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## Kimberley Women : Their Experiences of Making a Remote Locality Home

Elaine Rabbitt  
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***"I found it lonely because the north is a man's place or was. I don't think so much now. But it certainly was then and I had no contacts" (Merle, personal communication, June 20, 1998).***

***Kimberley Women: Their experiences of making a remote locality home.***

Elaine Rabbitt

**Doctor of Philosophy Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies at Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, Western Australia.**

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## **Abstract**

In previous histories of Western Australia, pre-dominantly written from a male Eurocentric viewpoint, scant attention has been drawn to the everyday lives of country women. The study described in this dissertation explores the responses of women to the challenges of relocation and settlement within a remote locality in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study. The theoretical framework investigates the notion that the Kimberley was a man's domain and historically women's contribution and experience has been discounted. Within the research area of feminist social history the study explores national and international migration and residency in a remote locality after World War II. It is asserted that women played an integral role in the development of the Kimberley region and their presence impacted upon the ever-changing social, economic and political climate of the area.

Primary and secondary sources were used to gather the data. A broad spectrum of women, of various ages, cultural backgrounds and length of residency in the Kimberley were interviewed. This study includes Indigenous women from other parts of Australia, Anglo Australia women and migrant women of non-English and English-speaking background.

## **Acknowledgements**

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This study would not have been possible without the friendship, support and advice of many women and men in the Broome community. I would like to thank my family and friends and in particular Alison Spencer and my sister Marie Wood for their expertise and patience.

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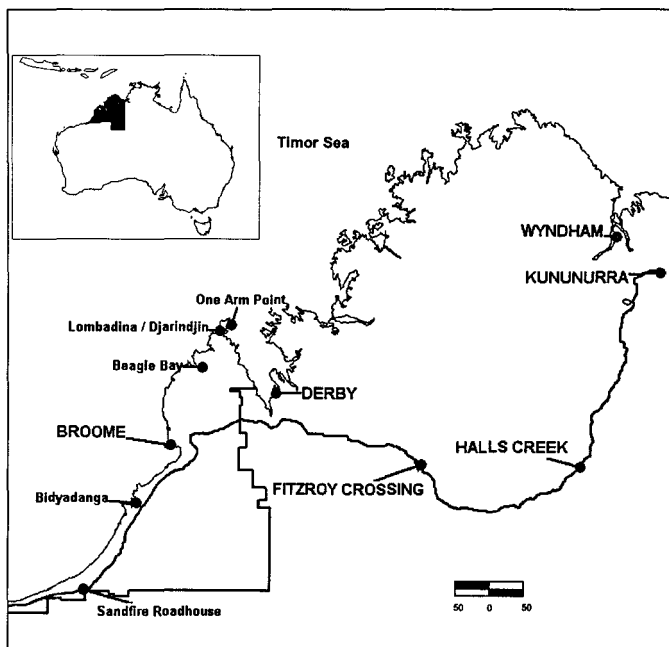
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### Map of the Kimberley Western Australia

The data for this map was selected from datasets: AUSLIG 250K Geodata, Wacoast, LOCWA1M and VLG.

## **Chapter One: Preamble**

### ***Rationale of the Study***

The north of Western Australia is a vast area divided into two regions, the Pilbara and the Kimberley. Diverse in physical features and opportunities, it is home to a multiracial resident population who live in towns, communities, stations and outstations. This dissertation focuses on a group of women residing in the Kimberley region. It is based on the stories of 24 Indigenous and non-Indigenous women who relocated to Broome from other parts of Australia and overseas. The lifestyles of the women and their experiences of settling in an area, considered by some to be isolated and remote, are investigated. The differences among these women, and the circumstances underlying their relocation, are many and varied. They shared in common a process of resettlement and adjustment. Factors such as ethnicity, class, age, family circumstances, education, economic and marital status and religion, are considered.

The Indigenous women of the Kimberley, the largest group of women in the region, are not the focus of this study. Rather, the emphasis is upon the recorded personal histories of a group of women who have relocated to the Broome area. The women's experiences of settlement on the Kimberley frontier, post World War II until 1998, have been analysed. It is recognised that popular histories of Broome tend to focus on and romanticise the 'heydays' of the pearling industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This history of Broome, based on the women's first person accounts, stories, views and perspectives, is interwoven with secondary sources to present an alternative viewpoint to traditional histories. The interviews were conducted in 1998.

This research is based on the notion that the north of Western Australia is considered by many non-Indigenous people relocating to the area to be isolated and remote from other populated areas of Australia. The Kimberley region has been considered frontier country by colonial explorers and settler Australians for centuries. In traditional western histories the area has been portrayed as a man's domain (Battye, 1915; Edwards, 1983; Kimberley, 1897; Ronan, 1958).

### ***Genesis of the Thesis***

To place in context my interests in and subsequent research on this topic, I present the following synopsis of how this thesis came about. Broome was a small town when I arrived in October 1976. My own settlement into the Broome community, as a young Anglo Australian woman was one of numerous adventures and new experiences. It was my first experience of north west culture. As I began to mix with the Broome locals and stayed for the onset of the wet and Christmas I felt an affinity with town and the community. I began to know people and they knew me as I settled into small town familiarity which developed over a quarter of a century of residence.

Over the years I have been involved in many community organisations, mainly as a volunteer, but at other times as an employee. Through this community participation I have met a diverse range of Broome people who have become friends and acquaintances. By being involved and resident in the community over a considerable length of time I have been privy to many a conversation about Broome and its past. I have been privileged on many occasions to interview locals and long-term Broome residents, and have my questions answered. They have trusted me with versions of their own stories and other Broome stories. Recording the first person accounts of some locals and long-term residents coupled with my reading of Broome and the Kimberley has enhanced my knowledge of the area.

The focus of this research is women like me, who have relocated to Broome. My own experiences are a version of many women's stories of settlement, adjustment, and involvement and of making a remote locality home.

### ***Clarification of Key Terms***

It is acknowledged that some of the terminologies used throughout this thesis are racist in origin. I would like to emphasize that these terms are not used to intentionally insult the people to whom reference is made.

#### ***Terms Used by the Project Participants***

**Black people:** refers to dark skinned, Indigenous people, both men and women from diverse backgrounds.

**Coloureds:** refers to people of mixed racial descent such as those of Indigenous, Torres Strait Islander, Asian and European descent.

**Gardya or Kartiya:** is a Kimberley specific word meaning white people. It was coined by Indigenous people to refer to white or light skinned non-Indigenous people, both men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Kimberley Language Resource Centre, personal communication, April 28, 2003).

**Half castes:** refers to Aboriginal people with a mixed ancestry.

**Koepangers:** people from Timor.

**Locals:** Indigenous and non-Indigenous people born and raised in the area

**Malays:** a collective term used in the colonial days of Broome to refer to people from Malaysia and other South East Asian people. It was used in reference to the Asian peoples living and working in the pearling port. This included indentured labourers from various part of South East Asia: Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, China and the Dutch East Indies.

**Manila men:** men from the Philippines also referred to as Asians or Asiatics.

Melanesian or South Sea Islander: a person with origins from Vanuatu.

"I'm just a South Sea Islander - nothing else. But everybody gets me mixed up for a Thursday Islander, but I'm a South Sea islander. The same as Melanesian. Even Aboriginal people think I'm TI (Thursday Islander). Everybody thinks that" (Arlene, personal communication, March 6, 1998).

Mung Beans or hippies: refers to people who sought an alternative lifestyle in Broome. The term was commonly used on the late 1970s and 1980s in reference to people who camped in the sand dunes.

New Hebrides: Vanuatu.

Pearl masters: men who owned pearling companies or were in charge of a pearling lugger.

Thursday Island: the main administrative island of Torres Strait Islands.

TI's: Torres Strait Islanders.

Tourists: travellers away from home, temporarily at leisure who utilise goods and services.

White people: refers to white or light skinned non-Indigenous people, both men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

### ***Government Terms***

Aliens: a xenophobic label that was used by government agencies. In Broome, the derogatory term was used when referring to the Asian people and their descendants of mixed racial origin.

Area North: is the northern region of Australia comprising the Kimberley and Pilbara regions in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Far Northern Queensland.

Asiatics: a term used to refer to Asian people.

**Full-bloods:** a term used to refer to people of Indigenous origins.

**Native:** a label used by government agencies when referring to Indigenous peoples and their descendants.

### ***Terms Used by the Researcher***

**Ambonese:** people from the Indonesian Island, 200 nautical miles north of Darwin.

**A mile:** an imperial system of measurement equal to approximately 1.6 kilometres.

**Anglo-Australian:** Australians who are descendants of British, Irish and Welsh immigrants, (the 'boat people', of the past 200 years).

**Asian:** a generic term. In this study it refers to people from countries in the region to the immediate north of Australia including the Philippines and Japan.

**Baby Boomers:** people born in Australia between July 1946 and June 1961 (Salt, 2001, p. 154).

**Batavia:** now known as Jakarta, Indonesia.

**Blackbirding:** a derogatory term used to refer to the practice of enslaving Indigenous peoples.

**Blow-ins:** a colloquial term used by Broome residents to refer to people who live in town for a short period of time.

**Dummying:** the practice of using a person who was eligible to apply for a pearling license on behalf of those not eligible.

**Dutch East Indies or Spice Islands:** now known as Indonesia.

**Dry season:** the period from May until September, the cooler, winter months.

**Fathom:** a unit of depth in the imperial system equal to 6 feet or 1.8288 m, used in nautical measurements.

Feminist: the politics of being a woman.

Frontier: means the border of a settled part of the country and is often used in a broad sense (Refer to the *Literature Review* for academic explanations). The concept of the Kimberley as the 'last frontier' has been romanticised to lure tourists to the area. At the Kununurra airport a welcome sign embedded in rock says: "Welcome to the Shire of Wyndham/East Kimberley The Last Frontier". A National Park in the Kimberley, Purnululu (The Bungle Bungles) is also referred to as Western Australia's wilderness frontier.

Indigenous Australians: the women and men who are the descendants of Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders.

Internal or national migrants: Australian born people who relocate within Australia from their place of origin.

Indigenous people: descendants from the original inhabitants of an area or country.

Lay up season: coincided with the wet season or cyclone season from November to March or April.

Ockers: Australian males who celebrate "drinking and a boorish masculinity" (Kirkby, pp 200-203).

Outstations: settlements away from a community or town.

Overseas immigrants: Australian residents who have migrated from overseas.

Personal communications: personal interviews, letters, memos, public speeches and discussions.

Shell openers: members of the pearling crew assigned to opening and checking the pearl shell contents.

Small towns: population centres with between 1,000 and 19,999 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998).

Tenders: members of the pearling lugger crew, whose duty was to attend to the diver's needs.

Traditional owners: Aboriginal people who have in accordance with Aboriginal tradition, social, economic and spiritual affiliation with and responsibilities for the land or any part thereof, of the region [Kimberley]. (Contained in the rules of the Kimberley Land Council Aboriginal Corporation).

Wet season: the period from November to March or April when summer monsoonal rains are expected.

### ***The Aim of the Study***

The aim of this study is to explore and document the experiences of a diverse range of Kimberley women who have made a remote locality home since World War II. An investigation of the intersections of gender, race, class and ethnicity has been undertaken within the context of the women's relocation and settlement. The experiences and interrelationships of both national and international women immigrants to the town of Broome have been examined. This study is a contribution to the sparse literature available in Australia on country towns and communities. This area of research, taking a female centred approach, is one that has been briefly documented.

### ***The Structure of the Thesis***

The historical overview of Broome presented in this introductory chapter lays the foundation for the investigation of women's experiences of making a remote locality home. The information contained in this chapter has mainly been derived from secondary sources and archival material.

Chapter Two, *The Literature Review* presents a review of literature relevant to this study. The diverse group of women interviewed for this project raised a wide variety of issues in relation to their relocation and settlement in Broome. The diversity of their lived experiences required the researcher to review a wide range of literature across many academic disciplines. This included literature pertaining to Australian frontier history and the establishment of colonial outposts in the Kimberley. A female centred approach has been

undertaken through an examination of feminist literature with a focus on standpoint theory relating to the lived experience of women in small country towns.

Chapter Three, *Methodology* is a detailed analysis of the methodology used to undertake this study. The means of gathering oral histories as the primary source of data for this project is detailed. The use of oral histories as a feminist tool is also examined. I have analysed the women's stories and used their scripts as the basis of the study.

In Chapter Four, *First Impressions*, the women are introduced with their personal, albeit brief, biographical data outlining when they arrived in Broome and under what circumstances. All of the women, except one, gave their consent for their first names to be used for the purpose of this study. The women are referred to by their first names only and the names of other people mentioned by them, whether family or friends, have been omitted. The chapter presents the women's first impressions of living in Broome.

Chapter Five, *Belonging*, follows the stories of the women and investigates how they managed in their new location. The women's sense of belonging is explored through friendships formed and their involvement in community organisations. The intricacies of living in a small town and being known are touched upon and further analysed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six, *Changing Times*, continues with a focus on the women's commentaries on development and how Broome and its residents were changing. The women's views on the tourist industry and the related investment in facilities in Broome are examined. Their opinions regarding being accepted in a small town are explored.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, the major themes of the women's stories are drawn together. Their stories exemplify the notion that the town of Broome, a small and popular Western Australian town, differs from other small towns around Australia. They experienced social conditions and power relations unique to the locality. They showed a resilience and were open

to new challenges. They initiated support networks to meet their requirements. Although most of the women have stayed in Broome long-term, others have left.

### ***The Context of the Thesis***

In order to place this study in context, it is necessary to provide a brief description of the area now known as the Kimberley region, and the town of Broome. A historical analysis of the era preceding this study is presented. This is to set the context for the study and explain the continuities that affect Broome even today, particularly in relation to perceptions of frontier status and views of a male dominated province. The founding of Broome as a colonial settlement, exploiting the pearl shell resource and responding to the economic requirements of the London pearl shell market is explored.

A brief overview of the physical and demographic features of the Kimberley is given, followed by an outline of the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the township of Broome. An examination of how the pearling port was established, flourished, declined and slowly rejuvenated into a thriving regional services centre, pearling port and tourist town is also offered.

### ***Physical Features of the Kimberley***

The Kimberley is Western Australia's northern region and comprises one sixth of the state's landmass. The region covers an area of 421,451 square kilometres, which is approximately the size of France. It is in close proximity to Indonesia and Asia. The Kimberley is bordered by the Arafura Sea to the north, the Timor Sea to the west, the Indian Ocean to the south west, the Great Sandy Desert to the south and the Northern Territory to the east. Broome, the largest town, is only one and a half hours' flying time north to Bali, Indonesia.

The climate is tropical, with "two significant seasons [the 'wet' and the 'dry'] separated by brief transitional periods" (Kenneally, Edinger & Willing, 1996, p. 5). Indigenous concepts of the seasonal patterns are more complex than the western, dualistic model of wet and dry. Indigenous seasons are recognised according to variations in wind and rainfall patterns, and the abundance of plant and animal food from the land (Kenneally et al. p. 7).

Winter, from May until September, is commonly referred to as the dry season. The major weather features are clear blue skies and comfortable night and day temperatures, ranging from an average of 15 degrees to 32 degrees celsius. At this time the sea is azure blue.

In contrast to the cool, dry weather is the hot, dry build up to the wet season from late September, through October, November and early December. This season features mostly clear blue skies with rare storms later in the season. Monthly temperatures range from the mid 20s to over 40 degrees celsius.

The wet season from December to April features cloud cover and cyclonic skies as well as hot and humid days. The humidity builds up with the onset of monsoonal rain in the latter part of the season and at times brings cyclone activity (Shire of Broome, 1995, p. 26). The temperature ranges from the high 20s to the low 30s.

The vegetation changes markedly according to the time of year and the amount of rainfall received. The torrential rains can cause flooding and make unsealed roads to outlying communities impassable. Major community and outstation residents may be denied road access to the major Kimberley town centres for lengthy periods, requiring basic food supplies to be airlifted to the residents. The unpredictable onset of flooding causing lack of access means that residents may also not be able to return to their outlying homes.

### ***Topography***

The Kimberley terrain is vast; rugged in some areas and flat in others. Features of the coastal terrain, particularly in the Broome area, include white, sandy beaches, mangrove swamps and the azure and/or grey seas. The 11-metre tidal range significantly affects the coastal environment. It has "an important influence on the types of plants, marine animals and birds to be found" (Kenneally et al. 1996, p. 11). There is an abundance of fish and seafood delicacies.

The tide influences opportunities for coastal recreation. High tide may bring cooling westerly winds but very high tides may also bring the discomfort of insects such as sand flies. Local knowledge of the tides, creeks and coastline create many opportunities for fishing. Low tide brings the exposure of the reefs and the opportunity to gather seafood. Beach activities are planned according to the tide.

### ***Locality***

The Kimberley region is divided into four Shires: the Shires of Wyndham/East Kimberley, Halls Creek, Derby/West Kimberley and the Shire of Broome. Broome is the largest of the six major towns in the Kimberley. Tourism promotions market Broome as 'The Gateway' to the Kimberley, 'Pearl of the North' or 'Pearl Coast'. The township of Broome is situated on Roebuck Bay, approximately 2,200 kilometres north of Perth and 1,800 kilometres south west of Darwin. The nearest town is Derby, a smaller centre approximately 240 kilometres to the north east.

### ***Demographic Context***

The number of people resident in the Kimberley region has remained relatively small compared to the size of the area. The Indigenous population always has and continues to out-number the non-Indigenous population in the region. Indigenous people are the largest group; the non-Indigenous inhabitants reside predominantly in the six Kimberley towns. The majority of non-Indigenous people are employed providing services or in the tourism, pearling or the cattle industry. Other non-Indigenous people are concentrated in small groups on mining sites, pearl farms, pastoral stations and Indigenous communities.

The current census figures for the Kimberley, as well as those produced in the past, are unreliable due to the methods of enumeration. These censuses are used by government agencies to estimate the population of the region. A report, *The Outcome Data Measurement Unfinished Business* by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Office of Evaluation and Audit

(2002), states that population counts for Indigenous Australians in the Commonwealth Government Census are questionable.

The relatively poor coverage of Indigenous people is due to a number of factors including the areas the Indigenous people generally living are more likely to be missed by the census, poor literacy levels, high mobility and general reluctance on the part of Indigenous people not to participate in censuses (p. 16).

"Although the censuses specifically asks each person to report on his or her place of usual residence, this information is frequently not reported" (Office of Evaluation and Audit ATSI, 2002, p. 17). Furthermore, "the net migration of Indigenous peoples between states and territories is assumed as insignificant" (p. 21), and compounds the under numeration. "The absence of reliable information" (p. 22), makes it difficult to estimate population figures which have ramifications for the social, economic and political life of Indigenous communities.

One of the major contributors leading to the under numeration of Indigenous people is the method of census data collection (Crough & Christophersen, 1993, pp. 19-23). There are a number of factors which have a bearing on the validity of Indigenous inhabitants' census data. These include the non-delivery of census forms for those in remote communities and outstations, the absence of literacy levels to understand and complete the form, failure to return the form and a reticence to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander for the purpose of the census collection (Choo, 2001).

From the time of Federation in 1901, until the 1967 Referendum, Indigenous Australians were not included in official census figures. "A question on 'race' was asked in all Australian censuses to exclude Aboriginal people from official population figures, a Constitutional requirement" (ABS, 1996, p. 2). These classifications were exclusionary provisions based on the narrow interpretation of Aboriginal to mean 'full-bloods', persons with more than 50% Aboriginal blood. 'Full-bloods' "were then subtracted from the official population figure" (ABS, p. 6). Government agencies classified Indigenous peoples according to their definitions of race, rather than allowing Indigenous peoples the right to self-identity (Dodson, 1994).

Guessing the number of Indigenous people in Australia, and across northern Australia, became a preoccupation of non-Indigenous, settler Australians. Estimates or 'guesstimates' of Indigenous peoples in colonial times, as they are today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, are a construct for determining government funding and resources. The 'white' settlers were concerned about the number of 'tribal' people and controlling them, despite their dependency on them for survival. At the turn of the 20th Century, official reports produced by the newly established Aborigines Department noted the increasing half-caste population with concern. After the census of 1916, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A.O. Neville reported that the 'full blood' Indigenous population was decreasing rapidly to the point of disintegration after only one generation. Government figures were based on unreliable counts conducted by departmental administrators. Station owners and missionaries were required to keep a tally of 'bush natives' with whom they made contact (Choo, 2001).

Prior to the 1966 Census, Indigenous people 'out of contact' were not enumerated and estimates of these were made by authorities responsible for native welfare (ABS, 1996, p. 6). As a result of the 1967 referendum, questions relating to race in the official census were changed. The number of Indigenous people enumerated in the census has continued to increase. It is acknowledged that a portion of this increase can be attributed to increased efforts by the Electoral Commission to ensure Indigenous coverage.

The inaccurate census figures preclude any detailed analyses of the composition of residents of Broome and the Kimberley. The greater inaccuracy of Indigenous population estimates from previous censuses means any analysis of the changing composition of the population over time also would be inaccurate and meaningless.

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**Table 1: Estimated Population of Broome 1947-2001**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
1947	449	572	1,021
1954	438	657	1,095
1961	491	731	1,222
1966	607	963	1,570
1971	809	1,159	1,968
1976	1,337	1,583	2,920
1981	1,723	1,943	3,666
1986	1,966	4,130	6,096
1991	3,596	3,940	7,536
1996	4,323	4,502	8,825

*Note.* The data from 1947 – 1966 is from the Census of Australia, Western Australia. The data from 1971 – 1996 is from Western Australia Year Books.

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**Table 2: Estimated Population of Broome 2001 Indigenous and Non-Indigenous**

	Women	Men	Total
Indigenous	1,409	1,308	2,717
Non-Indigenous	5,516	5,891	11,407
Not Stated	342	576	1,118
Total	7,467	7,775	15,242

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*Note.* Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census of Population and Housing Broome (IARE 21001). 897.8 sq. Kms. No. 101 Selected characteristics by Indigenous status by sex.

### ***Isolation: Myth or Reality?***

Indigenous people lived and worked in groups supporting one another; therefore the perception of isolation was not a part of their experience. Isolation is a Euro-centric western term implying segregation or feeling apart and alone. Yet it is experienced by Indigenous people outside of their 'country'. It is a recurring theme developed in this study. In this thesis the women's viewpoint of relocating and establishing themselves in a new environment was explored and relates to both their physical and mental isolation. Both physical and mental isolation from familiar environments are repetitive themes that emerge in the women's stories.

A dimension of 'isolation' for Kimberley residents is the distance between Perth and the region. "Probably always the greatest enemy of the settlers in this area [Kimberley], both past and present, has been distance, seldom the country itself" (Nixon, 1978, p. 86). Perth, capital of Western Australia is the most remote capital city in the world. Broome is as isolated from Perth as Perth is from the Eastern States. This distance affects the range, quality and cost of goods and services available. The overall cost of living is high, compared to other regions in the state and across Australia. Freight fees increase costs. These expenses influence the lifestyle of residents, particularly low-income

earners, as prices are charged for consumer goods are higher than anywhere else in Australia (Crough & Christophersen, 1993; (<http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/rpi/index.asp>).

Added to the physical isolation is the possible 'mental' isolation experienced by people relocating to new environments. Unfamiliarity with the people and the area can be traumatic for some, and rejuvenating for others who enjoy the challenge of re-establishing themselves. Separation from family and friends can manifest 'loneliness'. Also, limited proficiency in English and a longing for the cultural affiliations of one's country of origin are themes that will be developed in the thesis. In the 1990s the isolation was reduced due to cheaper and more frequent airline flights. This included international flights to Bali in Indonesia. Major disruptions to transport arrangements such as the pilot strike in the late 1980s and the collapse of Ansett Australia in 2001 dramatically increased the isolation of Broome. Reminiscent of the past, the direct links to Asia were severed.

The following synopsis provides an overview of the Kimberley's settlement from colonial days to 1998. The confrontation of differing cultures with the establishment of the pearling port and colonial settlement is explored. An overview of significant events in the history of Broome provides the reader with further background material to assist in placing the study in context.

### ***Historical Sources***

There are numerous secondary sources available on the history of the Kimberley region (Clement, 1996). Kimberley histories written around the turn of the 20th Century placed emphasis on exploration and pastoralism, the establishment of the pearling industry, Broome as a pearling port, and the quest for payable gold in the East Kimberley (Kimberley, 1897; McDonald, 1907; Praagh & Lloyd, 1904). They focused on geographic and economic factors, such as location and climate, rather than the social aspects of the development of the area.

The prolific authorship of Ion Idriess from the mid 1930s through to the mid 1950s provided Australian readers with images of the Kimberley region. Despite his somewhat romantic descriptions of relations between Indigenous people and their 'white bosses' on the Kimberley frontier, Idriess' numerous publications were popular and widely read. His tales of 'wild natives' and 'hardworking white men' incorporated the myth of the male pioneer on the frontier (Jebb, 1998, p. 45). Idriess' description created an impression that the region was devoid of 'white' women: "Hardly a dozen white women in the West Kimberley... In the Nor-West there are no white women at all inland... The Kimberleys owing to their extreme isolation are essentially a man's land" (Idriess, 1937, p. 4-5). His references to Indigenous women in relation to 'white' men were always in the role of the subordinate, 'black' servant. He did not allude to the sexual exploitation of Indigenous women by white men (Jebb 1998, p. 62).

