Women on the move: A qualitative study of relocation to a remote area

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Women on the move:
A qualitative study of relocation to a remote area.

by
Ann Jones

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Bachelor of Social Science (Applied Women's Studies) Honours.

at the

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

This study uses a feminist framework to explore women's experiences of relocating from a city or large regional centre to a small and isolated town. It comes in response to my personal and professional experience of remote relocation and to the dearth of feminist discussion in this area. The site of the study is a town of 2,500 people, situated in Northern Australia over 1200 kilometres from the nearest capital city and 800 kilometres from the nearest regional centre. Six women who relocated within the previous 18 months participated in the study. Two of the women were single and four were married. They ranged in age from 35 years to 59 years.

Semi-structured interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Data was analysed using coding procedures loosely based on a grounded theory approach. Results show that these women's experiences of relocation were shaped by affiliative needs and by ideological imperatives of family, work and gender. Choice and context of the move impact strongly on women's relocation experiences and on the coping strategies they use. The feminist focus of this study highlights the interactive and cumulative nature of relocation losses for women, particularly those who move frequently. This study also acknowledges the extent of relocation work that women do. It reveals the gendered nature of relocation experiences and challenges popular notions of relocation as beneficial for all.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief: incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or, contain any defamatory material.

Signed: ...

Dated: February 16, 1999
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my children, Robert, David and Linda, who have courageously embarked on relocation journeys of their own.
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CHAPTER ONE: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

"The personal is not only the political, it is also the crucial variable which is absolutely present in each and every attempt to ‘do research’..." (Stanley & Wise, 1993. p.157).

"This is a man’s town" my client had said. As I gazed out the window of the counselling service, pondering her words, I became acutely aware of the symbolism of the numerous four-wheel drive vehicles in the car park opposite. Was this the answer then to the sense of dislocation I had been feeling since I had moved to this remote town some months ago? I had relocated many times earlier in my life, moving with ease between continents, countries, and cities. Yet I was finding this move, to a small town 1200 kilometres from the city, the most difficult I had ever had to cope with.

Over the following months I analysed my own experience and realised that, for me, this move was different because I was different. In the intervening years, since my last move, I had come to view the world differently. I had developed a feminist consciousness which now revealed things I would not have noticed before. In the initial weeks, I had noticed the community’s collective need to categorise me into an acceptable ‘womanrole’. On introducing myself as “the new counsellor” I was invariably asked about my marital and parental status. No longer identified by my previous roles of wife and mother of dependent children I did not fit in. There is no category for single, mature, professional women in this town. Usually quick to make friends, I found I had difficulty meeting people who shared my values and world views. This left me feeling very isolated and alone.

On a personal level, I came to realise that, separated from my supportive feminist networks and friendships, and living in a town with
strong traditional gender stereotypes, I had become temporarily disoriented, resulting in a sense of insecurity and isolation. In addition, in such a conservative environment, my previous strong patriarchal conditioning was resurrected and precipitated an internal struggle about my role as a mother. I experienced a strong sense of guilt about my relocation - about not living in the same city as my children, even though they are now adults.

Professionally, in my first few months, I was consulted by several women who had recently relocated because of their partners' employment, and were very unhappy. Acknowledgement of their losses of family, friendships and, in several cases, careers, and my own self-disclosure of difficulties in adjusting to small town 'culture', resulted in an immediate sense of relief for them. Their experiences were validated, and reframed, not as personal failure on their part, as they had believed, but as an understandable and reasonable response to the situation in which they found themselves.

Later, after I had discovered the concept of 'relocation stress' in the psychological literature, I raised the issue of the impact of relocation and isolation with male managers of two separate organisations with mobile (mainly male) workforces. In both cases, the 'problem' was assigned only to female partners of employees, and was attributed to the fact that, because of the isolation, it was difficult for the 'girls' to go on shopping trips.

I continued to hear the phrase 'it's a man's town' over the following months, not only from recently-relocated women, but from women who had lived in the town for many years. By then, I too had noticed the strong male bias in occupational, recreational and social
opportunities within the town, the double standards that were used to judge male and female behaviour, and the case with which a young girl could gain a 'bad' reputation. When I raised the notion of 'a man's town' to a small group of professional men, I was met with a hostile and defensive response. I have only met one male, a visiting health professional, who described the town in similar terms. He called it "a big boys' town".

This research project then is a result of my personal and professional experiences of relocation. It is an attempt to integrate my experiences of relocation to a remote area with my work as a counsellor and as a researcher.

**Significance and purpose of the study**

This study is significant in terms of both its focus and its theoretical approach. It contributes to filling a gap in the current literature by adopting a feminist framework to explore and analyse women's subjective experiences of relocating to a remote community.

In much of the existing literature on relocation, women's own experiences are peripheral, the primary focus being their culturally-assigned roles of wives and mothers, with responsibility for their family's and/or husband's adjustment. Women's voices have seldom been heard with regard to what the experiences of relocation have been like for them as individuals.

Although some consideration has been given in recent years to the experiences of rural women (Alston, 1989, 1990, 1995; Commonwealth of Australia, 1988; Dallow, 1992; Dempsey, 1992;
James, 1989) very little attention appears to have focused on how women who move from cities to small rural towns experience that relocation. Previous research has focused mainly on urban relocation, particularly in relation to employment, with an emphasis on psychological adjustment of individuals and families (Anderson & Stark, 1988; Bayes, 1989; Berman, 1983; Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993, 1994, 1996; Munton, 1990; Munton & Forster, 1990; Munton, Forster, Altman & Greenbury, 1993). Some attention has been given to international relocation and the culture shock usually associated with such moves (Ang-Lygate, 1996; Coyle, 1993; Fontaine, 1986; Munton, Forster, Altman & Greenbury, 1993). There appears to be limited feminist analysis of relocation, and moving from urban to remote areas does not appear to have been explored.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to feminist knowledge and theory relating to the relocation process. Specific objectives of the study are: to describe and analyse the experiences of women who relocated from a city or major regional centre to a remote town; to explore the strategies they used to adapt to their new environment; to explore how gender impacted upon those relocation experiences; and, to provide a base for further feminist research on relocation. The specific question posed by this study is: What have been the experiences of women who have relocated to this remote area?

**Literature review**

The role of literature in this study has been twofold. Initially, I carried out a preliminary search on relocation to gain some background on the topic and to see how relocation had been conceptualised. A brief review of this literature is presented later in this section to provide
further background to the study. Later a data-driven literature search was carried out focusing on emerging themes such as decision-making, women’s friendship and culture shock, and on related feminist issues such as women’s work and women’s identity. The latter studies will be referred to where relevant to a particular theme or issue in the thesis. However, one important work which I will mention here is Jean Baker Miller’s (1986) model of women’s psychological development, which provided an important analytic framework within which I interpreted much of the data. Miller sees affiliation as essential to women and emphasises that they develop in the context of care and connection. Her work will be referred to throughout the study as it underpins and links various aspects of women’s relocation experiences.

A review of the literature on relocation reveals that moving has been conceptualised in several different ways: a) community relocation, often related to changed housing needs (Kling, Ryff & Essex, 1997; Ryff & Essex, 1992; Smider, Essex, & Ryff, 1996); b) job-related geographic relocation, both national and international (Anderson & Stark, 1988; Berman, 1983; Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993, 1994, 1996; Munton, 1990; Munton & Foster, 1990; de Cieri, Dowling, & Taylor, 1991; Fontaine, 1986; Nankeris, Compton & McCarthy, 1992; Robbins, 1991); and, c) migration, or cross-cultural relocation for political, economic or family reasons (Ang-Lygate, 1996; Francis, 1994; Turnbull, 1996). For the purposes of this study, I have focused on job-related geographic location.

Feminist researchers appear to have focused little attention on the issue of relocation, in spite of the fact that residential and occupational mobility is an increasing phenomenon of modern life. One notable exception is McCollum (1990) whose comprehensive study
will be discussed later in this chapter.

A search of mainstream literature reveals two separate but related lines of enquiry, from human resource management and from psychology. Both these disciplines have identified relocation as a major stress on employees and their families requiring significant psychological and social adjustment. The term 'relocation stress' is widely used throughout the literature to describe this adjustment process. The loss of existing family and friendship support systems and the need to rebuild social/community networks in a new environment is seen as a major source of stress (Anderson & Stark, 1988; Berman, 1983; Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993, 1994, 1996; Munton, 1990; Munton & Forster, 1990; Munton, Forster, Altman & Greenbury, 1993; Seidenberg, 1973). Culture shock is seen as an added dimension of this stress in the context of job-related international relocation (de Cieri, Dowling, & Taylor, 1991; Fontaine, 1986; Nankeris, Compton & McCarthy, 1992; Robbins, 1991; Robbins & Mukeji, 1990).

For the most part, the relocation literature assumes traditional family structure and role relationships. Women are cast as the 'supporting actors' in the relocation process, while men are seen as the 'prime movers', relocating for career advancement. Responsibility for partner and family adjustment is generally allocated to the woman (Berman, 1983; Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993). In a review of the literature on stress during relocation, Lundy (1994) found that mothers and wives were often “blamed” for the family's failure to adjust to their new environment. This reflects the belief of many feminists that women are expected to do the 'emotional' work within relationships (Spender, 1985; Rowland, 1988).
Although Coyle (1996) maintains that relocation research in the past decade has reflected sociological change, there is little evidence to support this. Even in recent relocation studies, the focus is primarily on male career moves (Coyle, 1993; de Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; Munton, 1990; Rives & West, 1993). While dual-income families are acknowledged in some studies, the wife's need to find employment in the new location is often seen as a hindrance to her partner's adjustment (Coyle, 1994; Munton, 1990; Rives & West, 1993). Only Pierce and Delahaye (1996) acknowledge the dilemma of relocation for both members of a dual-career couple. Single female transferees seem to be entirely missing from the relocation picture.

There appear to be no studies on relocating to a remote area and scant attention has been paid to the impact of gender on the relocation process, apart from differences in motivation and decision-making. Williams, Jobes and Gilchrist (1986) found that women were more likely than men to migrate for quality-of-life rather than economic reasons (see also Markham, 1987), and women in relationships reported lower levels of stress, where the decision to move was an egalitarian one (Makowsky, Cook, Berger & Powell, 1988; Williams et al, 1986).

One relevant study is Bayes' (1989) exploration of the effect of relocation, on what she provocatively called the "trailing spouse" (p.280). She found that many spouses experienced feelings of anger, resentment, and dependency "you invest in his dream...Nobcdy, not even you, invests in your dream" (p.285). Bayes found that social and relationship pressures make it difficult for the accompanying partner to express their sense of loss, and feelings of disruption and depression are often interpreted as personal failure. Respondents in Bayes' study revealed a profound need for acknowledgement of the meaning of
relocation for them: "No one knows how hard it is. What am I doing here?" (p.286).

As mentioned earlier, McCollum (1990) carried out a comprehensive study of relocating women. Through their stories she explored the complex nature of their moving experiences. She examined the issues which are important to women when they relocate - friendship, working, home and marriage - and highlighted the work involved for women in re-establishing themselves. She claims that those aspects of moving which cause particular distress to women, loss of friendships and support networks, are ignored or denied in the literature because the "marketplace" (p.253) is more highly valued than the social sphere of interpersonal connection. She maintains that this pervasive denial of the pain of relocation may be experienced by women as "profound deprivation...and an absence of necessary validation of the authentic self" (p.255). McCollum's study appears to be the only extensive feminist investigation of relocation but it does not address the issue of remote relocation.

Structure of thesis

Chapter Two continues to provide background to this study by describing the research process, and the beliefs and values which underlie this research, and subsequent chapters present the findings. Chapter Three details differences in decision-making between single, married, and frequent movers, and suggests possible underlying psychological motives for those decisions. It then looks at the impact of choice on women’s subsequent relocation experiences. Chapter Four itemises the multiple losses experienced by women who move and the specific losses related to remote relocation. The cumulative and
interactive nature of those losses is also examined. The extent of the relocation work that women do is revealed in Chapter Five, and this chapter also highlights the differences in relocation experiences between married women and their partners. Chapter Six challenges the notion of universal positive adjustment to relocation and suggests that, for some women, frequent moving can be quite damaging. The final chapter draws together the multiple threads of this relocation study, with particular emphasis on my own journey as a mover and a researcher.
CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

"By listening to women speak...feminist interview researchers have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience." (Reinharz, 1992, p.44)

This chapter discusses the importance of adopting a feminist approach to this research topic, and clarifies the theoretical framework within which this research has been conducted. It presents the data collection and analysis methods, indicates the limitations and ethical considerations of the study, and concludes with brief profiles of the study participants.

A feminist approach to research

Feminists have long challenged the myth of 'value-free' research (Cummerton, 1986; Lather, 1988, 1990; Klein, 1983; Reinharz, 1992; Rosser, 1988; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993). Many of the relocation studies discussed in the previous chapter reflect the political interests and implicit values of their disciplines. In the human resource management studies reviewed, people's experiences are analysed in relation to corporate values and goals. Women's experiences are defined by their impact on worker adjustment (Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993, 1994; Munton, 1990; Munton & Forster, 1990). Similar biases and restrictions apply to the psychological studies, with women being held responsible for family emotional adjustment. There is also a tendency to pathologise women, with difficult experiences often described as personal adjustment failure (Anderson & Stark, 1988; Lundy, 1994; Richards, Donohue & Gullotta, 1985; Seidenberg, 1973).

In both these disciplines, questionnaires and statistical analyses were the primary means of data collection and interpretation (Brett,
1982; Coyle, 1993; Munton, 1990; Munton & Forster, 1990). Such research methods leave little or no room for subjective expression which is seen as an integral and valuable part of feminist research (Gunew, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Roberts, 1981; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993). Even when interviews have been used in the current literature, women's experiences are still often narrowly defined by their role as mother (Brett, 1982; Coyle, 1993, 1994; Lundy, 1994; Munton, 1990) or 'corporate wife' (one respondent even being described as an "oil wife" (Munton, Forster, Altman & Greenbury 1993, p.66)). In addition, although many of the studies were carried out by relocation consultants (for example, Coyle, 1993, Munton, 1990), issues of power and objectivity have not been addressed or even acknowledged.

Feminist research is seen as an approach to knowledge-making rather than a particular set of methods (Reinharz, 1992) and calls for research designs which both empower the participants and contribute to social change (Lather, 1988; McRobbie, 1982; Reinharz, 1992). Interviewing, the data collection method used by this study, is seen as very effective in creating knowledge which "encompasses and expresses the experiences of women" (Finch, 1984, p.81), only if the personal, political and ethical issues raised by interviewing are also acknowledged (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992). Like McCollum (1990) I have used women's stories to explore "from the interior" (p.17) how the experience of moving shapes women's lives.

**Theoretical framework**

Feminists have highlighted the fact that knowledge is socially, politically and historically constructed, resulting in the predominance of androcentric knowledge which treats the masculine as the universal,
the scientific as objective and value-free, and, where issues of gender, class, race, and power differences are neither acknowledged nor addressed (Cook & Fonow, 1986; du Bois, 1983; Gunew, 1990; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Reinhart, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1983). The feminist framework which underlies this project brings a transparency to the research process, by making visible the motivations, beliefs and values that I, as researcher, have brought to the project.

Reinhart's (1992) definition of feminist research as "research which concerns itself with women's ways of knowing" (p.4), invokes three important concepts which lie at the heart of my approach to this study. Firstly, my belief that women are 'experts' on their own lives is constantly reinforced for me in my work as a psychologist. In the critical space created in individual casework and group facilitation, women emerge not as mere recipients of androcentric 'expertise', but as knowers and makers of woman-centred knowledge - knowledge they use to survive, to resist oppression in whatever ways are open to them, and to make changes in their lives.

Secondly, my belief that women experience the world differently to men, and that gender is at the core of this different perspective, is inherent in a feminist framework (Cook & Fonow, 1986; de Lauretis, 1986; Eichler, 1980; Lather, 1988; Rosser, 1988; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993). Patti Lather (1988) states that "gender (is) a basic organizing principle which profoundly shapes and mediates the concrete conditions of our lives" (p.571).

Thirdly, another feminist principle which underlies my approach is that women's experiences of the world, and even of common phenomena, are affected not only by gender, but by a vast range of
variables including class, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference, time, and place. As Stanley and Wise (1993) point out "(the) social contexts within which different kinds of women live, work, struggle and make sense of their lives differ widely across the world and between different women" (1993 p. 22).

