Chapter 4. Discourses of mobility

4.1 Introduction

In the interviews and focus groups, the young Tasmanians I spoke with told me stories about their experiences of migration and the impact of these experiences on their lives. Such stories are important for two reasons. First, because of what they tell us about the experiences of people in particular contexts. Second, because they are constructed stories, told from a particular viewpoint at a particular time and centre on "'what mattered' more widely to the narrator" (Mason 2004:162). The stories provide information both about particular events and contexts, and about the narrators themselves. This is because the types of stories that people tell are in part constrained by the norms and expectations of the culture in which they are telling their stories (Rosenwald 1992:265) and stories are an important means by which people's identities are formed and developed (Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992; Wiersma 1992).

To analyze these stories, I followed Barth (1989) in beginning my analysis with the presumption of disorder, and then trying to explain any order that I found using a method informed by grounded theory. While the migration stories of the people I spoke with were varied in their details, I did find some similarities. In this chapter, I outline the major themes that arose in the interviews and point to the inter-relationships between these themes.
4.2 Major themes

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1994), I analyzed all of the interview transcripts and coded for the issues that arose. Using open, axial and selective coding, I was able to organize the issues that arose in the interviews into six major themes:

1. Practical considerations (housing, education, employment and health)
2. Personal ties
3. Experiences of leaving and returning
4. The future
5. Sense of place
6. Flexible identity

These themes can be further organized into three levels of categories:

1. How people negotiate migration (i.e. what happens and how people deal with it practically); which encompasses the themes of ‘practical considerations’ and ‘personal ties’.
2. How people experience migration; which encompasses the themes of ‘experiences of leaving and returning’ and ‘the future’.
3. How people understand migration; which encompasses the themes of ‘sense of place’ and ‘flexible identity’.

All three levels, which correspond with three of my major research questions, are intrinsically related to each other, and between them they go much of the way to answering the question of why people migrate.\footnote{This question is explicitly addressed in section 4.4.1.}
Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the major themes of the research and their inter-relationships.

**Figure 4.1: Major research themes and inter-relations**

- The way people **NEGOTIATE** migration
  - Practical considerations
  - Personal ties

- The way people **EXPERIENCE** migration
  - Experiences of leaving & returning
  - The future

- The way people **UNDERSTAND** migration
  - Sense of place
  - Flexible identity
4.3 Negotiating migration: Practical considerations and personal ties

The young people I spoke with were active in negotiating their own migrations. This section includes a discussion on the ways in which they negotiated practical issues such as housing, health, education and employment as well as a discussion on the importance of personal ties as a factor in making these practical decisions.

4.3.1 Practical considerations

A number of practical issues were raised during the interviews and focus groups with regards to migration to and from Tasmania. I have divided these up into issues of housing, health, education and employment. It is important to stress here that while my focus is on the experiences of the informants and the narratives they use to make sense of their experiences rather than providing ‘lists’ of reasons why people move, this does not mean that practical issues are unimportant. Information about practical issues is valuable in a number of respects. First, studying narratives of experience requires that we understand the contexts of those experiences in order to make those narratives meaningful. Second, the context in which narratives are constructed and told influences the narratives themselves. Third, narratives can make explicit the power relations and cultural constraints at play in the narrators’ lives. A significant aspect of these power relations is the practical issues that confront these young people. Fourth, how people understand and react to these practical issues is important, especially as different people are likely to understand and react to issues differently, and thereby tell different stories.
Housing

With regards to housing, the dominant issues raised were the ability to buy or build a house in Tasmania, the possibility of living with parents upon returning to the state and issues related to renting including the loss of leases.

For a number of people, the opportunity to buy a house in Tasmania was a major factor influencing their experiences of returning. Some people had bought houses in the state while they were away, others purchased upon their return:

*Hazel:* Were there any opportunities that you think you had coming back that you wouldn't have had otherwise? ...

*Anna:* ... buying a house. We wouldn't have been able to buy a house in Sydney\(^{38}\) at that stage\(^{39}\).

However, this opportunity had become much less achievable since the 2003 housing boom in Hobart:\(^{40}\)

*David:* Yeah. It's all good, except the house prices have gone up and I've missed my chance to buy anything.

For people not living in their own houses, or with their parents, renting was a major factor in their experiences of both living away from, and returning to, the state. The loss of a rental lease in particular could be a nuisance for people, because it meant that they had to find a new rental property, which could be difficult. In some cases, the loss of a lease even prompted a move between states. Beth and her sister [Ellie] left Sydney and returned to Hobart when they lost the lease on their apartment:

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\(^{38}\) Sydney is the capital city of the state of New South Wales. It is the largest city in Australia.

\(^{39}\) Some quotations have been edited to improve their legibility. For example, I have removed 'um' and repeated words. I have not changed the content of these quotations.

\(^{40}\) Between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 the price index of established housing in Hobart had increased by 19.4% (ABS 2006c:1384.6). However, this growth has since slowed, with the Commonwealth Bank (2005) reporting that there was no growth in house prices in Tasmania the December 2004 quarter (and a 4.9% growth in unit prices).
Beth: I lost the lease on the house ... At that point in time I was living with my sister in [a suburb in Sydney], and we did talk about getting another place, um, but it was just, just too hard. I don't know if you've had experiences of trying to find a place in Sydney and the rental price ... and yeah, there was no other place, either go home or find another place in Sydney.

David also moved because of the loss of a lease in the less stressed housing market of Hobart, arguing that if he had to move house, he may as well move state:

David: Um, part of the reason I reckon that I went back [to the mainland] from Hobart was because I had just come back from visiting Canberra\(^4\), and I came back and the lease on the share-house ... fell through and so I had to find somewhere to live, so I just felt like moving out of Hobart ... the end of the lease would be the prime instigator.

From these few examples, it is clear that housing issues, ranging from purchasing a house, to renting, to living with family, have significant impacts on both people's decisions to migrate and experiences of migration.

Education

Post-school study was an important factor in the decision to move away from the state and to return. A number of people left the state to study elsewhere. In many cases this was because people wished to go to leading universities in their area:

Gary: My primary reason [for moving] was that it was the best opportunity in my mind for my education ... [that particular]

\(^4\) Canberra is the capital city of the Australian Capital Territory. While it is not as large as either Sydney or Melbourne in terms of population, the majority of Federal Government jobs are based in Canberra and it is therefore a common destination for university graduates.
University at the time had, from the information I’d been given, the best student/teaching-staff ratio, it also had the highest level of funding for the faculties I was looking at. It also had probably much respected teaching staff, especially the faculties I was looking at.

Study was also an important factor in the decision to return, with people explaining that Tasmania provided a better environment for studying, largely because of affordability. For example, Beth had a plan for studying, working and living independently in Tasmania:

Beth: I knew that I wanted to go to Uni, like that was one of the things that was mulling through my head and I knew that it would be too expensive to go to USYD [The University of Sydney], um, so I thought well if I get a job at [a department store in Hobart], it’ll be easy to go to casual [work].

While Emily intended to study, work fewer hours than she had done in Melbourne and live with her parents:

Emily: I went actually, I don’t want to do journalism at [a university in Melbourne], this working and studying and living in Melbourne so I’m going to move back to Hobart and I’m going to do a double degree, I’m going to do Arts/Law and I’m going to do a politics major and I’m going to study French again and I’m going to ask my parents if I can move back in with them and that’s my plan and that’s what I’m going to do.

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42 Melbourne is the capital city of the state of Victoria. It is the second largest city in Australia, and the geographically closest capital city to Hobart.
Only in one case was the decision to study in Tasmania largely influenced by the relative status of the research school:

*James:* Um, there's probably a few reasons [for coming to Tasmania to do a PhD]. One was the way [my girlfriend] had set up her PhD was that she was going to be back here for a year, so I wanted to get something back here because, to be in the same place ... Two, I had good contacts here, people, you know, who I knew could sort of set me up. And three, in the field that I'm working in, in Australia this is probably about the best school you can be in anyway.

As well as being important in the decision to move either to or from the state, in Peter's case, education was an important step in his plans for a different employment future. Having worked in a stressful job in the private sector in Melbourne, Peter decided that he wanted to live in Tasmania and therefore would need to retrain. Given the option of retraining in biostatistics, he instead opted for teaching:

*Peter:* If I want to stay in Tassie and eventually maybe settle down and buy a house and have a family or whatever, having a degree in biostats is not going to guarantee me a job. I'm just going to end up in the same boat I was before, with five years IT experience and a biostats PhD and looking in the paper going nope, nope. But I've finally made the decision to do teaching because then as a maths teacher in Tassie ... I'm in high demand.

Peter's approach is certainly supported by the experiences of many of the young people I spoke to who had completed a university degree in Tasmania and had then found that there were no work opportunities available to them in their chosen field in the state:
Jenny: I would have thought the main reason young people leave...would be because of career moves I guess, like there isn’t the big corporate, it’s not as easy to get into the big corporate places in Tassie I guess, so yeah once you’ve finished Uni and stuff, if you want to actually have a career it’s sort of, there’s the impression that you basically have to go to the mainland.

Employment

A lack of employment opportunities was not only a problem for people with university degrees however, as Beth notes:

Beth: I think the main idea [why young people leave] would be employment. We don’t have that many employment opportunities here for young people, but that could be, once again, because of the reason I wasn’t getting employment was because I didn’t have an education for it.

Trish also commented that her daughter recently found it very difficult to get enough work in Hobart with a high-school education, but since moving to Sydney has had no problems, indicating that the ‘problem’ of unemployment in Tasmania is still current, at least in comparison with the opportunities available elsewhere:

Trish: Oh, look, [my daughter] and one of her friends were living here with me before they went away, and they had their resumes and they were just knocking everywhere and handing out resumes and trying to get jobs and they’d get jobs, but they’d just be a few hours here and a few hours there.

For many people, moving was a good way to secure a job. However, the issue of employment was also more than simply an issue of the availability of jobs for some people who were more concerned about their careers more generally:
Luke: Um, I suppose [the decision to leave] was perceived career type reasons. Um, because I had a job with [a large company] when I left, when I took that job I was sort of in the process of getting this job in Melbourne … at the time Tassie appeared to not be really a go ahead kind of place, pretty stagnant in terms of engineering.