Other published stories of Broome such as Bartlett, (1954) and Ronan, (1958, 1964, 1966) present the reader with anecdotes and tales of Broome and the surrounding areas. The impact of colonial legislation and the ensuing social struggle for Indigenous peoples were the focus of publications by anthropologists such as Biskup (1973) and Rowley (1970).

In these publications, written by men, women received little attention. There was a tendency to treat females and males as a homogenous group. This approach remained consistent in studies focusing on the pearling industry and the role of Aboriginal and Asian labour produced by students of Western Australian universities in the 1960s and 1970s. These traditional historiographies have neglected the experiences of women, let alone the experiences of country women living in a frontier society such as the remote Kimberley region.

An exception is the publications of Mary Durack (1959, 1969, 1983), who provided a conventional perspective of women's lives in the Kimberley. Her viewpoint reflected her own position within Kimberley society. Given this, her work still remains one of the few useful resources for researchers constructing

the history of women in the Kimberley and is reviewed in further detail in Chapter Two of this study, *The Literature Review*.

Changes in attitudes towards women, Indigenous and migrant people in the 1960s resulted in the publication of their stories and histories. Social history as an academic discipline was recognised and developed in the 1970s. There was a growth in publications about the Kimberley region and in particular the town of Broome (Bain, 1982; Edwards, 1983; Weller, 1979).

However, as other researchers have found (Choo, 1995; Hunt, 1986) there is a lack of recorded information on women in the Kimberley. Generally, they have been omitted from official records. Little mention is made of women. An exception is the emphasis placed on the negative roles ascribed to Indigenous and Japanese women in contrast to the high society lifestyle of the pearlers' wives (Bain, 1982; Durack, 1959, 1983; Edwards, 1983; Sissons, 1979; Weller, 1979).

There is an absence of literature on the Kimberley and the pearling industry portraying the response of Indigenous people to the invasion and expropriation of their resources. The paucity of information on this topic is an example of history being contrived to reflect the opinions or values of the dominant culture, in this instance a patriarchal society. Any contribution of Indigenous women was not considered as they were seen as being of a lower status.

The importance of social history in representing the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples was acknowledged with the establishment of the first Indigenous publishing house, the Broome based Magabala Books, in 1987. Publications cover a variety of subjects which include autobiographies, local histories, traditional stories and natural histories of the Kimberley. However, one of the fundamental problems is that there is no public access to Indigenous accounts of the colonisation of traditional lands, such as those provided to Native Title Courts. This makes the Indigenous peoples' viewpoint of this history less evident.

In the next section of this study I provide an overview of Broome's history from the colonial establishment to the late 1990s. A brief history of Broome post World War II is given in this chapter, with subsequent chapters providing more information. I have hypothesised that the establishment of the town of Broome was unlike other remote towns. It was established primarily as the land base for the sea based pearling industry and so became an international 'hub' of activity. The pearling industry was reliant on direct links to Singapore. The Blue Funnel Line was a shipping service that made a regular port of call to Broome with labourers and provisions (Rabbitt, 1991, p. 14).

In 1888, the Eastern Extension Australasia and the China Telegraph Company laid an international telegraph cable between Broome and Java. This provided access to overseas communication between Broome and the imperial capital London (Airey, n.d.). Broome received news from London before the rest of Australia. The establishment and maintenance of these links were driven by the need for information on the price of pearl shell on the world market. These connections overshadowed associations with Perth, the administrative centre, 2,200 kilometres south.

The town of Broome was also used as a base for the exploration of inland areas, the traditional country of Indigenous peoples. The Kimberley was surveyed for gold and pastoral lands.

### ***The Traditional Owners***

The Indigenous peoples of the Kimberley, the traditional owners, are members of diverse communities with distinctive cultures (Pedersen, 1995; Tindale, 1974). They have their own languages, art forms and dreamtime stories, spanning at least 60,000 years (Flood, 1997). "Group identity was determined by common language, kinship relations and a spiritual, ancestral connection with land" (Pedersen, 1995, p. 20).

The coastal area, Gularabulu, "the coast where the sun goes down" (Roe, 1983, p. i) refers to the country along the coast now known as the Kullam region. This includes Bidyadanga (formerly La Grange Mission), the traditional lands of the Yawuru and Jugun peoples (now known as Broome town area) and Dampierland, a peninsula north of Broome (Roe; Yu, 1992). The country known as the Dampier Peninsula is the traditional country of the Bard, Jawi, Nyul Nyul, Djaber, Djaber and Nimanburu peoples (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe 1984). There are variations in the spelling of the names of the different groups of people (Tindale, 1974).

Groups of Indigenous peoples lived on a rich diet of seafood; delicacies such as fish, pearl meat, oysters and turtle. Staple foods from the land included bush fruit, animals and birds. They also harvested pearl shell, decorated them and wore them as ornaments (Bain, 1982, p. 14). Pearl shells were an important trade item for Indigenous people and were exchanged across wide stretches of the country. The north west coast, the source of pearl shells had cultural significance. The pearl shell linked Indigenous people in this region to other regions of Australia and were major items of exchange on Indigenous preoccupation trade routes (Akerman & Stanton, 1994, pp. 14-17). The Broome area was and continues to be a meeting place or crossroads where the fresh water and desert peoples meet the salt water people.

Indigenous oral traditions and archaeological evidence show that the Indigenous people of the Kimberley have continued their way of life for thousands of years. They had associations with their Indigenous Asian neighbours to the north (Crawford, 1981; Crawford, 2001; Flood, 1997;

McGann, 1990). It has been recorded that the Macassan seafarers from the East Indonesian Island of Sulawesi had visited the Kimberley Coast, known to them as 'Kai Djawa' (MacKnight 1978, p. 27), "at least two centuries before Australia was colonised by the British" (Choo, 1995, p. 92). They travelled across the sea on their 'praus' to trade or barter for items such as trepang, beche der meche or sea slug, sandalwood, turtle and pearl shell, bird's nest and plumes (MacKnight, 1978; Hercuse & Sutton, 1986).

While the history and anthropology of the Indigenous people is of significance to the context of northern Australia's settlement, a detailed exploration is beyond the scope of this research. Choo (1994), reviewed literature pertaining to Aboriginal people with emphasis on women's lives and implications for Australian historiography. She referred to a proliferation of anthropologists, writers and researchers whose studies "can be useful to historians in providing a 'slice of life'" (Choo, p. 80).

A brief synopsis of the traditional owners of the Kullarri region has been given. This is to provide background information on the history of the Broome area for the purpose of the thesis. The following section provides a précis of European exploration and exploitation of the Kimberley region.

### ***Exploration and Exploitation***

The geographical features of the Kimberley region, coupled with its remoteness from the settled south west of the state and eastern Australia, were deterrents to its exploration by non-Indigenous people. The area was one of the last in Australia to be settled as explorers had difficulties with the distance, expanse, and remoteness of the area. Unaccustomed to the tropics, they found the climatic conditions of the Kimberley region of north Western Australia, intense (Flood, 1997; Pedersen, 1995).

European explorers had ventured into the region as early as the late 17th Century, but it was not until the 1860s that attempts were made to exploit the land for commercial enterprise. In the ideology of these European colonisers the area represented, the opportunity for growth, development and social mobility. Pastoralists, pearlers, adventurers and opportunists of all kinds were

lured to the region by the prospect of making money. The British Colonial government named the north of Western Australia the Kimberley, after the first Earl of Kimberley, John Woodhouse, in 1880 (Choo, 2001).

Under the guise of 'exploration', British colonists identified areas of grazing country. Pastoralists gambled on establishing sheep and cattle stations in country which for them was unknown territory. They knew little about the Indigenous people, their culture and the climatic conditions (Pedersen, 1995). These northern squatters were revered by fellow colonists as "pioneering crusaders, extending civilised order to the wilderness" (Pedersen, 1995, p. 24). They were non-Indigenous people who anticipated wealth from pastoral, agricultural and mining activities. The rudimentary conditions coupled with isolation from settled areas in Australia, were significant factors contributing to the formation of a male stronghold. White women, as child bearers, were considered by their men to be too delicate to survive in the area (Hunt, 1986).

For the traditional owners of the land, the arrival of the colonists was an invasion of the territory they had occupied for thousands of years. They resisted the European entrepreneurs; the newcomers and their confrontations were fraught with issues of power, domination and misunderstandings (Flood, 1997; Jebb & Haebich, 1991). The Indigenous way of life, particularly the hunting and gathering of food according to seasons and locality, was disturbed by the new arrivals. Homesteads were built and areas fenced in, limiting Indigenous access to traditional country.

In a bid to protect their land from the foreign invasion the traditional owners organised raids on settler homesteads and stole and speared cattle. Battles were fought over land, waterholes and livestock. The introduction of cattle and their subsequent grazing and water requirements were a foreign practice to the traditional owners. They had no concept of private ownership of animals. They resisted the occupation of their land, water and food sources. The colonists did not anticipate the intensity of their resistance. The result was violence with injustices, massacres and a significant death toll.

Contemporary Australian historians have been outspoken in their analysis of the settling of the Australian frontier (Green, 1995; Pedersen, 1995; Reynolds, 1972, 1982, 1987, 1996, 1999; Ryan, 1981; Windschuttle, 2002). Reynolds has written extensively on the colonial conquest of Australia. He has challenged the misrepresentation of history by raising issues such as the violent nature of invasion, the implications of frontier conflict and the absence of Indigenous viewpoints. Euro-centric versions of history have omitted Indigenous people. This has been used as a means to justify the nature of colonial relationships and the type of interactions between Indigenous people and the invaders.

In contrast, Windschuttle (2002) presented the view that Australian frontier history had been exaggerated. In *The Fabrication of Australian History*, he scrutinised contemporary interpretations of Australian history and created a furore over his claims that Australian frontier violence had been embellished. He alleged that the 'leftist bias' of historians such as Reynolds and Ryan (1981) present Aboriginal oral history as historical fact, rather than 'official records'. He has challenged Ryan's account of genocide in Tasmania, and accused Reynolds of creating 'black arm band history'.

Accounts of conflict on the Kimberley frontier have been well documented. A contemporary version of the story of the East Kimberley massacre at Forrest River has been written by Green (1995). Pedersen (1995) has rewritten the story of Jandamarra, an Indigenous, Kimberley warrior and the defence of his country, known as the 'Bunuba Resistance'. Jandamarra (his anglicised name was 'Pigeon') was a member of the Bunuba group of people whose traditional lands were under threat from pastoral leases. He is the central character in Ion Idriess' (1952), *Outlaws of the Leopolds*.

### ***The Colonial Enterprise***

Prior to the establishment of townships in the Kimberley, pastoralists and pearlers relied on shipping for supplies. Ambitious pastoralists arriving overland realised the potential of harvesting pearl shell in the area now known as Broome, after noticing that the local Indigenous people wore pearl shell ornaments (Bain, 1982). They returned to the recently established pearling port of Cossack (1,000 kms south) and utilised the luggers there to sail with stores and provisions to search further north for the lucrative pearl shell. When the port of Broome was established stores and provisions were provided from Singapore, Batavia and Koepang, as well as Fremantle. Many of these early pearlers who were to reside in Broome, were well-educated men, "black sheep members of the English Navy and Maritime Fleets" (Bligh, 1984; Bain, p. 32).

The viability of the pearling industry depended upon labour. Settler Australian labour was not readily available in the Kimberley. Convict labour was not an option, as the colonial British government banned the use of convicts north of the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel (Hunt, 1986, pp. 15-16). In collaboration, the pastoralists and the pearlers used unscrupulous measures to gain the labour they desperately required. Indigenous people were kidnapped and enslaved to work as divers. A practice known as 'blackbirding' evolved and Indigenous men, women and children became its victims. They were taken from their traditional homes and subjected to inhumane conditions (Choo, 1995, p. 94; Hunt, 1986, pp. 24-26; Pedersen, 1995, p. 19). Some were forced to work as divers: "using stockwhips, neck chains and guns the pearlers 'blackbirded' Indigenous people" (Yu, 1992, p. 1). Many grew terminally ill from lung infections, others died of shark attacks or drowning. Those who survived were not necessarily returned to their original country and families, as many were forcibly taken to Christian missions (Pedersen 1995, p. 12).

The Colonial Government of Western Australia passed a series of Acts in the 1870s which tightened control over 'native' employment. Legislation affecting Indigenous people in the pearling industry included:

An Act to Regulate the Hiring and Service of Aboriginal Natives Engaged in the Pearl Shell Fishery; and to Prohibit the Employment of Women Therein 1871 (34 Vic. No. 14); the Pearl Shell Fishery Regulation Act 1873 (37 Vic. No. 11); and the Pearl Shell Fishery Regulation Act 1875 (39 Vic. No. 13) (Choo, 2001, p. 122).

Protective regulations on the hiring of Indigenous women and men were introduced, prohibiting the employment of Indigenous women on luggers but permitting their employment on stations (Durack, 1969; Herbert, n.d.; Yu, 1992). However, in the 19th Century, these government controls held little authority in the Kimberley, because the area was too far removed from the colonial headquarters in Perth for enforcement (Battye, 1915; Pedersen, 1995). Regular police patrols along the coast were instigated in the early part of the 20th Century to monitor relations between Indigenous women and Asian men (Choo, 2001, p. 103) rather than check the behaviour of the pearling masters.

The towns of Broome and Derby were established in the Kimberley in the same year, 1883. The settlement at Broome was proclaimed the Township of Broome after the Colonial Governor, Frederick Napier Broome. Broome became a catalyst for the expansion of the pearling industry and Derby the centre for the cattle industry in the region. Each town grew as a base to service these respective developments. Wyndham and Halls Creek townships were established towards the end of the 19th Century as a result of the East Kimberley gold rush (Hunt, 1986, pp. 29, 32).

In the 1880s, the pearling industry was dependant on the skills of the local Indigenous women and men for retrieving and carting the shells, and on the town for its supply of basic services. In 1887, legislation was passed requiring the use of the hardhat helmets, diving suits and air pumps. Indigenous people were not permitted to work as divers under the new regulations. The pearling masters were forced to seek alternative labour. Men were recruited from south and South East Asia under indentured contracts (Yu,

1992).

There was much speculation on the potential of the pearling industry and the sustainability of the abundant pearl beds. The colonial government continued to pass legislation to preserve the wealth of the industry for the 'white' population. The Pearling Act of 1889 allowed only white Australians, British citizens and naturalised 'aliens' to be granted pearling licenses.

To the European settlers, the term 'Asiatic' or 'Malays', was used collectively when referring to the Asian peoples living and working in the pearling port. This terminology included indentured labourers from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, China and the Dutch East Indies (Anderson, 1978, p. 18; Schaper, 1995). Filipinos, Koepangers, Ambonese, Chinese and Japanese worked side by side under a pearling master. They were usually indentured for a fixed term of two years at a predetermined rate of remuneration. At the end of the agreement they were returned to their port of recruitment (Choo, 1995; McGann, 1990).

The objective of this section has been to provide an account of Kimberley settlement. The next section presents an historical overview of the women who settled in and contributed to Broome's development in the early part of the 20th Century.

### ***Women in the Broome Area***

#### ***Indigenous Women***

In traditional society Indigenous women were economically independent. They worked collectively to take responsibility for their children and to gather food. They had important roles to fill in ceremonial life (Bell, 1983; Berndt, 1979; Green, 1985).

Their traditional life was disrupted when they came into contact with the European settlers who considered them to be primitive, of a lower status than Indigenous men and without morals according to 'Christian' principles (Spry 1996, p. 3). The pearling masters requiring a source of labour took them from

their families and forced them to work for them. They were also abducted and subjected to sexual indecencies, as companions for the pearlers (Baker, 1982; Bartlett, 1954; Durack, 1969; Edwards, 1983; Hunt, 1986).

They were most capable in their abilities to dive and gather shell, being able to remain submerged for long periods and dive to depths of seven fathoms. A belief that they had keener eyesight than men made them preferred workers (Biskup, 1973, p. 19; Yu, 1999). After 1871 Indigenous women, prohibited from visiting pearling vessels, were used to cart and sort pearl shell. Others became servants in the pearling masters' homesteads (Hunt, 1986, p. 103).

The women lived under the colonial regime of the pearling masters who dominated a society where interracial and cross-class relationships were socially unacceptable. Many Indigenous people were susceptible to communicable disease such as small pox, measles and venereal disease brought to the region by outsiders. As a result, many Indigenous people died or their lives were shortened (Hunt, 1986; Shepherd, 1975). Indigenous women were not paid cash for their liaisons. Instead a bottle of ale or a bag of flour or rice were considered to be sufficient remuneration (Biskup, 1973, p. 36; Choo, 2001, p. 99; Hunt, 1986, p. 112).

### ***Anglo Australian Women (National Migrants)***

Broome was a small and isolated outpost for newly arrived European settlers. In 1895 there were 50 permanent white residents in Broome and of these, only six were women (Durack, 1969, p. 112). Other women lived on schooners with their husbands and called ashore occasionally (Durack, p. 87). In the 19th Century women settling in Broome and the Kimberley were in the minority. They had to overcome their fear of being isolated in a strange and harsh environment, as did the men. Information on the lives of white women in the Kimberley, such as the pearler masters' wives and some missionaries, can be gleaned from Kimberley historiographies (Durack, 1969; Hunt, 1986).

Broome was totally alien to the pearlers' wives who were isolated from familiar customs and traditions. Their lives were affected by the unfamiliar climate, demanding living environment and poor hygienic conditions (Hunt, 1986). They depended entirely on their husbands for their livelihood and upon Indigenous servants to perform their menial domestic tasks. They employed adolescent Indigenous girls trained by the missionaries to cater for their family's needs. These girls completed domestic chores, such as carrying water, cleaning, the daily washing and minding the children (Hunt, 1986; Ronan, 1964).

Despite residing in the tropics, the pearlers' wives upheld English social etiquette and protocols. These women had an abundance of leisure time. They arranged luncheon and afternoon tea parties, and wore fashionable English clothing, unsuitable for the climate. Croquet was popular among the women who met and played every afternoon. The Weld Club, (a hotel burnt down in 1905), cricket, golf and tennis clubs were formed to provide places of recreation for the expanding European population (Bain, 1982, pp. 232–235; Broome Museum, n.d.).

### ***Overseas Migrant Women (International Migrants)***

Working Japanese women were among the first to settle in Broome "paving the way for [women] shopkeepers and labourers" (Hunt, 1986, p. 6, 126–128). Some Japanese women, and girls as young as 13, were smuggled into Broome after leaving Japan illegally. Others were brought into the country to work in one of the established Japanese businesses.

Traditional Kimberley histories have portrayed Japanese women living in Broome as a homogenous group who worked as prostitutes. However, this stereotypical notion has been challenged (Jones, 2002; Hamaguichi, personal communication, March 12, 2003). The growing Japanese community was very enterprising. They opened their own emporiums and laundries and established a Japanese hospital, market garden and soya sauce factory (Jones, 2002, 61–62). By 1921 there were at least 17 Japanese boarding houses and a growing Japanese quarter in Broome (Bain, 1982, pp. 91, 140; Hunt, 1986; Jones,

2002).

The influence of Japanese and Asian cultures permeated the town of Broome and its society. Durack (1969, p. 88) described Broome as having: "Oriental mystery and intrigue with its gambling houses, opium dens, and humble iron lean to's, the homes of the Asian crew along the foreshore". She also offered a romanticised description of the Japanese women. They "remained hidden from the public gaze behind tinkling bead curtains, their thin, high pitched singing and the soft plucking of their geisha lutes".

By the turn of the century the Japanese community was well established and Broome's multiracial population was segregated according to race and class.

### ***The White Australia Policy***

When Federation of Australia was celebrated in 1901, the first law passed by the new Commonwealth Government was the Immigration Restriction Bill, commonly referred to as the White Australia Policy. This Act, based on a determination to maintain racial homogeneity in Australia posed a serious threat to the north west port and to Western Australia's pearling industry in general. It was a xenophobic measure against prospective non-European or 'coloured' migrants. Such legislation served the interests of 'white' Australian nationalists. It reduced the number of non-European immigrants in the post Federation era (Collins, 1988, p. 9).

As previously mentioned, the burgeoning Australian pearling industry was reliant upon Asian divers and crew to maintain it. Asian men were a source of cheap labour. They proved to be reliable, hard workers and performed tasks that 'white' men were not capable of, or considered to be too arduous to be undertaken. The pearling masters applied to the government for exemptions from the Act for their divers and crew. This request, which was endorsed, ran counter to the policy, which in broad terms was implemented to maintain white racial superiority in Australia. Broome and the Torres Strait Islands were the only areas in Australia where exemptions to the White Australia Policy were endorsed (Broome museum, n.d.; Ganter, 1996).

In Broome, Asian men, on limited two to three year contracts, were permitted to work from their Broome base, but were not free citizens. Referred to as 'aliens', their movements were carefully monitored. The pearling masters were required to pay a bond for each crewmember which was forfeited if the crew absconded (Sissons, 1979, p. 9). The immigrants themselves lived in fear of deportation. On completion of their work contracts, the men were not granted extended exemptions. They had no option but to return home, spend time with their families, and reapply for another short contract.

The introduction of the Immigration Restriction Bill had limited the entry of Asian women into Australia and the indentured crewmembers were unable to bring their families with them. After years of living in Broome, many of these men had established a new family in Australia and their descendants were also classified as 'aliens'. Later some finally gained Australian citizenship (Jones, 2002 Yu & Tang Wei, 1999).

### ***The White Experiment***

The pearling industry continued to surge ahead as a major industry in Western Australia. To accommodate its labour requirements the quota of permits allowing Asian men into Australia was increased. By the early 1900s Broome was the largest settlement in the north of Western Australia (Praagh, 1904). This was the height of the pearling industry, when 403 pearling vessels were registered. Broome had become the world's largest and most affluent pearling centre (Broome Museum, n.d). The Asian divers, particularly the Japanese, were considered to hold the intellectual capital underpinning the industry.

Renewed calls were made for a strict enforcement of the White Australia Policy and for 'white' labour only to be used in the pearling industry. In 1912 in an attempt to overcome the Japanese monopoly over pearl shell diving, the Commonwealth Government funded twelve British Royal Navy divers to participate in what is now known as the 'white experiment' (Bailey, 2000). The divers and their tenders were expected to show their skill, resilience and aptitude for diving using modern equipment. The aim was to prove that the

pearling industry was not totally dependant on Japanese divers.

The master pearlers in Broome reluctantly complied with the Government initiative to introduce 'white' divers, even though the Asian labour force was much cheaper and far more skilled. After only one season the experiment failed. The imported white divers suffered paralysis and most died. The remaining divers left for Fremantle and an official inquiry concluded that the white divers' success had been impeded by the use of unsuitable equipment and lack of co-operation from crewmembers. The master pearlers continued to successfully argue for Asian labour to be employed in Broome (Bailey, 2000). The State and Federal Governments acknowledged that Broome was different to other parts of Australia as the Asian population continued to grow.

### ***A Class Conscious Society***

Although the white pearling masters depended on the knowledge and skill of their Japanese divers and Asian crewmen, the colour bar was firmly entrenched in the port. The Pearling Act of 1912 ensured a 'white' monopoly of the pearling industry. It was illegal for an 'alien' to own or lease vessels or any type of pearling operation. However, unofficially 'aliens' did invest capital in pearling ventures, using a 'white' person as proxy. This practice known as 'dummying' was continued discreetly, and women were apparently also involved in these illegal proceedings (Bain, 1982; Schaper, 1995).

Despite the interruption of World War 1, the Australian pearling industry based at Broome continued to thrive. The port remained a strong power base controlled by a small 'white' minority. It was a class conscious society based on distinction of ethnicity and employment. Throughout the town, which spread across one mile, there were clearly defined social and residential segments (Broome Museum, n.d).

The traditional owners, the Yawuru and Jugun peoples, had been dispossessed of their lands. Marginalised, some became fringe dwellers and lived segregated from the rest of the community on the outskirts of town. Under the *Western Australian Aborigines Act*, legislated in 1905, Indigenous people were forbidden to enter the town site. They were not able to cross the common

and enter Broome through what was metaphorically known as 'Broome gate' unless they were in 'lawful employment'. Most Indigenous people working in Broome town at the time were employed as servants for pearling masters or other government officials.

Approximately 4,000 Asian people, predominately men, lived in and around Broome's Chinatown in 1920. Many of these Asian people leased land and ran businesses. The bustling business centre was reminiscent of their home countries with its winding laneways and stores selling exotic goods and Asian foods. The majority of the Asians lived along the foreshore area which is now known as Chinatown (Broome Museum, n.d.; Durack, 1969; Jones, 2002; Redfearn, personal communication, July 19, 1991). Their accommodation was cramped as people crowded into corrugated iron buildings and ramshackle tin shacks.