Finally, I acknowledge that I did not bring, what Stanley and Wise (1993) call "an empty head" (p.22) to this research. My training as a psychologist and my personal and professional experiences of relocation have inevitably impacted upon participant selection, data collection and analysis. This study has been an interactive process which has placed the participants at the centre of the research. It has adopted a gendered perspective to women's subjective experiences of relocation, exploring both common themes and diverse experiences to produce women-centred knowledge.

Research participants

The sample for this study was six women who had relocated within the previous eighteen months, from a city or major regional centre, to a small isolated town in the northern part of Australia. This town (referred to as Palmerstown in this thesis) with a population of approximately 2,500, is located in rugged physical terrain, almost 400 kilometres from its nearest neighbour (population approximately 7,000), and over 1,200 kilometres from the nearest capital city. Because of small community size, potential interviewees were recruited through social interaction and word of mouth. I disclosed my own recent relocation to potential participants, told them the nature and purpose of my study, and invited them to contribute. All the women who were approached agreed enthusiastically to be interviewed.
The six women interviewed ranged in age from 35 to 59 years old. All of the women were Caucasian: Four of them were Australian-born and the other two were long-term British migrants. All had backgrounds in traditional female professions - teaching, nursing, social work, and secretarial work. Four of the women were married, two of them with very young children, one with older teenage children, and a fourth whose children were adult and no longer living at home. One of the women was single with no children and the other divorced with a young teenager. At the time of the initial research interviews, the length of residence in Palmerstown was between 4 and 18 months and all of them had lived in a city or large regional town immediately prior to their move. A brief individual profile of each research participant appears at the end of this chapter.

**Study design, data collection and analysis**

A collective case study design (Stake, 1994) was used, that is, a number of cases from the same location were studied, in order to enquire into the experiences of relocation. This enabled both similar and contrasting experiences in a common context to be examined. Case studies by interview enable us to "see" the women in research and are essential for putting women "on the map of social life" (Reinharz, 1992. p.174). Combining individual cases allows us to explore the relationship between the phenomenon we are studying and particular social structures or processes (Reinharz).

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour each, were conducted at a location of each participant's choice. Four of the women chose to be interviewed in their own home and the remaining two chose my office. The different locations did not
appear to impact on the nature or quality of data obtained. My approach to interviewing was guided by Oakley's (1981) feminist model which strives for rapport and includes self-disclosure and respect for the interviewees' view of reality.

My initial interview question was an open-ended, general query regarding the motivation for the move to Palmerstown. Specific questions or prompts, such as "Tell me more about..." were occasionally used to explore issues in more depth. In addition, topics or themes which emerged in initial interviews were explored with later interviewees. For example, in the first interview with Joanne it became apparent that the decision-making process had a huge impact on how she was experiencing relocation. In succeeding interviews I specifically explored this aspect of moving with each woman. However, I also encouraged women to talk about what seemed to be unique experiences for them. For example, Marie, who had relocated continuously throughout her life, linked her experiences to social changes for women. One specific issue I introduced was the concept of 'a man's town' which had emerged in counselling sessions with female clients in Palmerstown. I occasionally reflected on my own experiences of relocation when that seemed appropriate, usually to acknowledge a shared experience.

After transcription, each woman was given a copy of her transcript and asked for feedback, clarification, editing, or any additional information. Several women expressed surprise at the intensity and complexity of their stories. Marie, in particular, found this part of the project very significant in terms of understanding her mobile lifestyle. She provided some additional information and came and discussed her experiences further with me. Rosie declined to read
her transcript at that time, as she felt it would be too painful for her. She has kept her copy and said she will read it at a later date.

It was intended that data analysis would draw on Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory method which uses three levels of coding. In practice, however, the procedure was much more fluid, dynamic, and, at times, intuitive. Analysis and presentation of results was guided to some extent by McCollum's study, when it became obvious that several emerging themes, such as choice, loss, and the importance of friendships, were similar to her findings. Prominent themes became self-evident in the initial reading of the data. Some of these were very broad and I divided the data under these headings into subcategories. For example 'loss' was one broad category, which was organised under subheadings such as 'loss of friendships, 'loss of jobs' and 'loss of identity'. Other potential themes, such as 'decision-making' and 'culture shock' were more complex and necessitated reading and re-reading of the data and intuitive literature searches in specific areas, such as, women's psychology and small town culture, before final interpretation. Finally, the interactive nature of all the themes, both common and diverse, was articulated, and links made to ideologies of family, work, and gender.

The validity of this approach to data analysis was checked by consultation with the participants of the study who were contacted after the coding process, and given a written and verbal explanation of the common themes and individual differences that had emerged from the study. All of the women expressed satisfaction with my conceptualisation of the data. At the same time I provided them with a copy of their individual profiles and their pseudonyms. This resulted in two of the women asking to change their pseudonyms.
While I was writing the thesis I became increasingly aware of the disruptive nature of the relocation experience and the importance of acknowledging women's struggle for connection. This prompted me to identify every quotation I used, so that women were not disconnected from their experiences. I have used a series of five ellipsis points (.....) to indicate pauses and hesitations in women's quotations as I believe this adds to the authenticity and subtlety of the data. I also wanted to preserve a sense of continuity for each woman's story. This led me to contact participants again near the end of the study and write a short epilogue for each woman. These strategies were also an attempt to provide a sense of connection and continuity between the reader, the participants, and myself as researcher.

**Limitations and ethical considerations**

Limitations of this study are as follows: design and location of the study restrict generalisability of results; my professional role in the community may have impacted upon the availability of potential participants and/or the quality of the data; and, my own personal and professional experiences of relocation may have impacted upon the gathering and analysis of data.

A major ethical consideration for the proposed study related to the issue of a dual relationship between myself as researcher and counsellor, and the participants as researched and possible counselling clients. Thus, no existing or previous client of the counselling service was approached, or accepted, as a potential participant in the research.

Informed written consent of participants was obtained prior to
Interviews. Verbal and written information was provided to all potential participants, explaining the nature and purpose of the study, the research methods and the rights of respondents to withdraw from the project (See Appendix A). My role as researcher was identified as separate from my role as family counsellor in the community. The participants were informed that should a research interview trigger the need for counselling, such sessions would be provided at no charge, either with myself or a visiting social worker. However, this was not necessary. Provision was made for interviews to be carried out in privacy and with confidentiality. All tapes and transcripts of interviews were coded to ensure anonymity of participants and remain stored in a secure place.

Participant profiles

The following section provides a brief individual profile of each woman who participated in the study.

Stella is a single professional woman in her mid-thirties. Originally from a semi-rural background, she had studied and worked in the state capital for many years before her move to Palmerstown. Her motive initially was to have some “time-out” from a very demanding job and she then intended to look for work in the town. She was familiar with Palmerstown, having spent annual holidays there for a number of years, and her long-term plan was to settle in the town. Stella’s brother and his family had been living in Palmerstown for a number of years but she lived in her own home which she had bought some years previously. At the time of the interview, she had been living in Palmerstown for 11 months.
Sandra is a professional woman in her mid-forties. She is divorced with a 13-year old child who lives with her. She came to Palmerstown on holidays with her child two years ago and they both "fell in love with the place". Although she lived in the state capital for many years prior to relocating to Palmerstown, she had grown up in a small town in another state and preferred the lifestyle they offered. She had also "always hankered to get back to the tropics". On returning to the city after her holiday she explored job opportunities in Palmerstown and although there were no firm prospects of a job she decided to "take the risk" and move to Palmerstown. At the time of the interview she had been living in Palmerstown for 18 months and had obtained a position in her professional field.

Joanne is 35 years old and married with a young son, who was ten-months old at the time of the interview. Originally from the United Kingdom, Joanne had migrated as a young professional to Australia and had lived in several cities across the country before settling in one particular state capital. Just after her son's birth, she had moved to Palmerstown with her husband, who came to town to establish his own business. Prior to becoming a mother, Joanne had worked as a health professional. Because of her son's age, Joanne did not intend to look for employment in Palmerstown at the present time.

Fiona is in her mid-thirties and married, with two pre-school children. Her husband, a tradesman, was offered a lucrative 12-month contract in Palmerstown just after the couple had sold their small home in a city in the same state. They saw this as an opportunity to improve their financial position to enable them to achieve their goal of building a larger home for their growing family. Fiona and her husband had spent a brief holiday in Palmerstown 10 years before, when they were
both working in a large Northern Australian town. She had been out of the paid workforce since her first child was born, but just prior to leaving the city she had been offered a “perfect” part-time job in the hospitality industry which she could have combined with full-time mothering. The family had been living in Palmerstown for four months at the time of the interview.

**Rosie** is 47 years old and had moved, with her husband and two teenage children, from a large city interstate to Palmerstown, seven months prior to the interview. Although Rosie had moved many times in the past because of her husband’s career, this move to Palmerstown was precipitated by a serious tragedy resulting in severe financial and emotional difficulties for the family. The family had previously visited the town on holidays. Shortly after their arrival in Palmerstown, Rosie’s husband secured a position in his professional field. The family had originally migrated to Australia from the United Kingdom because of career opportunities for Rosie’s husband. Several other career-related moves had resulted in Rosie living in several cities in Australia where she had worked in a series of part-time, semi-skilled jobs. Prior to moving to Palmerstown they had lived in a state capital for seven years where Rosie had gradually worked her way up to a responsible semi-professional position.

**Marie** is a 59-year old married woman who moved to Palmerstown 15 months prior to the research interview, when her husband took up a prominent position in the town. Her three children are now adult and independent, living in other cities and towns throughout Australia. Marie described relocation as “a way of life for me”. She recalls never having close friends as a child because the family had moved continuously with her father’s job. The pattern continued after her
marriage, with Marie living in several cities and large country towns as job opportunities arose for her husband. The most stable period was 13 years spent in a country town during which the children completed primary school. Immediately before coming to Palmerstown Marie and her husband had lived for six months in a large regional town in the same state. Prior to that they had spent several years travelling around Australia with her husband obtaining short-term jobs in his professional field. Although not employed immediately prior to the move, Marie had a history of part-time and casual office work which revolved around the industry in which her husband had built his career.
CHAPTER THREE: CHOOSING

"Moving begins with choice, but for whom" (McCollum, 1990, p.27).

Relocation is usually seen as a positive challenge, with the decision to move being influenced by anticipated gains in the new location. Job opportunities, career development, financial rewards and/or improved quality of life, tend to make the choice appear relatively simple and straightforward. This chapter looks at how the decision to move was experienced by the women in this study, and reveals that the choice can be a complicated and sometimes painful one, particularly for partnered movers. Choosing to move represents different levels of complexity for women, depending on their marital status, their stage of life, and whether or not they have a prior history of moving. This complexity is not always acknowledged, or even recognised, at the decision-making stage of what can be a powerful, and, sometimes painful, life change, and can have a strong influence on subsequent adjustment.

For single women in this study, the decision to move appeared to be a relatively straightforward one. Without a partner’s needs and interests to consider, the choice was based primarily on quality of life issues. Among couples, economic, relationship, and family pressures made the decision a more complex one and resulted in some women agreeing to move even when they themselves were reluctant to do so. Results suggest that repetitive moves, undertaken by women to enhance their husbands’ careers, diminishes their self-esteem and may deplete their capacity for self-care and active decision-making. This chapter analyses these results in the light of feminist theories of development and decision-making (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). In particular, it refers to Miller’s model of female
development which recognises relationships and connection as central elements in women's lives.

Women moving independently

For the two single women in the sample, the decision to move was, while not necessarily simple, quite clear-cut. Stella, a single professional woman in her mid-thirties, was suffering from 'burn-out' after eight years in a very demanding job. She felt she had lost the sense of who she was, and decided to take "the time and space.....to re-acquaint myself with me". She also wanted to achieve "a long-held desire" to create a tropical garden in the house she had purchased in Palmerstown five years before. For Sandra, a 45 year-old divorced woman with a teenage child, the decision was sparked by a holiday in Palmerstown, when both she and her child "fell in love with the place". Having been brought up in a small town with a similar climate, she felt it would provide a more congenial lifestyle for them both. Although there was some risk-taking involved - she relinquished a well-paid, fulfilling position and moved without the promise of a definite job - she was confident of being able to earn a living either in her profession, or in a tourist-based industry with which she was familiar. Although friends and family in the city were slightly aghast at the decision, she had no doubt that it was the right decision to make for herself and her child. Both Stella and Sandra brought a strong sense of self-knowledge and self-determination to the decision-making process.

Partnered moving

Motivation for moving and the context of decision-making for single movers, Stella and Sandra, contrasted sharply with the
experiences of the married movers in this study. For Fiona and Joanne, both married with young children, the move to Palmerstown came at a time when they were engaged in full-time mothering, with decisions based on family considerations rather than personal motivation. In Fiona’s case she felt it was “definitely a joint decision” made for the benefit of their young family. By working long hours in a contract position for 12 months her husband expected to make extra money to help them build a larger house for their growing family. The feeling of free choice, a shared dream, and a definite time limit, provided the basis for coping strategies for the couple when difficulties arose later. However, Finch (1983) points out that there are powerful economic incentives for a wife to agree to move, when the husband is the sole, or principal breadwinner and she questions how free the choice to move is “when to do so would be to deny a better standard of living not only to herself but also (and perhaps more powerfully) to her husband and children” (p.48). Nevertheless, at the time the decision was made, Fiona had no qualms about the move.

For Joanne, the decision to move to Palmerstown was much more complex, and was the source of ongoing internal conflict between her own needs and wishes and those of her husband. Initially bemused by his proposed plan to set up a business in Palmerstown “he was always having ideas of different things to do”, Joanne thought “it would all just blow over”, as other schemes had in the past. By the time she realised he was serious, she was pregnant with their planned first child. Although her husband offered to delay the plan, Joanne felt there could possibly be repercussions on herself and the, as yet unborn, child:

I thought, if he didn’t do it then, he would probably never do it and he’d blame [baby] and me.....Well, perhaps not consciously, but I did think it was unfair to an unborn baby to
burden it.....maybe.....with “if it hadn't been for you, we could have done this”.

With this concern, Joanne's perception of choice in the matter narrowed considerably and, although she had been in Palmerstown on holidays twice and hated it, she began to try to convince herself that “it'll be OK, I can live there.....I can be happy there”. Thus began a very difficult and unhappy period in Joanne's life, in which strong feelings of loss related to relocation were exacerbated by feelings of anger and resentment towards her husband. The tension between these feelings and an over-riding sense of family duty, had a profound effect on her experience of relocation.

Although they were at a similar stage of life, Fiona and Joanne experienced the decision-making process very differently. For Joanne there was no shared dream such as that which helped sustain Fiona, but rather a conflict between her own needs, her husband's dream and her sense of responsibility to her child.

**Frequent moving**

Marie and Rosie both had a long history of relocating for their husbands' careers, but the context of their decisions, and the motivating forces for the move to Palmerstown, were quite different for each of them. Rosie was quite adamant that she “didn't want to come at all”. After years of moving, she had been settled in a city with a job that she really enjoyed and had worked hard for, but “circumstances within the family made me put my husband and my son first and me at the back.....as is always.....in a family decision. That's what I've found, every time we have moved".
To understand some of the complexity and conflict Rosie was experiencing, it is necessary to know a little more of her story. After an early marriage, Rosie worked as a secretary to support them both, while her husband completed his university studies. Then came full-time mothering, with her husband taking on the provider role. As the children got older, Rosie worked part-time to fit in with family responsibilities, and the demands of a transient lifestyle. Later, a crisis precipitated her into full-time work. Her husband lost his job. It was "a terrible blow for him and then....I went to work full-time in a job I really enjoyed". While her husband struggled to re-establish himself in business, a further serious crisis occurred, resulting in huge emotional strain and financial losses for the family. The move to Palmerstown was seen as an opportunity "for the whole family to start again". If it was not for this latest crisis Rosie was adamant she would not have moved. "I felt I had done enough moving, I'd sacrificed enough, I'd given everything and I would not have come this time". When interviewed seven months after relocation, Rosie, like Joanne, was experiencing considerable anger and resentment about the relocation, with an added burden of guilt that she should feel like this when the family was in crisis.