It is important at this point to stress again that employment, while important, is not the only reason for migrating and that some people were employed before their departure and did not experience any problems gaining employment in Tasmania:

Ellie: I left because of a boy, but also because of this feeling within me that I needed to get out, um, it wasn’t because of job opportunity or anything, I always knew I could get a job here.

Similarly, people could also find themselves unemployed while living elsewhere, for example in large cities such as London:

Greg: I just thought OK, I’m going to go to the UK … I stayed with my Mum’s sister, my Aunt in Manchester … and so I was looking for work there and then I went down to London and looked there and not having much luck.

For those people who did find work elsewhere, some lost their jobs:

Ben: [I] probably intended to stay in Adelaide\(^{43}\) for a couple of years or more, but in the end I got made redundant.

\(^{43}\) Adelaide is the capital city of South Australia.
Others decided to quit their jobs, in some cases influenced in their decisions by unsatisfactory working conditions:

*Luke:* The company I was working for had some sort of internal turmoil going on, so it was a smaller part of a much larger company ... and so there was also stress about trying to be a bit profitable.

But again, the loss of a job elsewhere was certainly not the only reason for returning to the state. For example, Ben actually moved to England after losing his job in Adelaide and Luke returned to the state in large part because he was planning to marry his girlfriend who was living in Tasmania.

After returning to the state, some people experienced difficulties in finding any, or enough, work:

*Kate:* I got a few casual things in there as well, but they were really bad for confidence as well because I tended to find that if you were casually employed, they just treated you like shit, basically. So first you can't get a job and then you get a few hours here and there and you don't feel valued and it's just really bad.

While others had no problems finding work:

*Beth:* We [Beth and her sister Ellie] printed off hundreds and hundreds of our resumes ... and we did the walk, around Hobart ... We got a job straight off.

Much of the discussions surrounding employment in Tasmania (particularly in Hobart) dealt with the idea that Hobart has a unique job culture, based in large part on the importance of contacts:
Kate: I don’t think I had any more opportunities when I came back than when I left, if anything less because, um, so much in Hobart relies on networking and I’d lost my networking, um, and I remember going to one of those stupid job search places and even the guy in the office he said to me ‘look, there’s pretty much nothing we can do for you. In Hobart, if you want a job, you’ve got to network, that’s all there is to it, like people are going to give jobs to their mate’s cousin’s friends … and he said ‘even I got this job networking. I mean I’ll do my best, like, I will do my best, but it’s not going to happen unless you get out there’ and I was like ‘but I am, I mean I’ve rung everyone I know, I’ve spoken to every contact I’ve got, I’ve done everything, but I don’t know that many people anymore’ and he was just like ‘well you’re just going to have to keep trying’ and I was like ‘oh my God’.

This ‘culture’ also meant that people could be rejected for jobs because they were ‘overqualified’: 

Heather: Just finding a good job, finding a job that I was happy with, um, I had a really, not high opinion of my self, but I knew what I was capable of and I expected everybody else to understand that. Um, so I didn’t understand the culture in Hobart, the employment sort of job culture of it’s not what you know; it’s who you know. Um, your CV can intimidate people um you can be overqualified for something, which I think, I still think is bizarre.

While the unemployment rate in Tasmania has dropped quite considerably over the last few years (ABS 2006b:6202.0), the same problems surrounding the job culture in Tasmania seem to be present. For example, Peter was looking for work in 2002 and 2003 and had similar problems:
Peter: I found then that the job market in Tassie obviously, I mean I knew that, but it's not as easy to get into ... I reckon I applied for about twenty, twenty-five jobs in the last four months, I've had three or four interviews and I haven't been successful with any of them, so I, being rejected a lot was not good for my self-esteem and coming from, like I finished my degree, I applied for three jobs, I got offered two, that's what I thought was going to be the same thing and I'm now with five years experience. A lot of the time they came back and said 'you've got too much experience', like I put my resume into one place and he said look I'm a test manager, you're applying for a testing position but you're more qualified than I am, I don't want you telling me what to do [laughter] and I was like, I'm happy to just be a tester, I just want a job [laughter], but I didn't get one.

For those who did find jobs, in many cases this was through contacts:

Mark: It was, it was remarkably easy to get a job at [large company] because I had plenty of contacts there.

Health

With regards to health, I was quite surprised at the number of people who had been sad, depressed, felt isolated or had stress-related health problems and the effect this had on both their decisions to move and their experiences of moving.

Feelings of isolation were upsetting for some people and in some cases appeared to be related to feeling depressed while away:

Ben: In some ways I felt very lonely when I was in [an English city] as well and that was a big motivator for coming back to
Tassie, um, of all the places ... I could go ... that was the place where I knew the most people.

However, while people moving away may expect to feel isolated, the feelings of depression experienced by some people were quite surprising. For example, Gary describes the hardest period in his time away:

*Gary:* I would say that it was about nine months into the whole foray that in my mind it was starting to sour, the milk was starting to curdle at that point, yeah, I’d already had that, the winter period really dragged me down ... I was finding that I wasn’t going to my lectures, I was still coping with my [assignments], I wasn’t going to my lectures, I wasn’t getting out of bed until one o’clock in the afternoon because it was too cold ... I wouldn’t do anything.

Interestingly, those people who felt depressed while away were generally succeeding or at least coping in their work or studies, but despite this, were very unhappy. For example Ben returned to Tasmania because he was unhappy living elsewhere, despite doing very well at his workplace:

*Ben:* I was saving a thousand pounds a month, I could have saved ten thousand, I could have come back and paid off my HECS[^44] and written my book, but I think my mental state, my psychological state wouldn’t have been too good if I’d stayed there much longer, like I was starting to get sort of fairly depressed.

As well as the issue of depression, some people experienced stress-related health problems while they were living away. The two most extreme cases were those of Rebecca, who was stressed about leaving a relationship and friends in Tasmania, and

[^44]: Higher Education Contribution Scheme payments.
Peter, who experienced stress as a result of work. Rebecca describes the physical state she found herself in when she left the mainland:

Rebecca: When I came back I was a lot thinner and I was shaky all the time and I'd run about all the time, and I couldn't eat at all.

Peter outlines his health problems that he believes may be at least partially a result of work-related stress:

Peter: I chaired a three hour workshop in front of some key [company] executives, one of them was director of something Australia-wide, she was a very important lady and I had the task of sort of selling that ... and one of my friends ... [said] during that three hours there was a vein at the top of my head that was going [pulsating] because of the stress that I was under, um, so that's the work side of it. Now I also had, I started to have some medical problems, now whether they're due to stress or what, I don't know, but um I had problems in my left ear, um, I had a dizzy spell, like I woke up and the room was going round and round and I was like ‘What the?’ It scared the shit out of me, it really scared me and I had a few panic attacks which is stress related but and that’s sort of, I’m not, I’m never really sure if they were to do with the dizzy or the stress I was under at work, um or what, but it was making my life difficult because then I started not to sleep well, and without sleep I was much more susceptible to colds and flu and so I was sick a lot more than I should have been and I was working a lot, um, but I’d be, I’d work until six or seven in the evening, I’d go and get some take-away dinner with the rest of the guys and then I’d be back at work until twelve and I’d run to the train station to catch the twelve-past-twelve train and then I’d be back at work at half-past-eight the next morning. Now doing that
five nights, five days a week, come Friday a few beers and I’m asleep … So, with all of that, I decided to take twelve months leave without pay.

Unfortunately, negative experiences were not confined to other places. In a number of cases, people experienced depression and stressful episodes upon return to the state. For example, Kate describes her feelings upon return:

_Hazel:_ Was Tasmania the way you expected it to be when you came back?

_Kate:_ No, not at all. Um, probably, well not probably, well the most depressing time of my life. The doctors wanted to put me on anti-depressants but I knew it wasn’t a chemical imbalance, I just knew it was just a really rough time and that I’d get through it and I did, but it was just horrible, I was just so depressed.

Emily described her physical reaction to feeling homesick for Melbourne upon her return:

_Emilys:_ It surprised me how strange I felt and I got homesick [for Melbourne] and I actually would get nauseous … Standing there going oh there’s this pain in my stomach I want to throw up and then I’d start crying and say, ‘oh God I want to go home’ and then I’d go home to Mum and Dad’s and it’d be like, I want a nap, and I’d have a nap. That surprised me.

Summary

These examples point to just what an huge impact migration can have on people’s lives, influencing their education, their careers, their home environment and even their physical health. Migration is more than simply an isolated move from point A to point B; rather it is a process of change and adaptation, which can influence all
aspects of a person's life. However, because the migration process is so tied up in all of the other aspects of a person's life, it is very difficult to separate the influence of migration from these other factors. This is where the issue of contingency comes into play. As Marcus explained in a focus group, it is hard to judge the effect of migration because people are in different situations before they leave and after they return. For example, people may get married, have children or even fall ill, all of which will influence the experience of returning.

4.3.2 Personal ties

So far, I have concentrated on these young people as individuals. However, it is important to recognize that they are influenced by a number of important personal ties. Some people moved with their partners or their children⁴⁵, others moved to join partners and friends who had moved before them and some stayed with relatives or friends when they first arrived in a new place and when they returned to Tasmania. Personal ties with family and friends were a particularly salient theme in the interviews and focus groups.

Parents

People's parents received a mention in most stages of migration. In the first place, some of the people I spoke to were not only leaving the state when they left Tasmania the first time, but were also leaving the parental home and this influenced their decision:

Jenny: I guess by the time you finish Uni and stuff as well, I was living with my parents the whole time of course as well and I just thought well it's time for a change, time for something new.

⁴⁵ None moved with parents.
For many others, however, especially those who grew up in the North and West of the state (and moved to Hobart), they had already left the parental home before they left the state.

It is interesting, however, that upon returning to the state, many people lived with their parents for at least a few weeks and sometimes for years after their return. Hence, parents’ houses provided an additional housing option. For some, living with parents seemed to work well:

*Hazel:* Um, do you like where you’re living now? [With parents]

*Emily:* Yeah, yeah I love it ... I’ve got to reconnect with my parents.