The majority of histories of Broome and the pearling industry depict the Asian crewmembers as spending their periods of leave on shore, drinking, gambling and visiting prostitutes. The validity of this depiction is questionable. The Asian crewmembers spent their time repairing boats and contributing to the community during the 'lay up' season which coincided with the cyclone season from November to April (Bain, 1982; Hunt, 1986; Jones, 2002; Yu, 1999). The first Catholic Church was built by a group of Filipino men who were employed as crewmen on the luggers (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

There was a severe gender imbalance in the pearling port, in the early part of the 20th Century where the men outnumbered the women. The Asian women residing in the port were predominantly aging Japanese women who had entered Australia prior to 1901 (Jones 2002, p. 176; Sissons, 1979, p. 488;). "As far as I knew they were nearly all older women who had come to Australia before Federation and had not been forced to leave, they were able to stay on" (de Castilla, 1977, p. 24).

The master pearlers, magistrate, doctor, bank manager, pastoralists, senior government servants and some pearl buyers formed the apex of the social hierarchy (Hamaguichi, in Schaper, 1995, p. 114). They resided at the

end of town nearest the jetty and customs house where they built sprawling bungalows with large verandahs surrounded by lush gardens with coconut palms and mango trees. Indigenous people, both women and men were employed as servants in these houses and Indigenous prisoners worked as labourers to pave the wide streets with the shell grit of discarded pearl shells (Lowestein, 1970, p. 13). The European population were reliant upon both Asian and Indigenous labour to maintain their lifestyle in the tropics.

The period after World War 1 was an affluent time in the pearling industry. Pearling masters organised their business affairs with Europeans and, on occasion, Asian partners. They administered their pearling luggers and operations from the shore, rather than actually physically working on the boats (Battye, 1915; Schaper, 1995). They worked in offices in Chinatown and were easily "distinguished by their dapper dress and debonair lifestyle" (Broome Museum, n.d., n.p.).

Next on the social continuum were other European residents and their families. This included men working as shell openers, clerks, small business owners, plumbers, carpenters, and engineers. Their wives pre-occupied with home duties, were assisted by Indigenous servants (Frederick Redfearn, personal communication, July 19, 1991).

### ***Race Relations***

Racial tensions were widespread within the pearling industry. This was a consequence of strict racial stratification, administered and endorsed by the minority white European society. Asian labourers were classed according to a social continuum based on race. The divers were predominantly Japanese men who insisted upon having their countrymen as their tenders (Jones, 2002, p. 31). Other Asian crewmembers were assigned less well-paid tasks such as pearl shell sorting, cleaning and cooking. Pearling masters intentionally employed crews of mixed race in an attempt to avoid mutiny on the pearling luggers (Schaper, 1995). Tensions were high between the different ethnic groups and as the crewmembers were out at sea for months on end it was the responsibility of the white pearling master to keep animosities in check. Back

on shore ethnic identity was part of day-to-day life as the colour bar permeated most aspects of Broome town. Place of residency, social and recreational activities were clearly defined for each ethnic group.

In 1920 the non-Indigenous population of Broome was estimated to be around 5,000 people and 'coloured' people outnumbered the 'white' populace four to one (Battye, 1915; Durack, 1969; Schaper, 1995).

Racial conflict escalated in Broome in 1920. It was estimated that Japanese indentured labourers comprised 70 percent of Broome's Asian population. They lived together as a close-knit group and considered themselves to be above the other indentured Asian labourers. They were renowned in the international pearling circles as being very astute. Employed as divers and tenders they earned higher wages than their fellow crewmembers who performed other manual tasks. The Japanese people were well established with their own hospital, Buddhist School and Club as well as boarding houses and businesses (de Castilla, 1977; Jones, 2002; Shepherd, 1975).

In 1920, rioting occurred between the Asian residents of Chinatown. The violence, now referred to as the Broome race riots (Anderson, 1978), was between approximately 2,000 Japanese divers and their tenders, and 400 Koepangers and Malays (Hedland Times, 1971, October 28, p. 17). Schaper (1995) concluded that the racial conflict was a result of the simmering animosity between the Japanese and Koepangers who resented the way they were treated by the Japanese.

It was the European members of the community who, with the support of Japanese leaders, quelled the ethnic uprising after a few days. Unable to control the escalating violence, the police inspector appointed special constables. Many of these European men were soldiers returned from World War 1. Their task was to escort the outnumbered Koepangers to the safety of the police station and to ensure that the other Asian national groups did not become involved in the conflict. Mounted police patrolled the streets of Chinatown and a boat guarded the waters of Roebuck Bay. A curfew was

enforced and hotels, including the Japanese club, were closed. Several Koepangers and Japanese people were killed (Jones, 2002, p.105; Yu, 1992, p. 3). Police Inspector Thomas, the man responsible for organising the European community into a peace-keeping force, was the only European casualty, he died from exhaustion (Schaper, 1995, p. 127).

A brief history of Broome's pearl shell industry has been given. The following section provides an overview of the history of Broome in the latter part of the 20th Century. It is brief as the history of Broome after World War II is developed throughout this thesis through the women's stories.

### ***The Old Days Pass***

The jumping off place for lugger travel is Broome, that un-Australian town that has been built almost entirely on the pearl fishery; a town of about three hundred whites, some thousand or so Asiatics – Japanese, Koepangers, Manila men – a few Chinese, a hundred or two aboriginal and half castes, and various mixtures of nationality that would be hard to name (Love, 1936, p. 2).

Gradually the old days of the small pearlers passed and the control of the industry was maintained by a few companies (Ewers, 1935, p. 15; Frederick Redfearn, personal communication, 1991, July 19). The Great Depression had a severe impact on Broome. Pearl shell, not pearls, maintained the industry. The shell was cured for buttons and sold on the international market. To boost the northern economy the Broome meatworks was opened prior to World War II. This provided Broome with a link to the cattle industry and was a valued contribution to the town's economy for nearly sixty years.

### ***Impact of World War II***

Prior to World War II the general Australian public knew little of northern Australia and the Japanese people living there. At the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1941, all Japanese aliens were considered the enemy and were interned. Japanese people in Broome did not resist arrest and peacefully spent six weeks in gaol before they were shipped south to the internment camps (Anderson, 1978; Bain, 1982; Edwards, 1983; Jones, 2002).

The government seized the majority of luggers. The seaworthy vessels were destroyed, a precautionary measure against Japanese invasion. The remaining Asian crewmembers were paid off and sent home to their respective countries (Edwards, 1983, p. 125).

### ***Post War to 1998***

Although there was a short-lived revival at the beginning of the 1950s, the pearling industry never fully recovered from the impact of the Second World War. Luggers were left to rot in the mangroves on the foreshore. The war years had taken their toll on the town of Broome and the future of the pearling industry was bleak. In a bid to boost the economy and maintain a stable resident population new initiatives were undertaken. The customary freighting of food, household, building and business supplies by sea was supplemented by the addition of subsidised airfreight services.

After the war of course air freighting of vegetables made household chores so much easier. In those days we used to get a weekly supply of vegetables. They were dear compared to what Perth people paid. It was such a blessing to have fresh ones (de Castilla, 1977, p. 26).

The pearlery looked to Asia for new initiatives. In 1956, an agreement was struck with the Japanese government which allowed Australian, Japanese and other overseas capital to be invested in a joint, cultured pearl venture (Malone, Hancock & Jefferies, 1988).

The cultured pearl industry gave a new lease of life to Broome and the pearling industry. Progress was slow. Broome entered the 1960s in a depressed state (Bain, 1982; Broome Museum, n.d.; Durack, 1969; Edwards, 1983).

The roads weren't built and road transport didn't go as far as Broome until recent years. There's still the road between Port Hedland and Broome that is still not bituminised and it always took such a heavy toll of any vehicles. Even when they went as far as Port Hedland they didn't go on to Broome as it was pretty well cut off except by sea or air (de Castilla, 1977, p. 25).

By the late 1960s the Broome economy had received a boost with the opening of the Deep Water Port. Operations at the Broome Meatworks were expanded and the pearling industry had gained new momentum with the demand for live shell for the cultured pearl market.

Despite this economic optimism, Broome was still a small and remote northern seaport in the 1970s. In 1970 the first 'Shinju Matsuri', Festival of the Pearl was held as a celebration of Broome's multicultural and racially harmonious traditions. This festival laid the foundations for the development of the tourist industry. However, the cost of living remained high, infrastructure was lacking, there were no private homes available to rent and services were limited.

It was in the 1980s that Broome underwent its most rapid growth and social change. Developments such as the sealing of the Great Northern Highway between Broome and Port Hedland in 1982 prepared the way for the tourism industry. The building boom of the 1980s was unprecedented and the town's population doubled from 3,000 to 6,000 in the decade between 1976 and 1986 (Shire of Broome, 1989).

Broome became the major centre for providing the infrastructure for the growing Kimberley economy. The tourist industry was expanding, and new developments were being undertaken in the mining industry. At this time, the momentum of development, particularly in Broome, was influenced by the injection of international and state government funds into the regional economy.

In 1981, a British Lord Alistair McAlpine of West Green Britain came to Broome for a holiday. Similar to the opportunists who arrived in the Kimberley a century earlier, he had a vision for the future of Broome and the region. He recognised the potential of the area as an unspoilt tourist destination. McAlpine began to buy properties and formed the Broome Preservation Society and restored and refurbished old Broome buildings to their former splendour. The influence of the 'McAlpine Era' in shaping Broome as a tourist destination is expanded upon in Chapter Six.

In 1986, Broome became the service centre for BHP's Cadjebut mine operation. The mine site (known as the Lennard Shelf Operation, in the country of Jandamarra) is 80 kilometres north west of Fitzroy Crossing and 530 kilometres by road from Broome. Mining operations were taken over by Western Metals Corporation in 1994. The ore body of zinc and lead at this site was exhausted by 1998. Now mining continues in the area at the Kapok and Pillara sites. "So the small town became, of necessity, a beacon in the development of these vast hot regions" (Davies, 1989, p. 2).

### ***Tourism***

In the 1990s Broome's tourist industry flourished and the town became one of Western Australia's major tourist destinations. It was promoted on a national basis as a tropical paradise. Broome and its community were changing. The ramifications of this expansion were unprecedented. The main industries were the service industries, tourism, pearling and pastoralism. The idea of Broome being a remote destination became somewhat outdated with the advent of extensive air services. It is an urban township with suburbs and housing estates, tourist centres, commercial and industrial areas. It is also a centre and meeting place for Indigenous people living on communities and outstations, and for other community members from stations and outposts who come to town for supplies, business and medical attention.

Chinatown remained the town centre and a few old Broome families of Asian and Indigenous descent lived behind their businesses. Wealthy investors restored some of the pearlers' houses in 'old' Broome. Modern brick or steel and iron housing estates have been built, on land near Cable Beach and the area west of the Nillar Irbanjin (One Mile Community), known as Roebuck Estate.

This latter development is in itself an illustration of the growth of Broome. At the time of my arrival at Broome nearly thirty years ago, the One Mile Community, as its name suggests, was located on the outskirts of the Broome township. It is a camping ground for Indigenous people, who as previously mentioned were not permitted to camp within the Broome town precinct. It was

not considered an ideal residential location. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the recently established Roebuck Estate was a burgeoning residential area, attracting many first home buyers and investors. It is a desirable location because of its proximity to both Cable Beach and Broome's town centre.

Not only has the town's infrastructure changed but also the make up of the community. The stories of the women living in Broome relate to environmental progress, expansion and development issues, which affected Broome in the 1990s.

### ***Conclusion***

The object of Chapter One has been to provide a framework for this thesis. The physical features of the Kimberley and its topography have been described. A brief historical overview of the area has been provided, depicting the traditional owners, the exploration and exploitation of the colonial enterprise as well as the establishment of the pearling industry. The development of the pearl shell industry, the town of Broome and other service industries has been outlined.

In Chapter Two a broad cross section of literature is reviewed with the intention of furnishing a background of theories relating to the themes portrayed by the women through their stories. How the women mixed and interacted amongst other women and men, across the boundaries of ethnicity, religion and class is pivotal to this examination of women's role in the development of Broome. The principal factors shaping women's lifestyle in Broome, such as geographic and mental isolation, choices and constraints, identity, cohesion and belonging, marginalisation and exclusion will be developed in subsequent chapters.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### ***Introduction***

This study is a contribution to women's history in Australia and particularly in Broome, in the Kimberley region of north Western Australia. It is significant for three reasons. Firstly, as a feminist social history, this study, by analysing gendered social relationships within the structures of society, moves towards rectifying women's absence from conventional histories of the Kimberley. Secondly, it focuses on a defined geographical region. Finally, it adds to the sparse literature on isolated women in rural and remote areas of Australia. They are isolated in the context of being mentally and physically apart from others and from services.

Rather than just 'inserting' women into history, this study emphasises the essential role of women in the social, political and economic life of the Kimberley, an area traditionally known as a male frontier. It is a critique of the notion that the Kimberley region was exclusively a man's domain.

The concept of the frontier is not fixed. It is a changing phenomenon based on perspectives that are conditioned by the era, the advancement of technology, geographical circumstances and the media. Historical perceptions of the frontier or frontier society conjure up images of male pioneers forging ahead in the conquest to develop new land, driven by the hope of a better future (Kimberley, 1897; Ward, 1958). The pioneer has been represented as a special breed of person, an adventurous, independent spirit who is hardworking and determined. The lives of these people have been romanticised to invoke national mythologies of identity and liberation. Colonial notions of the frontier continue to influence perceptions and interpretations made today.

In Australia, historic perceptions of the frontier as being unoccupied land have changed with The Australian Law Court upholding that the common law of Australia recognised a form of traditional native title. The High Court in the 'Mabo vs Queensland' case, June 3 1992, dismissed the notion of 'terra nullius' (land belonging to no-one) at the time of colonial settlement. The Court held

that Indigenous peoples were displaced by the 'wrongful' acquisition of land by settlers (Nile, 1996, p. 2). This landmark decision for Indigenous Australian people further challenged the myth of the peaceful acquisition of land in Australia, where the pioneers battled against the land rather than the people.

This chapter gives an overview of frontier colonisation, rather than an in depth analysis of colonial theory. The notion of the frontier is scrutinised on a global, historical and local level to portray ideologies that have influenced contemporary perceptions of settlement, identity and ownership in Australia and particularly the Kimberley. Representations of colonialism on the Kimberley frontier, the assumptions of the colonisers, and racist and sexist trends are also examined. This is followed by a closer inspection of feminist deconstructions of the portrayal of the frontier as a 'womanless world', the historical presence of women on the Kimberley frontier and feminist standpoint theories. These perspectives are analysed in relation to the settlement of the Kimberley frontier.

Women lived and worked on the Kimberley frontier when the first towns were established. The formation of small towns as service centres on the Australian frontier paved the way for new settlers to establish themselves. Women have been and are present in these towns, making a contribution to the community. A review of literature pertaining to small towns and the lifestyle of residents is given. The topic of women's work, both paid and unpaid is also broached.

In the 21st Century, the Kimberley region is marketed as a wilderness frontier by the Kimberley Tourism Association (2003) and tourist operators. Pristine and untouched, the area is considered to be one of the last Australian frontiers, open to the adventurous.

Some of the women in this study came to the Kimberley as tourists on their way to somewhere else and stayed in Broome. Others came for employment and many accompanied their husbands relocating to the area for work opportunities. Their ventures of relocation to new northern frontiers have been recorded through personal narrative. These oral histories form the basis of the study.

To place the position of women on the Kimberley frontier in context, I have examined theoretical concepts related to women and colonial theories. Women's position in Australian history, feminist standpoint theories, small town theory and women's contribution to the community through unpaid voluntary work are also included. I have explored masculine models of the frontier and how Australian history has excluded women, rendered them as invisible and marginalised their contributions.

I found existing feminist theories, although diverse, to be limited within the context of this study of the experiences of women relocating to a small, remote town. My intention in this chapter is to overview existing theories that are relevant to this alternate women's history. In the next chapter I explain my reasons for using the medium of oral history and provide an overview of the theoretical constructs that underpin this methodology. In subsequent chapters I draw on the women's stories and secondary sources to highlight the commonalities, and to a lesser extent the differences of their experiences. An examination of data in conjunction with theory is used to draw conclusions in Chapter Seven.

### ***Colonial Assumptions***

"Stories are the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (Said, 1993, xiii).

Narrative provides an important perspective in portrayals of the global colonial experience, just as the dialogue and stories of Kimberley women form the basis of this study. Stories brought back by those from the colonies helped formulate a general worldview that the colonisers were bringing civilisation to barbaric people. Mysterious, exotic "'they' were not like 'us', and for that reason deserve to be ruled" (Said, 1993, p. xi). Narrative was used by those conversant with the imperial process to contest and reflect on frontier issues such as ownership, occupation and the future of the land. These oral testimonies became a source of empowerment for further colonial enterprises (Said, p. xiii). A further analysis of oral history as an alternative means of

providing a voice to minority peoples is presented in Chapter Three, *Methodology*.

### ***The Concept of the Frontier***

The concept of the frontier and its definition is subjective. A synopsis of differing standpoints is given to challenge the place of women on the frontier and in particular the Kimberley frontier. The colonial conquest and occupation of the Australian continent was driven by economic, political and social factors. Colonial ideology was based on the perception of early European arrivals' opinion that the wide-open spaces were available for their use and exploitation. The views of the Indigenous peoples were rarely considered. Colonial notions of the frontier and conquest for land underpin this thesis and its recognition of Kimberley history in the context of its ascribed frontier status.

Explanations of colonisation have inspired theoretical questions which have provoked debates on the ideology of colonialism as a composite of ideas. These ideas refer to several versions of global perspectives based on inter-related social, economic and political notions (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1988; Banton, 1998; Falkowski, 1992; Fanon, 1965; hooks, 1995; Kemp, 1967; Knorr, 1963; Miles, 1989; Memmi, 1990; Mommsen, 1980; Said, 1993). The following section is an overview of colonial ideologies.

Colonial ideology is based on assumptions about other people, who were categorised according to race, class, sex and ethnicity. Traditional European ideologies of power ascribed an inferior status to marginalised peoples in society. This stance led to conjecture about other races, cultures and lifestyles. Racist attitudes were well entrenched in European societies prior to colonial expansion and capitalist development. Colonial attitudes could be interpreted as a manifestation of pre-existing conditions in Europe.

The racist notion of Indigenous inferiority and western superiority undermined the importance of Indigenous society and traditions. The supposed biological differences of Indigenous peoples in the colonised territories were a racist justification used by colonists in regard to their settlement. Moral standards did not hinder or deter European exploitation of frontier resources for

material gain (Miles, 1989).

From the colonisers' perspective it was imperative that the penetration of land and territories be undertaken in the quest for new territories. Their right to embark upon such an endeavour was not questioned socially or politically. This tenet was accepted, as colonists were conditioned by their cultural backgrounds, their worldview and what they had heard from other European peoples' experiences of the colonies.

European political domination of territories was a quest to strengthen their empires and enhance their prestige and status as world powers. Each one wanted to optimise their control over the 'new' territories. Thus the idea of nationalism was advocated as a justification to usurp less developed territories and conquer new frontiers. Traditional European social hierarchy equated wealth with land ownership. This Euro-centric perspective was reinforced by the rise of economic capitalism (Kemp, 1967, p. 2; Knorr 1963; Mommsen 1980, p. 3).

The desire to own and cultivate land was a powerful influence that lured the colonists to new territories. Land ownership provided an incentive to potential settlers whereas the missionaries were motivated by their desire to convert the Indigenous peoples.

### ***Christianity***

The call to evangelise non-Christian peoples and propagate the gospel, led to a zealous missionary undertaking. Christian missionaries were motivated by their belief and the quest to evangelise those less fortunate than themselves. This was condoned both by the church and the state, for the glory of God, for the monarchy and the nation. The paternalist attitude to the Indigenous people was one of 'civilising the uncivilised', using religious indoctrination (Knorr, 1963, pp. 27–32).

Christian missions were established in Western Australia by the mid 1850s after earlier attempts had failed. However, it was not until the end of the century that permanent missions were established in north Western Australia

(Choo, 2001, p. 53). The impact the missionaries had on the lives of Indigenous people in Australia, particularly in the Kimberley, was complex. Their challenge was to evangelise and educate the 'uncivilised' Aborigines in the ways of the 'civilised', and yet also protect them from the exploitation of other Europeans (Choo, 2001, p. 54-55; Zucker, 1994). "The nuns tended to be a mix of Irish and Irish-Australians and artful at using their subsidiary positions to great effect in their work of helping and being with people" (Crawford, 1994, p. 187).

They trained Indigenous peoples in the 'white man's ways', ready for employment. This had the added benefit of restricting the Indigenous people's resistance to their subjugation by outsiders. This assisted the enterprising efforts of pastoralists, pearlers, adventurers and opportunists of all kinds. The land represented the opportunity for growth, development and social mobility for the European colonisers. The missionaries themselves were active agents of change in the colonial process (Choo, 2001, p. 84, 172). "In contrast to public service officers, church workers tended to live long-term in the Kimberley and the local knowledge of the church bureaucracy and the nature of collaborative relationships within it meant that they were a powerful force" (Crawford, 1994, p. 188).

### ***Social Darwinism***

Any sense of European trespass was muted, among civil and military officials at least, by a sense of manifest mission and superior right. That latter sense, indeed, seemed as incontestable to them as the 'obvious' primacy of clothing over nakedness, of agriculture over hunting, of Christianity over heathenism, of reason over hedonism, of civilisation over savagery and of primed flintlocks over ironbark and rosewood spears (Evans, 1999, p. 54).

Relations between the colonisers, including the missionaries, and Indigenous peoples reflect the popular theories associated with social Darwinism (Choo, 2001; Smith, 1999a, pp. 49, 62). This presumes it to be inevitable that the stronger ethnic group will overwhelm the weaker one. The inequality of the social positions perceived to exist in the superimposed colonial, economic and political system was equated with proof of 'white' racial

superiority. Dominant colonial attitudes held in 19th Century Australia included the claim of racial superiority over coloured minorities. There was a widespread racial stereotyping of not only the Indigenous population but also of people belonging to various other migrant groups (Smith, 1999a, pp. 58-77).

A hierarchy of racial stereotypes was constructed with people of British and European extraction being at the top of the scale, followed by other migrants, including Asians, and Aboriginal people at the bottom. This was justified with a biological explanation based on "intellectual superiority" (Collins 1988, pp. 203–204). The acceptance of institutionalised racial practices was prevalent. In Chapter One an example of the implementation of this ideology was the strict stratification of employees in the pearling industry established at Broome. "Social Darwinism was nevertheless a common means by which European people in Victorian times (and to some extent today) interpreted the multi-racial world around them" (Watson, 1998, p. 108).

Racist attitudes provided a way for European people to interpret the world around them. An irrevocable belief in 'white supremacy' provided the means to justify the British conquest of Indigenous territories. Many 'whites' were complacent, accepting the biological inferiority of 'blacks' who were inevitably expected to become extinct (Watson, 1998).

Post colonial approaches to writing and reading from the margins challenge traditional western standpoints as they are written from the perspective of colonised, minority peoples. The contemporary works of a cross section of writers, such as Fanon, 1965; hooks, 1994; Memmi, 1990; and Said, 1993; examine colonial power relations and aim to honour peoples and cultures that have been suppressed and devalued. They view the imperial process and the resistance by Indigenous peoples from the colonised standpoint. There is acknowledgment that other cultures and societies did exist, and resistance by Indigenous peoples to the empire and imperial subjection was a cultural right. It was a fight for cultural recognition between the 'us and them'. As imperialism continued to advance, Indigenous peoples were further subjected to affiliations and interests of the colonists. Imperial colonial culture did not mask its worldly associations and intentions in the colonial conquest.

There is no single theory or explanation of colonialism and its relationship to capitalist expansion. For the colonised, imperial advancement led to racial conflict, exploitation, discrimination, bigotry and alienation of people from their cultural practices. For the colonisers, new frontiers and colonies were presumed to offer opportunities, including changes to one's class and social status. Well-entrenched colonial structures inform political and social ordering today.

Afro American feminist, hooks (1984, p. 121) asserted that American history exemplifies a racial politic based on white racial assumptions. Her reflections upon the imperialist social order can be transposed to the Australian frontier. In her analysis of feminism and racism in relation to colonialism, she argued that racism, as a tool of imperialism, overshadowed the formation of relationships between different racial groups. The racial hierarchy prevented relationships between white and black men and white and black women (p. 122). (For a further analysis of the many parallels between the colonisation of the Australian and American frontiers refer to Turner, 1962; Winks, 1971).

Historically, issues of race have superseded gender issues for women of colour. In their writings of black female experience hooks, (1984) and Huggins (1987), stated that liberation from racism for women and men of colour is more significant than women's liberation. They referred to the ideology of colonisation whereby both Australia and America were colonised on a racially imperialistic base and not on a sexually imperialistic base. Therefore racism between white and black women has to be eliminated before they can work together in the women's movement.