Although for Marie "there was no trauma about leaving [the city they had lived in for six months prior to relocating] and coming here" neither did there appear to be any real sense of choice or self-determination about the move. With a history of career-related moves behind them, Marie's husband had semi-retired five years ago and the couple had travelled extensively throughout Australia, with her husband picking up short-term jobs from time to time. They had then settled in a large regional town so that he could pursue a particular sports interest, but, after six months "he got to that stage, where he
wanted his brain working again”. A job opportunity in his field coincided with their plans to come to Palmerstown for an extended holiday “It just came out of the blue, so that was really good. We were going to come to Palmerstown and be paid for being here as well, [so] that made finances a little easier”. Marie, for whom moving was “a way of life”, originally as a child following her father’s career and later as a wife, appeared to acquiesce with her husband’s decisions rather than actively participate in them.

For both these women, Finch’s (1983) observation that, in decisions regarding relocation, “the cultural imagery that a wife follows her husband wherever his work takes him is very significant, because it is centrally bound to images of what constitutes a good wife” (p.49), seems particularly relevant.

**Why do women move?**

These results indicate support of previous findings, that women are more likely to move for quality-of-life reasons, and that for coupled movers most relocation decisions favour the husband's career (Bayes, 1989; Finch, 1983; Markham, 1987; Williams, Jobes & Gilchrist, 1986). These previous studies have drawn on theoretical analyses of gender differences in decision-making that portray married women as pressured by socialisation forces, cultural norms, and power differentials, to accept decisions made by their husbands (Bell & Newby, 1976; Gillespie, 1971). While not denying that these pressures exist, this heuristic explanation of women-as-victims does not address the complex dynamics that lie at the heart of decision-making for women. Results of this study indicate another possible dimension to decision-making, which has been ignored by previous studies.
An alternative interpretation of the motivating force behind women's choice is possible, if we choose as "psychic starting point" (p.82) the primacy of affiliation over self-enhancement, as suggested by Miller (1986). Challenging the male model of psychological development, which equates achievement with maturity or development, she suggests an approach to living and functioning in which "affiliation is valued as highly as, or more highly than, self-enhancement" (p.82). The central feature of Miller's model is that:

Women stay with, build on, and develop in the context of attachment and affiliation with others. Indeed women's sense of self becomes very much organised around being able to make and then maintain affiliations and relationships. (p.82)

Other feminists have supported Miller's position that relationships and connection are a central element in women's lives and self-definition (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Peck, 1986). Drawing on the work of Miller, Gilligan found that women's decision-making revolved around notions of responsibility, care, and connection. Miller (1986) herself maintained that "women's great desire for affiliation is both a fundamental strength and at the same time the source of many of women's current problems" (p.89). In a dominant culture which does not acknowledge affiliation as a fundamental human need and strength acting on the basis of this underlying psychological motive has "social, political and psychological consequences" (Miller, p.90) for women. One of those consequences is the struggle for women to combine affiliation with self-enhancement. McCollum (1990) draws strong links between Miller's theory and women's decisions about relocation, pointing out that "for a woman, care of self and care of others are not yet seen as harmonious. They are held in a tension of opposition" (p.272). In her study of relocating women, McCollum maintains that this aspect of feminine psychology, the strong desire for affiliation, makes it difficult for
women to make "wise and responsible choices" (p.222) about moving, choices in which their needs as well as their partner's are given equal consideration.

For women such as Joanne and Rosie in particular, the decision to move clearly represented this role conflict between affiliation/nurturing and self-care/achievement. Far from being victims, however, these women displayed strength and courage in dealing with the tension of opposition represented by their decision. They took on the task of containing, and trying to resolve, the emotional contradictions of personal frustration and resentment on the one hand, and love and concern for their loved ones, on the other. Later chapters will show, however, that this inner conflict clearly depleted emotional reserves, making it harder for these women to engage in coping strategies and slowing down their adjustment process. Single movers, who did not have to deal with that tension and conflict, were freer to make decisions based on quality-of-life issues, and were psychologically and emotionally stronger to deal with the tasks of relocation. This not only highlights individual differences in choice and motivation between single and married movers, but also indicates a strong link between the decision-making process and subsequent experiences of relocation. It also raises the question of gender-based differences in relocation experiences, an aspect of moving which will be examined later in this thesis.
CHAPTER FOUR: LOSING

“Suddenly your life changes completely. You’re missing what you’ve left behind and you feel defeated by the things that are not there.” (Marie)

Although loss is inherent in the relocation process, attention is invariably focused on anticipated gains. Thus movers often find themselves grieving for losses that are neither anticipated nor acknowledged (Bayes, 1989; Lundy, 1994; McCollum, 1990). This chapter looks at the significant and multiple losses experienced by women in this study, losses which resulted in feelings of profound grief over complex and major changes in their lives. It also attempts to place these relocation losses within the socio-political framework of women’s lives.

Some losses were common to all movers, particularly loss of people and places, while other losses were unique to individuals. Many of the losses were difficult to place into discrete categories, involving as they did a complex interaction between the individual and the context and history of their relocation experience(s). Almost all of the losses were interconnected, with a loss in one area highlighting or accentuating another area of loss. This linking of losses amplified the overall feeling of stress and grief associated with relocation. While repeated moves created awareness of some of the losses to be expected, this did not inoculate the individual against the emotional pain involved. There are indications in the data that, for some women, repeated moves may result in a profound loss of identity and sense of self. Losses related to the remote location resulted in the women experiencing ‘culture shock’, which is usually only associated with international relocation (de Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; Fontaine, 1986; Robbins, 1991).
Loss of friendships

Loss of established friendships and support networks was felt keenly by all the women, even by Stella, Sandra and Fiona, whom I term 'free-choice' movers. Stella's loss of "a whole network of love and support of old connections and long term friendships...and those deep and meaningful conversations, where I feel heard and nurtured at the end of it", was echoed in varying degrees by others. Deprived of this emotional, social and structural support women felt lonely and disconnected. "I miss my friends back home, I miss them a lot, yes, just having those friends there...you know, if you want to, you just get in the car and go around to their place or they come to visit" (Fiona).

The loss of friendships had many dimensions, which accentuated, and interacted with, other life changes and resulted in feelings of profound loss and grief. For Rosie, it was difficult to disentangle the losses specifically associated with relocation from the framework of losses already being experienced through the family crisis that had precipitated the move, but the loss of familiar friendships was felt intensely:

We've got a crap car, but who cares? I've got a crap house, I've got crap furniture, but, you know, I can deal with that.....but it would be such a relief if we were in [last city in which they had lived] where people know what happened and I don't even have to say anything, and a friend comes and gives you a hug. It's very hard without your friends.

For Joanne, moving immediately after the birth of her first child, the loss of friendship and support networks also meant the loss of anticipated experiences related to that particular time in her life:

It was a huge loss. Because, you know.....the way I saw it, having your first child.....should have been a lovely time.....
and it wasn't, you know....not just as a couple.....but.....as I've already said, friends of mine were pregnant at the same time and, you know, you plan things.....you think “oh, we'll do this or do that” and then suddenly I'd think “well, hang on, what am I talking about, I'm not going to be here, why am I saying all these things, you know, I'm not going to be part of this”.....and I feel sad.....I still feel sad about that.....I feel I was robbed of that time.

For Fiona too, the loss of friendships was interconnected with loss of familiar structure and leisure pursuits - what she called the “fill-ins”. “You know, you do your work or whatever you have to do and then [without friends] there's nothing to fill in the rest of your time.” Friday was a particularly difficult day, because prior to the move:

Friday used to always be my day. I used to have everything done so that on Friday, I'd pack the kids up in the car and then off we'd go.....whether it was going to a friend's place for lunch or we'd all meet up or we'd go shopping or we'd do whatever we wanted to.....Friday was our day. It was the end of the week because my husband finished work on a Friday. I just loved Friday.....Friday was my best day and now it's my worst day, because he doesn't finish work till Saturdays, so it's not the end of the week and there's nothing to do on a Friday, there's nowhere to go on a Friday, you know. There's nothing to do.....so.....I've really lost that.....and I find it's hard because it was such a big day and now it's a nothing day.....it's really hard.

As well as the loss of companionship, there was the loss of support and backup that friends provided and for Fiona this accentuated anxiety about the limited health facilities in the town and added to the sense of isolation:

If there's an emergency, you've got to be flown out of town, I mean, that's really hard.....if I had one child who got really sick and they had to be flown to [nearest regional centre], then I've got to go with them.....and your husband's working six days a week and you've got a child left.....and no one to say to “look we need a helping hand here.”

As women struggled to come to terms with major changes to the
very structure of their lives, they missed the easy familiarity of long term friendships - the shoulder to cry on, the support person in times of crisis, the companion with whom to share leisure time. They felt disconnected and unsupported. Married women felt this loss just as much as, if not more than, single women and, with one exception, did not appear to have revealed the extent of their unhappiness to their husbands. While this may be partly due to the ambivalence or, in some cases, outright anger and resentment felt by partnered movers about moving, it also confirms the importance of intimate female friendships as primary sources of emotional support for all women, including those in heterosexual relationships (Berzoff, 1989; Raymond, 1986; Rowland 1988).

Loss of jobs

Moving had meant change of employment status for five of the respondents. All except Marie had been employed immediately prior to moving, whereas at the time of interview only Sandra was in paid employment. With a history of male-dominated industries, Palmerstown offers limited job prospects for women. Apart from nursing and teaching, any employment opportunities for women tend to be for unskilled, part-time and/or casual work. "Most of the women I meet, they do a cleaning job or they work at the supermarket or the pub, you know, these sort of things...I haven't met any professional women" (Rosie). Even those low-paid, low-status jobs were seen as difficult to obtain if you were a newcomer. "Lots of the jobs are already gone, they're not advertised in the first place...it's only if you knew the people already" (Stella), and "I think it's a case of who you know rather than what you know" (Rosie). Thus, movers were doubly disadvantaged in the job market, both as women and as newcomers. This loss of opportunity for
paid work was experienced differently by women depending on their stage in life, their work history, and the context of their move.

For Joanne, at the transition stage of parenthood, the loss of her job was not significant in terms of her relocation, as she did not intend to return to work until her son was older. For Fiona, also a mother of young children, the loss was more acute. Not long before moving she had decided to return to part-time work for the first time since her eldest child was born "just to find myself again, because I was finding I was being a mother and a wife and I wasn't me anymore". She had "finally found the perfect part-time job" two weeks before her husband was offered the job in Palmerstown. "I couldn't believe it. I got the hours I wanted, I got the days I wanted, everything was perfect and I had to turn around after two weeks and say 'I'm sorry but I'm leaving town'". Apart from lack of job opportunities, the long hours her husband worked, and the absence of a support network, made it impossible for Fiona to even consider paid work and she had reverted to full-time mothering at the time of the interview.

Stella and Sandra, the two single movers, had very different experiences. Stella who had wanted "time out" from her job as a health professional, when she first came to Palmerstown, became increasingly frustrated and unhappy when she was ready to get back to work and could only find "cleaning jobs or factory work" available to her. This failure to find meaningful work eventually led her to leave Palmerstown. Sandra, who had a child to support and "took the risk" of giving up a well-paid professional job when she moved, found paid work immediately upon her arrival, but it took her a year to obtain a position in her career field. Although the latter had lower status and was less-well paid than her position in the city, she felt that this was
offset by lifestyle gains for herself and her child.

Marie, who had over the years of moving mainly worked part-time or casual jobs in her husband’s field, felt precluded from doing this in Palmerstown: “I don’t want to work for [her husband] in a town as small as this is, I don’t think that’s a good idea...well, it could be seen as playing favourites. It could cause problems in the office with the staff and I don’t want that”. Marie had not attempted to find any other job, recognising the absence of suitable work for a woman of her age and experience. Thus, the move to Palmerstown had deprived Marie of even the limited work status she had maintained during the years of her marriage.

The results of this study confirm the negative impact of relocation on married women’s work and career opportunities reported by other studies (Bayes, 1989; Markham, 1987; McCollum, 1990). More particularly, they support Bayes’ (1989) and Finch’s (1983) analysis that geographic mobility of male workers can impact upon wives’ paid work in three ways: firstly, mobility may prevent wives from obtaining any employment; secondly, it may oblige wives to take less desirable employment; and, thirdly, it may prevent career development for women.

Furthermore, these results point to a complex relationship between relocation, women’s work, economic dependence, and freedom of choice, particularly for frequent movers. By undermining women’s employment status, repeated moves reinforce women’s economic dependence, which, in turn, constrains their freedom to make choices. Frequent moving and economic dependency of women thus become mutually reinforcing. This dependency is doubly reinforced by the
gendered work culture found in a remote location such as Palmerstown, where the sexual division of labour relegates many women to unskilled, casual and/or part-time jobs. An important related issue, the loss of women's sense of identity through the recurrent job loss associated with frequent moving, will be discussed in the next section.

Loss of identity

Loss of identity was closely linked to recurrent loss of jobs experienced by veteran movers, Marie and Rosie. Both identified meaningful paid work as an important element to a sense of individuality and identity. For Marie, who described herself as "a nobody to the rest of the town", the struggle for identity was a longstanding and painful one. Already subsumed by marriage and motherhood, Marie's sense of self was diminished further by moving. Without prompting, she related a story from a relocation experience almost 30 years ago:

When I moved there and I put my oldest one into kindergarten, the teacher there turned around and said 'Oh, this is P.B's son'. She didn't turn around and say to me 'This is your son, are you P.B.'s wife' or anything. She said 'That's P.B.'s son'. Now, you know, I really felt as if I wasn't there....and that really hit home and that's what I feel when I move into a new town, you know, I don't have any identity. I'm not anybody. I really have to work at establishing myself each time I move.

Marie's loss of identity, which strongly manifested itself each time she moved, was, in part, due to the part-time or casual nature of her work history, but was also associated with the social changes for women over the past 30 years, which Marie felt placed "certain demands.....expectations on [women]". As women became more involved in the public workplace, Marie's unpaid work of homemaking and community work diminished in value:
I went through a phase of virtually apologising for not having a job....it was as if I felt guilty because I wasn't, you know, doing anything. I don't mean literally not doing anything, but not doing anything that was.....recognised as of importance.

This feeling of doing nothing of importance was reinforced by her husband who expected “that anytime he wants me to do anything, I can drop what I'm doing and can be available”. Without the social and community credentials that might have accumulated in a settled lifestyle, Marie’s identity was constantly open to question "whenever anybody asks me 'well, what do you do?' I don't know quite what to say". She felt that without an occupational “tag”, it was difficult for people in a new town to categorise and remember her, which meant that “as far as the town is concerned.....you continue to be a nobody”.

For Rosie too, repeated moves, with consequent loss of jobs, eroded her confidence and sense of identity:

It's left a big gap, you know. I always seem to have.....I never look for a job, when we move straight away. I always try and get the family settled and the house organised and the networks going, and then I look for a part-time job and then, we move again, you know, and this has been the pattern so many times. I think it's very destructive to my self-esteem and my self-worth.

Job disruption each time she moved involved loss of previous effort and hard-earned credentials, which were not as transportable as the “pieces of paper” and the “string of letters after his name” that had facilitated her husband’s career moves, and had resulted in his getting a job in his field shortly after moving to Palmerstown. In her last location she had:

...gone in at the bottom and I was just a clerk and I worked my way up until I had quite a responsible position. But it was because they knew me and I knew the work, and I knew I knew the work, so that when I went for that job, I knew I would get it. But if I had to go for an outside job.....I would
be so scared to apply for anything....I don't believe in myself.

This erosion of confidence meant that Rosie "started from scratch in each new place" because she did not believe she had anything of worth or value to offer. "Yes.....you've got to go to the supermarket and fill the shelves and work your way up from there again.....until you get the self-confidence up". Rosie also recognised that repeated moves, and family obligations, had restricted exploration of other possible avenues of fulfilment and identity. She envied women who were creative:

I've never had the opportunity to explore that. I think I'm not creative.....but, maybe I am somewhere underneath.....there could be a little bit there, couldn't there? If it hasn't, you know.....died. But for me, I think it's going to have to be through a job and I really don't see the opportunities here.

The experiences related by Marie and Rosie reflect the "special kind of patterning" that Finch (1983. p.45) believes geographic mobility imposes upon a wife's life - patterning that reduces her control over her own employment prospects. This in turn can lower confidence in her personal sense of worth. Work that is socially valued creates a sense of self-esteem for the individual (Rowland, 1988). With work status constantly being diminished, and other sources of identity affirmation, such as social and community connections also being disrupted, then development and Montanans of a strong sense of identity become very difficult.