For others, this arrangement worked less well:

*Ben:* Every time I go back and stay with my parents I feel a little less welcome [laughter] they’re ah, yeah, my mum started saying I should pay rent.

Parents were also important in the decision to return, whether or not these young Tasmanians planned to live with them upon returning:

*Kate:* [I came back] because I was worried about my mum ... I didn’t want to come home. Um, but yeah she was on her own and Christmas was coming up and she was very, very lonely.

*Heather:* Then I found out that my Mum was really ill, so I had to make the decision [to come back].
The move back to the state has enabled new relationships to form between some of these young Tasmanians and their families that may influence future decisions to move:

*Kate*: The thing that Hobart’s got that nowhere else has is my family, you know and everything else can wait … I just feel like I’ve got this really unique opportunity in my early twenties to get to know my parents as friends.

However, such new developments in parent-child relationships were certainly not a universal experience:

*Rebecca*: I never see [my parents], well I see them like once every two weeks here, but it’s not like they miss me while I’m away, they can just call me up and have as little a conversation as we have when we see each other every two weeks.

*Partners*

Partners were particularly significant in influencing the practical aspects of migration. Even among some people who were single at the time of interview, partners had been an important factor in past migration decisions and experiences. Some people moved with their partners, others spent a period apart from their partners and still others separated from their partners in part as a result of their migrations.

Having a partner complicated decisions about migration:

*Tom (focus group)*: I’m worried about the compromise between what I want to do and what is practical for my family or my

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46 I have marked those comments that were made in the focus groups. All other comments were made in the interviews.
partner ... I've only ever thought about myself and now I have to think about other people.

For those who moved with their partners, the decision to move was seldom an individual decision and the desires of both people had to be weighed up:

James: And that was two of us ... both graduating at the same time and wanting to both find jobs in the same place in really different areas, because I have like an Arts degree and honours in Arts and that I guess sort of steered me into public service work and I mean [my partner at the time had] an IT background so I mean she can sort of work anywhere, so we chose Canberra because it was a more likely place for me to get a job.

Katherine: We got married and probably would have stayed in Tasmania except that job opportunities came up in Melbourne and that’s, I mean that’s the reason why we left, left Tassie. I would have, like if I had have stayed, I was working and quite happy in the job I was in and I actually moved to no job. But [Steve] was offered a better opportunity in Melbourne, so we moved for that reason and that was straight after we got married.

However, moving with a partner generally made the experience of migration easier:

Hazel: Did you find it harder to leave when you went to Hobart than when you went to Melbourne, or the same?

Richard: No, it was much easier, because I was with my girlfriend at the time.

A number of people did not move with their partners, but joined them later:
Ellie: What was it in Tassie that encouraged me to leave? Um, my boyfriend wasn’t here, I moved [overseas] for a boy.

Others moved first and their partners joined them later. Interestingly, two of the people in this situation had partners they had met overseas who moved to Tasmania and applied for Australian residency:

William: Yeah, my girlfriend who was … she was my co-worker [overseas]. Um, you know we began to live together in the last few months of my stay there and she’s moved, she moved to Tasmania and she’s on a working holiday visa and we’re applying for a defacto residency visa.

Partners were also influential in some cases in the decision to return to Tasmania:

Elizabeth: [I left] because [my partner] was based in Hobart um and I was absolutely totally and utterly sick of [regional centre in North of Australia].

Partners were not only influential in the decision to move and in the experiences of those moves, but also remained influential as a reason to stay in the state:

Mark: Just in the last couple of months I’ve been told about opportunities in Wellington and Auckland that I’d have a damn good chance of getting and [my wife] said no, not with a baby, let’s just stay put here for a while because she’s got her job as well so um yeah I suppose it’s family that’s keeping me here now. I’d personally be quite happy to head off again.

Partners are therefore very influential in both migration decisions and experiences. However, migration could lead to strains in relationships:
Tim: My wife and I were really quite friendly when I left and that didn’t go all that well, so, she took me leaving as not very good [laughter]. We were sort of mates then but we sort of fell out a bit after that, and that was a bit hard actually, now that I remember it, obviously all patched up now.

In other cases migration led to the end of relationships:

Hazel: Did your girlfriend come back with you ...?
Ryan: She did briefly, yeah, she’s gone, she didn’t really want [to leave] where she lives so, her family was there, so, a few more reasons into that. Political reasons in there as well ... it was hard, she didn’t want to be pulled away from that. I suppose it’s a bit like myself, I wanted to come back to my own [roots and family] ... and she didn’t want to leave hers.

Children

Children were a big influence on decisions to return to Tasmania. Anna and Trish both returned with their children so that they could be around other family members when they grew up:

Anna: I think that that was a big thing, that they really need family, the kids need family more than me ... and we had a big family down here.

Trish: Um, because, [my daughter] was starting school and I’d separated with her dad three years before that, and yeah, I wanted her to grow up around her family and her cousins down here.
Tim moved back to the state because his wife wanted to be near family for the birth of their child:

*Tim:* ... moved back here and um the main trigger for that was we've got both sets of parents here, my wife and I, and just wanted, she wanted to be near family.

Children were also a factor in plans for future moves away. For example, Elizabeth was worried about the impact that moving away would have on her children:

*Elizabeth:* ... a crisis that's been building up for the last two years with what are we going to do and where are we going to go and I've had a real problem with moving and the girls and all that kind of stuff.

**Friends**

Friends were also important, both in decisions to move and in experiences of moving. In some cases, friends influenced the choice of location when moving away:

*Ben:* Adelaide had some small preference over other places as well, um like in terms of where I was focusing looking for ... jobs, simply because I knew a few people there.

*Rosamond:* I think I was fairly lucky to be able to go over and be with friends, I'm sure I would have felt horribly lonely otherwise.

Friends also influenced the choice of location when returning:

*Hazel:* When you left England, why did you come back to Hobart rather than go somewhere else?
Ben: Because I had friends and family here. Like one of the big things I found is that I need a good network of friends and it takes a good six months to sort of build that up when you move to a new place and rather than move somewhere else and potentially leave there just after I’d sort of started to make a basis for myself there, um I thought yeah I might as well come back to Hobart from that point of view.

Many people discussed friendships as an important part of their lives and were upset when they moved away from friends:

Matthew: I suppose when I left here the first time I had some slight pangs I guess, OK I’m not going to see any of my friends or family here for quite a while. And then the same thing happened there, I’d made all these really great friends and um my girlfriend … she’d gone back [to her home country] about three weeks before I left so that was tough. Um, and then yeah, I left um and I was sort of leaving everyone behind again so that was, yeah that was pretty difficult I think.

The changing nature of friendships was also an important theme in discussions of the experiences of moving back to Tasmania:

Rosamond: I suppose the only thing that might have been a bit strange, which wasn’t initially after I got back, but after a while, you sort of realize that your friends have drifted, um, and that you don’t have a place in their life anymore. And that’s quite sad, because you can’t really blame them because you’ve been away as well and you realize that you’ve drifted as well.
A number of people discussed how they had changed as a result of moving away and how after returning, they could no longer connect with their friends as they used to.

Susanne: What I did find difficult was keeping the friendships up when you’re experiencing things that are so completely different than everything you’ve experienced before, making new friends, and really after two years, you know, you’re making another lifestyle choice ... I certainly lost a lot of friendships from back here, um, just from feeling that I couldn’t relate to people back here or that they couldn’t relate to me, um, and the, the cost of keeping in contact is there, whereas it’s not when you’re here, um, and I think people just expect you, it really was quite a life-changing experience and people expect you to be the same and to have the same interests as you did before and you don’t, so that was tough.

The lack of recognition by friends that people had changed as a result of migration was frustrating for some:

James: A lot of my friends who stayed here I just didn’t get on with as well, and I think what really annoyed me was they didn’t even want to show a recognition that I’d done anything different. Like, that if I hadn’t been here, that I sort of just didn’t fit in.

Such experiences meant that some people had to expend a significant amount of energy developing new friendships after they returned:

Susanne: I just found that you make friends more through work and groups are a lot more cliquey and harder to break into here in Tasmania.
The energy used in developing new friendships parallels the energy required to maintain old friendships through communication and visits. Some people maintained contact with their friends in Tasmania while they were away:

**Peter**: So I did keep in contact with my high school/Uni friends, um and it's very important, oh, a good thing that I did, I mean I'm really glad that I did.

Others found maintaining that contact more difficult:

**Luke**: I think it was probably fairly difficult, I left my girlfriend, maintained contact with her sort of thing ... so other than that, um most of my friends from school ... I didn't keep in contact with them ... I regret yeah that ... friendships have never really recovered.

Others made a conscious choice not to maintain their friendships after moving away from the state:

**Ellie**: It wasn't even drifting apart, well it is drifting apart, but I didn't see it as that. I just totally lost contact with them and I don't know whether or not I grew as a person, I just couldn't imagine going back and hanging out with them any more, or spending time with them, they just seemed so different from me. I think they were starting to do that before I left ... as well. I kind of distanced myself from them a little bit before I left.

Friends outside of Tasmania were also very important and a number of people maintained contact with friends elsewhere after they returned to the state:
Emily: My core mates that I had when I left Melbourne, my friendship is actually stronger, because I’ve paid more attention to the [maintenance] of their friendship since I’ve left … I go back to Melbourne about four times a year and organize to see them. And now I get on this internet forum where a couple of my mates post so I can leave them messages and stuff … extra contact, so there’s phone calls there’s e-mails, there’s the forum, there’s messenger … and there’s visits and presents in the mail.

Summary

The people I spoke to seldom made decisions about the practical issues surrounding migration without considering their parents, children, partners and friends. Similarly, their experiences of migration were strongly influenced by the personal ties with family and friends. While I have chosen to focus my study on individuals, this does not mean that the significant impact of personal ties on people’s actions and experiences can be ignored.
4.4 Experiencing migration: Experiences of leaving and returning and plans for the future

As discussed in Chapter Two, the bulk of migration studies focus on demographic, economic, and social policy issues. Such studies also focus largely on the move itself. But while the actual move is quite short, the experience of migration stretches over a much greater time frame and can influence both people’s practical circumstances and their ideas about themselves (their identity) and the rest of the world (their worldview) in the long term. It is the experiences of migration (before, during and after the actual move) that can tell us the most about the importance of the migration process, rather than the move itself. This section explores the experiences of migration for young Tasmanians in the context both of leaving the state and returning to the state and discusses the impact of such experiences on people’s idea about the future.