Racial stereotyping continued in Broome and the Kimberley region well into the 20th Century. Racist and sexist colonial power relations can be directly perceived in the lives of Kimberley women at the frontier of European civilisation. Such attitudes and practices inform this exploration of the lives of women on the Kimberley frontier and are further developed in this thesis.

### ***Myth of the Male Frontier***

To gain an understanding of Kimberley women's experiences and responses to relocating into a society shaped by strong myths of frontier, it is necessary to reflect upon the cultural values intrinsic to the construction of settler society (Nile, 1996). Women's presence on the Australian frontier has been discounted and their work has either rendered invisible or glorified, despite the reality that women have and do live in Australian frontier societies like the Kimberley.

In traditional male histories the Australian frontier is portrayed as a man's world. Conventional historians suggested that frontier ethos has been a central force in shaping the Australian character and were based on the exploits of those European males who first settled outback Australia. The concept of the pioneering frontiersman was once central in Australian history.

This myth of Australian frontier society was developed and popularised by Russell Ward (1958) in his renowned classic *The Australian Legend*. He attempted to investigate and elucidate the development of the Australian self-image to provide a general Australian outlook. However, his work is limited to a male perspective, concentrating on a minority of bush dwellers. Focusing on the mateship ethos and the unique freedom of colonial life for the white bushmen, Ward suggested that the Australian frontier was egalitarian and the source of Australian democracy. Based on the equality of mateship and the notion that 'Jack is as good as his master', he justified the advent of British civilisation as a superior lifestyle.

Ward has mistakenly endorsed a version of history seriously flawed by romantic inaccuracies of gender and ethnic bias. This is enhanced by economic naivety and a misreading of the primacy of the urban nature of both societies. His belief that the frontiersman aided the rise of democracy is also largely inaccurate, albeit with the benefits of hindsight.

This concept was shunned by Winks who advocated that mateship reflected a fear of the bush rather than a love of it. He suggested that the transplanted British lifestyle was fraught with class rivalry and that Australian democracy sprung from the echelons of lower class, radical city dwellers (Winks, 1971, p. 34).

Watson (1998) referred to this portrayal of frontiersmen's lives as the pioneer legend. These men have been depicted as being asexual and celibate, battlers, survivors, and even heroes. It is not the courage and determination of the pioneers that she contests. Instead, it is the passive portrayal of the white intruders on the frontier. In traditional histories any mention of violence or bloodshed is justified under the guise of defence and protection. There is no mention of unscrupulous behaviour and slaughter, nor the effects upon the Indigenous population.

It is implied that the early pioneers led asexual lives. The sexual promiscuity of roving males, and inter racial relationships were considered to be degrading and 'uncivilised'. Such relationships were more often than not kept hidden. "It was rarely discussed, silently condoned and understood" (Durack, 1983, p. 279).

Yet the evidence of sexual relations with Indigenous women was blatant with the birth of 'half caste children'. Indigenous women were sought after and used for sexual 'gratification'. Watson (1998, p. 88) suggested: "Occasionally tribal women were willing sexual partners or at least desperate or hungry enough to endure the situation, often, though 'white' males were predatory".

It was common for women to be abducted for personal advantage. They not only provided sexual satisfaction but were also used as personal servants and labourers. Venereal disease spread unchecked. Watson (1998, p. 90) challenged the validity of the term 'heroes', asserting it was an untrue description of these men, as "almost certainly, far more blacks died as a result of venereal disease than from overt violence, as was the case right across Australia".

Reynolds (1999) wrote that his studies of frontier conflict changed his view of the so called, 'noble frontiersman'. Like most 'white' Australians he grew up learning about the 'mystique of the outback', "the bush was a source of the nation's distinctive attitudes and values" (p. 126). His main concern with Ward's *'Frontier Legend'* was that it was almost devoid of any mention of Aboriginal society, (let alone Aboriginal women), and acknowledgment of and reference to 'the frontier' violence.

Reynolds (1999), claimed the implications of 'the frontier' conflict, and the violence, were glossed over and not truly understood, even by the people who endorsed the Indigenous cause. The violence, he said, was a result of "racist behaviour by European men – characteristics they took with them to the frontier" (p. 125). He referred to 'The Great Australian Silence' that settled over Australia after Federation. In other words, Aborigines were written out of history from 1900 until the 1960s (Ward, p. 94).

The interpretation of the Australian frontier being an exclusively male bastion is a myth that has been challenged by Australian feminist historians such as Godden (1979), Grimshaw (1986), Hunt (1986), Jebb & Haebich (1991) and Lake (1996). They argued that although women on the frontier were a distinct minority group they lived in a society that "enshrined masculine values and interests" (Lake, p. 12).

Godden (1979) asserted in her paper *A New Look at the Pioneer Woman* that representations of 'white' women in colonial society focussed on the 'rural bourgeoisie'. They were portrayed as being 'virtuous' women, living an idealised domestic life. This depiction propounded the myth of the 'virtuous women'. Due to the scant detail afforded to the everyday experiences of women on the frontier, the selected lives of a few pioneer women have been upheld as models of morality and this stereotyped image has permeated Australian settlement histories (Lake, 1996; Ware, 1992).

Attempts to rectify this situation have been the central theme of numerous works by Grimshaw on colonial women on the Australian frontier (Grimshaw, 1985; Grimshaw, 1986; Grimshaw, Janson & Quartly 1995). In

*Man's Own Country: Women in Colonial Australian History*, Grimshaw (1986) argued that the portrayal of women as victims of the patriarchal society is outdated and places emphasis on the need to acknowledge women's relationships with men and their contribution to settlement. She considered a further scrutiny and review of interpretations of frontier colonial history is required. This was to establish the significance of women's role in frontier colonies in relation to the limited social status they were ascribed and gender relations within marriage and the family.

These propositions were expanded by Lake (1996) in *Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man*. Lake contended that early Australian feminist notions were moulded on historical perceptions of the frontier based on imperial and national attitudes towards gender relations, the family and the role assigned to women. She argued that British colonial settlers endorsed their women as matriarchs and custodians of the 'Anglo-Saxon breed'. Women, as nation builders had an "awesome responsibility", as "the bearers of culture, morality and order"; they were actively involved in creating the new nation (Lake, p. 14). Towards the end of the 19th Century 'white' women were motivated to take a political stance on women's suffrage, as men had failed in their role as protectors of women and therefore civilisation.

In a bid to dispel common beliefs that have been reinforced historically, the links between race, class, ethnicity and gender in the context of women living in an isolated, north west frontier society have been analysed by Hunt (1986) and Choo (1995; 2001). Social and class stratification in the north of Western Australia clearly divided people according to race, class, ethnicity and gender. The power and repercussions of 'white', racist politics based on race and class dictated the lifestyle of not only women in the north, but that of all minority groups.

As potential sex partners for the 'marauding male', Indigenous women were a threat to the purity of the 'white' race. They were held responsible for the emergence of the 'coloured' population because of their relationships with European and Asian men. In a bid to protect the British stock, legislation was passed which controlled the sexuality of Indigenous women. Under the Native

Administration Act of 1905-1936, it was illegal for an Indigenous woman to have sexual relations or cohabit with any non-Indigenous person (Choo, 2001, pp. 3-6, 96-126).

Jebb and Haebich (1991) in their examination of the frontier as a supposedly 'womanless world', included an examination of the plight of Indigenous women and their relationships with men, and non-Indigenous women. They suggested that although Indigenous and non-Indigenous women had associations on the frontier; 'white' women were lonely and isolated. Their connections with Indigenous women were based on racist attitudes and class distinctions which reinforced defined roles. The authors maintained that the failure to investigate, understand and construct gender relations on 'the frontier' is the result of the imperial/colonialist ideology which excludes an assessment of class and race.

Within a critique of colonialism, Jebb and Haebich, like Godden and Grimshaw, examined class divisions and gender relations on the frontier. This included investigations into women's relationships with each other, as well as with men across the boundaries of race and class. These studies elucidate this research. Differing approaches and themes within the context of women on the frontier have assisted me to ascertain women's roles in the development of a frontier society like the Kimberley.

### ***Women on the Frontier***

Australia is no exception to the tradition of gendering nationalist mythologies. The constructions of forms of 'white' masculinity have resulted in stereotypical, archetypal figures that have become the embodiment of national identity and nationhood (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly, 1994, p. 2). Yet women too, played a significant part in the establishment of British colonial civilisation. They were active agents in the shaping of colonial society, despite "the material and ideological constraints of their situation" (Grimshaw, 1986, p. 208).

The initiators of action were the European men, yet the social mores dictated that women were also necessary as a 'civilising' agent at the frontier. Gendered power relations, and the marginalisation of women in Australian frontier history, have compounded the myth that the frontier was a male domain. This reinforced a set of assumptions about society, lifestyle and language on 'the frontier' that has been transposed to the north of Western Australia. The idea that remote and isolated frontiers are exclusively male has helped determine the culture of the Kimberley and has influenced those who have moved there, settled and stayed. Each woman's notion of the frontier and expectations of life in this study is different and her class position and ethnicity affect her response.

This study is a contribution to that scholarship. It is a social history which questions historical evidence and literature pertaining to women, demographic trends and the Kimberley region. It presents a history of women unlike conventional Kimberley histories produced to date. The experiences of a group of Kimberley women who have moved to the 'last frontier' are analysed in the context of gender, ethnicity, class and identity within a small town in a remote region.

### ***Women on the Kimberley Frontier***

In the Kimberley of Western Australia the lives of women from all races have infrequently been recognised as contributing to the development of the area. However, their participation was vital to its success. In a settler society dominated by men, colonial females experienced "exploitation, exclusion, isolation and hardship" (Grimshaw, 1986, p. 183). The social institution of marriage and the family embodied the inferior status of women on the colonial frontier. Cultural notions of femininity and masculinity prescribed gendered boundaries, and the sexual division of labour was clearly defined. Therefore marriage offered women a more favourable life than spinsterhood, given the economic and social confinement of single life (Grimshaw, 1986, p. 195).

Well-known Kimberley writer, Mary Durack, a descendent of the famous pioneering Durack family, is the author of several books including *Kings in Grass Castles* (1959) and *The Rock and the Sand* (1969). In *Kings in Grass Castles*, which is a biographical account of her family's migration and settlement to Australia and the Kimberley region, Durack compounds the myth of the Australian frontier as a vast, empty, open space ready for the taking. Descended from a large pastoralist family, her interpretation of historical sources was the product of frontier ideology reinforced over generations.

Similar to Ward, in her reconstruction of the frontier she tended to romanticise settler life, propounding that Australian tradition had its roots in 'mateship' and the valour of the pioneering male. She contended that everyone, both the colonisers and Indigenous peoples, were never happy with the land laws in Australia. The frontier remained largely the province of the wealthy squatters (Durack, 1959, pp. 18-19). Durack was a part of this realm and her views reflect her background. She too, negates the role of women and the rights of Indigenous peoples, beyond mentioning, in passing, her own family members and pastoralists coping with Aborigines.

However, in her later book, *The Rock and the Sand*, Durack recounted Catholic missionary activities in the north of Western Australia. She researched the social aspects of the missionaries' lives and their day-to-day experiences. In this publication the women on the Kimberley frontier are mentioned. Durack (1969) referred to the arrival of anthropologist Daisy Bates and quotes her memoirs extensively to portray the life of the anthropologist and her work in the Kimberley (p. 131-135). She referred briefly also to the nuns who arrived in the north prior to World War II. They were referred to by name and some of their background history was provided. However the Indigenous female converts who became novices, although mentioned, remained nameless (p. 296, 306, 321).

Durack (1969, p. 258) also commented on the sparsity of 'white' women in the north, not just in the towns but also on stations. She further compounded stereotypical myths of women on the frontier in her reference to indecent sexual

relations between 'white' men and Indigenous women and relations between Asian men and Indigenous women. The Japanese women in Broome were labelled too as being 'immoral' Japanese immigrants working as prostitutes (p. 113). There is no mention of mixed race relationships being based on love, nor any discussion of the Japanese women working as Geishas serving those who could afford their services (Pearl Hamaguchi, personal communication, 2003, March 12). Durack "has taken these sources on face value as an accurate account or reflection of reality and has confined herself to work within a framework that relies on a white western perspective" (Rabbitt, 1994b, p. 6).

However, her writing reflected her own class position by reinforcing, rather than questioning, the class stratification and stereotyped images of these women. Using a traditional positivist approach, Durack did not delve further into the role these women played in the development of the region. She wrote from a particular ideological stance which was influenced by her family's position in society, her education and relationships with her subjects (the Aborigines), and social attitudes of the day. Nevertheless, the critical reader gains an insight into the prejudices facing both Indigenous and Japanese women and the role they played in Australian society.

An attempt to rectify the absence of women from the history of the north west was made by Hunt (1986), in *Spinifex and Hessian*. Unlike Ward and Durack she did not take a conventional approach to her history of the north west of Australia from 1860 to 1900. Rather she interpreted historical evidence from a feminist perspective, adopting a woman-centred approach. She examined the lives and experiences of the women who established themselves in the area, as well as the impact of European culture on the Indigenous women. She endeavoured to include the cross section of women that resided in the area.

Yet in her efforts to be inclusive were hampered by her attempt to cover the history of a broad area extending from Champion Bay, now known as Geraldton, to Wyndham in the East Kimberley. After completing an extensive search for information on the lifestyle and plight of women in the north west of Australia she acknowledged that many of the necessary sources such as diaries and written factual evidence were not available.

She concluded:

The surviving material [on the Kimberley] recounted the day to day functioning of the small settlements and the social life of the more wealthy settlers, or is in the form of correspondence from colonial officials. It also appears that much of the material of the far north in the Kimberley was lost or not been located.

An added difficulty with the sources available is that they are particularly male. They are written by men who, themselves, make up only a small section of the community – from a privileged class in a particularly patriarchal society (Hunt 1986, p. 8).

As a result, her history centres mainly on the Pilbara areas of Roebourne and Cossack.

### ***Feminist Social History***

"As there are numerous feminisms so there are many approaches to feminist history" (Matthews, 1986, p. 148).

From its beginnings, feminism has been a political movement advocating 'liberation' through social change. The advent of feminist epistemologies challenged methodological norms and has been fraught with controversy. The focal point of feminist empiricism was the issue of gender, therefore the social identity or gender of the researcher was relevant to the research. This concept subverted 'traditional' empirical methodologies whereby a researcher who gathers data is assumed to be independent of the object of the research. In the pursuit of a feminist perspective on knowledge, tensions arose over the objectivity of the observer and the potential for bias (Harding, 1986, p. 25).

Feminist historical scholarship has been concerned with recovering and revealing what has been lost and hidden from conventional histories. The second wave of feminism in the 1970s paralleled the emergence of social history as a recognised discipline. The work of a new breed of historians began to be published. The motivation for the development of feminist epistemologies in the late 1960s and 1970s was driven by the political struggle of subjugated and oppressed women, marginalised in society. Feminists began to focus on defying the dominant order by recording the history of women in relation to women's oppression under patriarchy (Dixon, 1976; Summers, 1975; Weiler, 1999). They began to trace and scrutinise the treatment of women and found that women are either absent from histories or their presence and achievements have been trivialised (Rabbitt, 1994b).

Questions arose as to the differences between women's history and feminist history. These queries were not only related to differences in the subject matter but included variations in the political approach taken, and the questioning of gender and power relations involved. Matthews (1986) agreed that in some histories, prominent and exceptional women have been mentioned and in others, women have been added to the periphery of the discussion. These compensatory histories treated women according to 'masculine

standards of significance' and were generally prescriptive in their treatment of women's role in society. They generally focused upon women who were portrayed as heroes. This reverence of women and the veneration of older women's lives is an issue taken up by Linda Smith. She stated: "although I have written my own such story I have gradually come to the conclusion that I do not really like most indigenous granny stories. Many seem far too romanticized to be real" (Smith 1999b, 63-64).

The difficulties of theorising women's individual experiences and 'finding a voice' are not new phenomena in the realm of academic, feminist social science. This study is no exception. Contemporary feminist debates have been affected by poststructuralist ideologies. These in turn have been influenced by political and economic global changes, and theorising about the world in general. This third wave of feminist thinking is concerned with language, experience and subjectivity, and challenges older frameworks of analysis. Theory and practice are interrelated (Middleton & Weiler, 1999).

Postmodern approaches to social analyses claim that there is no ultimate reality to the social world of multiple and shifting realities. This poses difficulties in grounding the explanations and interpretations of life for women in general. This is particularly so in this study of women on the Kimberley frontier, for all women's lives are fraught with inconsistencies, and at times contradictions (Davies, 1991, p. 47).

### ***A Women's Standpoint***

"Gender is an unstable and constantly shifting construct, always being recreated through the process and language through which we understand and define ourselves" (Middleton & Weiler, 1999, p. 2).

The need to legitimise feminist research called for a feminist standpoint as a place to begin, a feminist inquiry committed to 'telling the truth' (Harding, 1986, pp. 191-195; Smith, 1999, pp. 96-130). Feminists and non-feminists have argued about feminist epistemologies and the possibility of creating a feminist standpoint. It has been proposed that women have a particular epistemological standpoint because of their own oppression and

understandings of gender relations in patriarchy (Flax, 1987, pp. 622-623; Harstock, 1983, p. 159; Weiler, 1999, p. 45). Reacting to accounts of women's lives, women's experiences have become a starting point for standpoint epistemology, whereby the primary source of knowledge is everyday experiences (Harding, 1986; Nielson, 1990; Smith, 1999). "It is not simply an interested position (interpreted as bias) but is interested in the sense of being engaged" (Harstock, p. 159).

Different standpoints provide knowledge of varying situations which make a 'truer' sense of the world. As Smith (1999) argued, beginning research by enquiring about the everyday/everynight experiences of people does not make them objects of research. Rather, people's lived experiences, such as those of the women in this study, become a starting point to build on our understandings of the world about us. "Taking up women's standpoint as a place to begin locates the knower in her body, in a lived world in which both theory and practice go on, in which theory is itself a practice" (Smith, p. 7).

Informed by their social circumstances, the women's experiences become the testing ground for the building of a greater understanding of their lived experiences of relocating and settling into life in the Kimberley. Their stories form the basis of this study which examines the many and varied experiences of the women over the time they have spent 'up north'.

Notions of female difference as being a form of oppression and the ideology of a common oppression for all women have been problematic for feminist researchers. Traditional methods of inquiry have constructed women in a manner that reinforces and validates their oppression as a homogenous group. The idea of common oppression was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social realities. Women are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudices (Gluck, 1994, p. 76; hooks, 1984).

There is not a homogenous group of women, just as there is no homogenous politics of feminism, nor a unified women's voice. Other feminist poststructuralists (Butler & Scott, 1992; Riley, 1988) questioned the language used to document the facts for ordering and evaluating the past, for creating a historical feminist standpoint. They were concerned about what becomes documented as the true experience. In their deconstruction of the traditional empirical approach of historians, they questioned from whose perspective are their truth accusations made.

Paralleling this line of questioning, Weiler (1999, p. 45) asserted the need for historians to be cautious about their claims, as the past is "constantly contested and constructed through competing discourses". Our sources of understanding the past and what type of truth claims can be deduced from the activities of women as a source of knowledge for the world are theoretical concerns. Weiler (p. 44) stated: "It is typical of feminist theorists to view knowledge as contextual and historical".

### ***Marginalised by Feminism***

Women of mixed racial origin have accused 'white' feminists of racism, and of compounding the dominant view of women by their omission of "the ethnically different views and experiences of black women" (Barrett & McIntosh, 1985, p. 28). They have been cast in a segregated, subordinated, social domain. Ethnic origin and cultural ties segment them. The lives and experiences of these women are affected by cultural differences and the racist and sexist ideologies of the dominant 'white' race. They belong to a marginal group and are seen as being easily exploited, appendages to 'white' Europeans, and subsidiary to their husbands (Moore, 1991, p. 61).

On the other hand, hooks (1984, p. 15), viewed the issue of marginality as a tool for political reform. She considered the perspective of black women as marginalised members of society to be a 'special' vantage point in the criticism of "the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony." As a means of survival, Neilson (1990, p. 10) suggested that those in a "disadvantaged position" have knowledge of the

perspective of the dominant group as well as their own minority group. This 'awareness', Neilson argued, gave marginalised people "the potential for a more complete view of social reality than others" (p. 10).

### ***Bush Feminism***

The relevance of the Australian women's movement and liberating capacity for women other than 'white' educated middle class, city-based feminists is an issue laden with controversy. Ideas of women's liberation, which were considered to be radical ways of thinking in the 1970s, have been reviewed as ethnocentric, exclusive and conservative (f, 2001, pp. 17-18). For the pioneering feminists issues of gender and women's oppression under patriarchy were their primary concerns and lived experiences. Including and considering the oppression and experiences of other women from differing cultural and social backgrounds was beyond their realm. They did not have the information available to them, as it had not been collated. They took an ethnocentric approach whereby they focused on their own circumstances and did not take the opportunity to expand their perspectives in relation to other women. They were finding their own voice.

McKenzie (1998, p. 23) in her study of Western Australian farm women observed that "slowly a 'primitive feminist consciousness' is emerging in the bush". Her use of the words 'slow' and 'primitive' in her description of feminist consciousness in the 'bush' have a familiar western, colonial, ideological tone. Just as similar words and phrases were used as a justification for western notions of colonialism, the western model applied to notions of female difference is problematic. It compounds the dominant view. The majority of the farm women, considered women's political activity to be "antagonistic, unwomanly and unnecessary" according to McKenzie (p. 23). By comparing the 'farm' women to their city counterparts, McKenzie found they were far removed from the women's movement and that the word 'feminist' to some is a "dirty word" (p. 24).

McKenzie omitted to make mention of the Country Women's Association (CWA) in relation to the farm women in her study. To me this raises the questions of differing perceptions. Are only particular types of women's groups deemed to be 'feminist'? Are women's groups considered to be an arm of the women's movement?

Women living in remote and rural areas in Australia have had to find their own voice. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women have formed groups and organisations to assist them in their demand for services, particularly in the areas of welfare, education and health services. Traditionally, 'white' women's groups in the north have tended to be conservative and focus on family related issues (Rabbitt, 1994a, p. 186). The stories of the women in this study reveal that some have been members of women only groups such as the CWA and the North West Women's Association, whereas others have been involved in a variety of community organisations.

When interviewing the women in this project I did not seek their thoughts on feminism or the women's movement. I focused on the stories of their relocation and settlement and asked about their involvement in groups and organisations. Many of the stories revealed a 'sense of belonging' which emanated from their various affiliations, and is a topic further developed in Chapter Five. Many aspects of their stories had relevance to feminist concerns worldwide such as paid and unpaid work, child care, health and education. Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in the Kimberley have the opportunity to have a strong political voice. For example, in 2001, Mrs Carol Martin, the first Indigenous woman to enter parliament, was elected the Member for the Kimberley, a seat based in Broome. This 'local' woman has the support of her family, friends and her political party. Current issues of prominence for Broome women include land rights, health, housing and education. A synopsis of Kimberley women's involvement in and establishment of women's and community groups is given in Chapter Four.

### ***The Politics of Representation***

A contemporary exploration of Australia's social structures, based on the intersections of gender, 'race', class, and ethnicity was the focus of Pettman's (1992), *Living in the Margins*. With particular reference to the experiences and representations of Indigenous and non-English-speaking background women, Pettman analysed the multifaceted nature of identity, oppression and the roles ascribed to women within Australian society. She argued that the politics of representation, which is the classification of people into groups according to race, ethnicity and gender, is a political and social construct. It has been used as a means of including or excluding people. In deconstructing these categories she analysed the ramifications of confining individuals to an exclusive identity. Such a process does not take into account multiple identities, individual differences and commonalities (Pettman, p. 2).

She asserted that women, particularly minority women, are ascribed a social status confined to the boundaries of their group. Due to stereotyped images of the group, women are frequently sidelined and often not perceived to be actors in their own environment. They are therefore defined within society according to their cultural difference or race. This precludes any notion of sexism and class or treatment by the state as actually having an effect on their status.

Women are socially constructed in terms of race, ethnicity and cultural difference. While they may frequently be invisible within these representations of difference, asking 'where are the women?' reveals distinctly racialised or culturalised gender stereotypes. Gender is constituted in and through racial and cultural difference, and race and cultural difference are experienced in gendered forms (Pettman, 1992, p. 15).

Pettman acknowledged that it is difficult to theorise individual, multiple identities because of the many personal interrelationships, dimensions and variables involved. She highlighted the interconnections of race, cultural difference, class and gender according to social designations (Pettman, 1992, pp. 54-55). She further questioned the notion that social stratification clearly divides people as she argued that common interests, such as race and

ethnicity, might be mutual bonds that override economic status and inequality (Pettman, p. 64).