Unlike Marie and Rosie, Stella had come to Palmerstown with the strong affirmation of an established work career behind her. In fact part of her reason for moving was to explore who she was beyond her professional identity. She, too, however, found her sense of self challenged without the status of a job, although, she also identified her single status as a factor. "[I]t's because.....I'm not easily slotinable,
you know, as in.....I don't have the man, I don't have the job and I don't have the children". However, her strong sense of self had not been eroded through constant moving and she was able to incorporate an alternative acceptable identity - at least in the short term:

I'm known as the woman with that garden on the corner. People stop me in the street and say "oh, you're the woman with that garden".....you know. That's how.....because I haven't been working here.....that's how I have a label attached to me and I'm happy with that. It's quite a positive one.

As will be discussed later, however, over the longer term, the 'garden lady' tag was not enough to sustain Stella in her new location.

Despite the multiple losses experienced by Joanne, she did not appear to suffer from any loss of identity, probably because, for her, the move had coincided with transition from one strong identity status to another - from professional worker to full-time mother. Although she saw Palmerstown as 'a man's town', Joanne felt that "with a young child maybe it's not so bad.....I mean.....I don't consider myself disadvantaged here at the moment". Fiona, too, who had begun to question who she was in the city, and had looked for work as a means of re-establishing a sense of self, did not identify loss of identity as an issue and clearly identified with her role as mother. It is of note that both these women were engaged in full-time mothering, an identity which reflected and reinforced the stereotypical gender culture of Palmerstown.

The experiences described above clearly indicate the "dynamic nature of self" as described by Rowland (1988, p.19), who argues that:

The self is both consistent and variable - to a degree it is
situational - moulded and influenced by the experiences of a particular historical time, and by its own personality and character. It is also controlled and limited by social institutions and structures which constrain the availability of some experiences for the individual. (p. 15)

It appears that relocation both reinforces, and is reinforced by, those social institutions and structures that seek to control and constrain women's sense of self. In earlier studies, little attention appears to have focused on loss of identity as a consequence of relocation, although McCollum (1990) found some evidence of it in her study. For Marie and Rosie, the two frequent movers in this study, it was quite clearly a significant loss and one that reverberated throughout their lives. Of the multiple losses involved in relocation, they identified loss of paid work as being most challenging to their sense of identity.

Feminists have highlighted the importance of work outside the home to women's sense of identity and self-esteem (Oakley, 1974; Rowbotham, 1973; Rowland, 1988). The self-definition provided by work is reinforced by the social networks of the workplace and by the status, structure, and economic independence it provides (Rowland, 1988). In this study, this self-affirmation was most clearly demonstrated by Sandra who quickly re-established herself in her profession in Palmerstown. McCollum (1990) maintains that women who have never developed professional careers (like Marie and Rose) have diverse commitments through which their identity is expressed. Moving means that they lose more sources of affirmation, social, spatial, and community bonds, which take considerable time and energy to re-establish. When a woman's sense of identity is constantly unravelled by frequent moves it may be that the ability to re-establish a sense of self in each new location becomes diminished over time.
It would appear then that frequent relocation as a "trailing spouse" (Bayes 1989) challenges the very core of women's identity through constant disruption of self-affirming connections and erosion of occupational credentials. Even for single or professional women, moving to a location with limited job opportunities may increase the risk of loss of identity as Stella's remarks indicate. While Sandra was able to re-establish her professional identity quite quickly, no such opportunity existed for Stella. For some women, relocation to a remote area may result in acceptance of stereotypical gender identities.

**Losses related to remoteness**

Losses identified by respondents which specifically related to the remote location fell into three broad categories: firstly, the absence of accustomed amenities and resources; secondly, the loss of familiar physical environment; and thirdly, the loss of familiar socio-cultural environment. Combined, these losses represented a kind of culture shock which added to the sense of isolation and alienation experienced by movers and added to the amount of adjustment needed.

**Loss of amenities and services**

The loss of social and cultural amenities such as films and theatre were mentioned by all participants, although, for some, it was the loss of choice that rankled "I've never been a hugely cultural person or anything like that but...I find that when those things aren't available you suddenly, dreadfully, miss them" (Joanne). Art galleries, bookshops, selection of radio and T.V. stations, choice of restaurants were also missed, while limited shopping facilities, and quality and price of food were an issue for some. Concern over limited health facilities were
mentioned by both Joanne and Fiona specifically in relation to their young children. Absence of accustomed amenities led to feelings of deprivation and reduced opportunities for structuring time and social interaction.

**Loss of familiar physical environment**

Although loss of home has been identified by some researchers as a significant loss for relocating women (Bayes, 1987; McCollum, 1990) only Joanne and Fiona mentioned it in this study. Their concerns related to the insecurity of renting: "the house is not personal...it's just a house, not a home" (Fiona), and to lack of aesthetic appeal of houses built to withstand the cyclonic conditions of Northern Australia. "I look at these block walls and the concrete ceiling and think 'this looks just like a prison'" (Joanne).

More significant in this study was the reaction to the harsh and arid environment of Palmerstown, which was seen as alien and uninviting by many of the women, particularly those who had always lived in cities. For Joanne, who described herself as "a city person", the unfamiliar landscape was:

...hideous, it's that horrid low scrub, that doesn't support any form of life, apart from lizards and it's very, very unappealing to look at. I find the scenery very, very, nondescript and I don't like the desert-like, scrub-like surroundings at all. I really miss nice houses and nice gardens, and not being able to walk to the beach......and a path to walk along at the beach, and somewhere to stop and have coffee.

Fiona too found it:

not a pretty place at all......it's sort of.....a bit hostile in a way......It's all just rugged bushland around [and] people don't take pride in their places......because, if you walk places and
see nice gardens and everything, it makes you feel better inside.

and Rosie found that:

Every time you go from your house to the shops, you know, in your sandals, your feet get covered in dust... because there is no grass, there's just dust everywhere... just blowing about.

Even women who could appreciate some aspects of the environment also found it "harsh and difficult", "depleted", "beaten by [lack of] water and the heat". For Stella the struggle with the environment became an analogy for her struggle to find acceptance and meaning in Palmerstown "you know, digging a hole and planting something in the ground is such an undertaking.....and it's rocky and hard. I think, truly, it's a metaphor".

Bayes (1989) points out that "spatial images and spatial memories are often vivid parts of one's sense of self" (p.284) and that with relocation one must often adapt to a very different kind of physical space. Some of the spatial images that Palmerstown provided were alienating to women used to city living, and created a longing for a familiar environment.

High temperatures in summer added to the sense of loss felt by many of the women, and highlighted their feeling of isolation and alienation. For Joanne, moving to Palmerstown during the hot summer months accentuated her feeling of loss of contact with other people. Although concerned about her young baby, "sometimes it was just too hot to put him in his pram and take him out", desperation sometimes drove her out of the house in which she felt "imprisoned". This, however, did not bring her a sense of relief:
Sometimes here I could believe I was the only human being in the world.....especially, you know, on a hot day, I would put him in his pram and take him for a walk and I just would not see another single human being, you know, I'd hear no noise, not even a car.....I might as well have been on the moon as far as I was concerned.

For others too, the intense summer heat resulted in loss of freedom, loss of motivation, loss of energy, and an increased sense of isolation. Several women described the feeling of “double isolation” when high temperatures necessitated staying indoors in air-conditioning for the greater part of the day. For Stella, the long hot summer depleted her energy and accentuated her aloneness, especially as she lived alone:

I was building up energy in the well, after a very depleting set of circumstances, so [the heat] took back.....it took out what I was trying to put back in.

Going home and shutting the door and turning on the air-conditioner.....when you do that all day and all night, day after day.....it’s an element all of its own.....because it was literally too hot to go outside.....it was incomprehensible.

For women in this study, the extreme climate added to the sense of alienation already imposed by the unfamiliar and harsh physical environment. By restricting women’s physical and social movements, it diminished their sense of control over their environment and their lives, and added to the losses of relocation.

None of the studies reviewed for this research mentioned relocation loss associated with living in an unfamiliar physical and climactic environment, perhaps because none of them related to moving to a remote area. Yet it was clearly a loss felt deeply by several of the women, perhaps made all the more significant because such loss is not anticipated when moving within one’s own country.
Living in 'a man's town'.

While there was some disappointment and sense of loss relating to idealised notions of friendly rural communities, there was shock at the experience of living in 'a man's town', a phrase which was interpreted by respondents to describe a different 'gender culture' to what they had been used to in the city. Male dominance in the town was seen as pervasive in business, recreation and in local government:

The top business people in town seem to be a bunch of connected men, who scrub each others' backs. (Stella)

A lot of the activities that are available here are death-defying, manly type things, you know, diving, gamefishing....I mean, I'm not saying women don't do those things but the majority of men do do them. (Joanne)

...the council is run by macho, sexist men. (Sandra).

Stella felt that underneath the "surface friendliness" of the town there was "another agenda about power and control....male power and control" and most of the women were dismayed by gender attitudes that were seen as "ingrained in this town" and "fiercely resistant to change".

Several had witnessed scenes of male dominance that shocked them:

I think this is definitely a male environment....I feel that really strongly, you know, women get punched out.....in the face, by men. And that's acceptable behaviour.....because she [a young female acquaintance] 'deserved' it! I mean, I find that totally abhorrent. She 'gave lip' and got hit on the lip as a result, you know.....she 'deserved' it! (Stella)

Well, one of the ladies at netball last week...it was pouring rain, but you play, rain, hail or shine.....she was down there with her seven-month old baby because her husband was at the pub and it was raining and she had to play netball while he was under an umbrella in the pram.....because the husband was doing what he wanted to do. I couldn't believe it.....no way! You know, it's just crazy.....but, yes, it's a man's town alright. (Fiona).
The treatment of the girls working in the [hotel] is terrible. I've got to know quite a few of them.....and they're just treated like absolute scum, you know, just as though.....they're fair game.....(Sandra)

This concept of 'a man's town' was reinforced by the sexual division of labour, the strong male drinking tradition within the town, and the emphasis on male recreation rather than family recreation:

You don't see the family going out boating here....it's all the blokes in the boat and off they go. You've just got to be at [the boat ramp] there at the weekend to see that. They just keep going past and, like.....it's all men in there, you hardly ever see women in the boats. So they [men] work all week and then go to the pub.....and then they go fishing all weekend and the women are still sitting at home. I don't know how they do it.....it's not my lifestyle. (Fiona)

This perception of living in 'a man's town' resulted in feelings of alienation, reduced self-esteem and/or loss of control over women's personal and social environment:

[It's] a harsh town.....you know, it feels like a brick wall when you hit it. I think if you're not a man in this town, you know, your credibility and rateable level is pretty low. (Stella)

Men are more inclined to be busy and women can be sitting around doing nothing. (Marie)

I think this town is rough and.....I don't want to sound like a real snob but.....a lot of people here are not people I would normally associate with. (Joanne)

[S]ome women in town who are heavily involved in the football or the gamefishing or something like that seem to be quite happy.....but that's a male thing, I think.....it's not what I want to do. (Rosie)

The experiences of living in Palmerstown related by the women in this study coincide with the 'smalltown' gendered culture as described by Alston (1995); Dempsey (1990; 1992.); Macklin (1995); and, Poiner
They also reflect the discrepancies between the rural idyll often promoted by rural communities and the actual experience of rural or remote living noted by some researchers (Cheers, 1985; Dempsey, 1990, 1992; Macklin, 1995).

Culture shock

For women who were used to city living, the combination of limited services and amenities, a hostile physical environment and climate, and what was perceived as a 'man's town', generated a culture shock similar to that usually associated with international migration. Some women in this study clearly experienced all six elements of culture shock, as defined by Oberg (1960):

- Strain due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations;
- Sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in regards to friends, status, profession and possessions;
- Being rejected by and/or rejecting members of the new culture;
- Confusion in role, role expectations, values, feelings and self-identity;
- Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences;
- Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment. (p.178)

Although not mentioned by Oberg, Stern (1986) suggests that unfamiliar geographic and climatic environment contributes to a sense of culture shock. In this instance, the sensation of being in a foreign culture was related to gender rather than ethnicity. Lack of job opportunities, stereotypical gender attitudes and values, and overt
displays of male dominance in a small and isolated town highlighted discrepancies between respondents' former lives and their relocation experiences. It is significant that Sandra, for whom small town living and the physical environment and climate were familiar, and whose occupational status and identity were assured, bore few signs of culture shock. However, for women accustomed to city living, and without the affirmation of paid work, relocation to Palmers town resulted in varying degrees of anxiety, alienation and rejection, which are seen as characteristic of culture shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960).

This study confirms earlier findings of the multiple losses experienced by women who relocate, in particular, loss of friendship and support networks, loss of jobs, and loss of familiar environment (Bayes, 1989; Coyle, 1993; Markham 1987; McCollum, 1990). In addition, it highlights the interaction between the losses of relocation and the socio-political constraints of women’s lives, and indicates that relocation and loss of identity may become mutually reinforcing for frequent movers. Results of this study also indicate that relocation to a remote location with an alien physical and social environment may produce 'culture shock', which previously has only been associated with international relocation.
CHAPTER FIVE: STRUGGLING and STRATEGIES

“It’s like trying to dig through a big brick wall trying to get to the other side.” (Fiona)

While the practical and visible aspects of relocation - packing, travel arrangements, organising living accommodation - are exhausting in themselves, it is only when the boxes are unpacked that the real work of relocation begins. This chapter describes the work undertaken by women in this study to re-establish themselves emotionally, socially, and structurally, in their new place. As with other areas of women's emotional work, this relocation work has been largely ignored in mainstream literature. By making visible the struggle involved, the strategies used, and the time, energy, skill, and persistence needed, this study acknowledges the significance and value of relocation labour as “an important body of work for women that is neither named nor acknowledged” (McCollum, 1990, p.168).

All the women interviewed in this study, used a wide variety of strategies to cope with the losses of moving and the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. They worked hard to maintain old valued connections, to make new friendships, to find meaningful work, and to adapt to a new physical environment. The isolation and harsh climate drained emotional energy, which was already lowered by the physical and contextual aspects of the move, and sometimes, “escape routes” were needed to recoup the emotional vigour needed for the task. Part of the struggle for married movers was the contrast they perceived between their own experiences of relocation, and that of their working partners. For women whose choice about moving had been constrained, this intensified the struggle to cope with the losses of relocation, and to regain some kind of emotional and social equilibrium. For 'free
choice' movers the depth of the struggle was less intense, but still significant.

Maintaining old connections

Maintaining old connections was an important coping strategy used by all the women. Phone contact, letter writing, and visits by friends and family, provided movers with some sense of emotional continuity, and reassurance that the mover was not totally cast adrift from her former life. Visitors, particularly in the early stages of relocation, provided an oasis of intimacy and support, when everything else was so new and uncertain "you can talk to them [visiting friends] without fear of your conversation being repeated around town....they filled in a lot of time and I could do things with them" (Marie). There was also the comfort of knowing that friends could now picture the mover in their new setting, that some new threads of connection could be woven, when so much had been lost by absence and distance "so people came up and stayed, and saw what I was about, and what I was doing, and where I was...so that was great" (Stella).

The struggle, however, still had to be faced once visitors left. In the early stages of her relocation, Joanne found that visits by family and friends accentuated her loneliness and isolation:

After my Mum left.....it was just awful.....I've never known time to go so slowly....I was very unhappy. I used to cry every night, without fail. I had a lot of visitors during that time and when they'd leave to go back to [the city] I would just want to.....you know, climb into their boot and go back with them.

Marie, an experienced mover, found that frequent visitors gave her an excuse to avoid the difficult work of making new connections:
They provide the connection and company you long for in a new place without you having to produce the energy to establish new friendships...[but]...I had moments in between when they [visitors] weren't here, where I'd feel like I dropped my bundle a bit and I didn't have the motivation to do anything.

Maintaining old connections was an important strategy for all movers, providing temporary respite from the struggle of relocation adjustment. But, in some ways, the strategy was paradoxical. On the one hand it provided a sense of continuity and support and, on the other, it accentuated the loss and loneliness. It could also delay or distract movers from the difficult, but necessary, task of establishing new connections. Other studies don't appear to have defined maintenance of old connections as a relocation coping strategy, although McCollum (1990) describes as “bittersweet” (p.88) those communications with old friends which could mask the sense of loss, but, also, make it more acute when temporary reconnection ended.