4.4.1 Experiences of leaving and returning

The migration experiences of these young Tasmanians provide the backbone to understanding the issues involved in the migration of young adults. It is through an understanding of migration experiences that we can gain some insight into the motivations behind migration, the impact of migrations on people’s lives, their identities, their values and their future actions, and the relationship between migration and broader socio-economic issues from the local to the global scale.
Experiences of leaving

The experiences of people leaving the state varied quite considerably. However, there were some similarities in the ways in which people spoke about both their reasons for, and their experiences of, leaving the state.

Reasons for leaving Tasmania

The reasons that people gave as to why they were leaving Tasmania provide a good introduction to the experiences of leaving the state. Obviously, these reasons varied quite considerably amongst the people I spoke to. However, there were some themes that were common to many informants. I have divided these into reasons related to Tasmania and reasons related to elsewhere.

Reasons related to Tasmania

Quite a common reason for leaving Tasmania, or at least a factor influencing the decision to move, was the absence of ties in the state. This included an absence of ties to people, to employment, to 'debts' and even homelessness in one case:

Trish: When I left, there wasn't really anything to keep me here. I wasn't working, I wasn't studying. Um, I'd actually lived on the street for quite a few years and I've seen a lot of pretty hard stuff and I think I was fairly messed up by that stage and um, so there wasn't really anything to stay for.

As well as an absence of ties in the state, some people also experienced an absence of ties to Tasmania itself. Rosamond linked this detachment from Tasmania to the process of growing up:

Rosamond: No, I really felt very distant from Tasmania at that stage [when I left for Melbourne], I was very, um, I'd sort of passed the stage of even being able to think about it ... there was
nothing that I wanted from Tasmania anymore ... I think it's definitely in association with growing up, um, I don't know how people can stay here during that period.

For those who did have ties in the state, another reason for leaving was that of avoidance:

_Hazel:_ Was there anything, there was obviously some stuff in Tassie that encouraged you to leave?

_William:_ Yeah, um, family things, yeah, not to leave, more escape for a little while I suppose.

David said that he thought avoidance was probably a major part of many young people's decisions to leave the state:

_Hazel:_ Why do you think that young adults ... leave Tassie?

_David:_ Well, in my case it's to avoid people, I think that's still true. And looking at me personally, I would say that leaving is a way of avoiding all sorts of things, and if you gloss that with job opportunities or career or study elsewhere, I think they're valid reasons, but they're still excuses.

For Beth, the recognition that she left the state to avoid things was recent, pointing to the contingent nature of narrative constructions:

_Beth:_ Yeah, yeah. I wouldn't have said that it was because I was running at the time, but I probably would say that now.

However, for others, the move was not understood in terms of avoidance at all, but rather in terms of opportunities elsewhere:
Peter: So I definitely wasn’t running away, running away, um, there was no real reason why I was moving to Melbourne to get away from anything ... The move was for the job yeah and I guess, as growing up, being financially secure to me has been, well it’s been instilled in me that it’s important to be financially secure.

Reasons related to elsewhere

As well as reasons for leaving the state related to Tasmania, people discussed a number of reasons for leaving related to their destinations. People moved for the purposes of exploration and curiosity, and also for perceived positives of other destinations including employment and education opportunities, anonymity, excitement and more challenges.

The opportunities available outside of Tasmania for employment, education and self-development were a major factor in the decision to move for most people. Mark explained the importance of opportunities for education and employment when he was speaking about why he thought so many young people leave Tasmania:

Mark: ... main reasons why people leave, um, one is um because they can’t pursue either the studies or the work, probably mainly the studies that they want to do here ... so studies is one reason. I still believe there’s more job opportunities in other places than here, so that’s a second reason. Although having said that there are, I don’t think there’s necessarily a lack of job opportunities here, as in there are jobs available, it’s a question of whether the jobs are available in exactly what an individual might want to do or not ... there’s a lack of specific job opportunities here I should say.
Mark's general analysis is backed up by the experiences of the other people I spoke with:

Matthew: Once again it's the same limited opportunities, um, for what I want to do, so. I'd like to stay in academia if I can and if I want to get a position ... either a postdoc or whatever it's going to either mean heading back to the mainland or heading back overseas, either back to England or maybe to the States depending on what's available. So, if this turns out at the end of my PhD that I still want to follow this career path then yeah, a move will be necessary I think.

The opportunity for self-development as a result of moving was also a prominent theme, captured here in this comment by Gary:

Gary: I felt pretty good [when I left Burnie]. I actually thought I was never going to go back, yeah, I felt quite happy, I felt like it was a new chapter, I actually felt like I could re-invent myself really.

Another 'opportunity' in moving elsewhere was the possibility of exploration, and of experiencing a different environment:

Matthew: I probably thought it would be nice to go somewhere else because I had lived here well yeah, forever, um, so that was probably part of it, just to see, to see somewhere else.

Mark explains this in terms of the excitement of the unknown. Certainly, excitement was a major factor in experiences of moving elsewhere:

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47 This issue is discussed further below and in Chapter Seven.
48 Burnie is a regional centre in the north of Tasmania.
Mark: I think the third reason [why young people leave] is this general concept of other places are more exciting. I don’t know if it’s necessarily other places are more exciting, it’s probably the unknown is more exciting.

Moving away was also a way of challenging oneself:

James: I was probably too casual about it all because everything was comfortable, which was probably half of the reason I left in the first place was that in some ways a lot of the challenges had been done here.

Part of the reason that moving away is seen as more challenging and perhaps also why it is seen as more exciting, appeared to be the anonymity that people had after moving – the idea of a fresh start. The desire for, and desirability of, anonymity was a particularly strong theme to emerge in the interviews and focus groups. David argued that this desire for anonymity was tied to the issue of avoidance:

David: If people are leaving because they want to avoid something, personal issues or whatever, then basically they’re seeking anonymity ...I don't think that's possible in Hobart, so it's always going to occur. Whereas if you live in a big city, you can gain that anonymity fairly easily, without leaving that particular city.

For others, the link to avoidance was not so clearly made, but anonymity was an important drawing card in the decision to move:

49 This issue is discussed further in Chapter Seven.
Susanne: Yeah. I guess moving from Launceston to Hobart gave me a bit of a taste for you know, that freedom and wanting to try new things and I, I felt I guess a little bit oppressed by the, you know, the Tasmanian sort of everyone knows everyone.

Other comments made by informants about anonymity when reflecting on their experiences of migration indicate the importance of this issue in the migration experience more generally (beyond the actual decision to move):

Steve: When we first arrived in Melbourne, there was a beautiful moment of anonymity, we just felt so phenomenal, it was wonderful, we were so free, we'd walk along Burke Street mall and no one knew us, it was just fantastic.

Realizations of the desirability of anonymity have also affected people's experiences of returning to the state. For example, in a focus group, Kate spoke about her regret at the loss of anonymity she felt upon return, while Jenny saw the positive side of a loss of anonymity upon return:

Kate (focus group): I didn't realize what it was like to be somewhere where I didn't have to worry about being recognized and I do feel a bit claustrophobic being here sometimes...

Jenny: On the other side, it's quite nice that you can just run into people.

Kate: No, I ring people I want to run into.

Jenny: But like being on the other side of the world, I had this really shocking day and it was just after I'd moved and my boyfriend was still here and it was just horrible, I didn't know anyone – running around the city and nobody cared.

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Launceston is the second largest city in Tasmania after Hobart. It is in the north of the state.
Narrative constructions of reasons for leaving Tasmania

When people were speaking about their reasons for going elsewhere, some gave very definite and clear answers. For example, in one of the focus groups, Rebecca was very clear that the only reason she had left the state was to start a course she could not do in Tasmania. Gary also left for education purposes:

*Gary:* My primary reason [for moving away] was that it was the best opportunity for my education.

Similarly, Richard left the state apparently for the sole reason of employment, actually working for a Tasmanian firm while he was away:

*Richard:* I actually started a TAFE[^1] course after I finished uni in database whatever and they put me onto this [business in Northern Tasmania] and they had a contract with the weaving mills in Melbourne, so I went to fill that in.

*Hazel:* When you left Devonport for Melbourne, was there any other reason you wanted to leave, other than the job? Like were you pleased to be leaving, or?

*Richard:* No, just the job really, I didn’t, I was careless whether I was leaving or not, it didn’t bother me.

However, for many people, the reasons for leaving were not so clear or simple:

*Hazel:* If you can just briefly say the reasons why you moved to each of the places you moved to?

*David:* Ah, I just moved, I mean I can tell you about the movement itself, I was just moving around.

[^1]: TAFE is a vocational education and training institute.
A few informants explained that there were 'official' or acceptable reasons for leaving as well as a more complex collection of reasons, which were not usually talked about:

_Hazel_: Why did you make that move?

_Tim_: Ah, I don't know, rationally. You know how there's real reasons and rational reasons?

_Beth_: From the surface it appears employment, but there were lots of different reasons ... as to why I moved.

During one of the focus groups, Beth was particularly eloquent about this point, explaining that she was not happy in Tasmania before she moved, which was why she left, but she told people that she was leaving for employment. In a later conversation with Susanne on this issue, she suggested that perhaps it was easier to say that you were leaving for education or employment than it was to say that you are unhappy with your current situation.

Such understandings were also context-specific. For example, Tim explained that he believed the desire for anonymity to be a driving factor in his decision to move, but he was not conscious of this at the time of moving:

_Tim_: There were a few other underlying social reasons, which I'm sure I wasn't conscious of at the time. My father was fairly well respected in Hobart as, you know, you were sort of always going to be in his shadow if you were here and I wanted to go away and just do it on my own and just um have a bit of a clean break.

The people I spoke to created narratives to explain their actions, both at the time of their actual migrations, and later in their interviews with me. What is particularly interesting about the above quotations is that they highlight how people recognize
that they are constructing these narratives, and how they can reflect upon their previous narratives in hindsight while constructing their new narratives in the interviews.