Yet, personal narrative is a subjective process depending on many factors such as the narrator's social construction of themselves and their worldview, which may be constantly changing. Our observations, method of research data collection and conclusions drawn are all related to our own personal, subjective and cultural position. Our explanations are grounded in our worldviews, "culture-laden paradigms" which are not static (Nielson, 1990, p. 13). Societal constructs, such as gender, race and class affect the objectivity of the researcher. Historical representations are biased in that they reflect the identity and experience of the observer. They are not value neutral. These issues and contemporary theoretical debates are significant considerations in the use of oral history as a source of data. The ramifications of this method will be reviewed in the subsequent chapter.

### ***Balance of Voice and Power***

The historian, the narrator and the critic all have their own "conditioned perspective" (Harding, 1986, p. 249; Weiler, 1999, p. 44). This notion of conditioned perspectives is central to postmodern critiques of feminist standpoint methodology. Women's experiences are pervaded by ideologies of a masculine culture, the dominant discourse, which are reproduced consciously or subconsciously. This internalisation creates a "dualism of the mind" which Davies (1991, p. 44) asserted is "similar (and not related) to the male/female dualism, in which there are two hierarchal opposites which take their meaning in relation to each other and cannot exist without each other, but are in constant battle with each other". She further argued that for those on the subservient side of dualisms such as woman to man, black to white, child to adult, insane to sane, are rarely heard. This lack of 'voice' or being listened to does not stem from the 'person' in question or from incapacity and inability. Rather, it is a matter of being able to articulate a perspective within the boundaries of the dominant discourse. That is, being able to speak with an authority that will be noticed (Davies, p. 52).

Just as the construction of gender is central to feminist thought, subjectivity is a construct used to gain an understanding of the 'self' and identity. The perception of identity is enmeshed in a web of differences of power. Individuals are born into a particular world of meaning and they inherit a history and cultural landscape which locates them within certain structures of society. Identity, therefore, exists within a specific world of meaning that is socially constructed (Choo, 1995).

Over generations the socialisation process has conditioned forms of behaviour which are considered to be culturally appropriate. Individual differences such as nationality, ethnicity and sexual orientation have been reinforced historically, psychologically and culturally. Therefore culturally appropriate behaviour takes on a historical significance, which is subject to social relations. The acknowledgment of women's individual differences is intrinsic to the survival of the political status of women (Poovey, 1988).

As discussed previously, the people of Broome, both women and men, have traditionally been subjected to classification and categorisation. This issue of identity and identifying with one or multiple groups is inherent to this study and is an ongoing theme of investigation. It leads to questions about shared experiences and shared subjectivities. The notions of women's shared subjectivity and the inclusion of some women's voices over the exclusion of others are not new debates. In this thesis it is recognised that multiple standpoints or realities, rather than a single feminist standpoint is an adequate place to begin understanding the lives and experiences of a group of Kimberley women.

### ***Social Relationships***

Gender cannot be studied in isolation, however, for intersecting forces shape the experiences of both women and men (Middleton & Weiler, 1999, p. 2). Emphasis on the need for an understanding of social relationships between women and men, ethnic groups and class structures in Australian history is central to this thesis. The importance of these interrelationships has been stated by Saunders (1990, pp. 171-183) in her review of women's history in

Australia and by Ramazanoglu (1992, p. 209) in her paper on feminist methodology. Ramazanoglu suggested that "the intersections of gender and sexuality with 'race'/ethnicity and class are still too little understood, and yet these intersections are fundamental to any full understanding of social life".

### ***Being Known and Belonging***

In a small town you are someone, you are known. Shopkeepers know your name compared to the city where you are "a nobody" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 315). A small town is a close-knit community rather than a loose-knit network. Residents, intentionally and unintentionally, are able to acquire a considerable knowledge about one another. Locals develop multi-layered ties through their interactions. Neighbours join the same groups, shop in the same places, their children attend the same schools, and their families attend the same churches. They play the same sports. They constantly meet one another in different institutional contexts. This intricate network of interrelationships is established between people living and working in the same locality. It is a matter of propinquity (Dempsey, p. 95).

Small towns in northern Australia are a resource which play an important role in the overall development of the area (Davies, 1989, p. 1). The six small towns in the vast Kimberley region of Western Australia provide essential services to residents and visitors in a remote and isolated area. Each town supports a particular hinterland by providing basic services such as food, fuel, banking outlets and limited medical facilities.

An overall population shift is occurring across Australia (Salt, 2001). There is an exodus of people leaving small inland rural towns to relocate to larger regional cities or to the coast (Alston, 2001). This trend has been referred to as the 'Australian beach culture', whereby a growing number of Australians are seeking a lifestyle on the coast (Salt, p. 5). Retirement belts have formed along the coast. As population numbers dwindle in small inland towns, services are reduced and remaining residents have to travel greater distances to a regional town or city for their basic needs.

The increased population of coastal towns such as Broome adds to the demand for goods and services. This leads to an expansion of the community infrastructure which in turn, becomes a catalyst for further development and draws more residents. It is the people, the residents, who are a town's best resources (Davies, 1989, p. 2). Long-term residents of northern towns are vital to the community's infrastructure, as they provide local knowledge and stability. "They need resilience, self-reliance (and in many cases self motivation), a great deal of ingenuity and skills that will allow them to improvise" (Davies, p. 3).

Short-term residents who transfer to northern areas as a stepping-stone to promotion from other parts of Australia and the world, bring a different type of quality to the area. They offer their various worldviews, new ideas and enthusiasm (Davies 1989, p. 2). In Broome, short-term residents are an important feature of the town's shifting and changing population. They add to the diversity of the town's residential base. How these 'blow ins' impact on the town of Broome and relieve the isolation of residents is discussed further in Chapter Five.

The women in this study had their individual reasons for relocating and remaining in the north of Western Australia. This investigation of their lifestyles was undertaken to comprehend why the women had moved to the Kimberley and chosen to stay in a small, remote town. Connections and relationships with the land and the people, within a small town environment have been explored and analysed.

Frankenburg (1993) in her study of 'white' women and racism places emphasis on 'the social geography of race'. She advocated that historical, social and political forces shaped the physical and social environments of the 'white' American women in her study. Focusing on racism, yet mindful of the intersection of gender and class, she believed the material and conceptual environments of the women she interviewed had been moulded by historical demarcations of difference passed from generation to generation (pp. 43-70).

Over generations, Broome's multicultural population has been a dominant feature of Broome society. The mixture of races has produced a people that are unique to the area with their own traditions and cultures. The landscape and environment of the Kimberley shapes and influences the identity of the people who reside there. Not only the physical, but also the metaphysical and emotional environments form a "metaphorical map which we hold within us which helps us make sense of our milieu" (Choo, 1995, p. 62). Although Choo acknowledged that it is inappropriate to make generalisations about people and landscapes she encapsulated the notion of 'cultural landscape' to develop her argument that the environment has shaped its inhabitants who in turn have shaped the environment. She argued, "cultural landscapes evolve in response to the physical as well as metaphysical (spiritual) and emotional environments in which people live" (p. 65).

To Indigenous and non-Indigenous people born in the Kimberley, the environment is familiar and is home. For the women in this study, who have migrated to the area, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, making a remote locality home involved a transition process. Over time, as the women settled and became a part of their new surroundings, consciously or unconsciously, they drew new metaphorical or mental maps based on their experiences

Prior to the investment and building boom of the 1980s, Broome was a small town, where the majority of residents knew each other or at least knew of each other. However as the non-Indigenous population of both Australian and overseas residents continued to boost the residential base, the population of the town has changed. Indigenous families have been on their country for thousands of years, generation after generation. By contrast, Anglo Australian families and migrant residents tend to move to the area for a variety of reasons. This is exemplified in the stories of the women. The length of time they stay depends upon many variables (Lange, 2000, p. 6).

Lange's (2000) study of the experiences of migrant women settling in Western Australia focuses on non-English-speaking background women and their sense of belonging as Australian citizens. She explored how these women

"redefine and reconstruct their identity once on Australia" (Lange, p. 1) and how over time their identities become "more closely intertwined with Anglo-Australians" (Lange, p. 5). She acknowledged the diversity of migrant women's lived experiences and their multiple differences and how they are continually subjugated to the margins by other women due to stereotyped images of non-English-speaking background women.

Social relationships are influenced by many factors such as class, gender, age, identity, occupation, religion and length of residence. These hierarchal differentiations influence a resident's choice of friends, lifestyle and overall life choices. In his indepth study of a small town in the eastern states of Australia, Dempsey (1990) identified a wide breadth of topics which he claims are the principal factors shaping social life in a small town. Factors, such as the geographic location of the town, the mix of peoples, knowing people and being known, choices and constraints, availability of services, marginalisation and exclusion. Similar issues and themes pertain to the lives of the women of the Kimberley and are further developed in this study.

Some parallels can be drawn between the town of Broome and Dempsey's *Smalltown*. Broome was similar to *Smalltown* in population size until the early 1980s. The majority of the town's residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, knew each other or knew of the other. Yet, unlike *Smalltown*, the majority of Broome's non-Indigenous population have migrated to the area in contrast to the traditional owners who have lived on the country for generations.

After conversations with the town's people, Dempsey (1990) concluded that both men and women showed a strong sense of attachment. They experienced a sense of belonging and identity. By living in a small town they felt a sense of pride through being known and recognised. This social status provoked an attachment to community. "Structural and demographic factors foster the development between inhabitants, which in turn contribute to the development of a sense of attachment among community members" (Dempsey, p. 91).

Similarly the women in this study, over time displayed a community attachment to Broome. "I think they [people of different nationalities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] mix really good here. I just think everyone gets on fairly well here. I like the laid back lifestyle of Broome you know that and the weather is keeping me here (Cheryl personal communication, April 30, 1998, p. 14).

People's involvement in and commitment to local government, strengthens the community. This leads to an improvement of services which paves the way for future development. People need to be supported and encouraged to stay in remote areas by providing incentives such as tax concessions and freight subsidies. For as (Davies, 1989, p. 4) concluded, "a pioneering spirit, a sense of adventure just may not be enough to keep these valuable resources, people, up here where we need them in the future".

Conversely, Loveday (1989) in *Small Towns in Northern Australia* questioned whether local people have the capacity, knowledge and expertise, or the information and resources, to adequately make decisions about future development for their area. He maintained that the ramification of large-scale policy development inevitably reflected the standards of outsiders. He argued that the values brought from the city took precedence over those of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the area. Furthermore, Loveday queried the appropriateness of monocultural institutions that become the decision-making bodies in northern 'bicultural' towns, as groups have conflicting issues of power. His reference to a small town in the Northern Territory is applicable to Kimberley towns:

I use the term biculturalism because most towns have black and white populations and we have to question whether monocultural institutions are appropriate, or whether some kinds of institutions might not be a little better for everybody, black and white alike (Loveday, p. 6).

However, the influence of 'local' people on their local government representatives must not be overlooked. The works of action groups and progress associations have their place in influencing decision-making processes in small towns. Kimberley residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, women and men continue to lobby government agencies for

services to be delivered in a manner that suits the needs of Kimberley people.

In her investigation of the functions and characteristics of small towns in northern Western Australia in the late 1980s, Philippa Hudson (1989, p. 47) referred to the Kimberley towns of Broome and Kununurra as 'boom towns' due to their unprecedented growth in population. She related Broome's development in the late 1980s to two significant turning points: the development of the tourist industry with the introduction of the Shinju Matsuri Festival in 1971, and the coming of British entrepreneur and businessman, Lord McAlpine, in 1982. She argued that because of the tourist industry, local residents were "caught in a spiral of soaring land and housing prices" (Hudson, p. 48), which has been good for some, but not for others. She cited education, health, welfare, housing, land, commercial and local government activities as being the main issues related to the provision of services and elements of change.

Furthermore, she argued that insufficient attention has been paid to the quality of life in small northern towns due to a preoccupation with projected population changes and a vision of development. Growth and development are seen in positive terms and stability and decline in negative terms, but at what cost? She maintained that an attempt has to be made to ensure that there is equilibrium between development and preservation. Her view of Broome as being "a playground for the rich" with locals battling to survive (Hudson, 1989, p. 73) is somewhat simplistic and perhaps time specific. Hudson's research focused on Broome's development in the mid to late 1980s. At this time some residents operating businesses in the service industries benefited from the expenditure of wealthy tourists. The tourist industry as a whole provides opportunities for employment. At the end of a booming decade in Broome the National Pilot Strike of 1989 affected Australia's tourist industry and the economy of Broome. The expected income to be earned from a prosperous tourist season did not eventuate and led to a down turn in business.

Hudson concluded that the positive changes in rural Australia have generally been disregarded and this has had repercussions for future planning to maintain a balance between rural and metropolitan environments. Yet, John Taylor (1989) observed that private and public expenditure has generated localised pockets of employment in boom towns. He considered the major issues facing small northern towns in the future will be the levels of investment, both private and public, necessary to maintain an adequate population base (Taylor, 1989, p. 8).

Investment, both public and private, continues to increase in Broome as the town grows at a rapid rate. Broome is undergoing massive physical and social change as the demand for goods and services escalates with the rising population.

### ***Women and Work***

Traditionally, Australian social attitudes have discriminated against women in the labour market and restricted the range of jobs available. This in turn has limited women's rights to economic independence, freedom, and opportunities to acquire self-respect and develop skills.

World War II provided some women with a greater opportunity to enter the workforce, as their labour was required in a time of national crisis. As part of the war effort some entered the armed services in auxiliary roles that supported the men, the soldiers fighting on the front. Women undertook duties such as nursing, cooking, secretarial work, driving and communication whereas others worked in munition factories. These were temporary positions where women were replacements for male workers. Others worked as volunteers, performed domestic labour and managed households under wartime restrictions where food and clothing was rationed (McMurphy, Oliver & Thomley, 1983).

After the war some of these women found themselves unemployed and settled into home and family life as married women. Australia needed a population injection and those women and men born in the post war period from 1949–1961 are colloquially referred to 'baby boomers' Australia wide (Salt,

2001, p. 154).

A western phenomenon in the 1960s was that few women with young children were in the paid workforce (Williams, 2000, p. 40). Friedan (1962) in *The Feminine Mystique* challenged the role of women as housewives and called for a sex role revolution, encouraging women to enter the paid workforce. An outcome of the rise of feminism and the establishment of the women's movement was consciousness raising of equality for women and work. Significant references for a historical overview of women and work and theoretical interpretations include: Bevege, James & Shute, 1982; Game & Pringle, 1983; Hargreaves, 1982; Allen, Hutchinson & McKinnon, 1989; Kingston, 1979; Mumford, 1989).

In the 1970s an increasing number of women entered or re-entered the workforce. Issues of inequality for women in the workplace began to be addressed.

The South Australian Parliament passed the first Sex Discrimination Act in Australia: *The Sex Discrimination Act 1975*. This paved the way for The Sex Discrimination Act passed by the Federal government in 1984. The Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act was passed in 1986 and the Affirmative Action Agency was established. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 came into effect on 1 January 2000, renaming and updating the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 as the Equal Opportunity WA 2000-2001.

Some feminist theorists have seen women's disadvantage in the labour market as a consequence of the inequitable sexual division of labour in households. Others have attributed such disadvantages to such labour-market factors as the sex of those controlling transnational capitalism, definitions of skill, restricted options for women attempting to maximise return for their labour, or hostility from male trade unionists (Allen, 1992, p. 9).

By the early 1990s, traditional roles, values and expectations of women and men in the workplace were changing (Trades & Labour Council WA, 1991). While still maintaining traditional responsibilities as homemakers, women continued to enter the WA workforce. "Over 60% of two parent families with

dependent children have both parents in the workforce. Nearly half of sole parents are working, the majority are in fulltime work" (Trades & Labour Council WA, 1991, n.p. [Introduction]).

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the average wage for women in Australia remained lower than that for men. (Refer to Appendix 1 for an insight into the situation for women and work in Western Australia in 2001).

Although significant milestones have been reached to provide equality of opportunity for women in the workplace feminist research suggested that "the workplace and workplace practices continue to be structured in terms of gender relations as well as capitalist-class relations" (Game & Pringle, 1983, Pringle, 1988 in Pettman, 1992, p. 64).

The truth is that while there have been many advances for women in the past 30 years; we still have a long way to go. [Author's emphasis] In many respects, the challenge is greater now because discrimination is less overt, subtler, and sometimes almost invisible (Krautil 2002, p. 5).

"Changes in the workplace are not paralleled by changes in home responsibilities" (Wood, 2001, p. 189). This lack of change to women's responsibility as primary caregivers adds a complexity to women's career patterns that is evident in the lives of the women in this study. Some of the women's careers were disrupted with their relocation to Broome, and/or with the advent of motherhood. "Women tend to develop occupational qualifications that are easily transferable between jobs to support their discontinuous careers" (Edwards, Robinson, Welchman & Woodall, 1999, in Bierema, 2001, p. 5).

Krautil (2002, p. 9) purports that young women, experiencing the advantages of the post women's liberation campaign are indisposed to be identified as taking a gender based initiative in the workplace for fear of reprisals.

In my experience many young women see it as potentially career limiting to be "labelled" as someone who speaks up on women's issues; and who thus remain reluctant to become involved on women's initiatives – such as female networking forums, "women's only" career development etc – because they fear it will be career limiting.

Connections between sexuality and the gendering of the labour market is particularly pertinent to service occupations such as the tourism and hospitality industries. In these industries emphasis is placed on the worker's ability to ensure client customer satisfaction and therefore sexuality has become an issue.

Particularly pertinent to this study is the 'pub culture' of the north west as many of the women interviewed worked in the hotel industry or socialised in the Broome hotels. Traditionally the sexual division of labour ensured that Australian women worked in female dominated workplaces. Yet, white women have worked in Australian pubs as barmaids since the late 19th Century despite their presence in the male domain being challenged (Kirkby, 1997). Considered to be an undesirable occupation for respectable women, Western Australian barmaids were granted a pay rate equal to that of their male colleagues in 1911. Paradoxically, 'equal pay' for WA barmaids was awarded in the hope that women would be forced out of the industry with a preference for male staff if both sexes were to be paid the same rate per hour.

It wasn't until the 1960s that women were legally permitted to drink in hotels albeit relegated to the ladies lounge where drinks were more expensive and furnishings sparse. The laws prohibiting Indigenous men and women from drinking were rescinded and the era of exclusivity for white male pub patrons was put to an end in 1971. This did not prevent publicans being racially exclusive as Indigenous people "could, and did, still experience discrimination from individual pub owners" (Kirkby, 1997, p. 197).

Despite this history of inclusion and exclusion, pubs have become an icon of national identity and emblematic with 'the Australian way of life' for the white Australian male 'ocker' (Kirkby, 1997, pp 200-203). By the middle of the 20th Century, Russel Ward's mythology of 'mateship', and the archetypically

masculine Australian had been transferred to pub culture. "Masculinity and national identity were thus interwoven with pub culture, and the ethnic and sexual exclusivity of that culture was celebrated" (Kirkby, p. 2).

Another feature of Australian lifestyle, albeit not synonymous with Australian pub culture, is involvement in community organisations as a volunteer. Over generations traditionally both women and men have offered their services and skills as volunteers through a variety of community groups such as church organisations, sports and service clubs.

Volunteers, contributing their unpaid labour to the community, assist in building a better community. The inclusion of women's unpaid work is relatively new in studies on women's work. Women's volunteer work has been undervalued by non-active participants (Woods, 2001). Like household labour, women's voluntarism has often been distinguished from real work as "a labour of love" (Pardo, 1997, p. 198).

Unpaid occupations are misrepresented, as the term 'volunteer' is a label that masks the importance of the volunteer work being undertaken (Higginbotham & Romero, 1997). Pardo (1997) & Dickson (1997) investigated the circumstances under which women participated in unpaid work. They highlighted the differences and similarities of women's voluntary labour across race, class and ethnicity. Comparing the voluntary work of working class women to upper class women, Pardo argued that the work of upper class women, the unpaid homemakers, is 'charity' work. These wealthy women can afford to be volunteers and perform tasks of goodwill, whereas the motivation for performing unpaid tasks for women at the lower end of the social scale is different. Unable to obtain the same services and facilities as upper and middle class women, they perform unpaid labour to establish services for the community from which they and their families will benefit. Both their paid and unpaid work assists in their survival and that of their families (Pardo, pp.197-215).

Dickson (1997) referred to making time to perform unpaid community voluntary work as the 'third shift' for working mothers. Her analysis of the unpaid voluntary tasks performed by groups of African American women in Denver in the 1930s can be applied to a broader community of present day volunteers: "(a) self-improvement efforts; (b) helping the poor and needy (c) working with children and adults; (d) fundraising; and (e) cooperative efforts among clubs" (Dickson, p. 216).

These sociological studies demonstrated how community participation for some, depending on race, class and ethnicity, became an essential activity rather than simply a reflection of individual choice. "Their perspectives are shaped by their class, racial, ethnic, and immigrant status in society" (Higginbotham & Romero, 1997, p. 194). While doing unpaid work, the women developed invaluable skills and social networks that allowed them to address larger community issues successfully (Pardo, 1997, p. 197).

Bolton (2000) suggested that perceptions of women and work need to be rethought, as working women have to manage a 'third shift'. Unlike Dickson (1997) Bolton's third shift is a psychological phenomenon, that of inner "self-critical voices" where women are torn between their working lives and their family commitments (p. 3). Similar to Dickson however, she referred to voluntary community work as "a category of endeavour often marginalised as women's work" (p. 9).

Many of the women in this study have volunteered their time and skills to the Broome community. Their involvement in groups and associations reflected the categories applied by Dickson. Their situation also concurred with Bolton's description of their activities being marginalised.

Some of the women also spoke of their life cycle in Broome, of the transitional changes from a single woman to living with a partner, having children, working and mothering. These are values which are embedded in female traditions (Belenky, 1997).

## ***Conclusion***

Fundamental to this thesis is the acknowledgment of race, class, gender and culture in influencing the diversity of individual and group experience. Peoples of mixed racial origins have populated the Kimberley for over a century. This melting pot of peoples has created a distinctive, localised culture, which has been influenced by the social, economic and political development of the area. Records of women's contribution to this development are scarce. This is an indication of the historical evidence reflecting the class distinctions and racist and sexist controls which were firmly entrenched from the mid 19th Century (Markus, 1994; Pettman, 1992; Yu, 1992). These entrenched attitudes and the stereotyping of people into categories according to race, class and gender hindered the recording of the experiences of minority groups. This was because the 'past' of women was generally not considered to be of value to those who held positions of power (Mukerji & Schudson, 1991), the exception being official documents such as court reports, police and immigration records.

The isolation of the Kimberley region in remote northern Australia, which has been ascribed a frontier status, presents new arrivals with settlement issues unique to the locality. These settlement processes, and the issues facing women relocating to a distant region and adjusting to a new lifestyle, shaped by images and myths of a frontier society, have not been documented. As individuals in their own right, their lives and experiences are important in the reconstruction of Australian history.

Therefore, in my analysis, women's contribution to the unprecedented development of the area is explored. Patterns of exclusion, class stratification and marginalisation have led to the belief that 'the Kimberley was a white man's frontier. Since the second wave of feminism, it has been acknowledged that traditional documentation of the frontier, has been written with a male orientated approach. The frontier was portrayed as a model of masculinity, with white males opening up land, males dealing with the natives, males setting up enterprise and males enforcing the law. Women were marginalised and their contribution neglected or remained on the periphery. The narratives of

the women in this study suggest that their experiences of relocation and living in the Kimberley are unique to the locality.

The ideologies that have influenced modern day perceptions of settlement, identity and ownership in the Kimberley have been discussed. This included a general overview of historic notions of the frontier on a global, Australian and localised basis. These viewpoints have been scrutinised in relation to the 'myth of the male frontier' and settlement of the area that became known as the Kimberley. The ramifications of racist attitudes, further entrenched by notions of social Darwinism, have also been examined.

The historic position of women on the Australian frontier is included to gain a further understanding of social conditions and power relations that came into play, within the context of racism, sexism and isolation. This is followed by a discussion of feminist standpoint theories, and the difficulties women have experienced in finding a voice across the labyrinth of diversity. An added dimension to this theoretical framework is the notion of being known in a small town and how the women's experiences of relocation to a new northern frontier have shaped their identity.

A qualitative methodological approach incorporating both primary and secondary sources was employed to undertake this study. The focus was on the women's stories which were the primary sources. In my analysis, the women's stories are entwined with background information from secondary sources. In the subsequent chapter I review the literature pertaining to feminist oral history. A detailed account of this methodology and the implications of this medium for this thesis are also presented.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### ***Introduction***

The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate the experiences of a diverse range of women, post World War II, who have made the remote Kimberley region home. It is an examination of the women's prior knowledge of the area, their expectations and settling in process. It is an exploration of how, over time, they have created their own support networks and how they have survived. Aspects of the women's lives have been revealed and analysed for the purpose of documenting their significant contribution to the development of the north of Western Australia.