Building new connections

While it was important to the women to maintain existing emotional bonds, the need for friends in the new location was intense. All of the women, single and coupled, had separated from close friends when they moved and they struggled to re-create that intimacy with new people. In addition, they needed new connections to create a sense of support and belonging in their new community.

Making friends and belonging did not 'just happen'. Strategies included joining sporting clubs, churches, community groups and “just being friendly” to everyone they met. Although superficial connections were reasonably easy to make, friendmaking took time, persistence and
emotional resilience, as Fiona's experience illustrates:

I went to playgroup when I first got here...just for the same reason, to meet people, but I found it was the same thing.....It's still just "hello, how are you" but that's as far as it goes.

You see the mothers at Kindy, you know, but then that's it.....it doesn't go any further than that. Nobody says "oh, are you new, would you like to come around for a coffee".....no one.....it's hard! I was really hoping that someone would.....but they never did. so now I sort of....well, just get out and do things, otherwise I'd go crazy.

Her next strategy met with at least partial success:

I'm slowly starting to meet people because I'm now playing tennis and playing netball, so I'm putting myself out into the community to be able to meet people and make the connections...but, even some people you make connections with.....you only see them that day and that's it. You don't, sort of.....they're not friendly enough to want to bring you into their home environment. They don't want you to to invade what they've got.....a lot of it seems that way. So, I think that's quite hard.

It's not surprising that for Fiona:

It feels like you're getting nothing in return. Yes, it's like trying to dig through a big brick wall trying to get to the other side and if you finally make it, well.....you're alright, but if you don't.....you don't.

At the time of the interview, four months after moving, despite persistent efforts, Fiona had not made a single close friend, although she and her husband had made tentative connections with two couples, through her husband's work - couples who were also newcomers, who were "in the same boat as we are".

Fiona's previous history of successful friendmaking enabled her to externalise the experience and gave her the emotional resilience to continue the struggle towards connecting:
[Previous town] is really friendly, we just made so many friends down there and we never had a problem fitting in down there. I think it's like that down there and then [we came] up here still in that 'well, we're ready to make friends' mode, but it's the people up here who don't.

Fiona's experiences were not unique among the movers. After 11 months, Stella "hadn't met that many people really, considering I'm generally a social, outgoing being." Women expressed surprise at the difficulty of making connections. They looked eagerly for welcoming gestures from long-term residents and were disappointed at their absence or what they saw as the superficiality of such gestures:

It's easy to talk about people waving and how friendly it all is, but there's no guts behind the initial connection.....what does it mean? (Stella)

I think it would be hard to get anywhere further than the superficial. (Rosie)

In this place, I think it's harder to make friends, because.....the people just don't seem to put the same effort into it as they might have done in another place. (Marte)

Even experienced movers, like Rosie and Marte, were surprised at how difficult it was. As well as joining a church and a sporting club, Rosie and her husband "go along, if we see anything advertised.....anything we could go to. We'll see what's there and .....we'll try and meet people, you know". In spite of this, after six months, connections were still only tenuous:

Oh, superficially, it's OK.....so that when you're in the supermarket you can say 'oh, hello, how's it going' and it's a face you know, but.....as regards a friendship.....no. I have found that you have to be prepared to give a lot more than you expect.....you have to give a lot to people in order to gain a friend.

From experience, Marie knew it took time and energy to make new
friends when she moved, but found it harder than expected in Palmerstown "it doesn't matter where you go, city to country or country to city, [but] in isolated areas like this, you seem to have to make an extra effort than you have to make anywhere else".

As mentioned in the last chapter, idealised notions of friendly rural communities may have contributed to women underestimating how difficult the work of friendmaking would be. Some respondents in this study recognised that long term residents did not have the same urgent need for friendship as they themselves did, nevertheless, it hurt to feel marginalised, especially at a time when the need for inclusion was so great:

They all have their own little communities and they don't want anyone intruding. (Fiona)

People who've been here a long time...they've got their little pocket of friends so they.....you don't break into those very easily because, there's a word for it.....where people are rather cliquey. (Marie)

On one level, it's all friendly and lovely and 'oh, what a nice town' (but) scratch the surface and it feels very unfriendly .....like a shut out or something. (Stella)

When connections were made, they were almost invariably with other newcomers:

Everyone I know has been here less than six months.....because they're the ones that are in the same boat we are.....they are [also needing friends] and so, they're the ones you have something in common with. (Fiona)

[Newcomers] are the ones I tend to make friends with, rather than the ones that've been here all their lives. (Marie)

The ones I see more regularly are the ones who are
new.....you've got a lot more in common with the people who are new to the town. (Joanne)

Having 'something in common' meant one could be more honest about the difficulties one was experiencing. Because of the need for acceptance, extreme care had to be taken not to offend local people by any suggestion that their town was less than idyllic:

If I know I'm going to be in a situation where I'm going to be meeting people or whatever, I'm thinking of all the positive comments that I can make.....so that it's positive feedback, you know.....and I'm not whinging, I'm very careful not to say anything negative. I don't want to do that.....well, it's not going to endear me to them, is it? They're not going to want to have anything to do with me, so, the most I'll say is "oh, I find it very hot" or...."the heat is getting to me". (Rosie)

I didn't say anything bad, I just said 'It's really hot up here', that was always my line, so I sort of got away with it that way. (Fiona)

These remarks reflect the potency of the 'big happy family' metaphor of localist and rural ideologies noted by Dempsey (1992) and Macklin (1995), who argue that newcomers who breach such core meanings are liable to be marginalised. This interpretation is supported, rather than contradicted, by the fact that, at the time of the interviews, only the two single movers, Stella and Sandra, had made close connections with 'locals'. Although they had been in the community longer than other movers in the study (11 months and 18 months respectively), it appeared to be the shared 'marginalisation' of being single, rather than the time factor that made this possible:

When you do connect with a long-term local, generally, they're people who've remained open.....like.....I'm thinking those people are single too, you know, if you're in a relationship.....it all forms a little network, doesn't it? (Stella)
Sandra, who had made friends with another sole parent and a single woman found that “you just do not get invited to situations where you have married couples”. While both agreed that this bias also existed in the city, they felt here was even less social acceptability about being single in this small remote community: “it certainly feels that without a man, there’s this thing of....you know, where do you fit in?” (Stella). Single people, and particularly single women, already living in Palmerstown were more likely to be on the margins of the conservative town, and thus more responsive to newcomers, especially single newcomers.

On the whole, however, close connections were easier and ‘safer’ to make with other newcomers, and while they fulfilled the need for companionship and emotional support, they did not link the newcomer to the established community. In some cases, too, newcomer friendships could be self-defeating, as Joanne found when she became friends with a woman who had also recently relocated. “Even though it was nice to have somebody to go out with”, the fact that her friend was also having difficulty adjusting undermined any efforts Joanne made to develop a more positive attitude:

Negativity wasn’t helpful....it was contagious. Because, you know, you’ve got one person saying this and it was.....what I deep down really thought.....but I was trying to cope with it. But, as soon as someone starts to express what you really feel, you just think “that’s right, I remember now, I really do hate it. I can’t pretend...what’s the point in pretending.”

It was only after this friend left that Joanne was able to work at maintaining a more positive attitude, which made living in Palmerstown at least bearable.

Another factor that impacted on friendmaking was the need for
privacy. Relationships of mutual trust build up over time and with shared experiences. Rosie felt caught in the tension between her need for the support and intimacy of close friendship and her need to 'protect' her family from possible gossip:

I think because of our circumstances [the family crisis], it's just made it that much more difficult, I think, and in meeting people I think I have been hanging back a little bit, in terms of.....I don't want them to know about me and what's happened, which has probably stunted possible relationships. This is the first time I've felt I've had to be guarded, I don't want anybody in town to know.

This need to guard against gossip "it takes a while to work out who can be trusted" (Marie), and the longing to be accepted by the new community, often put women in the paradoxical position of desiring intimate relationships, yet being wary of the self-disclosure needed to attain them. Rural studies have noted the constraining influence of gossip on people in rural communities (Cheers, 1985; Dempsey, 1990; 1992, Macklin, 1995) and it clearly presents an additional element for movers to contend with, when relocating to a small town.

Work of friendmaking

Most of the women found the work of friendmaking emotionally and physically taxing, yet the time immediately following relocation was a time of emotional depletion, not only because of the physical and psychological demands of the move, but because movers were grieving over their losses. Movers struggled to maintain a balance between their emotional reserves and their urgent need for connections:

I think that [feeling isolated] is part of the process of relocating, but, God, it's hard when I'm alone here and it's my energy levels that will mean I go out of the house and make
the connection or not....and how easy it is not to..... (Stella)

There are days when...It's as if you've got mood swings, you know, you just feel down...you really don't have the energy to do anything...there's no motivation there and you just feel that life's passing you by and you're doing nothing and you're useless. (Marie)

I couldn't even get out of bed before 9 [a.m.], and I used to start work at 7 [a.m.]. I couldn't do anything, you know, I was so, so tired and I still am. (Rosie)

Sometimes I stretched out and made the connection...but some of the time I chose to stay where I was and people met me. Because you know it takes a lot of energy to maintain connections and make new ones. (Stella)

Stella, in particular, was aware of her low emotional reserves and she chose to pace her affiliation efforts. "I chose to not go to the pub and not to.....circulate.....I suppose. I chose to be reasonably solitary and connect with people as I went along, rather than seek connections". To some extent, however, she had an advantage over other movers. She had the work of her garden to give her a sense of purpose and identity, and to sustain her spiritually. Her garden also provided a conduit for friendship "it drew some people in.....like, a woman walking by stopped and got chatting and we visited each other". She also had a brother and sister-in-law in town with whom she spent some time, so she was not totally isolated.

On the other hand, for Rosie, the need for friends was much more urgent. Despite feeling "absolutely exhausted" by both the physical move and the emotional circumstances surrounding it, she felt driven to seek connections "immediately", an approach that had worked for her in previous moves, but which was less successful in Palmerstown.
Despite the amount of energy it took, all of the women saw the making of friends as essential to their emotional well-being and their sense of connectedness in their new location. The intensity of the movers' longing for close friendships and connection reiterates the importance of attachment and affiliation to women's psychological well-being and development (McCollum, 1990; Miller, 1986). They were driven to take initiatives, to be persistent even after repeated failures, a tendency also reported by McCollum (1990) in her study of relocating women. Many of them, including veteran movers, found it difficult to establish more than superficial links, and connections were easier to make with other newcomers than with established residents, which often increased the mover's awareness of being an outsider. The absence of paid work not only heightened the need for companionship, but deprived women of opportunities for the repeated associations which enable new relationships to develop.

There was no foolproof formula for friendmaking - it was a matter of persistent hard work, flexibility and emotional robustness. McCollum (1990) points out that we rarely think of making friends as a form of work, yet "the search for the new connections needed for affiliative work to be fulfilling [is] every bit as taxing as the hunt for professional opportunities and the field of search [is] far less well defined" (p.91). In the absence of shared work spaces, newcomers must continually seek out opportunities for recurrent meetings with potential friends.

**Working for a sense of self**

While all the women were engaged in the work of establishing friendships in their new location, there was also the challenge of
finding meaningful work, in a town which provided limited opportunities for paid work for women. In its absence, women searched hard for other work which would provide structure, focus and a sense of identity in their lives. They also wanted work through which they could contribute to their new community and thereby get a sense of belonging.

Of the six women interviewed, only Sandra was in paid work at the time of the interview. It had taken a year to obtain a job in her profession, although she had obtained paid work shortly after arriving in Palmerstown. That first year had been extremely difficult, with the long hours demanded by the job incompatible with her desire to be a responsible parent to her young teenage child. The conflicting demands faced by most single parents - financial provision versus emotional and physical presence - were accentuated in the absence of support networks. Once re-established in her own profession, however, Sandra had a strong sense of identity and belonging in the town, in contrast to all other movers.

For Fiona and Joanne, their work of full-time mothering was more demanding without the support and companionship of familiar trusted friends, and with the limited facilities of a remote location. Basic items like children's shoes and clothes were impossible to obtain in Palmerstown, recreational amenities for young children were very limited, and extra effort had to be made to structure the days in some meaningful way:

I just did not realise that it was so secluded and just.....there's nothing here. There's just nothing.....it would be nice if there was a [department store] or something, just to buy clothes and shoes for the children, and I just thought there'd be more things here to do, like, even just for the kids.
There's nothing here for the children, recreation-wise.....things like that.....the kids get lost. I take them everywhere I go and they meet other children and things.....but there's nothing.....and, once the weather cools down and you don't go to the beach, well.....what do you do? I didn't realise it was going to be quite so bad. I thought there would be more things to do. (Fiona)

I felt he was too young for Playgroup. I mean, if I was in [the city] there's no way I would have taken him to Playgroup at eight months, but.....I knew I needed to meet people and to get out of the house, so I started going. I'm not the only person there who feels like that. There would be other people with young children who go for the same reason. You go, you know, for your sanity, rather than for the child. (Joanne)

For Joanne and Fiona, there were also the unique pressures of mothering in high summer temperatures, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

For Stella, suffering burn-out from her previous job, creating a tropical garden provided her with a sense of purpose. "That was my job to do.....that was my aim.....that gave me a sense of why I was here and what I wanted to achieve.....The creativity of gardening helped give me a purpose." In the initial months of relocation her garden became the main focus of Stella's life, providing structure, satisfaction and a sense of identity and meaning. Later, however, when Stella wanted, and needed to resume paid work, she was frustrated by what she saw as a "closed system" within the town. Accustomed to the more overt job selection procedures of the city, she felt disadvantaged as a newcomer "you know, lots of jobs are already gone, they're not advertised in the first place....it's all word of mouth". In addition, while not expecting to work in her professional field, she felt discouraged by the menial jobs available for women:

Yes, well for me, if I really, really, want to work here, I could work in the factory, I could clean toilets, I could...well, they're
about my limits. Even in the supermarket.....you've got the age thing, you know, most businesses in town pay a flat rate, bare minimum, and they're like.....17 to 19 year olds.

Stella’s decision to leave Palmerstown shortly after the interview, was directly related to the unavailability of suitable paid work. With her garden project completed, no real prospect of meaningful work, and the hostility of a “macho” culture, it was “too much of a struggle to keep going... It's been a good time and it's been useful, but.....to continue on is actually counterproductive”.

For Rosie, getting paid work was a top priority after getting her family settled, not only for financial reasons, but for “getting [her] life back on track.....for me, it's going to have to be through a job.” At the time of the interview, however, Rosie did not feel hopeful about obtaining any kind of paid work in Palmerstown. “I really don't see the opportunities here.....It's probably more who you know.....than what you know in getting a job. I think getting a job for a woman in this town would mean a lot”. She had, however, joined a community fund-raising group as a way of both becoming involved in the community and re-establishing who she was. “I'm a sort of civic-minded person, while I'm here I want to have input and I want to do what I can”.

In earlier moves to cities and regional centres, Marie had often worked casual, part-time, or temporary positions in the field in which her husband held managerial positions, but in Palmerstown she felt that this would place her in the firing line of small town politics:

There, I was just one of the other staff, whereas, here because of the closeness of it.....and the smallness of it, and the continual contact.....It could cause problems between the staff and[her husband] and I don't want that. But also, if there are problems in the office, then I'm in the middle of it and.....I don't want that.
She tackled the challenge of finding something meaningful to do by using the church as an "anchor point" for community work as she had in previous relocations. She found it harder now, than it had been when her children were young, when her 'mother identity' had given her "a reason to get out into the community.....you know, whether it's Cubs, or Scouts, or Kindergarten committees, or, you know, helping in the school with your children, there's always that connection when they're young". Despite very low levels of energy at times, Marie became involved in voluntary community work in Palmerstown, as a way of structuring her time, meeting people, and becoming known in the community. For both Marie and Rosie, work outside the home, even unpaid work, was an attempt to re-establish some sense of identity and control over their lives.