This also raises an important issue for migration research methods. If people are constructing appropriate narratives to explain their actions in different situations – by providing ‘acceptable’ reasons for leaving the state to friends and family such as education and employment and providing more complex explanations in a confidential interview with prompting – then the research method used in studying migration is likely to affect the results obtained. This may explain why migration research based on surveys and highly structured interviews tends to produce lists of ‘reasons’ why people move such as ‘for work’, ‘to follow a partner’ etcetera, without providing further depth of explanation into the experiences of migrants, or the inter-relationships between different factors which may influence a decision to move.

Experiences of leaving

For many people, their moves away from Tasmania were difficult and sad affairs. In particular, leaving close friends and family proved difficult for people, but the natural environment also received a mention in some people’s accounts:

Mark: Oh very upset [to be leaving Tasmania for Melbourne], I was crying ... I mean I was upset about leaving the family.

And later:

Mark: It was more sadness about, you know, leaving the family and leaving the love of the close bush and the close beach and that sort of thing.

The timing of departures also influenced experiences of moving away from the state:
Ben: [Leaving the state for the first time] was a lot harder than the second time as well ... I probably had a bit more warning that time ... because ... I’d been hanging around here after I finished uni having trouble finding work for a while ... and then I just sort of thought I’ll go to Sydney and I think I’d sort of decided that sort of three or four months in advance of when I actually left. Um, so there was a big ... lead up to that in the sense of ... time to worry about whether I was making the right decision and what I was leaving behind etcetera ... whereas when I got the job [in Adelaide] I think they wanted me to start within a month, I only really had a month’s warning.

Greg: [When I left to go to the UK] it was a lot more a sense of relief than anticipation; it was to get away and make a new start. Whereas when I went to the US it was almost as if like, because I’d sort of been planning it for the whole year ... whereas when I went to the UK it was a lot shorter notice ... just grabbed my passport and went. Yeah it was a lot more of a relief to actually be leaving rather than looking forward to anything that was going to be there.

Others were simply happy to be leaving and were not sad at all to be moving away:

James: Um, I think I was really looking forward to [leaving], probably more than [pause] yeah, I don’t think that I was, I wasn’t particularly upset to be leaving at all.

The most common positive emotion that people spoke about in relation to experiences of moving to another place was excitement:
Hazel: When you left Tassie the first time, when you were living in Launceston, how did you feel?
David: Oh, excited.
Hazel: OK, anything else?
David: No.
Hazel: Just excited?
David: Yep.
Hazel: And how did you feel when you first arrived?
David: Excited.
Hazel: And after a few weeks?
David: Excited.
Hazel: [laughter] and after a year?
David: Pretty excited
Hazel: [laughter] OK.
David: I didn’t have a bad time that first year.

The ambivalence of experiences surrounding migration was particularly evident in some people’s discussions about being excited. People spoke about being excited at the same time as being scared and sad:

Beth: I felt really, really scared, but fear and excitement are so close together, it’s hard to tell. I would have been excited, yeah.

Hazel: When you left for Adelaide, do you remember how you felt to be leaving?
Michael: Tied, because a bit sad to be going but I was excited to be moving somewhere new and start a new life and all that sort of stuff, so a bit of both really.

People often felt nervous or scared about moving as well as excited and this could cause people to be quite distressed as a result of moving:
Jenny: Um, the first few days were pretty horrible. It was right in the middle of summer as well it was like ... It was like 38 [degrees Celsius] or something and of course that whole sort of oh my God, what have I done type thing. Yeah, because my sister came up with me as well and um, yeah my first day of work, I just remember I had to say goodbye to her in the morning and it was like I had to ... work, it was like these huge red eyes [laughter] and oh that's attractive.

Some people said that when the initial excitement of moving elsewhere had waned, they began to feel home sick:

Susanne: You start to get to know people and so you loose that initial excitement and wow and wonder, um, I think yeah after that wears off a bit, probably the home-sickness kicks in a bit and um, and you know, in a funny way you start to compare everything to back home and think it doesn't measure up in the same way as when you come home ... it was a bit of a grass is always greener.

Other negative experiences discussed in the interviews included feeling pressured and stressed in a new environment with lots to organize:

Susanne: Yeah. I really felt that ... not being able to make contact with someone that was familiar, that was really tough ... the pressure's on you and you feel like you're carrying a lot of pressure in that sense because you can't off-load to anyone else at that stage because you don't have any comfort people from back home there and you don't have new people that are experiencing, well you do but you haven't met them yet, do you know what I
mean ... So when you first get there you just feel really, um, isolated, I think.

Having to deal with the pressure of new situations also led Susanne to discuss how she felt naïve on leaving the country for the first time:

_Susanne_: I felt really naïve when I got going, like I'd never traveled on an international flight before, um, I was going by myself, I was going to no one and um I just felt really obvious [laughter] ... I felt really, um, hicky I guess, if that makes sense ... So not sophisticated at all.

The process of moving was not simply a matter of people making a logical decision to move and then moving and having positive or negative experiences as a result. People actively analyzed their own motivations and decisions throughout the migration process. For example, some people questioned their own decisions to move, worrying about their decisions and asking themselves if they had done the right thing:

_Luke_: [When I left] I suppose there was a feeling of ah, trepidation and not really knowing whether it was the right decision or not.

Much of the excitement and nervousness surrounding both the decision to leave and the experiences of leaving was tied up in ideas, experiences and narratives of difference. The various places people were moving to were often quite different to Tasmania. This difference was one of the reasons people gave for wanting to leave Tasmania:

_James_: At the time I was pretty keen to go somewhere else to just experience different things, I guess
Difference influenced the experience of actually leaving:

*Katherine:* We all jumped on the boat and there was a real sense of, you know a whole part of my life is over, you know, completely, complete newness in front of me ... no family, no friends, you know, none of that, anything that I was familiar with, you know a completely new and totally foreign environment, oh not totally foreign, but a very new environment.

Difference influenced people’s experiences once they reached their destinations:

*Emily:* I found it overwhelming, um, I always knew it would be bigger and there’d be more stuff and there were all these neat things that you could do there that you couldn’t do here, um, I was more surprised at how lonely I was ... I didn’t realize how homesick I would be and how big Melbourne could be. Yeah, once I’d been there a while it didn’t feel big anymore ... so it’s just sort of unknowing, it’s like in Hobart the percentage of unknown stuff to known stuff is quite small ... whereas in Melbourne everything was unknown and there were small parts of it that were known. I wasn’t prepared for that.

Such difference was also related to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty for some people. These feelings were not seen in simply negative terms, however, and were often related to the idea of a change in one’s own life and identity.52

*Katherine:* So that two days was, you know, for me it made me feel sick almost, you know, because, I mean, my life was just so, I don’t know, had been really pure I guess, I’d been in the same place since I was five, um, the same people, really, um, really

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52 This issue is discussed further in Chapter Seven.
close knit community ... and, um, I kind of sensed at that point, well my life's going to change dramatically, um, my life will never be the same again. And I had a big sense of that ... a lot of uncertainty and a lot of um, not fear, I wasn't fearful, um I was excited and there was you know, like a, there was a sense of newness and a sense of um expectations and that, I think I liked the feeling that my life could change and that it would be really different. Um, but there was certainly insecurity and uncertainty, you know, as well.

Some people settled down well once they reached their destinations:

**Michael:** I didn't have any trouble finding work and made lots of friends and all those sorts of things, I didn't have any trouble settling down.

However, getting settled usually took a significant amount of time:

**Emily:** Yeah, I don't think I really was at home and sort of right into the swing of things really for a couple of years maybe.

Other people had difficulty settling in their new location at all:

**Richard:** I didn't really get to know anybody while I was there ... so I was a bit lonely over there and I didn't, ah. Melbourne itself was a good place, but ... not knowing anyone there was a bit difficult.

**Mark:** Everything in Melbourne seems to involve spending money to have fun, while here, my fun was generally speaking free because where Mum and Dad lived was over the fence, the bush
was over the back fence, you could jump over the fence and walk up Mount Wellington um or, you know go to the beach it’s only half an hour away. So as a Uni student I had not a great deal of money um and my idea of fun didn’t involve a great deal of money … I think that was a lot of the reason why I, I didn’t, I didn’t settle into Melbourne because it was just so different [because you need to spend more money to have fun].

As the above quotes indicate, settling in a place involved forging new social relationships and getting used to the culture and the physical environment. While some people settled down and enjoyed living in the places they had moved to, at least during the first few years:

Peter: I was there for five years, which is a reasonable amount of time, um, and I, I must say I really, really enjoyed myself four years, um I think Melbourne’s a great city, um and it’s a great place to be, a great place to live, there’s a lot of really cool people there and things to do.

For others, while they settled into their working lives and new social relationships, they did not forge a connection to the actual places they were living:53

Jenny: I think after a year I knew that I wouldn’t stay in Canberra for that much longer because I didn’t really like the place um I don’t even, I still haven’t exactly figured out what that is I don’t really know, like I just fly into Canberra and just go ‘oh God’, I think it’s because it’s so meticulously laid out and it just seemed so planned. It didn’t have the soul that Tassie had I guess.

53 The concept of ‘attachment to place’ is discussed in more depth below, and in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.
Experiences of returning

People's experiences of returning to Tasmania varied considerably. Some people had positive experiences of returning, others had negative experiences and for many people, their experiences were mixed.

Reasons for returning

The reasons people gave for returning to Tasmania can provide some insight into their experiences of returning. Common themes included leaving a job elsewhere and desire for the lifestyle and proximity to family available in Tasmania.

Reasons related to elsewhere

The reasons that people gave for returning to Tasmania were largely related to Tasmania, rather than the place they were leaving. However, perhaps the most common reason related to 'other' places was problems with employment and visas (for people overseas). For example, Peter found himself under a lot of unwelcome pressure at work:

Peter: [The company] is an up-or-out company alright, so that means get promoted or get fired, not get fired but be talked into resigning is probably a better way of putting it.

And Susanne's visa ran out:

Susanne: I'd come home from the fact of running out of money and not being able to continue my visa.
Reasons related to Tasmania

The most common reasons for returning related to Tasmania were the desire to be near family and the lifestyle benefits of living in Tasmania. For example, Tim returned for support for the birth of his child:

Tim: Well the move was because we wanted to be closer to a bit of a support network, first kid.