Overall, little has been written of the experiences and interrelationships of women in isolated country towns and communities. It is an area of research that has drawn slight attention. The availability of literature on 'isolated' women in rural and remote areas in Australia is meagre. The Kimberley is no exception. As mentioned, conventional histories ascribe a male status to the area, mentioning women as adjuncts. As a contribution to rectifying this neglect, this study focuses on the involvement of women in the development of an area traditionally known as the male frontier.

This research is an investigation of women's experiences based on knowledge drawn from their stories. Their stories were analysed within the context of their residence in a racially diverse community. My own prior knowledge of the Broome community and involvement in various community activities has influenced this analysis.

I undertook a search of secondary materials on the Kimberley to further my own understanding of Broome, particularly prior to the time frame of my own residence. The purpose of this research was to gain alternative perspectives of the region. The consideration of the preliminary information gained led me to build on the topic and to develop queries about the women who had made the Kimberley their home. I considered why the women were motivated to relocate and whether it was their decision. I further considered the women's knowledge

of the Kimberley and the influence of their lifestyle prior to relocation. I wondered to what extent notions of the north west being a male frontier shaped the expectations of the women prior to migration. Further queries arose as to how their prior perceptions of the area and their previous experiences affected their settlement process? Upon settlement, I deliberated on how the women reconciled their expectations with the reality of their new lifestyle, how they adapted to their new environment and why did they stay? I contemplated the reasons behind differences in each woman's experiences in different time periods since World War II. I speculated on how individual experiences change over time and how attitudes to living in a frontier society have changed.

In this study a qualitative methodological approach incorporating both primary and secondary sources was employed. A combination of these sources provided background information for comparison and analysis before embarking upon the gathering of the oral histories, which form the basis of this study.

Collecting information for this project was complex and involved a series of components. To establish the context for the interviews it was necessary to review relevant historical, feminist and demographic literature pertaining to the Kimberley, Western Australia and northern Australia. As mentioned, there has been scant mention of women in histories of Western Australia until recent times and there continues to be negligible feminist literature pertaining to country women.

Census data was collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics from 1947 to 2001 to be used as an indicator of the growth and development of the Kimberley region with a focus on the Shire of Broome. A comprehensive review of government and public records and documents relevant to the time period was also undertaken. Any mention of women was used as a lead to gather further information on their lives.

To obtain these important contextual materials I approached many government and non-government organisations as well as archival collections. These included the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Department of Mines, Department of Local Government, Department of Commerce and

Trade, the Broome Shire Council and the Country Women's Association. I travelled to Perth to access records in the Battye Library and Australian Archives and Universities, and to Darwin to the Northern Australia Research Unit. I read newspapers; examined transcripts of oral histories conducted in the Kimberley and searched numerous files to glean any information about the lives of Kimberley women.

Reading and analysing histories of Broome and the Kimberley and scrutinising government and non-government records broadened my knowledge of the area. The material gathered furthered my understandings of life for women in the Kimberley prior to my own relocation. Drawing together and collating this information informed this oral history project as it assisted me to formulate the type of questions I anticipated asking the women. Although the secondary sources tended to provide limited information on the social aspects of the everyday lives of 'ordinary' women and men, they were useful as they influenced the line of questions I asked participants. The secondary sources reflected the thinking of the time. These sources, particularly official records have also been used to authenticate aspects of the women's stories. For example the time frame of an event, spelling of names and places, and official terms and titles that differed from colloquial usage.

Conducting this research furthered my understandings of the context of relocation for the women who were to be a part of this study. However I was aware that there were also strong implications for the manner in which the next stage of information gathering was sourced. The methodology had to suit the women who were of varying backgrounds, ages, and cultural identities. My decision to use interviews to create their histories was made with considerations of their personal styles of communication and their potential to work with me, a member of the Broome community.

The directions of other histories of Broome further supported this choice. A number of first person accounts of the experience of Broome over time provide an alternative viewpoint to other representations of events, people and places. Therefore, personal renditions provide other options for accessing information. They often challenge mainstream representations of stories

presented in the media or in secondary sources as they reveal another aspect of the past which may challenge conventional notions. In this study the notion that the Kimberley frontier was exclusively a male domain is a conventional myth that can be challenged by recording the stories of a group of women. Their presence in, and response to living in an area that has been ascribed frontier status will give an insight into intercultural attitudes and gendered discourses. It will also show how women have contributed to the development of the region.

The process of interviewing was selected as the most appropriate tool to create new understandings of the topic. The following section explores theories relating to oral history and their implications pertinent to this study.

### ***Oral History***

Storytelling is an ancient tradition used to pass on information. It preserves customs, beliefs and events of significance. In the western world, the use of storytelling as a means of recording history has undergone a change in status. The recognition of the value and insights into a culture's historical background that oral traditions offer is a fairly recent phenomenon (Rabbitt, 1994b, p. 15). As stated in Chapter Two of this study, over the last 30 years the method of recording experiences orally, has grown in popularity both internationally and in Australia. Those interested in preserving the stories of marginalised people who did not lead prominent lives, such as the poor and working class, women, ethnic and Indigenous minorities, began to use this medium to record accounts of people's lives, and their interpretations of the past. For example, it has become an essential means of gathering evidence for Native Title hearings which rely on Indigenous testimony.

Oral history is a medium used to record accounts of people's lives and the past. Supporting this methodology, Prentice (1999, p. 37) stated that "perhaps only in the lives of single individuals is it possible to glimpse the complexity of motivation and experience that make up human history".

It is intrinsic to this study, as it offers an insight into the gendered, social relations from the perspective of women living in an area in northern Australia,

considered by some to be isolated and remote. For others isolation was just not an issue as they were pre-occupied by the demands of their work and families. Therefore listening to and recording the first person accounts of a cross section of Kimberley women can document alternative, gendered histories.

### ***Oral History as a Feminist Tool***

Oral history has become a popular medium for feminist researchers. It provides the opportunity to assemble tangible information about a cross section of women whose experiences have not been previously documented. Recording the everyday experiences of women's lives has become a crucial element in broadening the scope of feminist research. "The impact of feminist research has been to awaken whole issues of gender in research activities and to politicise the debate on the conduct of research: similar arguments have been raised about race and ethnicity" (Punch, 1994, p. 86).

### ***Critique of Oral History***

Although it has been recognised that oral history offers an alternative approach to accessing information that cannot be found in secondary sources, its validity has been questioned. The collecting of case histories using oral history is a controversial field of enquiry. It is a methodological approach that has been scrutinised by some academics and historians who raise queries relating to the reliability of the source (Gluck, 1994; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Grele, 1985; Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson, 1996; Hamilton, 1996; Thompson, 1988; Thompson, Frisch & Hamilton, 1994). This censure is based on the premise that many questions arise as to the validity of anecdotal evidence based on personal, subjective experiences. The narrators' own biases, the validity of their accounts and the accuracy of their memory can all be questioned. Issues raised include the potential of narrators to: rely upon memories, distort the truth knowing that the testimony will become a public document, tell the researcher only what they think the researcher wants to hear, and include some information to the exclusion of other details.

These criticisms are similar to those made of male centred, secondary sources. "Any writing about the past is a subsequent reconstruction... no history reaches us unmediated" (Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson 1996, p. 12). The following discussions respond to these and other considerations relating to the use of oral history for this study.

The researcher understands that the information received through this method of data gathering, is a representation, a version of the past, based on the narrator's own experience and relationship to the past. Oral history is a subjective, interactive process involving both the researcher and the participant. It is dependent upon many individual variants, the most important in this context being gender, residency, occupation, socio-economic status, ethnicity and religion. The difficulty lies in interpretation, as individuals' conceptions of the world are influenced by their situation and experience (Grele, 1985, p. 129). "The aim is not to explain people's behaviour but to be able to explain to them/ourselves the socially organized powers in which their/our lives are embedded and to which their/our activities contribute" (Smith, 1999, p. 8).

Grele (1985) referred to the oral history movement as a 'movement without aim' in his review of theoretical problems with the methodology of oral history. Criticising the oral history process, he argued that oral historians were often not professional historians and ill prepared. In his opinion, the stories become data, collected after the fact. Therefore when it came to evaluation, the researcher did not have the depth of knowledge for theoretical introspection (pp. 129–136). Yet, as mentioned, the validity and accuracy of traditional histories based on written manuscript sources, letters and other documentation also have their weaknesses. The researcher selects the content and produces a document that is not free of bias. It is a myth that history is objective (Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson 1996, p. 6; Theobald, 1999, p. 15).

These criticisms created a basis for doubt about the validity of the oral history movement in Australia. However Hamilton (1996, pp. 44–46) argued that by the 1990s the fears relating to the validity of collecting oral histories had been allayed by the professionalisation of the practice. The publication of the

*Bringing Them Home Report* (1997) provided further evidence of oral history's worth. This was the largest oral history project to be undertaken in Australia, whereby the lives and circumstances of Indigenous peoples, now known as the 'Stolen Generation' were documented using oral testimonies.

### **Memories**

International debates about oral history also focus upon theoretical discussions of memory and subjectivity (Thomson, Frisch & Hamilton 1994). These include theories of remembering and forgetting, and the various cultural forms that shape the storytelling, which in turn informs new ways of understanding. The relationship between memory and personal identity has been analysed. A general conclusion made was that in today's society images of the past are intertwined in history and memory and therefore our culture. "Memories are coloured, in the end, by events and feelings over a lifetime" (Prentice, 1999, p. 35).

This school of thought is pertinent to this study as the Kimberley, and in particular the town of Broome, is renowned for the pearling industry, historical links with Asia and subsequent racially diverse community. An intermixing of cultural experiences influenced the way the women composed their personal lives and reiterated their stories. Only in retrospect as we have moved with the times, do we see oddities or recognise differences from a more experienced and present day perspective.

Reliance on individual memory as a means to provide an authentic account of an event or experience is a major criticism of the use of oral history. The reliability of memory as a historical source has been queried (Thomson, Frisch & Hamilton, 1994). Physical deterioration of a person's memory and nostalgia in old age may result in a distorted truth. The narrator's story, their version of the 'truth' differs from other eye-witness and first person accounts (Thomson et al., 1994, pp. 33, 40).

In this study it is 'true' that the women's accounts of particular incidences and experiences of life in Broome differ from other person's accounts. It is also 'true' that there is no 'simple' or universal truth to a story. Stories are always

from someone's perspective; they are a personal representation. They are shaped, managed and modified over time. These versions of stories have their place in the process of mythologising an experience as the stories are told and retold.

Thomson (1994, pp. 8-11) in *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* explored the links between theory and practice, the process of memory composure and the ramifications for recording history in the community in depth. He argued that memories are composed in two ways. Firstly, the cultural shaping of memory whereby selected experiences are remembered and articulated in a particular way, depending on who the perceived audience will be. Secondly, in a more personal psychosocial setting in which stories are constructed by the individual in the way they feel comfortable to portray their lives and identities.

In Thomson's cultural approach, language and meaning are portrayed in a way that is assumed to be culturally appropriate and acceptable. The fashion in which the story is retold depends on who will read or listen to the account. It may be reiterated one way if the perceived audience is family and friends. If the narrator predicts that their testimony may become a public document, the experience may be told in a more indirect, impersonal manner. This approach is based on the importance of social acceptance, and may lead to the remembering being placed into a context that fits wider social patterns and common beliefs (Borland, 1991, p. 63).

The emphasis placed on the story being socially acceptable may lead the narrator to generalise, repress or exaggerate experiences. The narrator may only restate what they think is expected of them or what they think the researcher wants to hear. Personal biases may be added depending on whom they perceive will be listening to their rendition. Some information may be included to the exclusion of other details; the story is constructed for the circumstances of the telling (Weiler, 1999, p. 56). All stories are continually shaped and modified over time.

Just as the women in this study chose which information would portray their stories for the purpose of this academic investigative study, as the researcher I have divulged selected information from my own perspective. I became a participant in the investigation as I was consciously revealing occasional personal 'insider' information to some of the women. This accentuated the multi-layered interrelationships of us, as women residents of a small town. In reference to the researcher, Smith, (1999, p. 6) said: "Her experiencing is always active as a way of knowing, whether or not she makes it an explicit resource".

Thomson's (1994, p. 9) discussion of the psychological approach to composure hinges on the subjective notion of one's 'sense of self'. He argued that individuals construct their personal identities through the memory of past experiences and comparing these experiences with other people. Telling stories to the self or to others, he surmised, shapes identity, and memory forms the basis of self-perception. Individuals' self-perceptions and ambitions influence their understanding of past experiences and self-awareness. Some memories survive while others do not, as experiences impact on the individual in different ways. Memory of an experience may be outstanding and meaningful in one particular time frame and then over time comes to lose its significance as past and current memories are moulded to shape new identities and aspirations. Thomson's analysis of memory and subjectivity poses implications for oral history as a methodological paradigm. Contradictory versions of an experience, he further argued, must not be excluded, as these are all representations of a story.

Meanings of events are shaped by popular culture, which in turn may reshape our original memories. Thomson et al. (1994, p. 41-42) raised concerns over the influence mass culture has upon impoverishing 'our original memories'. The film industry and the media have influenced notions of 'popular culture'. Thomson et al. (p. 41) referred to fears "that even our memory would take on the conventions of filmic representation of the past". An example of this is when one uses a television character to describe themselves or components of their lives. Or when we say yes, we recall a particular event, but our

recollection is the 'media' version as we were not actually 'eye-witnesses' to the event. This lends itself to the possibility of a 'homogenised' version of the event being retold, which in turn could lead to loss of community and identity.

Technological advances have also changed the way in which memories are recorded. The oral tradition of recording memories and stories has been supplemented with a host of modern day equipment such as films, videos, tapes and CD ROMs (Hamilton, 1996, p. 44).

Stories may be reconstrued according to changing political ideologies to suit attitudes of the day or to reinforce a myth. In this study the myth of the Kimberley as only a male frontier is scrutinised. Thomson (1994) in his challenging of the Anzac legend, questioned and critiqued versions of the narrator's stories, providing an alternative history "which empower some people at the expense of others", p. 35. Similarly I am using the women's narratives, which form the basis of this study, to broaden the scope of knowledge of Broome. It is appropriate then, that the relationship of memory and gender be explored to better understand the implications for this study.

### ***Memory and Gender***

Everyday patterns of behaviour and personal feelings are significant to the storytelling process. Common cultural attitudes affect gender relations, just as the accounts of minority peoples challenge and influence existing ideas (Leydesdorff et al., 1996, p. 8). In this study, the intersections of gender, race, class and ethnicity contributing to the women's identity are interwoven. This is an involved process based on the intricacies of relationships across cultures.

The complexities of interrelationships are central to the work of Gluck, (1994) and Gluck & Patai (1991), who are feminist oral historians. Their work is significant to this study as they acknowledge that the recording of women's voices through the use of oral history is not a simple and straightforward process. They admit that when the potential for oral history as a tool for feminist research was being explored in the 1970s, many feminists considered gender to be a unifying bond for all women. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, it was naively assumed that 'gender was transcendent', and that the

common bond of sister hood united women (Gluck, 1994, p. 75; Smith, 1999, p. 5). Potential divisions of race and class were ignored.

In the 1990s, the notion of universalism was discarded and replaced with a focus on race, ethnicity, class and gender as 'interlocking systems of domination'. These intersections were to take precedence over gender (Gluck, 1994, pp. 75-76).

Along with Gluck & Patai and Leydesdorff et al, (1996), I argue that there is a need to recognise plurality, as the variety of individual viewpoints is linked to diverse attitudes and interpretations across race, class and gender. This recognition is fundamental to this study. The reconstruction of memory is based on the experience and the subjective realm of the individual. Memories and language are not only gendered but also marked by multiple intersections of race, class and gender.

### ***Silences***

Literature on interviewing techniques for oral history highlighted the need to deal with silences carefully. Thomson, (1994, p. 11), stated silences may not necessarily be about feeling uncomfortable or a repression of information. Rather the silences may assume preconceived knowledge, or a shared cultural identity or empathy. His theory of composure emphasises the need to analyse the multi-layered meanings of the storytelling process. He argued that positivist oral historians who ignore the silences gloss over layers of meanings which the person does not feel comfortable with or may not wish to identify as their experience.

I anticipated that the issue of silences would impact on this study due to the interrelationships between the women and me, living in close proximity in a small town. In the majority of instances we were familiar with each other prior to meeting for the interview. There were periods of respectful silence as we pondered the difficult part of the story just told. The silences gave us both the opportunity to recompose ourselves.

In all the interview situations I used my discretion, as it was of paramount importance to me both personally as a professional and as a woman living in Broome, that the relationship between the two parties must not be impaired. In some situations I was able to re-phrase the question, give an example, or come back to it later. Whereas in other instances this was not possible due to an unspoken uneasiness felt by both of us, or out of respect for cultural sensitivity (Gluck, 1994, p. 77). At times I would interpret the women's body language, or notice they were distracted so I digressed to another topic.

Arguably, the withholding of information affects all investigative studies and is ultimately the storyteller's choice. In this study, at times due to my own 'inside ' information or hearsay, I was aware that there was perhaps more to the story than was being revealed. This is a sensitive issue that must be handled with great care and diplomacy. The well being of the storyteller must be protected. Therefore despite any notions that it may be the researcher's 'duty' to challenge the silences, to rectify misconceptions of other histories, it is imperative that the researcher be familiar with correct cultural protocol, to ensure that the line of questioning is ethical.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

In responding to the above-mentioned considerations for conducting oral history interviews, I focused on the importance of ethical conduct. The following discussion outlines other steps taken to ensure that the dignity of the women and their stories was always upheld.

From the outset of this project I understood the challenge of the dual role of researcher and community member. I took extensive precautions to ensure that the balance of control between my personal/professional networks and my researcher role was maintained. The following examples of practice demonstrate the ethical measures and the reciprocity arrangements made to give the best possible conditions for each woman to share her story and for protection of the individual.

### ***Collaborative Process***

Throughout this study emphasis is placed upon the importance of the partnership between researcher and narrator. In the following discussion issues of power relations and of representation of the stories are examined.

Criticisms have been made of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the biographer and the subject. Questions arise as to whether it is empowering to be interviewed and who holds the control over the original story (Gluck, 1994 pp. 75–82; Gluck & Patai, 1991, p. 2; Hamilton, 1996, pp. 45–46; Theobald, 1999, p. 15; Thomson et al., 1994, pp. 34–35, 40).

The researcher and the narrator have varying degrees of control over the interview process. In this study as the researcher I initiated the project and had specific information or a theme to be explored. In the interview, the women were asked specific questions centring upon their backgrounds and prior knowledge of Broome and the Kimberley, their relocation to the area, how they found life and with whom they mixed.

This raises ethical dilemmas as to how far a researcher can probe, the repercussions of disturbing the narrator's composure; the psychological effects and the question of letting people speak for themselves (Thomson 1994, p. 237). Tensions may arise, particularly when the researcher explores popular myths and challenges the narrator on issues that are comfortably ordered and composed in the participant's minds. For example, sensitive issues relating to land ownership, pastoral leases and Native Title are relevant to this project on Kimberley women.

My questioning influenced the type of information the women gave, but I argue that the women, the storytellers, always controlled the flow of information. They had the information and the 'power' to choose how to respond and may give a "socially desirable" answer (Fontana & Free, 1994, p. 364). At times, some of the women ignored the theme and answered the question on another tangent, inserting their own interests and emphasis. At other times the women also had the power to choose not to respond to certain lines of questioning at all. "In historical inquiries it is often the case that large chunks of material are

missing, that what we find are fragments of a woman's life, small moments and glimpses that in themselves are fascinating" (Smith, 1999b, p. 71).

The interview process was a form of empowerment for the women in this study. They were approached to be a part of it and they agreed to tell their stories (Gluck, 1994, p. 75). They all accepted typed transcripts of their interviews. In some instances, the women may have been fulfilling a psychological need to have their stories recorded. Being approached to be a part of this study may have satisfied or aroused a desire to be heard. They have become a part of this recorded history of women in the Kimberley (Hamilton, 1996, p. 45).

In Gluck's (1994) conceptualisation of the 'power dynamics' of the oral history process she contended that first the narrators hold the power in the interview process as they have the information. Then with the reviewing of the transcript, the narrator loses some of that power, as the researcher analyses and re-shapes the text. The dialogue is transcribed and the transcript becomes a written text which highlights interpretations and biases relevant to the research topic (Bauer, 1993, pp. 519-547; Ferrier, 1990, pp. 134-139). The researcher takes control of the narrator's story in this interpretive process (Borland, 1991, p. 63).

Further criticisms then arise as to the collaborative process and to how the events are retold and dramatised by the narrator and how the researcher interprets the information (Hamilton, 1990, p. 130). Oral histories involve a 'two way process of interaction' that cannot be recorded free of cultural bias, experiences and emotive factors. "Transcripts in the form of the typed written word cannot give the reader the full flavour, passion and verve of how the stories were narrated. The written word cannot fully portray emotions, such as the intonation of the voice, the laughter, or the tears, as they were recorded in the original dialogue" (Rabbitt, 1994b, p. 24).

Nevertheless the written form of the women's stories is valid. In this study, referenced verbatim quotes were used from the transcripts. The only words edited were the names of other people to whom reference was directly

made. I did not transcribe sections of some interviews that were on topics, which in my opinion were not relevant to the women's relocation and settlement. However, as a precaution details of these omitted sections were noted using the number counter on the tape recorder.

Yet another characteristic of the collaborative process is that of mutual acceptance. This is particularly relevant to the 'power dynamic' between researcher and narrator when the final transcript is presented.

Thomson et al (1994, p. 34) wrote of their concerns that the final product may not be what the narrator had anticipated and could be interpreted as being a breach of trust and confidence. They were also apprehensive about the use of selected sections of the transcript and argued that specific comments may be referred to and quoted but its use may differ from the narrator's original intent. Such concerns have been alleviated in this particular study. I actually gave the women their transcripts and sought their comments and changes. As the researcher I collaborated with the women after the interviews, to ensure their words spoken to me had been transcribed in the way they desired. I had a particular emphasis or line of research which was the focus of the interpretive process. This was explained to the women, in that I was interested in recording their experiences of making a remote locality home.

Questions have been raised as to the value the researcher places on the narrator's stories and how they are interpreted and used. The researcher values the perspective of the narrator as a source of information. The stories are used to theorise and validate the research (Borland, 1991, p. 64; Theobald, 1999, p. 12). Conversely, the storytelling may not meet the expectations of the interviewer. The researcher may be disappointed with the oral history produced. The information the researcher wished to hear may not be 'within memory' of the narrator (Theobald 1999, p. 15). The stories told are 'social texts, records of interaction that have been entrusted to the researcher (Olson & Shopes, 1991, p. 198).

### ***Role Management***

Role management was a consideration for my position as a researcher in this project (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 69). As a researcher on the 'inside', I personally considered the objectivity of other researchers on the 'outside' and the ramifications of their written words about individual people. I am not in Broome for a short sojourn to collect information, nor am I anonymous. I see many of the women going about their community activities and socialise with others. I see them as a part of my day-to-day life. I am a 'situated knower' a participant in the actual process of inquiry and discovery (Smith, 1999, p. 6).

The women were not treated just as research objects, or a homogenous group. As a long-term resident of the area, there is a high possibility of commonplace interactions with some of the women. These dynamics placed the researcher in a position that would have differed if the women had been strangers, or lived elsewhere. However, seven of the women have left town since they were interviewed five years ago and I have made contact with only one of them since that time.

### ***Cultural Sensitivity***

An aspect of this study was cultural sensitivity and respect for the women. I endeavoured to follow correct 'cultural' protocol when approaching potential participants, particularly those from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds. For example, I aware that in the Filipino community the matriarch or 'head Filipina' must be approached first, before contacting any other Filipina or asking her husband for permission.

Due to prior knowledge of the women's lives, some questions were not asked out of respect for their privacy and personal sensitivity. Sometimes within the community and family, the 'insider' relationship is disadvantaged. Particular pockets of information may not be elaborated upon, or conversely over emphasised. An 'outsider', anonymous in the community may be made privy to a differing rendition and provided with another perspective (Smith 1999b, p. 65).

However, from my perspective as the researcher, I viewed my knowledge of and friendship with some of the women as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. A further benefit was being introduced to the women I did not know by people whom they trusted. I did not know five of the women, two Indigenous Australians and three migrant women. Yet, despite my insider perspective, at times with no prior knowledge or warning, questions asked, with all good intentions, hit on sensitive issues that the women did not wish to deal with or discuss. There was really no common denominator as to the topic or type of question.

The majority of women interviewed lived in the Broome township. Some of the women were living on Indigenous communities; others worked on pastoral or mining leases. Still others were market gardeners from the 4, 12 and 20 mile' areas, or commuted to the Cadjebut mine and pearl farms out of Broome. Within the scope of this study these women's location is defined as making them part of the Broome community. This relatively close physical proximity leads to yet another consideration, that of the inter-relatedness of the participants and the researcher.