Work which is socially valued is important for all women (McCollum, 1990; Oakley, 1981; Rowland, 1988), but for women who have suffered the losses of relocation, it is doubly important as a means of re-affirming self. In the absence of paid work, through which "identity is most widely, and perhaps most seriously, affirmed in our culture" (McCollum, 1990, p168), women looked for alternative work as a means of affirmation. Rowland (1988) points out "[the] self is not fixed...it is a product of the dialectic, between the forces which impose upon and create the self, and the individual's attempt to interact with and recreate her social existence" (p.19). Through community work, Marie and Rosie resisted the constraints of a relocation ideology, which shaped their lives, and constantly undermined their sense of self.

For Fiona and Joanne, their work of mothering became central to their 'social existence' in Palmerstown, although the relationship between their work of mothering and their relocation experience was
somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, the remoteness made the task of mothering more difficult, but, on the other, mothering provided a structure, focus and sense of meaning to their lives. The vastly different experiences of Sandra and Stella, the two single movers, illustrate vividly the importance of the availability of paid work for relocating women. In addition to decision-making, paid work emerges as a most important element relating to ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ relocation for women.

**Adapting to new physical environment**

Along with connections to people, individuals develop strong attachments to places. Adaptation to a new physical space is part of the adjustment involved in relocation. A lower standard of housing and the harsh and arid landscape were alienating for some movers in this study. But a far greater struggle was that of dealing with the loss of control and of physical freedom associated with extremely high temperatures, which Palmerstown endures for up to six months of the year. Average daily temperatures in summer exceed 37 degrees celsius, with temperatures often in the mid forties. Women talked about ‘The Heat’ as an entity, an enemy, that drained physical and emotional energy, restricted opportunities for much-needed social interaction, and undermined attempts to re-establish familiar and comfortable rhythms of day-to-day living. For Fiona and Joanne, with young children, movement outdoors was particularly constrained:

You just couldn't take children out in that heat, you know [because] they dehydrate so fast. (Fiona)

I mean just the fact that I would be hot pushing him and also he was so little - he was too little to be out...you know, I was so worried about him being burnt and things like that.
So.....there was nowhere to go. You can't walk around [the supermarket] all day. (Joanne)

This not only isolated these mothers for long periods of the day with only their young children for company, but placed additional responsibilities on them to try to organise and structure their children's leisure time:

Yes, well what we did was we made sure that whatever we had to do we were home by 11.00 in the morning and then we never left the house till 5.30p.m. in the afternoon, other than to, maybe, grab clothes on or off the line. That'd be the only reason why I'd go outside and that's why you felt so isolated because, you just didn't go anywhere it was just too hot.....so you just never did anything in the afternoon. So you'd sit there and play with the kids but, they would get bored, and it was so hot or whatever and then at half past five it'd be like...open the front door and we'd all run outside...turn the hose on and play outside till 7 o'clock at night...you'd eat late...just to be outside...yes...it was the only way you coped. (Fiona)

Home-working women coped with 'The Heat' in the only way that was available to them. With no access to an air-conditioned public workplace, and in the absence of air-conditioned shopping centres, theatres or community centres, when even going to the beach was impossible until evening, they had no option but to isolate themselves in their homes. This compounded their emotional aloneness and depletion and, at times, made the work of relocation overwhelming:

There were quite a few times when it was really hot....because you're stuck inside and you can't do anything....that I could easily have packed up and gone. (Fiona)

I found that the heat here later on, after the winter was over, the heat here just sapped any energy...and I had even less motivation to do anything during that time. (Marie)

It was so hot, I felt I couldn't breathe. (Rosie)
The summer [was] an endurance test of endless, relentless heat, and drying out, harshness, and isolation, because you couldn't go outside. It was horrible...it was horrible. (Stella)

Strategies, which had been a source of strength and purpose during the cooler weather, had to be abandoned because of the heat. When Stella couldn't garden because of the heat, she felt "isolated and de-energised and uncreative and apathetic. It was just too hot, you know. What was I doing planting plants that were just going to die, because it was 47 degrees?" The harsh climate also had the effect of undermining friendmaking strategies:

If you take six or seven months out of the year, that's a huge chunk.....when you're isolated, because you stay home in the air-conditioning.....and there's a lot of people here who can't wait to get out of town when it's hot. So, I think that all has an effect on how people make friends. (Marie)

For women in this study, coping with 'The Heat' was one of the major tasks of adapting to their new physical environment. By depleting energy reserves, and limiting physical movement and social interaction, it made the work of relocation much more difficult.

**Escape as a strategy**

Escape was a strategy mentioned by all the women except Sandra. When the struggle with 'The Heat', with the smalltown isolation, and with the whole experience of relocation felt overwhelming, the women looked for means of escape, however temporary. As already mentioned, having visitors offered temporary escape from the emotional isolation, as did telephone contact with old friends. Women devised other escape strategies, according to their situation and their resources. Joanne realised she was "lucky" to have the financial resources to plan regular escapes "I think that's a big
bonus, to know that you can get out”. In the emotional turmoil of the first months of relocation she found it impossible to develop any real coping strategies. Only the prospect of temporary escape kept her going:

I just hung on [for a visit back to the city and a little later to England] for those dates. I probably wasn’t even logical at the time. I was probably quite irrational. It was just a case of looking at my calendar and thinking.....one......two......three......four.....five.....six.....seven days to go, six days to go and then “oh, thank God, only five days”.....literally counting the days till I was going to [the city]. Without an escape route it would be very, very difficult. I don’t think I could do it!

For other women who could not afford frequent trips back to the city, opportunities such as, “getting out of town for a conference” (Marie), or visiting beaches far out of town “it’s beautiful, it really is lovely to escape around there” (Rosie), were seen as means of escape. Temporary geographic escape seemed to replenish the emotional energy drained by the struggle and enabled some women to develop a more “positive attitude” to the work of relocation.

Stella, however, chose the ultimate escape - which was to leave Palmerstown permanently - when it became clear that she could not get suitable paid work there. As a single woman she was free to make a choice based only on her own needs. None of the married women seriously considered such an escape, although several of them had thought of it. Rosie had left a “back door” open for herself by taking a six-month leave of absence rather than resigning from her previous position. Joanne would certainly have considered it “if [I] did not have the baby“ and, as already mentioned, Fiona had been tempted during the summer months “If I had had a house to go back to, I probably would have [gone]”. As with the initial decision-making, any real possibility of escape was much more difficult and complex for married
movers than for those who were single.

For married movers who are unhappy, and whose husbands are employed, the opportunity to reverse the decision and opt out of the relocation are very limited. Bound as they are by economic dependence and an "ethos of love and duty" (Rowland, 1989, p.95) the repercussions of such a decision would be enormous. Although a husband living apart from his wife and family, for substantial amounts of time, is accepted and, indeed, encouraged, when it fits the capitalist agenda - as seen in the fly-in fly-out arrangements of the mining industry - a woman who chooses to live separately from her husband is seen as "deviant" and is likely to be socially sanctioned (Finch, 1983. p.49.). Other ways in which married respondents' experiences of relocation were framed and constrained by dominant ideologies of marriage and family are highlighted in the next section

Moving and marriage

Part of the struggle for married women in this study was that moving as a couple did not necessarily mean the emotional reciprocity of a joint experience. Only Fiona and her husband appeared to acknowledge the disparate demands of relocation, and this enabled them to develop mutual support strategies. There was understanding and a sense of equity about each other's difficulties - Fiona, caring for two young children in an alien environment, and her husband, working very long hours, "and then we'd both say 'well, we had a choice and we made it together', no one railroaded the other one into anything". A joint decision and a shared dream of building their own home sustained them.
For the other married women, Joanne, Rosie and Marie, there was no sense of mutual decisions and shared dreams. Without paid work, their lived experiences of relocation contrasted sharply with those of their husbands. In spite of shared time and space, gendered differences in the structure of day-to-day living resulted in emotional and structural disparity which seemed to compound their losses.

Joanne, in particular, felt that her husband’s experience of living in Palmerstown was “totally different” to hers:

He loves the outside life, he loves the sunshine, he loves the heat....and when you’re in the water, the heat’s fine. He’d go to work and it’s 10 degrees cooler on the water, so the heat wasn’t a factor for him. He’d finish work and he wouldn’t think of coming home.....he’d go surfing for a couple of hours. He loves surfing.....so off he’d go surfing. Then he’d come home about 5 o’clock in the evening.....maybe 6 o’clock and have his dinner. Why wouldn’t he think it was great?

In contrast, Joanne’s day revolved around the care and responsibility of a young baby, in what she was experiencing as a friendless, isolated and hostile environment. While she acknowledged that this stage of her life would have meant considerable adjustment, even if she had stayed in the city, she felt that relocation had deprived her of her friends, her freedom [because of the heat and isolation], and the comforts of her home and familiar environment.

When she tried to explain this to her husband “he just....I don’t know if he couldn’t understand, or didn’t want to understand”. In fact, about 4 months after they arrived, Joanne overheard him telling some visiting friends “oh, you know it’s wonderful up here. I don’t think we’ll go back to [the city], I think this is where we’ll live”. This “devastated” Joanne, not only because her unhappiness was not recognised or acknowledged by her husband, but also because the original plan had
been to spend only two years in Palmerstown. This incident led Joanne to vigorously confront her husband and issue an ultimatum about how much she was prepared to sacrifice for his plans. While this resulted in an acceptable compromise, the feeling of unfairness about the relocation experience remained and led to a rift between them which, at the time of the interview, was only just beginning to heal.

After repeated moves, Rosie had come to expect that her experience would be different to her husband's. All previous moves had meant career advancement for him and "starting from scratch" for her. Even though this move was "much harder" for her husband - because of the family crisis and his business failure it was the first time he had moved without a job - nevertheless:

He got the job very quickly with [employer], and there is a career path, and he's had his three months' probation, and they have re-affirmed him and said, you know....."we're so lucky that we've got you" and so.....he's beginning to see his possibilities within [the company], even though he's 48 and just.....so lucky to get a job at his age and a second chance at a career.

For Rosie no such opportunity for re-affirmation was likely to present itself. Compounded by frequent relocation, her paid work experience reflected the part-time, disrupted, non-professional qualities which characterise many women's participation in the workforce. It also mirrors the feminist historical analysis of women being treated as a reserve labour force, expected to respond to the changing patriarchal need (Rowland, 1988). In times of crisis she was needed to work full-time to support the family, but upon relocation, was expected to withdraw to home duties and emotional support of the family. The right to be involved in meaningful paid work on a full-time, permanent basis clearly belonged to her husband, with Rosie expected to subjugate
her work needs to the demands of relocation.

Although she tried to maintain "a positive attitude" and to take pleasure in seeing her husband and other family members having the opportunity to rebuild their lives, she was beginning to question why her needs always seemed to come last:

If it works for them, I have to tell myself "hey, this is worth it, hang in there, it's worth it for them." But then that's part of the self-sacrifice mentality that women have, you know, as a Brownie, I had it drummed into me "Think of others before yourself, do a good turn every day." Do you know what I mean? I was brought up with that submissive attitude, so I have to.....sort of.....get over that hurdle and say "OK....I accept that that's good for them but I've got to get my life back on track too.....I've got to....."

For the first time Rosie had considered rebelling against the expectation that she would sacrifice her own needs for those of her husband and family. Reluctant to lose the job she loved, where she had built up credibility and self-confidence she had "begged and pleaded" with her last employer to keep her job open for a year. They agreed to give her leave of absence for six months. At the time of the interview that deadline was fast approaching "so if I wanted, my bolthole is still there and that's the first time, in all our moves, that I left myself with a little back door, and you don't know how tempted I've been to take it, because it's been so hard". Although Rosie did not use her "back door" it was an important act of rebellion on her part - the beginning of a challenge to a lifestyle, where her work and her identity were constantly expendable in the interests of her husband's career and the 'good' of the family.

In Marie's case, the search for identity and meaning, which was central to all her relocation experiences, was not a problem faced by her
husband "[Her husband] had his job, he had an identity, he had training behind him in that field for thirty-four odd years and he was...you know, also a [sportsman], so he already had what he wanted here. He didn't have to search for anything". Without dependent children or paid work there was little structure or focus to Marie's day, and no sense of status or achievement from home-based activities:

The things I was doing at home didn't give me company. I could do things but because you're on your own, you tend to lose a bit of interest and you don't push yourself to get them done in a hurry or anything like that...you think, well, I've got tomorrow or the next day or whatever...so time slips by.

Home for Marie represented a withdrawal from life, from the effort and energy needed to make new connections, which she knew she needed:

You really need some company, you really need to connect with people. I enjoy time on my own, but there are times when I'd like to mix with people more [but] it's very easy to sit at home or hide away and not do anything. Sometimes...you just feel that life's passing you by...and you're doing nothing and you're useless and you're.....

In contrast, home was a "refuge" for Marie's husband who got "all the stimulation and people contact he need[ed]" through his job and involvement in a local sports club. However, he did not spend a lot of time in his refuge as his job was "a very busy one. He can be quite involved in that and he's captain of the [Sports] Club, so he just has to be there at functions. So, we don't spend a lot of time together". Although she had got involved in community work, Marie spent a lot of time alone, struggling to find some meaning and personal fulfilment in her new location. Like Rosie, Marie's frequent moving had prevented her from building an identity through a career. Now she no longer had even the demands and rewards of mothering young children to sustain her
and give her life meaning and focus.

There appeared to be striking differences in the relocation experience between non-working movers in this study and their working partners - challenging the notion that relocation is equally stressful for all. Bayes (1989) points out that while paid work provides colleagues, connections, status and recreational activities for the employed mover, the accompanying partner enters as "an uninvited stranger" (p.282). In a remote location such as Palmerstown with few job opportunities for women, and some resistance to newcomers, the 'uninvited stranger' has to work very hard to find acceptance and meaning.

These results also support McCollum's (1990) findings that "there is a skew in both losses and gains - whereas a man's identity will be perpetuated, the woman's will be unravelled; whereas the man's work will be furthered, the woman's will be transformed" (p.177). These differences in experiences appeared to be, in most cases, unacknowledged within the relationships of the women in this study, making the work of adjustment exceedingly difficult and, in some cases, impossible. Bayes (1989) points out that when the move represents a career gain for the working partner, as it usually does, there can be inhibitions on the expression of the grief and loss by the accompanying partner. However, even when these feelings are expressed, as in Joanne's case, they may be dismissed or even ignored by the working partner. Relocation, for married women particularly, becomes a gendered experience, both reinforcing, and being reinforced by dominant ideologies of family, relationships and work, in which women are expected to sacrifice their personal needs for the 'good' of the relationship.

This chapter has vividly depicted the struggles of relocating
women which support Finch's (1983) claim that moving is a powerful disrupter of women's sources of affirmation and fulfilment, particularly for women who have not developed professional careers. It is this inherent disruption that forms the basis of the woman's struggle each time she relocates - the struggle to re-establish a sense of self through friends, through work, through community participation.

By detailing the re-establishment strategies used by the women, this study acknowledges the depth of the struggle and makes visible the extent of women's emotional work of relocation. Similar to McCollum's (1990) findings, strategies were varied and numerous, and required time, energy, skill and persistence. Women's emotional and physical energy ebbed and flowed, depending on the climate, the availability of support, and the context and choice of the move. When energy levels were high, women tackled the daily challenges of restructuring the fabric of their lives in an unfamiliar and sometimes alien environment. When they were low, they withdrew to nurse their emotional wounds. Strategies which worked for one woman did not necessarily work for another and familiar strategies for frequent movers did not always transfer to this remote location. The depth of the struggle to adjust and the implementation of coping strategies appeared to be closely linked to the extent to which individual women felt they had control over the decision to move.

This chapter has again highlighted the interaction between relocation and socio-political constraints that influence women's lives. Disparity in experiences of relocation between husbands and wives point to relocation as a gendered experience, where women's work of relocation is neither acknowledged nor valued, and where dominant ideologies strongly influence women's experiences of relocation.
 CHAPTER SIX: SURVIVING

"If I face each day in a positive frame of mind and look for the best in the situation that I'm in, I can cope much better." (Rosie)

As previous chapters have shown, the work of relocation can be intense, and distinguished by feelings of extreme loss, grief, and struggle, but, according to the literature, moving is also expected to stimulate growth, providing new opportunities, new experiences, and new relationships (Bayes, 1989; McCollum, 1990). Relocation is often portrayed as a temporal progression with relocaters moving through distinct stages of disruption, loss, and adjustment, to re-connection and growth (Adler, 1975; de Cleri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; Furnham & Bochner 1986; Nicholson, 1990).