Luke came back to be with his girlfriend:

Luke: My girlfriend and I decided to get engaged and she was [doing] Uni down here.

Lifestyle factors also influenced many people’s decisions to return. In particular, as noted earlier, a number of people returned to undertake university study in Tasmania because the lifestyle available to students in Tasmania was seen as more desirable than that in a large city.

The timing of returns

Some people did not have concrete plans about how long they intended to stay away and whether, or when, they would return to the state, they ‘just moved’. However, for those who did have plans, many did not adhere to those plans. For example, both Jenny and Anna said that they did not plan to ever return to Tasmania.

A number of people came back to the state before they expected to, generally because their plans (regarding work, education and relationships) had not worked out. Gary’s experiences were related to both education and relationships:

Gary: It [studying in one of the country’s top universities] was a different thing, mainly because I wasn’t dealing with people who
were on the spectrum of the bell curve, I was dealing with the top end of the bell curve and then you’re put across a bell curve and then you might not weigh out quite as well as people who put in twelve hours a day ... um, I found that my girlfriend ... dumped me or whatever and she lived back here and she was supposed be um moving over but she never did and that sort of wore me down and I didn’t really move on.

A few people had also planned to leave again shortly after returning to Tasmania, but had stayed. Jenny had a course to continue overseas, Peter returned to the state on leave from his job in Melbourne and Mark returned for the summer holidays while he was between jobs. All three enjoyed living in Tasmania upon their return and so changed their plans. Jenny continued her studies in Hobart, Peter began retraining for a new career and Mark found employment in Hobart.

Plans to move, then, are not necessarily an indication of the actual moves that people make. These narratives indicate the contingency of people’s migration experiences and plans, indicating that as people’s experiences change, so too can their plans.

Narrative constructions of reasons for returning to Tasmania

When people were speaking about their reasons for returning, some gave very definite and clear answers (e.g. to return for the birth of a child or to join a partner). However, some people did not see returning to Tasmania as a result of any conscious choice to return. Rather, they had returned to the state by default, or because it was the ‘obvious’ place to go:

Hazel: How do you feel now about your choice to come back?
Rosamond: Um, I don't really think about it because it just happened, so I can't really go, oh, I shouldn't have made that choice because I don't think I really made that choice.
Steve: It turns out that Hobart was like a default mechanism almost, initially

This is particularly interesting because it indicates that for some people, the experience of migration is not one of a period of deliberation followed by a conscious choice to move and then the move itself. Instead, they made a choice after the move to either stay in the state or to leave again.

A related issue was that of returning to the state because it was ‘easier’ to do so for various reasons, including financial and housing reasons as well as proximity to friends and family:

Emily: I didn’t consider anywhere else, because I was looking for sort of a support, you know, I guess financial in terms of a place to live and sort of emotional while I was going through Uni stuff, so support that wouldn’t be available to me anywhere else

Hazel: So when you came back, why did you come back to Devonport as opposed to anywhere else?
Matthew: Um, well partly because I wanted to see my family again I guess and partly because that was just the easiest thing to do, I could come back and stay with Mum and Dad and not have to fork out money for anything or look for a house.

Moving back because it was ‘easier’ to do so need not be seen as a negative decision, however. Matthew was aware of the possibility of being seen as a ‘failure’ taking the ‘easy option’, but in fact this was not his experience:

Matthew: I was a bit apprehensive at first, I thought, I wasn’t sure if maybe it was a step backwards or um perhaps if it might have been just taking the easy way just coming back here to all the
familiar things, um, but as it turns out I don’t think it is. I thought I might just slip back into old habits and all the things I sort of, things that I always used to do when I was here … I think it was a really positive, now I think it’s a really positive move having come back here because the, I know I’m doing a good PhD and um I do love Uni.

Experiences of returning

Experiences of return varied. Some people were not particularly happy to be returning to Tasmania. This was largely the case for those people who did not have complete control over their decision to return. For example, Katherine returned in part because her partner wanted to return:

Katherine: I wanted to go back to Melbourne and [Steve] didn’t really mind … [Steve] was happy to either go to Melbourne or go to, come to Hobart, um, you know, depending on where he could find work that he’d really enjoy, I think that probably was his main priority … Whereas definitely, me I would have preferred Melbourne.

Susanne had even less control over her decision to move as her visa had run out in England:

Susanne: I think I got frustrated with it when I first got home, um, because I left under duress as well … I wasn’t ready to come home, I’d come home from the fact of running out of money and not being able to continue my visa so there was a bit of me that was looking to pick holes in what I’d been made to come back to.

Others were happy to be returning to Tasmania. Both because they were pleased to be leaving their previous place of residence:
Elizabeth: I was absolutely totally and utterly sick of [regional centre in Northern Australia], I found it an incredibly hard place to break into and hadn’t made a social circle, hadn’t made friends.

And because they were happy to be returning to Tasmania:

Hazel: How did you feel about leaving Sydney?
Ellie: Exhilarated [laughter]. I was just happy about coming home.

For many people, the experiences surrounding the return move were ambivalent, with people being sad to leave family and friends and lifestyle in one place, but excited about returning to Tasmania:

Hazel: How did you feel when you left England to come back here?
Sophia: Well, I was excited, but I was really upset as well.

People’s experiences after moving were varied. However, there were some commonalities between people’s experiences. Many people had positive experiences, especially immediately after their return. People were excited to return to familiar places and to see family and friends:

Matthew: It was really good to see them again and get off the plane and out of the airport and just have that eucalyptus smell hit you and it’s like, oh my God. Um, and hear everyone’s accent again and yeah, that was really good um, and then I got home and I got back to Devonport and saw my folks and that was a bit of a shock because they looked bloody old, um but it was good seeing
them and seeing my brother and sister again and yeah so that was really, that was really good.\textsuperscript{54}

Some people were also happy to return to a quieter lifestyle in Tasmania (discussed further in 'sense of place' section below):

\textit{Beth:} Happy to be home, happy to slow down, to not have to think at a mile a minute. Even when you're inside in your house in Sydney you feel like you're going a hundred miles a minute just because you know what's going on outside you, whereas being here in Tasmania, well in Hobart, it just feels calmer, yeah, you can feel like you can slow down and be a bit more yourself.

However, people also had negative experiences upon returning to the state. A number of people said that they were upset that people in Tasmania were not interested in hearing about their experiences once they returned, or even recognizing that they had done anything different:

\textit{Susanne:} Not feeling like anyone was interested in the experience and on a superficial level you feel like they are because they might ask what the trip was like and you can only say so many things like great, wonderful, you know, but yeah not, really not being able to communicate to anyone, except those that had been there what the experience was like was really, really tough, that was probably the hardest thing to come to terms with and just learning not to talk about it because you bore people.

As indicated by the above quote, this lack of recognition or interest was not simply an issue of people not wanting to have interesting conversations, but rather of

\textsuperscript{54} As Matthew's quote implies, for those people returning from overseas, it was exciting to return to Australia, as well as returning to Tasmania.
acquaintances in Tasmania being unable to acknowledge events in these returned Tasmanians’ lives that had influenced their beliefs and values and their own self-identities.

Some people even felt so different when they returned that they felt like outsiders:

*Gary:* Any problems [as a result of moving back to Tasmania]?
Oh yeah. Um, I wasn’t from there anymore ... When I came back I looked different, I wasn’t an average Tasmanian anymore, I was, ‘oh you’re one of them mainlanders’ almost.

This experience was not universal, however, and Steve even bemoaned the loss of anonymity he experienced upon returning to the state:

*Steve:* Just going to the shopping centre and meeting people, again that anonymity that we experienced while traveling overseas and also living in Melbourne was all of a sudden just gone.

Related to the issue of the lack of recognition accorded to these returned Tasmanians’ self-development, a number of people also said that they thought of returning to Tasmania as a step backwards in their own self-development and in their career development:

*Katherine:* I always say to people that I found it very, very difficult to be back in Tassie, I felt like I was coming backwards. I felt like moving to Melbourne was a step forwards in my life, like in terms of everything it represented, in terms of me learning stuff about myself and others and learning, you know, learning about life and the world and seeing so many different perspectives and I think that consolidated in my mind that the community that I came from and the kind of ways of thinking that I was used to in
Tasmania was characteristic of the wider Tasmanian community and I think I just stereotyped a lot.

Some people felt ambivalent about their return:

_Susanne_: Um, I almost felt ambivalent ... it was a weird thing because I remember the flight from Melbourne to Launceston and you know on a clear day how you fly and you see the whole of the state and I cried my eyes out when I saw it for the first time again and yet when I got back, um, there were people there to meet me and stuff and then driving, driving into Launceston at 5.30 and supposed peak hour and after work used to take me an hour and a half to get to on the tube and the bus in London and the airport trip from my parents’ place, from the airport back to my parents’ place took twelve minutes or something and I just felt like I was waiting for something more to happen, um, I don’t know, it was a really bizarre feeling, it was almost like I’d never been away, it was almost like the whole twenty-two months had just been erased because everything was the same, and I remember feeling ... completely relaxed around my family again and that was so nice, but at the same time just feeling like there was no way I would ever share, communicate to them the experiences that I’d had and um and that just felt really sad and I missed the people that understood that instinctively and I just felt a bit like, yeah it had never happened, like I’d just walked back into my life and it had never happened and that’s quite bizarre.

A number of people said that it took them a while to settle once they returned to the state. Some people took time settling into new work and home situations:
**Tim:** But because I'd been in ... a pretty senior role, work was quite important, it was quite a big part of life and before you have kids it's sort of ... it's a bit different really, but I was going through this change of home became a lot more important.

Others took some time settling into a new culture and way of doing things from that which they had come to expect living elsewhere:

**Ryan:** The hardest thing was just settling into the culture again ... I'd got used to I suppose a different culture, a different way of doing things.

Others took time coming to terms with a largely unwelcome move:

**Katherine:** I felt I was coming back in time and didn’t want to and I probably didn’t begin to shed that baggage I think until probably a year into staying in Tassie again. So I had a distinct sense of not wanting to live in Tassie for a good year after coming here.