### ***Relationships - The Politics of Prior Knowledge***

In a small community there is a high probability that the researcher will personally know, or know something of, the women who agree to be interviewed. It was a situation that applied to this study. Being a long-term resident of the area, playing an active role in the community and being a member of numerous clubs and committees, I am a researcher on the 'inside'. I found that with the women I did not know personally, I usually knew other family members or mutual friends or colleagues. Previous knowledge or hearsay between the narrator and the interviewer can create expectations and preconceived ideas. The process of remembering and how the story is told may also be affected by ideas of each other. Elucidating this topic of interrelationships, Gluck (1994, p. 82) declared that "we are engaged in a direct social interaction, a mutual relationship. And that means we have to confront two subjectivities – our own and that of our narrators".

As the researcher, I was aware that I am in an advantaged position to be able to research the lives of other Kimberley women. I am privileged by my acquaintances with these women and by my education, which has allowed me to undertake this research (Weiler 1999, p. 43).

I share mutual interests with most of the women in this study. We are women in a small northern community; this is our common and overriding bond. We either know each other or know of the other. Referred to as "cultural likeness", Gluck (1984, p. 227) advocates that a higher rate of success will be achieved in the interview process if both parties can find a common bond. Thus where trust and respect are established, tensions and apprehensions can be alleviated, which may ensure a more in depth interview.

### ***Issues of Confidentiality and Ownership***

At the introduction to the interview an explanation was given of my intention to present a copy of the transcript to ensure that information had been accurately noted. This gave the women the scope to change any of the material. I was aware that this was beyond the necessary university, ethical parameters but felt that a transcript would not only protect confidentiality and privacy, it would be a useful historical resource for the participant.

Prior to the tape being turned on, and commencement of the interview, a verbal explanation of the introductory letter and parameters of the research was given. As each woman agreed to be a part of the study she signed a consent form and her verbal consent was put on tape. She understood that her story could be withdrawn from the project at her discretion, at anytime (Appendix 2).

Each narrator was given the option of being referred to by a pseudonym of her choice. Only one of the narrators chose not to be identified, so her privacy has been maintained by using a pseudonym which she selected. A masking of descriptive data, which might identify the individual, has been undertaken. This woman has since passed away. Two other women placed conditions on the use of their stories. One woman agreed to be interviewed only under the premise that I did not interpret her stories in a derogatory manner. When given her transcript to peruse she did not make any alterations

or request any of her stories to be omitted. After being interviewed and receiving a copy of her transcript, another woman stated that her story could be used to help me gain my university qualification but not for any other purpose.

The other women I interviewed were not concerned with masking their identity and were not alarmed at the thought of their words being used as a part of research on women in the Kimberley. I consider the women trusted me as an insider. As a member of the community, rather than a researcher arriving in town, collecting information, leaving town and publishing a book. Most of the women knew I had written stories and articles about Broome in the past. I had interviewed some of them previously in other professional circumstances. I mixed socially with some of them and we could recall how long we had known each other and where and when we met. The importance of the skills of the researcher in carrying out the interview and the reward of social exchange were integral to this process.

### ***The Interviews***

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis; tape recorded, and transcribed using the editorial guidelines recommended by the Oral History Association of Western Australia. Predominantly open ended questions, which were flexible and subject to change were asked, because, as Janice Raymond argues, this "maximises discovery and description" (Reinharz, 1992 p.18, refer Appendix 3). In this study a conversational approach was undertaken.

### ***Selection of the Participants***

As indicated previously, my own situation as a long-term resident of Broome shaped the methodology of the study. Over 26 years I had developed extensive networks within the community, both personally and professionally. Through these associations people knew of my interest in the area of women and the effects of relocation and in many incidents, they related to my experience of choosing to settle in Broome.

The context then of establishing the project was one in which I initially contacted women I knew personally. I chose to approach women who I

considered would be willing to be involved in my study, on the basis that I had worked with them in professional paid employment or as a volunteer in community groups. These contacts generated further interest in my work with some of these women suggesting other women, as potential participants. I relied upon my extensive network of friends and colleagues to make the necessary introductions to successfully complete this project. The ensuing contacts then became a dominant feature in shaping the direction of the study.

My aim was to gain multiple perspectives of women's experiences of relocating to and living in Broome. The process selection was multifaceted as I considered the many types of women that had made Broome their home. While it was possible to gather a broad cross section of experiences from women who had both been born in Broome and from those who migrated, I chose to narrow the scope of the study. The focus was to be upon creating a history about the lived experiences of Kimberley women, who like myself had migrated to the area. This is not to say that the stories of the women, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, born in Broome are not valuable or intrinsic to this study. On the contrary, in all the stories of the participating women, were tales of their social and professional relationships with Broome born women. I acknowledge that their presence has been a significant influence upon my life and the lives of many women who migrated.

In my attempt to be 'inclusive' rather than 'exclusive', I focused on interviewing a sample of Broome women whom I perceived had varied life experiences. I had decided that I would interview 24 women and considered the many types of women living in Broome. Within the selection process determining the categories of women to interview took several steps. Numerous ways of grouping the women across previous location and class were possible but complex. I considered the easiest way to categorise the women was by ethnicity and then broke these down into sub-groups. I am not intending to imply that ethnicity is a major factor or surpasses the other categories.

There were to be eight women in each of the three categories: Indigenous women, who were not from the Kimberley, Anglo Australian women

and overseas migrant women

In addition to the above categories these women's lives also depicted many other variables relevant to the study. I also wanted a cross section of women of different ages and length of residency in Broome. The women interviewed were between the ages of 22 and 73. The first arrived in 1956 and the most recently arrived woman I interviewed made Broome her home in 1997.

Within the selection process I considered each category of women separately. Numerous ways of grouping the women across race and class emerged. There were many variables, such as length of residence. I considered it was vital to the study to have a cross section of women of varying length of residence to gain a view of Broome over each decade since World War Two. Potential participants were re categorised according to number of years of residence – less than 10 years, between 10 and 20 and over 20 years.

Then they were re grouped according to their ages – under 30 years, under 55 and over 55. Categories of potential women's occupations and class were considered such as workers in the Kimberley's major industries: mining, pearling and tourism. Then there were Government workers, mothers at home, grandmothers and retirees to be considered. Other variables included identification as an Indigenous person, a migrant, a 'coloured' person, or a 'white' Australian. Each category could be further separated. Were the women from the city or the country, an Asian or European migrant? What was their first spoken language, their level of education and prior knowledge of Broome and the Kimberley? Identifying as a single or married woman, the number of children, whether the woman was married to a person of the same race and class or a cross-cultural marriage.

The following discussion outlines the logistics of initiating and implementing the contacts with the women who shared their stories.

### ***Initiating the Interviews***

The women in this project were approached according to their accessibility. Although it may be argued that any woman would have been suitable to interview as each life history is exclusive and offers a perspective on Broome, I was led by my need to fill the categories I had ascribed to potential participants. Thus, I did not take up all the suggestions of potential participants I received through my networks.

In selecting the method of obtaining participants for the study I relied upon the extensive network previously described, rather than employing advertising such as media or community notices used by researchers external to the town community.

In the majority of cases, I met potential narrators in an informal situation as we were going about our business, down town, at the hospital or at sporting events. For the women I knew, an informal personal invitation was made initially to gauge their level of interest. Friends introduced the five women interviewed whom I did not know personally. I outlined the project to each woman, giving her time to consider whether she wished to be involved, and if she had the time to commit herself. Follow up phone calls were made and formal letters introducing myself as a university researcher and the nature of the research were sent (Appendix 3).

Several women who were approached declined the invitation to be interviewed. Two of these women were older Anglo Australians woman who had married into families that had a long history with Broome and the pearling industry. One declined immediately whereas the other woman agreed to be interviewed, but phoned me the next day to say she had changed her mind. It was the woman's prerogative, and even though it is acknowledged that she did not have to give me a reason for her this change, she volunteered to tell me that her husband had suggested it was not a good idea. To me this raised issues of patriarchal values, where the woman had been influenced by her husband in her decision-making. Was she free to tell her story and were her reservations her own?

However, reassuringly the final 24 participants were reliable and generous in their contribution to this study.

Much consideration was also given to the type of letter that was sent to potential participants and in particular the language used. For most of the women knew me as a long-term resident, from my associations with community groups and as a former representative of the media, not as an academic. I wrote to them as researcher stating my intentions and requesting the taping of their stories. Letters were sent only to women who had confirmed their interest with me verbally. Further phone calls were made to arrange a meeting time and place. It was clearly outlined on the 'consent form' and repeated verbally to the women that they "have the right to withdraw from the project at anytime".

### ***The Interview Process***

Most of the interviews were completed in the day and the majority of the women preferred to be interviewed in their own homes when their children and partners were otherwise occupied. They preferred the privacy, convenience, comfort and security of being interviewed at home. Some of the interviews were held at the university during the week and also on the weekends. A couple of the women were interviewed in my own home.

The current circumstances of the narrator, such as family commitments, health and workload also impinged upon the interview process. An older woman may be lonely and have the time and desire to relate her life story whereas a younger woman may also be lonely, but family responsibilities may make her time more limited. The onus, whatever the relationship between the two parties, was upon the researcher to ensure that the narrator was comfortable with the interview process.

The interviews usually took approximately two hours. Most of the women let the tape run freely and did not request it to be turned off. In some cases when we were having a cup of tea after the interview, I asked the storyteller if I could turn the tape back on to record an interesting tale. Also, one older woman asked me three times to turn the tape back on again as she had recalled something else she would like to tell me.

As demonstrated in the above discussion, a major effort was made to understand the needs of the narrator and to recognise the potential for subjectivity and bias, when conducting the interviews.

### ***Transcribing the Interviews***

It was my privilege, as a researcher to have in my possession the women's voices and their stories on tape. The transcribing of the interviews was completed at my own home on the outskirts of Broome. This was a lengthy process.

I became familiar with the women's stories over time. Sections of some tapes were replayed and the transcripts were revisited numerous times, as I carefully undertook a scrutiny of the women's stories. As part of the interpretative process, I have drawn on my own experiences where appropriate to assist my analysis. I have used contemporary international, national and local debates as starting points to explore some of issues the women have grappled with in the process of making the Kimberley their home. Just as the women in this study chose which information they would narrate to portray their stories for the purpose of this academic investigative study, as the researcher I have divulged selected information on my own perspective and experience. An example of this is the exchange of memories about specific places or events. This accentuates the multi-layered interrelationships of residents of a small town.

The information was collated, similar and differing experiences noted, and then critiqued. Rather than reiterating what happened the events are placed in the context of the social climate and ideologies of the day. Upon analysis, notions of individual differences and experiences were apparent. The stories were explored to identify major themes of gender, identity, race, ethnicity, class and religion. In the main, these were placed in chronological order according to the decade the women arrived. For as Tuchman (1994, p. 306) said: "Any social phenomenon must be understood in its historical context".

### ***Trustworthiness***

It became obvious to me that I needed to ask some of the women further questions to clarify and check points, names and spelling. This also provided an opportunity to change, delete or add any information they chose. It was also a way for me to give back something to the women. I did not offer the women copies of their tapes and no one has asked me for one. I posted most of the women their transcripts to give them privacy to read them. Then I began the process of meeting with them again to check their responses and in some cases ask further questions. Most of the women did not make any changes to their transcripts. One non-English-speaking background migrant woman must have spent many hours rearranging her story and her use of English grammar. Another Indigenous woman deleted sections where she had referred to people that we both knew and may be easily recognisable to those on the inside.

Only one woman was interviewed who had relocated to Broome during the 1950s and stayed in the area. Three non-Indigenous women, all from country WA told me stories of their arrival in Broome and the Kimberley during the 1960s. Most of the data were collected on women settling in the Broome area in the later decades of the 20th Century – the 70s, 80s and 1990s.

A further limitation of the project was that the researcher could only speak English. As the hiring of interpreters was beyond the budget of the project all the interviews were conducted in English. Only those non-English-speaking background women who could speak English could be interviewed. This had implications for this study as the experiences of non-English-speaking background women who have learnt English will differ from those who have not. Therefore, the pool of potential participants was reduced and this limited the cross section of women interviewed.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has outlined the complexities of gathering data using the medium of oral history. The methodological approach undertaken in this study has been defined and critiques of this medium scrutinised. In this study, to authenticate aspects of the women's stories, their narratives have at times,

been interwoven with information gleaned from Kimberley histories and official and unofficial archival evidence. These sources, which are limited in their depiction of the social aspects of day to day living, particularly the experiences of country women, have been used as an additional reference point.

The ways in which the women reiterated their stories to me for the purpose of this study were profoundly shaped by their experiences of living in Broome, once an isolated and remote pearling port, and now a popular tourist destination. They had their own personal reasons for being a part of the study and the majority of the women knew me or knew of me or my family.

The complexities of how stories are remembered, retold, relived and recorded have been outlined. I have used examples of both feminist theoretical works on oral history and mainstream oral histories to engage in a discussion on theory and practice in relation to this study. In particular, I have examined my stance as a researcher in a small town and the complex web of interrelations I have with the women. This study is not a history from the 'bottom up' (Gluck, 1994, p. 75; Olson & Shopes 1991, p. 198; Theobald, 1999, p. 12). I have interviewed women whom I consider to be my peers, the majority whom were known to me - living together in a small community.

## **Chapter Four: First Impressions**

### ***Introduction***

In listening to the women recount their stories of relocating to Broome and the Kimberley, I was struck by the diversity of their lives and yet the commonality of their experience. The women's stories revealed recurring issues, which crossed boundaries of time, background and class. Many of their experiences overlapped, and as the interrelatedness of the themes became apparent, a pattern emerged.

As I studied this pattern I became aware that while many of the women encountered difficulties and hardships settling into life in the north, for some the move was consistent with their previous lived experience. I acknowledge the effect of former life situations, which impacted upon the women's new ideas and experiences. The work of Senge (1990) in the area of 'mental models' has relevance to this phenomenon. The women brought with them their own 'baggage' in relation to their past, and this in turn influenced their ways of thinking and acting.

I am therefore cognisant of the effect of deeply entrenched internal images on perception and behaviour. I acknowledge that this, coupled with the potential for memory to be subjective, has influenced the recounting of the experiences (Thomson, Frisch & Hamilton, 1994). In telling and analysing the stories of the women there is a compelling need to understand their backgrounds. Accordingly, as each participant is introduced into the study, a vignette of her background is presented. The voices of some of the women are heard more frequently than others. Some women are quoted more often than others. There are numerous reasons for these variations in the use of the women's stories. At times, segments of a story are used to highlight a particular point or to embellish a theme. Some of the women were more forthcoming than others when it came to articulating their stories. Others deleted sections of their stories upon reading the transcript of their interview. Each woman's story is highly valued in this project. The amount of oral evidence used from each participant is by no means a measure of the value of their stories.

The next part of this study draws the threads of the women's experiences together through commonalities and contrasts that they encountered over a period of four decades, from 1956 to 1996.

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**Table 3: Women Arriving in Broome 1950s, 1960s.**

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Arrived</b>	<b>Age on Arrival</b>	<b>Family on Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation on Arrival</b>
Rose	1925	country Victoria	Anglo Australian	1956 Feb	30	single	nun
Kristine	Not given	country WA	Anglo Australian	1962	19	single	hotel housemaid
Betty	1944	country WA	Anglo Australian	1962 Sept	18	single	nurse
Ainslie	1948	country WA	Anglo Australian	1967 Jan	19	single	teacher

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**Table 4: Women Arriving in Broome 1970s.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Arrived</b>	<b>Age on Arrival</b>	<b>Family on Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation on Arrival</b>
Jenny	not given	Country WA	Indigenous Australian	1970	18	single	nurse
Alice	not given	Googutha Country	Indigenous Australian	1971	not given	wife mother of 1	home duties
Merle	1932	country WA	Anglo Australian	1972 Dec	40	wife mother of 8	station home duties
Carol	1951	country WA	Anglo Australian	1973 Sept	22	single	meatworker
Pat	1953	country WA	Anglo Australian	1975	22	married	office duties
Barni	1960	country Victoria	Anglo Australian	1977 Sept	17	single	barmaid
Minna	not given	village	Indonesian migrant	1978	not given	wife	domestic

**Table 5: Women Arriving in Broome 1980s.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Arrived</b>	<b>Age on Arrival</b>	<b>Family on Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation on Arrival</b>
Chelsea	1972	country WA	Anglo Australian	1982 Jan	10	parents & brother	school
Kerry	1968	Yamitji country	Indigenous Australian	1983	15	God parents	school
Linda	not given	Small town Philippines	Filipino migrant	1984	not given	husband mother of 2	home duties
Arlene	1952	country Qld	Vanuatu Australian	1985 Feb	33	husband mother of 3	nurse
Pallas	1976	Country Qld	Indigenous Australian	1985 Feb	9	parents & 2 brothers	school
Kazue	1960	city province Japan	Japanese migrant	1988 Nov	28	single	pearl technician
Cheryl	1959	metro Brisbane	Indigenous Australian	1988	29	partner	hotel housemaid
Sue	1962	metro WA	Anglo Australian	1989	27	husband	social worker

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**Table 6: Women Arriving in Broome 1990s.**

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Arrived</b>	<b>Age On Arrival</b>	<b>Family on Arrival</b>	<b>Occupation on Arrival</b>
Jodie	1968	Noongyar Country	Indigenous Australian	1990	24	partner	cook
Claudine	1956	city Switzerland	Swiss migrant	1990	34	husband	barnmaid
Bernadette	1965	metro Brussels	Belgium migrant	1992 July	27	partner	home duties
Edwina	1964	country New Zealand	Maori New Zealand	1994	30	single	administrator
Karima	1973	city New guinea	New Guinea Australian	1997	24	partner	injured pearl diver

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In this chapter, six issues emerge. These are analysed as separate entities with a view to drawing implications of the total picture in the concluding chapter. They are presented under the following themes: Living Conditions and Lifestyle, Health, Race Relations, Isolation, Support Structures and Employment.

In exploring these themes, major emphasis is placed on the commonalities of the women's experiences and their multiple perceptions. However, illustrations are also drawn to present their differences. Their impressions of Broome, both positive and negative, reflect racist and sexist attitudes, class privilege, and a multitude of other prejudices (Gluck, 1994; hooks, 1984).

As the women's oral accounts of their lives are central to this study, I have contextualised their experiences with vignettes which summarise their experiences prior to their arrival in Broome. As previously indicated, their narratives are presented within the framework of six themes and where appropriate, the stories within these subjects are organised in chronological order. This structure is adopted to highlight the changes that occurred in Broome over the four decades. However it is important to emphasise that in most incidents, the emotions and experiences portrayed are not time specific.

### ***Living Conditions and Lifestyle***

Many women relocating to the north west were not prepared for their new lives. In 1973, the newly appointed adviser to the Office of the North West, Mrs Diana Waite, was "given the task of trying to improve the quality of life for women in the North...in a male orientated environment" (Hollister, 1973, p. 99). Interviewed for *The West Australian's* 'News of the North' she said "living conditions could be so different that many going north found themselves like migrants in their own country" (Hollister, p. 99).

Waite's description encapsulated the experience of many 'white' women, particularly in the early and mid part of the 20th Century as they brokered a new frontier. After World War II, the majority of women relocating to the north west had accompanied their working husbands and were occupied with home duties. They lived in Government housing, specifically designed for the region's conditions. These houses featured walls of louvres built to provide the greatest possible amount of free air movement. Although practical for airing and ventilation it made the housewife's task of keeping a clean and tidy home nearly impossible. Keeping beds, linen and the house in general, dry was unachievable during seasonal thunderstorms as the open style houses were not waterproof (Devereux, 1961, March 10 [letter from Broome Hospital Undersecretary to Principal Western Australian Government Architect]).

The medical facilities available were limited and there was a recurring shortage of doctors, dentists and nurses. As there was no Government subsidy given to the people in the Kimberley, medical attention was costly for patients who had to fly to Perth. This was unlike their counterparts in Queensland and the Northern Territory, where medical assistance and transportation were provided free to the patient.

For all the women interviewed the change in living conditions was a major feature of their relocation and settlement in the Broome area. This topic was a frequent point of discussion because the locality and the north west climate dictated their lifestyle. Comments revealed many issues, in particular ones related to the weather and health.

As previously outlined in Chapter One, the Kimberley climate affects the lifestyle of all residents. Each woman commented on her reaction to the climate and the landscape and her need to adapt her lifestyle accordingly. On the one hand there were the challenges of the dust, the heat, the humidity, the mosquitoes and sandflies and on the other, the reward of the exotic landscape, varied leisure activities and outdoor life.

#### **Rose – 1956**

A Protestant Anglo Australian, Scottish and English descent, Rose grew up on a farm in Central South Western NSW. She lived and worked there until she was in her mid twenties, except for a brief period when to further her musical education she attended a Catholic boarding school. Rose was a single, rural woman who converted to Catholicism, then worked for a few years in Sydney before sailing to Western Australia. She was employed as a shop assistant in Perth and as a housemaid in the Geraldton area before relocating to the north west in 1956.

Rose was thirty when she arrived in Broome in February 1956, to commence life as a member of Catholic religious order (a nun). She recalled she knew little of Broome or the Kimberley before her arrival. She had done

some reading but was not prepared in any other way:

In my mind I had this picture of coming to a desert. A place where it would be very hard living and very isolated. And I can remember the heat and humidity and mosquitoes. And I thought 'Well this is what I came for' (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

These were the noviciate years for Rose and so she led a secluded life in her first years in the Broome Convent as she undertook religious training. She did not perform much external work and her life centred on the church, the convent and the people within that community. Rose's contact with the town was limited. To fulfil the requirements of a strict religious life she maintained a busy, daily routine which included early rising, prayers, mass and working in the convent kitchen (Choo, 2001).

The rules of her order dictated clothing inappropriate to the Broome climate. The nun's habits, despite being made from cotton, were hot and detrimental to her health. It was her task to sew the calico habits for herself and the other sisters. "It didn't prevent prickly heat. Yes everyone suffered from prickly heat" (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

#### **Betty - 1962**

Betty was raised on the Goldfields of Western Australia. The youngest of an Anglo Australian family of seven, she lived and went to school at the Kalgoorlie Pipeline's No 5 Pumping Station. Betty trained as a nurse in Perth and Bridgetown before applying to the Medical Department for a northern posting in 1962.

The 18-year-old Betty and a nursing friend arrived in Broome in September 1962. Her only knowledge of the Kimberley was a recommendation from one of her patients. The expected representative from the hospital was not there to meet them. "Got off the plane and cried my eyes out because it was just red dirt. No air conditioning and the heat. I was devastated. I actually wanted to go home" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Betty had responded to the call for nursing staff in remote Western Australia. She was posted to Broome as there was a shortage of 'white' labour, both male and female, in the north west during the 1950s and 1960s. Several factors deterred people from choosing to work in Broome. The distance from Perth meant isolation from family and friends. This plus the unfamiliar environment and the lack of facilities, especially accommodation, made it difficult to entice a permanent 'white' residency.

An added complexity was the north west way of socialising. In Broome the social milieu was such that a new 'white' arrival had to make the decision of whether to cross familiar boundaries and attempt assimilation with Broome's multiracial groups. For the new arrival this often meant not just mixing with new people but also entailed socialising in places to which they were unaccustomed, like hotel bars. The manner in which Betty faced and overcame this challenge is developed later in this chapter under the themes of race relations and socialising.

Living conditions were not equivalent to southern Western Australian standards. In the 1960s AC power was not connected. Washing machines, air conditioners, televisions and many electrical appliances were unavailable.

As a nurse at this time Betty referred to the lack of AC power as creating not only extra work duties but also hindering her lifestyle. "I was devastated because I had learnt to live with AC power after coming from Mundaring Weir, to coming back to DC power. No air conditioning and the heat. I came up here in September" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

She also commented on the quality of the water supply: "But the good water had just come into Broome when I came here so that was a benefit" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

By the late 1960s Broome was considered to be a town on the threshold of expansion. The economy had received a boost with the opening of the Deep Water Port in 1966 and oil exploration was being conducted off shore. Operations at the Broome Meatworks were expanding and the pearling industry had gained new momentum with the demand for live shell for the cultured pearl industry.

Despite this economic optimism, Broome remained a small and remote north west town. In the 1970s the cost of living remained high, infrastructure was lacking and services were limited.

#### **Jenny – 1970**

Jenny an Indigenous Australian was born on a station in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. Her parents both worked on the Canning Stock Route. From the age of six until completing her education at 17, she lived at the Church of Christ Mission School, five miles out of Carnarvon. The children were separated from their families from February through to December each year. Jenny worked as a nursing assistant in Perth, as well as a domestic servant on stations in the Gascoyne area. She moved to Onslow, worked in the shop, saved her money and travelled north to Derby, eventually moving to Broome.

Jenny first passed through Broome in the late 1960s on her way to Derby. As a teenager on holiday in Broome, Jenny stayed with her aunty and met her future husband, a local Indigenous man. "I thought it was a nice little town, very small at that time. There was more Asians, like Aboriginal Asians and Japanese and all that. In Carnarvon it is like whites and Aboriginals" (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Her recollections included an impression of the climate. "At the station at Mt Phillip it used to get really hot, but here you get the sea breeze" (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Jenny's positive experiences at this time influenced her choice to reside in Broome. She worked temporarily at the Broome Hospital before returning to her parents in preparation for her relocation to Broome in 1970.