This chapter presents evidence, however, which indicates that individual differences in choice and context of the move, rather than length of time in the new location, appear to have greater impact on women's experiences and ability to adjust. Some experiences challenge the whole notion of positive adjustment to relocation, with the focus on survival, rather than any personal growth or gain. There is even some indication that relocation, particularly frequent relocation, may be quite damaging to some women, in terms of emotional robustness, self-esteem and identity. This chapter also suggests an alternative view of moving that more accurately reflects the complexity and contradictions of relocation experienced by the women in this study.

Single movers in this study identified more positives in their new location than partnered movers. Those positives were strongly linked to the achievement of personal goals, which had been determined during the decision-making process. For partnered movers, positives were
more nebulous and were more inclined to relate to family, rather than personal, gains. Some positive claims were marked by ambivalence, as though there was a strong need to identify at least some gain from the experience. Paradoxically, the physical environment, while a source of loss and struggle on the one hand, also provided the most common positive experiences in the new location.

Of all the respondents, Sandra (divorced and living in Palmerstown 18 months) was the only one who was unequivocally happy with the move and was clearly settled in her new place:

I love it....love living here. Yes, I just love the freedom. I just love being able to take the dogs down to the beach. It takes me two minutes to get them down there, or I walk them there. I’ve got bush at the back of my place and it’s just.... everything I expected it to be.

She, as a ‘free choice’ mover, had had specific personal goals which were clearly fulfilled by the move:

I’ve lived in small towns all my life and big cities just don’t appeal to me. I don’t miss city living whatsoever. I went down to [the city] at Christmas time for two weeks to catch up with family and friends and I just about made the two weeks....I couldn’t wait to get back up here. And, the other thing is I wanted to bring my child up in an environment like this. I can give [her child] so much more freedom up here than I could in the city.....and [her child] is extremely happy here.

It is significant that Sandra’s experience of relocation probably had more in common with the husbands of the married respondents, rather than those respondents themselves. She had quickly re-established herself in her career in Palmerstown, which gave her a strong sense of identity, achievement, and belonging, as well as a ready-made circle of colleagues for support and companionship. Familiar structural patterns were re-created in an environment which
appealed to her, and to which she had freely chosen to move. Thus, the scope of her potential losses was reduced and the need for grieving minimised.

Sandra's story illustrates what previous chapters have indicated, that freedom in decision-making, and availability of paid work, are fundamental to women's experience of relocation. Free of the constraints imposed on partnered women by ideologies of marriage, and with professional qualifications, which, luckily, were in demand in Palmerstown, Sandra experienced relocation as exciting and challenging, with very positive lifestyle gains.

For Stella, another 'free-choice' mover, relocation had provided an opportunity for self-healing, self reflection and spiritual growth:

For me it's been a very positive, at times, very difficult process, but.....a good one. Because I know myself more, I feel I like myself more and I know I can spend time by myself and that it's actually good. I've learned that I actually don't like it as busy as I thought I did. I don't need that many connections and social networks to sustain me as what I thought I did.

She recognised and accepted the paradoxical nature of the physical environment - on the one hand, a source of strength and beauty, and, on the other, a hostile force that could exhaust, particularly during the heat of summer:

Yes, it's the environment that's kept me here....sustained me.....that I've fallen in love with about the place. It's just so stunningly beautiful, and rugged, and harsh, and arid, and dry, and yet, in amongst all of that are little flowers, and trees that grow out of rocks, and the ocean and sea life.....the moon.....the stars...the skies.....everything is so enormously stunning. I mean I'm really, really taken with the environment. It's like.....wow.....I don't get bored of it. I love all the emus and lizards and kangaroos.....it's wild and wonderful.
It depletes.....you know, you see the bush and you see it beaten by no water, all this heat.....the insects come out.....this place could suck you dry.....what it gives back in, you know, spiritual walks on the beach, and the moon, and the stars, it takes out of you in the heat and dust.

In fact, it was this very paradox that was the source of spiritual growth for Stella:

Maybe I needed to go through the summer.....you know, to be burnt by it and now to have the rain come. It did feel like it took its toll though.....it wasn’t a blossoming time.....it was an endurance.....which is not such a bad thing, you know. That’s life too.....you don’t always get the field of flowers to waltz through.

For Marie, the environment as a source of pleasure was the only positive she identified:

I think this is a terrific place, really.....I mean [it's] just lovely to be able to go and sit out there in the water with the dolphins and the whales and everything.....the environment around here is beautiful. I just like to be able to walk along the road and hear the birds whistling and see what birds are around the place. Yes, I’m quite comfortable with that sort of environment anywhere, you know, that’s a plus. You miss out on that in the city.....I really enjoy that.

However, even this gain was tempered, by the remoteness and isolation "I would really love to be able to pick this up and move it.....a little closer to more facilities". Marie’s profound loss of identity from frequent relocation appeared to make each move a struggle for survival. In Palmerstown, she felt like a “nobody”, struggling with loneliness, low self-esteem, and a sense of uselessness. Persistently low energy levels, often indicative of prolonged grief (Weiss, 1990), undermined her search for sources of affirmation and connection. Although not specifically addressed in the interview, it seems likely that Marie’s age, economic dependence and strong religious beliefs, precluded her from ever
questioning her role as a 'trailing spouse'. Rather, she saw it as her duty to be supportive of her husband and not to count the cost to herself.

For Fiona, at the time of the interview, the only positive aspect of the relocation experience appeared to be the satisfaction of working towards a financial goal for the family "we wanted to come for the work and the money.....if it wasn't for that we wouldn't be here, I can tell you that now! I wouldn't choose Palmerstown as a place to live if I could choose!" Initially a 'free-choice' mover, Fiona's remarks indicate the economic pressures to stick with the relocation, even when they realised it was more difficult than anticipated "we, sort of, had expectations that it would be better than this, just because we had such a good time 10 years ago". Clearly, living in Palmerstown with two young children was a very different experience to being on holiday as a couple. There was the feeling, however, that she and her husband were both putting in equal effort for the 'good' of the family and that by concentrating on anticipated gains, rather than on the difficult present they could cope "You know, in a year's time we'll both look back and go.....'Well, we did it'".

In Rosie's case, relocation gains, both real and anticipated, were for other family members, and were weighed against considerable personal cost:

To see [her husband] rebuilding his life again is..... really good and it makes me think.....it's been worth it to see him getting back on track, because, he never thought he would work again, and to see that.....and to know that.....if it works out for [a family member].....it'll be worth it.

Opportunities to get her own life "back on track" appeared very
limited in the absence of job opportunities. Six months after moving, Rosie was still struggling to survive emotionally on a daily basis: "I try to have a positive attitude. I think that's probably the biggest thing, and if I face the day in a positive frame of mind and look for the best in the situation that I'm in, I can cope much better". Rosie's remarks express the strength of those internalised notions of duty and self-sacrifice which underline women's experiences of relationships and family (Rowland, 1988).

With the extent of Joanne's losses unrecognised, and her reality denied by her husband, she was stuck in a trough of loss and grief, unable to see any real assets in the balance sheet of relocation:

No.....to be truthful, I don't think there are [any positives]. I can't think of any.....I mean, I guess you could say it's nice that you can leave your windows and doors open.....that you live in a relatively crime-free environment.....that's quite nice, but I think.....that's a bit too high a price to pay for being so.....you know.....No.....no.....I must admit if you gave me a piece of paper and asked me to write down the positives and negatives, the negative list would be.....there wouldn't be enough room on the page, whereas the positives.....I would have trouble.....

When weighed against the depth of her loss and sense of isolation, the one positive that Palmerstown did provide, a relatively crime-free environment, meant little to Joanne. Although she felt she had made some progress since the first few months of relocation "when everything was so awful, I was so, so miserable", Joanne, like Rosie, struggled on a daily basis to maintain a positive attitude:

I came back [from an escape trip] knowing I had to be more positive about it, because I knew I was going to have to be here for a couple of years and I couldn't see the point of being thoroughly miserable for two years.....I mean, that just seemed very childish.....and very pointless, so I came back.....trying to be more positive.
However, she had no real sense of connection or belonging in Palmerstown. Only the knowledge that the stay was temporary and that she could afford regular ‘escapes’ out of town, was making the experience of living in this remote area bearable. "If somebody were to say to me tomorrow that this is permanent, I would leave! I would just leave there and then, because there’s no point in prolonging...the agony." The fact that she now had a son strongly influenced Joanne’s decision to stay and make the best of things, at least for a limited time. She was adamant that without her son she would have continued working in the city and maintained a long-distance relationship for the time her husband wished to stay in Palmerstown.

The myth of moving on

Most studies imply that, over time, movers make the adjustments needed for successful emotional and psychological reconnection in their new location (de Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; Furnham & Bochner 1986; Nicholson, 1990) and many suggest that unsuccessful relocation, particularly of couples or families, relates to some personal failure on the part of the wife and mother (Lundy, 1994). Even McCollum (1990) implies that, over time, everyone adjusts. "Time and energy are needed to regain the familiar rhythm of daily life and to reconstruct the total fabric of identity" (p.82). However, the lived experiences of women in this study highlight several important points. Firstly, some locations may not permit familiar rhythms to be re-established, either through lack of facilities, extremes of climate or physical terrain, or differences in social and cultural environment. This means that a sense of loss is being constantly reinforced, making it very difficult, or even impossible, for women to re-establish a sense of belonging. Secondly, for frequent movers like Marie and Rosie, repeated loss of social support systems
and occupational credentials makes the task of reconstructing their identity, time and time again, a painful struggle. Thirdly, the depth of loss experienced by some movers, particularly when such loss is ignored by a partner, can deflect the amount of emotional energy available for implementing adjustment strategies, thus delaying or even obviating the 'moving on' process.

Degree of damage

The experiences of women like Marte, Joanne and Rosie challenge the whole notion that relocation is a linear adjustment process in which all movers reach a stage of re-connection and growth. Clearly, choice and motivation, frequency of moves, and actual location, impact strongly upon the scope and depth of loss experienced by movers. This in turn affects emotional robustness and the capacity to access and enjoy any possible benefits.

Weiss (1990) suggests that "degree of damage" (p.6) may be an appropriate term to describe the losses associated with geographic mobility. While he links this to a recovery process he emphasises that, where losses are severe, recovery may only be partial or incomplete. This concept of 'degree of damage' appears to provide a more suitable framework for describing and analysing the results of this study, which clearly indicate: firstly, that there is always some loss involved in relocation and that individuals may experience different losses, depending on the choice and context of the move; secondly, that accompanying partners are likely to experience relocation significantly differently to the primary mover, particularly in relation to work; thirdly, that the amount of emotional energy available to an individual to engage in the adaptation process is likely to be in inverse proportion
to the extent of loss suffered; fourthly, that accumulated damage from frequent moves, may result in loss of identity for accompanying partners; and, finally, that particular locations may increase the scope and severity of losses, particularly for women. This view of moving challenges the popular model of relocation which portrays all relocaters as moving through distinct stages of disruption, loss and adjustment, to re-connection and growth (Adler, 1975; de Cieri, Dowling & Taylor, 1991; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Nicholson, 1990).

This 'degree of damage' framework also allows us to see individuals interacting in a process in which numerous variables, including gender, marital status, work history, culture, and ideology, influence their degree of loss and their level of recovery. It enables us to better understand the vastly different experiences of women like, say, Sandra and Joanne. On one hand, Sandra, who had no conflict over choice, and had obtained employment shortly after her arrival - a job which structured her time, provided her with status, sense of identity and connection with colleagues - experienced relatively little damage and achieved a high level of recovery in a relatively short space of time. On the other hand, the choice, context and lived experience of Joanne, were completely different. As a wife, a mother and a 'reluctant mover', she experienced a much higher degree of emotional loss and damage as a result of relocation and after ten months was still in survival mode.

The notion of 'degree of damage', also provides a framework for movers from which to understand more fully their own experience. Not naming the losses of relocation leaves women "alone in the shadows - alone, bewildered and ashamed" (McCollum, 1990, p.63). It can also leave them angry and resentful, as some of the stories in this study testify. Bayes' (1989) finding that relocating women often look
internally to find a reason for their unhappiness was reflected by several of the women in this study, who attributed at least part of their difficulties in relocating to being: "hormonal" (Joanne), "menopausal" (Marte), and, "pre-menstrual" (Rosie). At the time of the interview, none of the married movers, at least, appeared to have done any real reckoning of the gains and losses of relocation for themselves and none seemed aware of the socio-political constraints that governed their relocation experience. Making visible the losses and the possible 'damage' involved in relocation challenges the myth of universal adjustment and equal rewards for all movers.

This chapter has illustrated that relocation takes place within a dominant ideology which values occupational achievement over connections and affiliation (Miller, 1986) and where women's emotional needs and emotional work are both exploited and unacknowledged (Rowland, 1988). Women's ability to recognise and interact with these ideological forces are influenced by a wide range of variables, including marital status, age of children, economic dependence, education, work history and emotional robustness. This, in turn, influences their relocation experience, making survival, rather than growth, the goal for some women. In the absence of 'legitimised' knowledge which reflects their reality women may blame themselves for failure to adjust. A model of relocation, such as that suggested earlier, challenges dominant discourses about relocation by acknowledging the complexities of relocation, the differences in individuals' experiences, and the contradictions in the experiences for men and women.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE JOURNEY ENDS

I found that reading through [transcript] was really good. I never really saw it all down like that before. When I'd read it I felt like...O.K. that's how it is and I'm ready to go on. (Marie)

This concluding chapter draws together the multiple strands of this research project: firstly, by reflecting on the aims of this study; secondly, by articulating the connection between the relocation experiences of the women in this study and the oppressive ideologies that seek to redefine their lives; thirdly, by suggesting possible directions for future research and, fourthly, by tracing my own dual journeys as mover and as researcher.

The aims of this study were: to describe and analyse the experiences of women who relocated to a remote town; to examine the strategies they used to adapt to their new environment; to explore how gender impacted on their experiences of relocation; and, to provide a base for further feminist studies in this area. These objectives have clearly been achieved by the qualitative nature and feminist focus of this study, which placed the participants at the centre of the research. Their stories have provided data which is rich and relevant. Participants' words have been quoted extensively throughout the study, to help their stories come alive for the reader, and to acknowledge their expertise on what they have experienced.

Their words have revealed far more than I expected, highlighting the interaction between aspects of women's psychology, dominant ideologies of family and work, and women's relocation experiences. Their stories expose the gendered nature of the relocation experience, the hidden cost of moving for some women, and the extent of the relocation work that women do. They also challenge the notion of
relocation as positive and progressive for all and provide tantalising glimpses of future directions for research. The achievement of the objectives of this study will be further illustrated by a summary of the complex themes and subthemes revealed by the data which show the connection between women’s relocation experiences and dominant ideologies that seek to constrain them.

The impact of choice

The relocation stories revealed in this study indicate that moving is experienced by women in highly individual, deeply emotional, and psychologically complex ways, and that the perception of choice is the cornerstone upon which women’s experiences are built. For partnered movers the decision to move was a complicated one, creating tension between their own needs and the needs of their partner and families. With little personal benefit to be gained from the relocation, other than the maintenance of marital and family relationships, some partnered movers struggled with conflicting feelings of loss and love, when the personal implications of their choice became apparent. For single movers, without the constraints of a partner’s desires or interests to consider, no such conflict existed. The extent to which movers felt they had freedom of choice affected the extent and depth of their losses, the amount of emotional energy available for relocation work, and the coping strategies they used.

This study has used Miller’s (1986) model of women’s psychological development as a framework to interpret relocation decision-making and to incorporate the relocation experience within the broader context of women’s lives. Partnered women in this study, made decisions about relocation that clearly reflected the importance of
the primary relationships in their lives, which Miller sees as the central element of women's psychological development. Dominant ideologies of marriage and family interacted with this aspect of women's personalities to influence their decisions about relocation. Single women in this study, who were relatively free of those ideological restrictions, made decisions directly related to their own needs and desires. For women who had moved frequently, the concept of choice was even more problematic, influenced not only by psychic needs and ideological demands, but by the precedent created by a history of moving.

This study has made it clear then that, for women, relocation decision-making takes place within a psychic and ideological framework which strongly influences the outcome. The importance of caring and connecting for women, make it difficult for them to oppose a relocation they themselves don't want to pursue. Choice and context of a move, have a strong impact on the scope of relocation losses that women experience and on their capacity to engage in coping strategies.