As the above examples indicate, experiences of migration vary between people and over the course of a person’s life. Similarly, the reasons people spoke about for leaving and returning to Tasmania varied. Both the reasons for, and experiences of, moving were also very complex (and often ambivalent) for each individual. However, my informants were aware of these complexities. In fact, it is these complexities that people must negotiate as part of understanding their lives as a whole. People were aware of the significance of their migration decisions and experiences beyond the actual event of moving, and tied them to a broader understanding of their lives. Furthermore, many people were consciously aware that they were doing this, discussing the ways in which they had created various narratives in the past, and also in the present, to explain their actions and their experiences.
4.4.2 The future

People's experiences of past migrations can have a significant impact upon their plans for the future. Furthermore, people's plans and ideas about the future provide an interesting insight into their values and ideals. While people's plans for the future cannot be read as simply outlines of what will actually happen (because any number of things may change a person's plans and future actions), they are interesting because of what they tell us about the motivations and values held by these people, which may affect future migration decisions.

Desire to move

The majority of people said that they expected to move away from Tasmania again:

Kate: I know I definitely won't live in Hobart forever, but I don't know when I'm going to leave.

Some said that this would not happen for a number of years, others said it could happen in the near future. However, some people said that they would like to live in Tasmania in the future:

Ben: I would choose to live in Tasmania, um, because it's home, because of the things I stated previously, um, I also, I also really haven't found somewhere quite as nice just in terms of um overall beauty of the place itself, friendliness of the people, cheap cost of living, ah, yeah, so in an ideal world, um definitely I'd be living in Hobart, or if not in Hobart, somewhere nearby that's more in the wilderness.
Some people also said that ideally they would have Tasmania as a base and travel to other parts of the country and the world, both for the sake of travelling itself and for work:

*Michael:* I’d like to be able to base myself here and work other places … Tassie will always be home, will always be somewhere I can come back to.

**Contingency of plans for future moves**

However, plans for the future are contingent on a number of factors, including relationships, children, and opportunities for employment and education:

*Hazel:* Do you think you’re going to move away again … ?

*James:* Now that’s a topical question, um, that probably depends on what day you ask me.

For example, Tasmania was seen as a good place to bring up children by a number of informants:

*Kate:* I reckon in about ten to fifteen years time I would want to be in Hobart … I can see myself wanting to settle down and have kids, and when I’m ready for that … coming back here … I just really think it’s a nice environment … again the community side of it is good, the fact that I know the area really well as well helps, I just, I like the values of people in Hobart … not so money driven and what have you. I couldn’t go anywhere smaller than Hobart … and I think the environment’s nice.

However, Tasmania was generally not seen as a place with many employment opportunities:
Gary: I can’t see me here all my life ... I considered Melbourne ...
... I can see that there’s more economic opportunities, um, people in Hobart, they’re succeeding if they’re breaking even. In Melbourne, if you’re breaking even, what are you doing wrong?

However, Tasmania was seen as a good place to live when older. The implications of this are outlined in Chapter One in comments about Tasmania’s ageing population:

Trish: I can imagine myself living here when I’m old...
Hazel: Why’s that?
Trish: Um, family probably, yeah, yeah, familiarity, it is a beautiful place.

Actual moves

Within one year of the interviews, at least three of the thirty people I had interviewed had left the state again. However, during the interviews, two of these people said that if they left, they would like to return to Tasmania again:

Ellie: Someone asked me, ‘when you graduate’ – because I’m going to Sydney to go ... to uni ... – ‘when you graduate will you be coming back here?’ and I said ‘oh, for sure’.

Ben: Um, I intend to [come back to Tasmania after living in the UK], I think [my partner] probably does as well. Yeah ... unless I have to, I’d in preference live in Tasmania to somewhere else. If, I mean jobs, jobs is the difficult thing again.

This, combined with the fact that seven of the thirty people interviewed had moved away from the state and returned again at least two times, demonstrates again that migrations are not ends in themselves, but rather significant points in a much broader process of migration which may include many moves over the lifetime.
4.4.3 Summary
In negotiating their migrations, people have to deal with practical issues of housing, education, employment and health. They also have to negotiate their ties and commitments to family and friends, their preferences with regards to various lifestyle factors and their ideas about their own self-development (discussed further below). All of these issues must be negotiated throughout the migration process, and also in thoughts and decisions about potential future moves.
4.5 Understanding migration: Sense of place and flexible identity

So far, I have discussed the ways in which people negotiated and experienced their migrations. I will now discuss the ways in which people make sense of their migration experiences and justify their negotiations of these experiences in a discussion of how people understand their migrations. Of course, understandings of migration are as diverse as the people who migrate, however, in analyzing the interviews and focus groups two major themes regarding 'understandings' about the migration experience emerged. These two themes, which I have coined 'sense of place' and 'flexible identity', are outlined below.

4.5.1 Sense of place

In the interviews and focus groups, people spoke about what they thought of Tasmania as a place and how their opinions about Tasmania had changed as a result of their migrations. The idea of a 'sense of place' and the issue of the construction of Tasmania as a place are discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Here, I provide an overview of the major issues that were raised in the interviews with regards to discussions about Tasmania as a place after people's return to the state. In these discussions, two dominant narratives arose, often simultaneously. The first was the attractive lifestyle opportunities in Tasmania and the second was the isolation and insularity of the state. People's opinions about both lifestyle opportunities and the isolation and insularity became more pronounced as a result of leaving and then returning to the state.
Lifestyle

Many people spoke about the beauty of the Tasmanian environment and the lifestyle opportunities available in the state, particularly in Hobart. The ease of accessibility in Hobart was seen as one of the major lifestyle advantages, meaning that people had the time to undertake social activities, and other leisure activities in the natural environment with relative ease because of the limited travel times required and also the proximity of the city to the beach and the bush:

*Jenny:* The lifestyle’s the real reason that I love Tassie.

Some people also discussed the importance of significant features of the natural environment to them. Mount Wellington (see Plate 4.1), the mountain overlooking the city, and the Derwent River were mentioned often:

*Steve (focus group):* I’m particularly drawn topographically to this place … and Mount Wellington has importance to me … I like to think about it, I like to walk it, I like to look at it.
In addition to the natural environment, the proximity to friends and family was also an important lifestyle factor. Furthermore, in discussing their attachments to Tasmania, some people found it very difficult to separate people and the physical environment when describing their experiences:

*Rebecca (focus group):* It’s hard to separate place and the people who are there.

This lifestyle narrative was, however, connected to a narrative about a lack of career opportunities and the idea that in order to live in Tasmania, people needed to sacrifice their career aspirations:
Hazel: If I was to ask you today, do you think it was a good choice to come back?

Luke: ... I guess it's not without consequences in terms of probably career path and um pay and that sort of stuff, but in terms of um, lifestyle, my marriage, all those things, I don’t think those things would have happened had I not come back.

Isolated and insular

The second major narrative in discussions about Tasmania was that the state is isolated and insular and that a significant number of people in the state can be quite narrow minded:

Sophia: You feel isolated stuck on an island.

Elizabeth: There’s all sorts of problems that Tassie has. I mean there are great things about being an island but I think being an island makes you quite insular and closed to other ideas and because of the expense of getting off the island; it’s actually a really big effort to get off the island. So to go and get all that stuff that I’ve just talked about, about sort of the experience and the different view of life takes a lot more effort to get there, so you’re less likely to do it, you’re more likely to stay and just do your day to day things, but getting out of that rut takes effort.

Renewed sense of place

Many informants discussed both of these narratives about Tasmania simultaneously. Furthermore, interestingly, both narratives appeared more pronounced after having lived elsewhere and returned:
Ben: I certainly appreciate Tassie a lot more after moving, moving elsewhere.

James: I think a lot more's changed in the last three years than had changed in the time I was away ... I don't think [Tasmania] had changed very much at all, but I probably saw it differently as well ... I think I saw it as being fairly narrow minded in a lot of ways.

Also, some people recognized that they came back to Tasmania at a different stage in their life and that this affected their experiences of returning:

Michael: I mean in terms of moving back and feeling comfortable and stuff yeah it was quite strange, it wasn't hard, it felt a little bit different because when I was here before I'd just started working and well I'd been a student so I didn't necessarily have money and um did different things, whereas coming back I just had a bit more money and just had a different outlook on life so you see the same place in a different light.

This indicates that the migration experience certainly did have some impact upon people's constructions of place. Indeed, if I had asked people who had never left Tasmania about their ideas about Tasmania as a place I may have found people who spoke about the lifestyle in Tasmania and people who spoke about being isolated. However, the experience of returning to a place did appear to lead to a renewed or more pronounced recognition of these issues.

Home

Another issue that I coded under 'sense of place' is the idea of home. I asked specific questions about 'home' in the interview because I was interested in the concept from early in the research process. However, I did find that most people actually mentioned 'home' before I asked them specific questions about the concept. The
concept of home is discussed further in the next chapter, which draws together comments made on home in the interviews and academic writings to provide a greater depth of understanding of the concept.

Summary

In summary, the experience of leaving the state and then returning impacted upon people's ideas about Tasmania as a place. Most people said that they saw Tasmania differently upon return, with many appreciating its relaxed lifestyle and beautiful environment, but also recognizing the tendency towards isolation and insularity in the state. The ways in which people thought about Tasmania as a place were an important part of both the ways in which they negotiated their migrations and their migration experiences. The significance of people's senses of place, in particular their sense of Tasmania as a place, is discussed throughout the next three chapters.

4.5.2 Flexible identity

In both the interviews and focus groups, people spoke about the need to be flexible in terms of their migrations, their work and in particular their own identities. In many cases, this flexibility was seen to be beneficial and was tied to the idea of having choices. The consequences of such a flexible worldview in terms of identity are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. In this section I provide an overview of the major issues that were raised with regards to flexibility.

Flexible migration

Many informants said that they considered it normal, natural or expected that they, or young people more generally, would leave the state:

David: Oh people leave all the time; you just expect them to go.
Emily: You know, turtles pop out of the sand, run to the water, go for it, you know, head out to deep sea. And it felt very much partly that, I just had to go, had to get out of town.