**Counting the cost**

The narrative nature of this research has highlighted the impact of choice and context on the depth and extent of relocating losses, and has uncovered the interactive and cumulative nature of those losses. In addition, women have identified physical and cultural restrictions, specifically related to the remote location, which have added to the overall costs of relocation for participants in this study.

As shown in earlier studies, disruption of friendships and social support networks was a key element in participants' relocation stories,
resulting in feelings of grief, isolation and loneliness. By acknowledging the importance of women’s friendships, the feminist focus of this study underlines the depth of this loss for relocating women “for many women the threat of disruption of connections is perceived not as just a loss of a relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self” (Miller, 1986. p.83). As mentioned earlier, relocation disrupts numerous connections in women’s lives and this necessitates reweaving the social fabric of their lives.

Job loss has been identified in some earlier studies, as a significant relocation cost for women who accompany working partners (Bayes, 1989; McCollum, 1990). In Palmerstown, this loss was exacerbated by the male-dominated employment profile of the town, and the existing informal smalltown networks, which meant that relocating women were doubly disadvantaged. As women, and as newcomers, they were marginalised, when it came to job opportunities, and this compounded their sense of loss. These results highlight the fact that moving reinforces gender inequities in the workplace, through additional disruption of women's work record (often already interrupted by child bearing and rearing), lack of suitable work, and/or prevention of career development. This increases partnered women's economic dependence, which, in turn, results in relocation, and oppressive ideologies becoming mutually reinforcing. This effect is heightened in a remote location, where such ideologies of work, gender and family, are particularly dominant.

Loss of identity for women, as a consequence of relocation, appears to have received scant attention in the relocation literature, yet it was clearly a crucial issue for some women in this study. Recurrent loss of jobs associated with frequent moving, resulted in an erosion of
confidence and credentials. The importance of paid work for relocating women cannot be over-emphasised. Without an occupational ‘tag’, women can feel invisible in their new community, particularly when their unpaid emotional work is not recognised or valued. As a source of status, structure, economic independence and social networks, paid work reinforces women’s sense of self, particularly when other sources of affirmation have been lost through moving.

For women accustomed to city living, moving to a small, remote town, with an unfamiliar physical and social environment, generated feelings of culture shock. Palmerstown represented an unfamiliar landscape and harsh climate, which restricted their physical movements and diminished their sense of control over their environment. This loss of control was accentuated by smalltown culture, which was experienced as constricting and oppressive to women. Although culture shock appears to be only associated with international relocation in the literature, the discrepancies experienced by some women in this study between their former lives and current experiences, deepened their feelings of deprivation, alienation and rejection, and left them in a state of estrangement in their own country.

The extent and depth of losses which individual women experience when they move are influenced by freedom of choice, context of the move, availability of work, and ideological constraints. The emotional and social cost of relocation is often not anticipated by movers, and cumulative losses over time can result in damage to women’s sense of self. Some relocation benefits were identified, mostly by single women, and primarily related to the physical environment, but, at the time of the interviews, the losses outweighed the gains for
most of the participants. Counting the cost of relocation for women has been a major focus of this research project.

Acknowledging the work

One of the most striking things to emerge from this study was the extent of the emotional work undertaken by women to re-establish themselves (and in some cases their families) emotionally, socially and structurally in their new location. As mentioned previously, moving is a powerful disrupter of women's lives and work was needed to heal the psychic breaches caused by the multiple losses of relocation. Old connections had to be maintained, and new links made to people, places and community. Fresh structures and patterns of day-to-day living had to be implemented, in the face of an unfamiliar physical and social environment. The tasks were numerous and required a wide range of strategies which took time, energy, skill and persistence.

That this relocation work is neither named nor acknowledged in mainstream literature is disappointing, but not surprising. Feminists have long emphasised the fact that women's emotional work is not only ignored, but often exploited (Finch, 1983; Rowland, 1988; Spender, 1985). Here again ideologies of work and family interact with the relocation experience, creating a paradox for women. Women are expected to take on the emotional work of relocation and, in fact, are blamed if they do not succeed (Lundy 1994), yet popular conceptions of relocation make the emotional work of moving invisible, even to women themselves. On reading their transcripts, several women remarked that they had not realized what a difficult experience relocation was, until they had read their own stories. Naming and making visible aspects of women's lives, which are often "omitted, distorted or misunderstood"
Relocation work is harder for women whose motivation for moving is the maintenance of family relationships rather than any personal desire to relocate. Conflicting feelings about the move drains emotional energy, leaving little to invest in the relocation work. For some married women in this research, the decision to move was an act of love and duty, which was neither recognised nor acknowledged by their partners and this led to feelings of anger, resentment and guilt. These feelings were exacerbated by the disparity between partners' day-to-day relocation experiences. Work provided male partners with career continuity, status, structure, and social networks, all of which their wives had to work hard to achieve or, indeed, in some cases, found it impossible to achieve.

These results point to relocation being a gendered experience, strongly influenced by ideologies of work, marriage and family. Relocation for married women restricts participation in many sources of potential satisfaction, achievement and affirmation, which moving provides to their working male partners. Single women, who choose to move, and can obtain suitable work in their new relocation, are more likely to report positively on their relocation experiences. Paradoxically, while singleness may be restrictive in some ways, it also provides a certain freedom of marginalization in relation to relocation. With less ideological constraints, single women can not only make choices based on their own needs, but also have more freedom to rescind their relocation decision, should the experience not fulfil those needs. Rowland (1983) points out that, for married women, discussions of ‘the family’ neglect conflicts of interests or differences within it.
Clearly, when it comes to relocation for some women, the family is a "locus of struggle" (Rowland, p.101). This points to the importance of frank discussion by couples about who will benefit from moving, and the need for some explicit gain and loss calculations before and after relocation.

An alternative view

The feminist focus of this research challenges two of the popular representations of relocation in mainstream literature: firstly, that relocation is equally beneficial for all movers; and, secondly, that the relocation process is a temporal one, with individuals moving through distinct stages of disruption, loss, and adjustment, to re-connection and growth. An alternative view of relocation is suggested, which acknowledges the psychic damage caused by the multiple losses of relocation which make it difficult or, in some cases, impossible for women to 'move on'.

As discussed in the previous section, not only are the costs and benefits of relocation different for married women and their partners, but, between women themselves relocation will be experienced very differently depending on choice and context of the move, marital status, availability of work, and previous relocation experiences. For all women, relocation to a remote area provides additional challenges, in terms of an unfamiliar physical and social environment.

It is acknowledged that some of the participants in this study were quite recent movers, and that further adjustments may be made over time. However, the data in this study strongly suggest that individual differences of choice and context of the move have a greater
impact on women's experiences of relocation, than time spent in the new location. For some women, the losses associated with relocation were so great, that daily emotional survival was a struggle. Despite the difficulties these women experienced, their stories are testament to their emotional strength and courage, and their commitment to family relationships. The fact that they continued to engage in a process which was clearly of little benefit to them, reflects the centrality of relationships in their lives, but, perhaps, also reflects Miller's (1986) belief that women who act on that underlying psychological motive “can be led into subservience” (p.89). A view of relocation based on 'degree of damage' caused by the losses of moving is suggested by this study, as a way of acknowledging the complexity of moving for women.

The importance of affiliative connections for women as emphasised by Miller (1986) is a recurring theme throughout the relocation experience. The other underlying influence is that of gender. Both these themes underpin women's experience of relocation, impacting upon choice and motivation, upon the type and extent of losses they experience, upon the strategies available to them, and upon their day-to-day experiences of relocation.

**Future directions**

This study has provided a fascinating glimpse of the complex experiences of women relocating to a remote area. The gendered nature of those experiences highlights the importance of a feminist focus on this aspect of women's lives. Possible areas for future study include a deeper exploration of some of the issues already revealed in this study, such as: the impact of marital status on both the motivation and the experience of relocation; the effect of frequent relocation on women's
lives, particularly in relation to employment and identity; and the
differences between men’s and women’s experiences of relocation.
Other areas of interest include a more in-depth analysis of the impact
of the age, ethnicity, class and/or sexual orientation of relocating
women, as well as length of stay, and differences between city and
remote relocation.

Dual journeys

This study was undertaken in response to my personal and
professional experiences of relocation to this remote location. On a
personal level, one of the things that puzzled me, was why this
particular move was more traumatic than earlier experiences of
relocation. At the start of my research journey, I put this down to the
fact that I now viewed the world from a feminist perspective and
baulked at the gendered culture of a small town. Through sharing the
stories of the women in this research project, I now realise this is only
part of the picture. Although relocations earlier in my life had taken
place within the context of marriage and family, upon reflection, they
had been initiated by me in an attempt to escape some of the
ideological constraints of my cultural and religious background.
Earlier moves were relatively unproblematic because I had exercised
choice about moving, and the gains for me outweighed the losses. The
context of this move, however, while freely chosen and providing some
professional benefits, also meant some significant losses in terms of
social, physical and cultural environments.

Sharing the stories of the women in this study has had a
profound effect on my understanding of my own relocation experience.
The power and the pain of my own experience was reflected back to me
in the words of these women, who so generously and honestly spoke
their knowledge of relocation. They confirmed my own sense of struggle
and affirmed my sense of self. My strong sense of connection with these
women through our shared stories sustained me in the face of my own
relocation losses.

On a professional level, as a counsellor, I have gained enormous
insight into the elements which contribute to what's called relocation
stress in the existing literature. This has been due to the richness of
the data provided by the narrative, qualitative nature of this work.
Deconstructing relocation stress, in the light of these results, reveals
constrained decision-making for women, significant emotional, physical
and social losses, discounting of women's relocation work, and the
debilitating effects of frequent moving. It is significant, and perhaps
not entirely coincidental, that during my time in Palmerstown I have
begun practising a counselling approach which encourages
deconstruction of the dominant myths about our lives. Women, in
particular, often come to counselling with ideologically-contaminated
stories of personal failure. Narrative therapy encourages people to
challenge the dominant stories of their lives, to resurrect their
alternative knowledges of their own experiences, and, to generate their
own "solution knowledges" (White & Epston, 1990. p.viii). This research
project has helped confirm for me the importance and integrity of this
approach to therapy.

As a researcher, this has been my first major qualitative research
project. Although philosophically and intuitively drawn to this
approach, rather than the hypothesis-driven methods of psychological
research with which I had been familiar, I still had some lingering
doubts at the start of the project about the capacity of this approach to
provide sufficient and appropriate data to analyse the experience of relocation. What I found was that the qualitative approach yielded not only an abundance of high-quality data, but the opportunity to consult with participants that my conceptualisation of the data truly reflected their experiences. In addition, the narrative nature of the data ensured that the relocation experiences were not isolated from the rest of participants' lives, which enabled links to be drawn between these experiences and the broader ideological context of their lives.

Another concern was that it felt a little 'unsafe' to be so firmly situated personally in the research project. There is a certain sense of personal safety in remaining invisible in the research process and transforming what people say and do into what Stanley and Wise (1990) call the "abstract mode" (p.162) of social sciences. But just as their relocation experiences cannot, and must not, be isolated from the rest of women's lives, so this research project cannot, and must not, be isolated from the rest of my life. Stanley and Wise point out that to deny the presence of the personal in presentations of feminist research is to deny the importance of the personal elsewhere. The semi-structured interviews used in this study provided an interactive experience which helped close the gap between me as researcher and the participants as researched. My personal and professional experiences of relocation have informed and enriched this study and, in turn, the research experience has enriched my life and has enabled me to integrate the personal, professional and academic aspects of my life.

Epilogue

It is ironic, and perhaps fitting, that as I write this final chapter I am in the final days of my own relocation experience in this remote...
town. I am acutely aware of the impending disruption to the connections I have made with the women in this study. With this in mind I present a brief epilogue to the stories of these women in honour of their struggle for continuity and connection.

Stella decided to leave Palmerstown, shortly after the research interview, because of lack of job opportunities and the gendered culture of the town. We have kept in touch by phone and facsimile and she is currently settled in a large town in Northern Australia, which has provided professional job opportunities and a less oppressive culture. When asked to reflect on her time in Palmerstown Stella described it as “a perfect opportunity to take time out, re-evaluate my life, garden at every opportunity and discover who I was again...[but]...Palmerstown has been a good place to leave. [The new town] has been a good place to arrive in.”

Sandra continues to enjoy life in Palmerstown. She attributes this to the fact that she enjoys her job and loves the environmental surroundings of Palmerstown, which provide ample opportunity for her to pursue a particular recreational interest. Although the gendered culture of the town sometimes bothers her, she feels she “can give as good as she gets” having been brought up in a similar small town.

Fiona joined a community festival committee around the time of the research interview. She was subsequently involved in weeks of intensive voluntary work which gave her “something to do with [her] time” and also provided her with the longed-for connection with ‘locals’. The resultant success of the festival gave her “a great sense of achievement.....it made me feel good about myself.....it was something for me”. Fiona and her husband have almost completed their 12-month contract in Palmerstown and are considering the possibility of
relocating to a city in Northern Australia which would provide job opportunities for them both. Fiona feels she learned a lot about relocation in the past year, particularly with being involved in the research project, and is adamant that she would not move to a town as small and isolated at Palmerstown again.

Joanne describes herself as "coping better' with life in Palmerstown now. At times she finds herself "almost enjoying it.” She admits that her stay is made bearable by the fact that she can escape frequently to the city, which is something none of the other movers could afford. She is currently planning to be away from Palmerstown for most of the approaching hot summer months. Under these circumstances she is prepared to stay for a few more years while her husband builds up the business, which they then plan to sell. She feels that to leave now would mean that all the struggle has been for nothing. She believes that if they gain financially, the move will have provided at least some benefit for her.

Marie left Palmerstown about four months after the research interview when her husband suddenly resigned from his job. Because of their abrupt departure she did not have an opportunity to say goodbye to me personally but sent a message through a friend to explain why she was leaving. During discussions after reading her transcript, and the conceptualisation of the data, Marie said that she had found being involved in the research project very valuable in terms of understanding her relocation experiences. She also said "I think if you don’t acknowledge the sense of loss then it just stays in there [indicating her heart] and then from time to time it comes up again. It never really goes away".
Rosie is currently working part-time in a supermarket in Palmerstown. The job is far below her skill and experience, but she sees no other opportunities for employment within the town and the family needs the money. She is still unhappy in Palmerstown and is hoping that her husband will apply for a transfer to a city next year.
Appendix A

Edith Cowan University

Faculty of Health & Human Services

Consent Form

Project Title: Women on the move: A qualitative study of relocation to a remote area

Researcher: Ann Jones. Student ID [redacted]

Project Supervisors: Dr Suellen Murray. Phone: 089 400 5712
Pamela Weatherill. Phone: 089 400 5640.
School of Community Studies, Edith Cowan University.

The purpose of this research is to describe the experiences of women who move from a city or large regional centre to live in a remote area. I am interested in the thoughts and feelings of each woman in relation to the relocation experience and the strategies used to feel settled in the new environment. It is hoped that this study will give 'a voice' to women in the relocation research literature.

Informal interviews will be conducted in your home, or another location of your choice. Interviews will be audiotaped and will last approximately one hour. Participants may stop the tape at any point in the interview, or may request that all, or part of, the tape be erased. A copy of her own transcript will be given to each woman for editing, clarification or adding information, before analysis of the data. Following analysis, I will consult with each participant and present my interpretation of the research findings, before writing the final report. Participants will be encouraged to discuss whether the identified themes and issues truly represent their experiences. Any differences in meaning or interpretation, if unresolved, will be presented in the final report.

No names will be used on the tapes and both the tapes and transcripts will be coded anonymously. When not in direct use by the researcher, the tapes and transcripts will be kept securely locked. Quotations used in the research report will contain no identifying information.

Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time up to completion of final the report. Participants may contact the research supervisors if they have concerns or queries about the project.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I ......................................................... hereby agree to voluntarily participate in this project under the conditions set out above. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed research and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that this research has no connection with Ann Jones's work as a family counsellor.

Participant: .............................................. Dated: .................................. 

Researcher: .............................................. Dated: ..................................
REFERENCES


in terms of an unfamiliar physical and social environment.

It is acknowledged that some of the participants in this study were quite recent movers, and that further adjustments may be made over time. However, the data in this study strongly suggest that individual differences of choice and context of the move have a greater

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