Beth (focus group): Most of my friends left to go to Melbourne. It wasn’t expected of me, but it seemed normal. You know, it wasn’t a rule, but everyone seemed to be doing it so that creates a kind of normality around it.

With regards to why it was ‘normal’ to leave, some people spoke about the attraction of the ‘bright lights’ elsewhere:

Ellie: When you know nothing other than Tasmania, you see this big fabulous world out there, you see Sydney’s bright lights, or Melbourne’s café culture, or New York, or anything and you just pine for something different and something interesting and that’s what I was like.

Part of the attraction of other places however, appeared to be not simply that they had something to offer, but rather that they were different:

Elizabeth: Why do people leave? I think it’s kind of expected that you need to go away to gain that experience because there are other things out there and I think it is a gaining experience, the thrill of the big smoke and the thrill of all the things we don’t have here that we feel we miss out on.

Hence, the experiences to be gained from moving elsewhere appeared to be as important as the destination. For Ben, the desire to leave was in part tied to ‘natural’ curiosity:
Ben: I think because Tasmania’s so isolated … there’s a need to know what else is out there, um, yeah, I think, I can’t personally imagine having lived my entire life in Tasmania and not even been curious about, you know, going somewhere else.

While some people felt that they were expected to go to experience something different, for others, the expectation that they would leave had more to do with finding employment:

Peter: There are perceptions that you can’t get whatever sort of job; that the opportunities aren’t here. I don’t know because I haven’t tried, um, I suspect it is true that there aren’t the opportunities, um, but I also think that the [pause] the fact that so much gets said about all our young people are leaving, it’s such a problem, probably does generate this mind set that you have to leave, I think in my own case it never occurred to me not to, I wanted a good job and all those things and I just left … it’s interesting that in some cases fear of the problem creates the problem.

I have called this assumption that young people will leave a ‘culture of migration’ following the work of Jones (2000:156) who argues that “a ‘culture of migration’ forms part of the cultural capital of some families”. I use the concept of culture as “a dynamic concept, always negotiable and in [the] process of endorsement, contestation and transformation” (Wright 1998:10).

However, this assumption that it is normal, natural or expected that young people will leave was not held by all informants. For example, Anna said that it was not expected that she leave and that her friends who were born in Tasmania did not want to leave. It was just her own desire to leave, which was in part reinforced by a relative in Melbourne. Susanne also said that she wanted to leave because of a desire to
experience something else, rather than because everyone else was leaving. Rebecca also did not feel that she was expected to leave, or that it was normal to leave, rather she left for the purposes of education.

Hence, if there is a ‘culture of migration’ it is certainly not uniform. Marcus recognized this when he commented in a focus group that while most people in his cohort at university left the state (he was doing a science degree), people in different situations might be less likely to leave. In this way, Marcus directly acknowledged the positionality of the migration experience.

Jones (2000) provides a further possible explanation for the differences in the assumptions of people with regards to migration. She explains that “a ‘culture of migration’ forms part of the cultural capital of some families” and that “geographical mobility has long been associated with upward social mobility and thus with the middle class” (ibid:156). It is difficult to determine whether ‘class’ had any impact on the normalcy of migration for my informants. However, the impact of parental expectations on those who did consider it normal to leave the state was quite evident in many cases:

Steve: I mean [Katherine] and I when we first met thought that we always wanted to travel. So there was always this idea in the back of our heads, or in the back of my mind at least that we would not be spending time, all our lives in Tasmania. Um, it had been instilled in my mind and in my heart or whatever, in my head for a long time, just through my family background … we always had exchange students from, because Dad was a Rotarian and ah, they’d live with us.

Flexible choice

Interestingly, while many of the people I spoke to talked about being flexible with regards to future moves, this was not simply a question of being mobile for jobs or
even simply to experience something different. People’s discussions about flexibility were largely about keeping their options open and a lack of forward planning:

*Katherine:* Ultimately, if circumstances change, there’s a myriad of choices, there’s a myriad of options that we have up our sleeves to pursue, so in that regard I’m very comfortable.

*Hazel:* Did you have any intentions about how long you were going to be in Melbourne when you left? . . .

*Emily:* No . . . I don’t remember having any time frame in mind; it’s just that I was moving there. You know, I’ve never really been that way inclined I think, I’ll just go somewhere and then I’ll think about it.

And later:

*Emily:* I’m not really closing myself off for any option.

*Flexible identity*

As has been noted above, the assumption that young people should leave was tied in part to the need for employment and the expectation of the flexibility of labour. However, an even stronger theme to emerge during the interviews and focus groups was the perceived relationship between moving and developing one’s own identity. People talked about moving in terms of self-discovery, sorting out their identity, as a learning process and as a challenge. The issue of change was also important in these discussions with people desiring change, having ‘life-changing’ experiences and talking about how they have changed since their return.

Self-discovery was a major theme to emerge during the interviews. People talked about struggling to work out who they were and what they wanted in life. Migration was one way to address these issues for some:
Kate: I think it also just gave me a lot of purpose in what I was doing because I wasn’t really feeling passionate about uni or anything, but like I didn’t really know who I was or anything and I wanted to sort of find that out by living and doing something different.

For some, the movement itself stirred up questions of identity:

Peter: I always thought about myself as awakening and getting to know a lot more about the world and a lot more about myself by moving to Melbourne.

Such desires for self-development also had an impact on plans for future moves for some of the people I spoke with:

Kate: I finally feel that I’ve got back into my comfort zone again, which I was in before I left … and maybe it’s about time – I mean I’m happy, I’m really happy where I am – but maybe too, I might want to consider just going somewhere where I feel that vulnerable sort of lost feeling again and that you learn how to get through things.

These issues of identity formation are explored in greater depth in Chapter Seven, where I discuss the concepts of the ‘post-modern’ or flexible individual and the importance of both mobility and place for identity.

Uniquely Tasmanian flexibility?
Some of the informants also commented that they did not think that this assumption that young people would leave was a uniquely Tasmanians phenomena. For example, Sophia thought that this was an issue for all rural areas:
Sophia: I think it's sort of easier for me... because I'm from Hobart and it's not a big city, but it's the biggest one in Tassie. And I feel sorry for people who live in the country, because there's nothing for them ... I think it's very hard for young people, but it's the same for any small town in Australia.

Emily agreed, but said that Hobart did not “cut it” as a big city alternative:

Emily: Particularly because so much of what we’re influenced by, you know, television, media and books and stuff, um, there is quite a, I think, a natural urge for young people to go to the cities and Hobart doesn’t cut it ... and all around rural Victoria, young people leaving their towns, moving to Melbourne, in New South Wales, leaving their town and moving to Sydney, even to Newcastle.

Katherine thought that young people everywhere should leave the place they grew up for the experience:

Katherine: If I had children I would tell them, I’d kick them off, like, ‘go, go, go’ experience other people, other cultures ... I know it did me the world of good, I know it changed my life... but I think I’d say the same if I was living in Melbourne and had kids there, I’d say ‘go’, I don’t think it’s necessarily a Tassie thing.

However, Marcus commented in a focus group that while young people move away from home all over Australia, when he lived in Perth he noticed that university students who left had a strong sense of coming back. Whereas when he left Tasmania, he did not know if he would come back. Coming back is not open to people in terms of jobs in Tasmania, whereas in bigger urban centres, people probably think of
moving away more as a phase, rather than a permanent decision. Hence, while ‘leaving home’ may be a common experience for young people in Australia, the expectations of returning may differ in different areas.

Flexible migrants – a problem for Tasmania?

The people I spoke to were generally aware that significant numbers of young people were leaving Tasmania:

Susanne: The drain of young people from the state I’ve never quite come to grips with, I think it still happens and we’re bringing older people into the state so the population’s increasing, but we still seem to be a bit of a backwater and that’s a real pity I think.

However, I was interested in whether they thought that young people moving away from the state was a problem. When I asked this question, the answers I received were usually quite complex and pointed to the benefits to be gained from flexibility in relation to employment and identity, but also to demographic instability. Heather’s comments were quite typical:

Heather: Is it a problem? … I think it’s great to see so many people come back, so for those people who have left to bring back loads of experience and, both personal and work wise I think is really positive so I don’t see that it is a problem as long as you get the same sort of flow of people into the state that are going out, yeah, otherwise we will end up having a brain drain and we’ll become the retirement stroke single parent state with no in-between.
Summary

For the majority of the people I spoke with, leaving the state was seen as a normal, natural and/or expected thing to do. This was connected to the idea of a need for flexibility in terms of finding employment, in terms of increasing the ability to make choices, and in terms of self-development. The majority of people also pointed to the desirability of migration for self-development and career development when discussing whether young people leaving the state was a problem, arguing that leaving the state was beneficial for such development. However, these people were also aware of the potential drawbacks of more young people leaving the state than returning in terms of the state’s demographics and economy.
4.6 Conclusion

The stories that people tell about their experiences and about their lives are valuable because their content can inform us about the lives of particular people in specific contexts. They are important because their construction can aid us in gaining a picture of the values and perspectives of the people we are studying. They are also important because they can help us understand the cultural norms and expectations that inform those constructions. Thus, the stories that these young Tasmanians told about their migrations provide information about particular events and contexts, about the narrators themselves and about the norms, values and power relations evident in their society/ies.

This chapter has provided an overview of the major issues that arose in discussions with thirty young returned Tasmanians about their migration experiences. These issues have been divided up into three strands of analysis:

- How people negotiate migration (encompassing the themes 'practical considerations' and 'personal ties').
- How people experience migration (encompassing the themes 'experiences of leaving and returning' and 'the future').
- How people understand migration (encompassing the themes 'sense of place' and 'flexible identity').

The remainder of the thesis will move on from a description of what people said about their migrations to a deeper theoretical discussion of the implications of their comments. I have chosen to focus on the question of how people understand their migrations for the remainder of the thesis as I consider this to be the most theoretically and practically fruitful starting point for further analysis. I address this question through the themes of 'sense of place' (Chapters Five and Seven) and 'flexible identity' (Chapter Six). However it is important to recognize that all three research questions (negotiations, experiences and understandings of migration) and
all six themes (practical considerations, personal ties, experiences of leaving and returning, the future, sense of place and flexible identity) are inter-related.