#### **Alice - 1971**

Alice, a Googutha woman, was born in 1930 near Ceduna on the West Coast of South Australia. She lived with her large family on a mission where she received her education until the age of 16. Alice met her Indigenous husband from the Western Australian Bardi group of people in Adelaide. After the birth of their son her husband brought them to Broome, Western Australia to meet his family. She was over 40 years of age when she arrived with her young son.

Despite the welcome and support from her new extended family, Alice found Broome was a marked contrast to her home environment:

Yes it is a big difference. We used to live down there right down the flat in Morgan Camp. That's where we stayed.

There was hardly any houses built at that time so it was very small. Today you see houses everywhere, right down to Cable Beach. There was no houses there - just the sand hill where people go over the other side for swimming and that. We used to live across opposite there. All the old tin houses where Aboriginal people lived.

I used to know one Mr Morgan who was an old pearler. He used to live around the corner there. He's a wealthy man I think. When he saw me and my husband and old grand dad, he said "You can live in there. You stay there, you'll be right". From there on I can't tell you no more and that's where we live today (Alice, personal communication, August 10, 1998).

### **Merle - 1972**

Merle was accustomed to country life. An Anglo Australian, she grew up in Narrogin and Perth and lived in a "brick and tile" family home in Geraldton before she took up station life out of Broome in December 1972. She was 40 when they made the decision to relocate, aiming to improve the quality of their family life. Prior to this, her husband's employment required him to work away from home. Seven of their eight children accompanied them. Merle drove a small truck, a F250 to Broome accompanied by her brother in another truck, and her father-in-law in a third. Her husband flew a light plane to the station with some of the children.

Merle arrived to an old homestead, with a shed, store room, lighting plant and freezer. They were 20 kilometres by dirt track from the town of Broome:

Yes, it was a big change. Stark. Stark horror. Thought 'Dear God' and the bottom dropped out of my stomach, I tell you. Powdered milk. You know we never had powdered milk. We always had eight pints of milk per day delivered, that was it. The kids had to have milk.

I didn't notice the heat so much. It was just the noise of the freezer motor in the kitchen window, the cockroaches were just horrific. You have got to have seen it to believe it. I could hear them in the walls and I could smell them. Oh stink. Only for the trees and the God given birds.

In December of course there is not a lot you can do with your cattle. Fortunately or unfortunately that wet was not a very big wet. It wasn't a heavy wet (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

In contrast to Merle's station experience, 20 kilometres from the township of Broome, Betty's perspective of conditions in the mid 1970s was different. Having lived in Broome for over a decade, she considered that as the town grew, life became easier for the residents:

Well you had power, water and more people were coming into the town and more cars and more roads were being built, bituminised and schooling was improved. The upgrading of the schools and that.

It was still [limited] shop wise and that was you still had to wait for the boats to come in for your vegies and things. But it wasn't as... it didn't seem to be as difficult you know (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Yet for Merle living on a station in the 1970s the absence of electricity or gas supplies caused a heavy workload as she used a camp oven to cook for her family:

Of course I made the fatal mistake of cleaning the wood stove. It was an old Metter's stove and I cleaned the bottom and the bloody thing fell apart. So I ended up with no oven. No gas. No gas stove at all. They found a couple of big camp ovens, big ones and I cooked in those. I cooked the stew; I cooked the bread you know (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

The lack of fresh fruit and vegetables in the north west affected the quality of life. Provisions were sent by sea and the transportation of perishables took more than a week, depending upon weather conditions. Women such as Merle attempted self-sufficiency. "I did have chooks and we did try and grow a bit. And we did a good job until cows got in and ate it. So we bought them after that" (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Other supplies also presented a challenge for Merle, a station woman who was accustomed to shopping in a larger centre. She found the town to be 'pretty' but 'very archaic':

Very other world - like Streeters [a drapery store] they closed for two hours. Like when I wanted to buy tea towels they only had a dozen and I wanted to buy a dozen and they wouldn't sell them to me because they wouldn't have any in stock! (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

At this time, the Women's Liberation Movement was building momentum in Australia. The Western Australian Government appointment of Mrs Diana Waite was unique in Australia. She became a spokesperson for the plight of north west women. As mentioned, she articulated her first impressions and

views of living conditions for women in the region to the media.

The over-riding impression gained would be a general feeling of frustration regarding inadequacies in housing, higher cost of living which became more apparent as one proceeded further north, anxiety regarding shortage of doctors and educational problems concerning mainly secondary and tertiary opportunities.

It would appear to me, that if improvements can be made in the things that can be changed, the natural environment problems can be coped with (Hollister, 1973, p. 99).

Mrs Waite refuted arguments that high wages compensated for the low standard of living. She itemised costs that were particularly expensive for families including boarding school, holidays and airfares. In addition she argued that there was shortage of adequate supports such as childcare, health services and recreational facilities.

#### **Carol - 1973**

Carol, an Anglo Australian, was born in Perth and grew up in Geraldton, Western Australia. While employed in an office, she and three other girlfriends decided to drive around Australia. They set off with a sense of adventure but without consideration of practicalities as their Volkswagen sedan did not have the space for even basic camping equipment. She was 22 years old when she arrived in Broome at the end of the dry season in 1973.

When Carol and her friends arrived in Broome they were surprised by the conditions.

It was dirt road all the way from Carnarvon when we drove up here. It was just so red and dirty and filthy. The town was so different to what it is now. There weren't many hotels or anything in town then, you know. It was just a very little tiny town (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

While Jenny, Alice and Merle relocated to be with their partners, the motivation and the circumstances of other women such as Rose, Betty and Carol were different. The call of a vocation to religious life meant that if Rose was to fulfil her vow of 'obedience' she had to accept her placement. Perhaps it was a sense of adventure as well employment incentives and the opportunity to earn money that lured Betty and Carol with their respective friends. However one commonality for all six women was that Broome's climate and environment provided a strong contrast to the conditions to which they were accustomed.

The sensation of "homesickness" and wanting to "go home" was raised directly by Betty and was certainly a theme shared indirectly in the conversations with others. Issues of leaving home raises questions as to what makes a place 'home' and this notion is further explored in this study.

#### **Minna -1978**

Minna was born in 1949 on a remote Indonesian village in the Mellecou Islands, situated 200 nautical miles north of Darwin, Australia. Highly educated she graduated from the Indonesian Academy of Theology as a priest and returned to her island to care for the spiritual needs of 900 people. It was there she met a sailor from Finland who had been shipwrecked. They migrated to Australia in 1978, married in Perth, and five days later travelled north to Broome.

Historical links (refer Chapter One) between Indonesia and northern Australia had formed over centuries. Indonesian men colloquially referred to as Koepangers from the island of Timor were recruited as indentured labourers for the Broome based pearling industry (Platter & Smith, 2000). These Asian men formed relationships with Indigenous women and supported their wives and children despite Government controls to keep the races separate. Some gained exemption from the Immigration Act, remained in Broome, married their 'girlfriends' and raised their families. Their descendants form the large 'local' population of mixed-descent Broome people (Yu, 1999).

When Minna arrived she was the first Indonesian woman to migrate to Broome since World War II. She was a forerunner in a new wave of Asian immigration to Australia and to the town of Broome (Lange, 2000; Rabbitt, 1995). Unable to speak the language or understand the culture, Minna turned to the similarities with her Indonesian homeland for comfort:

It was like home, quiet, and very quiet. There was one shop at Seaview. Was like a Chinese shop in Indonesia with the shelves. It reminded me of home. Mangroves, we didn't have mangroves in my mother's village. So, only no hills (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Minna's description in the late 1970s was a view presented when Broome was on the threshold of change. As detailed in Chapter One, the early 1980s heralded a period of growth, optimism and development for the town of Broome. The population was growing and the tourist industry was drawing increasing numbers of visitors each year. Broome was set to become the regional centre of the Kimberley.

#### **Linda - 1984**

Linda migrated to Australia from the Philippines in 1981. Born in a small town, approximately the same size as Broome [11,000], Linda worked in her family's business until she was 20 years old. She moved to Cebu City in the Philippines and lived with her husband and two boys. In 1977 after a change in circumstances Linda and her two sons were sponsored to Perth, Western Australia by her new husband. Linda explained that she had not heard much about Australia, as news in the Philippines tended to focus on America. She lived in Carnarvon prior to relocating to Broome in the mid 1980s.

Linda was 42 when she accompanied her husband to Broome in 1984. Similar to Minna she compared Broome to her home and her first impression was also positive. It was of a vision of Australia being a 'good' place to reside:

When I arrived I appreciated that it was a beautiful place. Something new to me. It is not really crowded like the Philippines. Not like in the Philippines - it is busy all the time. Plenty of room as far as your eyes can see. Vacant place (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

**Kazue - 1989**

Kazue was born in a Japanese Province close to a major city. She grew up with her working parents, her grandparents and brother. After training in dental hygiene, she travelled to many other countries. In 1989 when she was 28 years of age, and with little English, she travelled alone to Broome. Her purpose was to visit a Japanese friend working on a pearl farm out of town and to stay for a holiday. Here Kazue met her Australian husband and instead of staying six weeks for a holiday she became a resident of Broome.

In addition to the sense of space the environment provided, women like Kazue saw other advantages: "You don't need to watch all the time, like when you are walking. It's so easy. Easy going. You don't have to get dressed up" (Kazue, personal communication, May 9, 1998).

This emphasis on the safety and the stress free nature of the Broome lifestyle was frequently raised.

**Sue - 1989**

Sue, of Anglo Australian and Croatian descent, grew up in Perth and was educated there. Her father was a doctor and her mother a physiotherapist. She attended a private school and went on to university to gain a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, and a post graduate degree in Social Work. Sue first heard about Broome and the Kimberley in high school. She initially came to Broome in 1982 for a one-week holiday, and returned for varying amounts of time over the next few years. Later, as a social worker she gained employment in Derby and then relocated to Broome.

In 1989, Sue transferred to Broome from Derby in her role as a Government social worker. She was provided with Government Employees' Housing Accommodation (GEHA) and her husband relocated with her. Like many of the other women in this study, Sue came to Broome with her male partner. The difference is that she was the only woman whose position of paid employment led to her being transferred to Broome, accompanied by her husband.

Sue, along with other women who came to Broome at the latter part of the century, was advantaged by the services and facilities in place. However access to supports readily available elsewhere was still a problem and directly influenced the women's lives at home and work. While in the 1960s the connection of AC power to operate electrical appliances was a major issue, in the 1990s the provision of support services for information, communication and technology became the modern day equivalent.

Sue commented on the lack of services in Broome in the 1990s:

Trying to get computers fixed easily, guaranteed next day delivery envelopes are not guaranteed from Broome. The range of food and shops, fresh food. Having to send things to Perth to get fixed. Many of the services have monopolies, which seems to limit their quality and availability and increase their prices eg there's only one dental service (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

The issues raised by Sue, a modern professional, demonstrate a shift in expectations over a period of 40 years. While her concerns centre upon quality, choice and speed of delivery, those of the earlier women in this study focused upon the introduction of basic services.

**Barni – 1990**

Barni, from rural Victoria was sixteen when she rode a motor scooter into Broome in 1977. Unable to find work at the end of the tourist season she continued south 300 kms to Sandfire Roadhouse where she found employment. Barni married the publican there and stayed for thirteen years. She left Sandfire in 1990 with her children, to create a new life in Broome. She soon established a successful herb farming business on the outskirts of Broome.

Unlike the majority of the other women in this study relocating to Broome, Barni was already familiar with the town when she decided to relocate. Over the years she had paid regular visits for business, holidays and to see members of her extended family. "For me here was a town that was large enough that not everyone knew your business. I thought it was great, finally had access to education, I saw that the progress of Broome was making resources far more available" (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

She sought new friends in Broome and met many people through her activities. "I sold watermelons and rockmelons and that introduced me to Elaine. I met a number of people" (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

**Claudine - 1990**

Swiss born Claudine came to Australia as a tourist and over the years travelled back and forth to Europe. She arrived in Broome with her European husband in 1990 to stay with her Welsh cousin. After looking for work over several weeks, Claudine reluctantly accepted employment at the Roebuck Bay Hotel.

In contrast to Barni who was familiar with Broome, Claudine's orientation period was a challenging one. Employment opportunities in the areas she preferred were unavailable and although widely travelled within Australia, the climate and environment were not what she expected. "I found the town red. And I did find it hot even though it was winter" (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

Claudine was aware however that her understanding of Broome's culture as well as her social network would be widened by working in the hotel industry, an aspect which is developed later in this Chapter.

#### **Jodie - 1990**

Jodie, a Nyoongar woman from Perth, arrived in Broome in 1990 with her partner. She had grown up in Perth with her Indigenous family. After leaving school she started as a kitchen hand at the Royal Perth Hospital. Jodie gained an apprenticeship there, and five years later qualified as a cook. She met her partner, a Broome man of mixed descent, in Perth. He was returning to Broome and as she had finished her apprenticeship she decided to also 'head' north. She was 22 years old when she arrived.

Jodie spoke of the good times she experienced in her early days in Broome and how she met new people. She found the Broome of the 1990s offered her an alternate relaxed and friendly lifestyle:

We went out fishing. Didn't go out raging or anything like that. Go out for tea and meet people at barbeques and people would ask if we wanted to go fishing with them or go bush. Mainly a mix of cultures or Aboriginals. Yeah Aboriginals and mixed ones. Family and friends Aboriginal men with white women (Jodie, personal communication, June 7, 1998).

Her depiction of Broome was as a 'laid back' place with numerous opportunities for leisure activities, and relatively free of racism (Rabbitt, 1995). This representation can be likened to the tourist image of Broome where visitors are invited to 'slip into Broome time'. This is a colloquial term coined in the

1980s used to explain a person's lateness or slowness in performing a promised action. However, for others the image of a 'laid back' Broome was a myth as they went about their day to day business.

#### **Edwina - 1994**

New Zealand born Edwina, of European and Maori descent, migrated to Australia with her family when she was 12 years old. Her father was an engine driver and they moved to Port Hedland where he worked for the Mt Newman Mining Company, now BHP Billiton. Edwina was educated in Port Hedland and had various jobs, mainly in the Pilbara region, before relocating to Broome in 1994 at the age of 29.

Analogous to Jodie, Edwina who had travelled around the world, found Broome to be:

Laid back. Very laid back and relaxed. And of course the people. The locals of Broome. Not so much the itinerant tourist but the locals and the lifestyle of Broome. That was an attraction. Here in the Kimberley it is laid back, you accept people and you want to find out what their culture is like or their background (Edwina, personal communication, April 3, 1998).

The chance to experience different forms of activities was a new and alluring prospect. "You have the opportunity to dabble and experience anything that you want to and these opportunities are here both cultural and work wise" (Edwina, personal communication, April 3, 1998).

#### **Karima –1997**

Karima was born in 1973 in Rabaul, New Guinea. Her early childhood was spent on her family's coconut plantation with her Polynesian mother, Australian father and siblings. Karima's primary education was completed at a Rabaul boarding school and in 1986 she moved to Darwin to continue her secondary education. She lived there with her cousins and completed Year 12 in 1992. On leaving school, Karima was employed in Darwin with the Paspaley Pearl Company. This organisation also has operations in Broome and after commuting between Darwin and Broome, she based herself in Broome.

For New Guinea born Karima, the Kimberley landscape had strong aesthetic appeal:

And the colours too. It is the first time I have really seen Kimberley colours and I was just amazed and I would sit there for days on the beach and just watch the colours. You know sunset, sunrise. I think it was mainly the scenery that attracted me to Broome (Karima, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Karima's impressions, which were shared by Asian migrants Minna and Linda, are in sharp contrast to the initial reactions of Betty who 'burst into tears' and Merles' 'stark horror'.

The influence of the physical environment is explored by Choo (1995) who argued that landscapes contribute to the shaping of identity. This notion will be further explored in the following chapter. Another influence depicting the physical attractions was that of author, Ion Idriess (Chapter One).

Clearly the terrain had significance for the Asian women and Karima from New Guinea. They described Broome's environment in relation to their previous homelands, responding positively to its tropical weather and to the landscape. Their language depicts their fascination, "Just watch the colours. Plenty of room as far as your eyes can see" (Karima, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

For Betty and Merle, both Western Australian born country girls who were unused to the climate, the tropical conditions added a further dimension of discomfort to their relocation.

The above example emphasises the varying situations and perceptions of the women in this study. The women's expectations of what Broome can offer are likened to other places. Each woman compared Broome with what she had known elsewhere. In examining their positions I have kept in mind the shaping of their mental models, the assumptions they carried with them in choosing Broome as a home. The multiple realities of the women's everyday lived experiences form the basis of knowledge for this study. Influences may have included aspirations for wealth or opportunity, or perhaps it was the dream of an idyllic lifestyle.

For Jenny it was the attraction of the sea and the tidal movement which she found intriguing:

The only thing I heard about Broome was that when the tide goes out the boat sits on the mud. And there was a jetty that extends right out and you could walk out there... and I used to think it would be great to go and look at that but then Mum and Dad would say it was too far away (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

The objective of this section has been to highlight the impact climate and environment had upon the women's first impressions of Broome life. It is important to emphasise that not all found these to be negative factors; on the contrary for some the experience brought unexpected richness to their lives. The next part of this chapter depicts the challenges presented in accessing adequate health services.

## **Health**

The provision of, or lack of, health services impacted upon the lives of the women relocating to the Kimberley. Anecdotes about the post war period revealed that in comparison to city services, the health facilities in Broome and the Kimberley were inferior. After World War II the limited medical services available in Broome and the segregation of health facilities were of concern to the member for the Kimberley, John Rhatigan.

There was a separate Native Hospital which catered for the "big percentage of natives who are still in their primitive state and adhere to tribal customs, and therefore have not yet reached the stage where they could be satisfactorily accommodated at district hospitals" (Rhatigan, 1954, December 4 [letter to the Minister for Health, Mr Hutchinson]).

Broome's racial stratification was blatant, with Indigenous people being offered services in a dilapidated building separate from the facilities used by their white counterparts. In 1960 discussions were held between the Health Department and the Broome Hospital Board, with a plan to offer all residents the same services and facilities. The Minister for Health, Mr Ross Hutchinson (personal communication, June 9, 1960) reassured the Board that the new hospital would be provided with "two entrances, one for whites and one for coloured people" (The Broome Roads Board, 1960, p. 341).

Rhatigan continued to lobby the Minister for Health for an improved medical service.

My recent inspection of the Broome Hospital leaves no doubt in my mind of the urgent necessity for a new hospital the accommodation is totally inadequate and is in fact deplorable.... The shortage of trained nursing staff is another disadvantage which the people of Broome suffer (Rhatigan, 1961, March 22 [letter]).

It was a challenge to find health care workers. It was around this time that Betty arrived to work in the hospital system. During the 1960s, nursing staff were expected to undertake a huge workload in conditions worse than those

experienced by their city counterparts. Betty spoke of her responsibilities in those early days when, because of the shortage of staff, she was the only nurse on night shift and was at times called to perform duties beyond her role:

I had to deliver a baby in a car outside the front of the hospital because there was no-one around me and this woman was having a baby. So I ran out delivered the baby and ran and got the matron. I mean you just had to do those things. You had to look after the mids. [mid wives] (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

She also referred to the lack of amenities and services to support the health work. "There were no automatic washing machines and things like there is today. So it was difficult. There was no Milton (disinfectant). Everything had to be scrubbed and boiled" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Referring to the use of coke in place of electricity, she recalled the girls' duty to replenish the fuel supplies and of her own obstacles:

And of course I wore glasses and we were trying to get the instruments out and the woman was just about ready to deliver and you know, women in those days suffered. It was really hard. It was hardship. Ohh! If women of today had to go through what we did in those days they wouldn't survive. I've even told my girls they wouldn't survive.

You know in the '60s gastroenteritis was a killer. We lost babies left, right and centre. There was no disposable stuff so everything had to be sterilised and all the nappies had to be washed by hand before they were sent down to the laundries because the ladies down in the laundry had to boil up and scrub with their bare hands (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

The continual reference to climate in this study reinforces how it dominated the women's existence at home and in many of their work places. In Betty's situation it was a need to maintain hospital standards: "About 40 during the day and you had these big urns boiling away with the instruments in it and steam" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Alice found the change in climate was advantageous to her health. "It's alright for people with asthma. Here. The old man told me that this is the place. If you stay here you will be OK. I grew out of that while I lived here (Alice, personal communication, August 10, 1998).

Jenny explained the health system for patients in Broome in the 1970s:

Yeah, you know like years ago when you had to have an operation you had to go away for it. ENT (ear, nose and throat) you had to send them all up to Derby for an operation and come back. I had to go, a group of us. But now they can do the operation in Broome Hospital (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

#### **Pat – 1975**

Pat, an Anglo Australian originally from Fremantle, was 22 when she relocated from Carnarvon to Broome in 1975 to join her husband. Initially reluctant to leave her job and friends in Carnarvon, Pat soon became immersed in life in the Broome community. She worked in the accounts departments of both the Continental and Mangrove Hotels before commencing her career with the public service in Western Australia. Her leisure pursuits included basketball, softball and netball.

After living in Broome for more than a decade both Pat and Carol found their experiences of the medical facilities and professional services in the 1980s to be trying, particularly in relation to women's health. Pat said:

I always did feel that we certainly required better health facilities here. I would have to see a visiting gynaecologist [mid 1980s] whenever he would happen to be coming to Broome and quite often it was a different gynaecologist. So when I'd go it was a different one and they would say I need to do some tests and I would say I have already had these tests. But they'd say they would have to do it themselves. It was very frustrating and this happened for years. It was very frustrating (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Carol expressed a similar view:

Really that annoys me a lot, the hospital, because I feel they made Derby into Kimberley Regional Hospital because it is more central to the Kimberley. But the population in growth in Derby over the season is nowhere near ours. We go from 10,000 to 30,000 overnight. And a lot of them are elderly people. I think it is wrong that we have only got 30 beds or 35 beds or something like that.

It is absolutely atrocious. Like when I was trying to have my girls [1970s & 1980s] I had a lot of trouble. Belinda was actually born in Derby. They had to fly me up on the midnight horror. That 3 am one in the morning. I had to go in the old bouncy ambulance to the hospital and then they flew me back here and I was in hospital here for three weeks (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

By the end of the 20th Century the improvement in services was marked. Systems to accommodate the needs of patients in remote areas were well established. In emergency cases patients are flown to either Perth or Darwin by the Royal Flying Doctor Service for treatment at major hospitals. Patients are also sent to Perth under the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) for medical services not available in the north west. The overall provision of health facilities has changed. This positive view was expressed by Merle:

From the health point of view I think we are better off than the people down south. Because they send us off down there and someone sees you just like that. We don't have to go on a wait list. Mind you we don't go unless we are nearly dead! (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Conversely, Sue, a recent arrival in relation to some of the other women, expressed her concerns, raising the issues of transient medical staff. She considered the medical services in the Kimberley to be unsatisfactory and, based on her previous experience elsewhere, expected a higher standard of care:

There's a lack of specialist medical services, there's also a limit to many existing services that do exist as many of them only have one or two staff and there's often a large turnover in staff. Often, it takes new staff several months to get to know the place and the job, so often there's gaps in service during the change over period. There are also often gaps when staff leave, as it's difficult to get workers to come to the area, particularly Government workers (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

In this segment the exploration of the inadequacy of health provision depicts another demand placed upon the women in their relocation. In many incidents, to get 'better' medical treatment the residents of Broome have to leave town. The women's comments about the health system reveal that for some there is an expectation that services required should be available locally.

A key point raised by Betty in particular was the formal separation of services based on racist policies which existed prior to the 1967 'Equal Rights' Referendum. This theme of racial differentiation will be explored in the following section.

### ***Race Relations and Socialising***

As a newcomer to Broome in the 1960s Betty's introduction to segregation was personally challenging and professionally unacceptable. She immediately became immersed in the hospital culture and segregated racial circumstances of the day. She lived and worked at the hospital and socialised with the 'local' staff who embraced her into their community. Betty's duties included work in both the Broome Native Hospital and the Broome Hospital.

While Betty's employment context was one of racial division this discrimination also affected her social life. As part of the Medical Department's induction course in Perth, newly recruited staff were advised not to associate with Indigenous people. "We were told at the Medical Department before we came up here you were to nurse them but not talk to them" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Betty and her friend were accommodated at the back of the hospital in the nurses' quarters. The Matron, who also resided there, influenced the out of work hours' activities of Betty and other junior employees. As a staff member Betty worked along side local, Indigenous people and socialised with them after work hours. "We were close-knit, together in the hospital. We just stuck with one another" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

She had no recollections of any other young, white, single girls that may have been considered suitable companions for her. "There might have been pearlers wives and their daughters and ones like that but not like it is today. No comparison. That's why we had to mix with the people at the hospital" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Betty's wider view of life in the community and her promotion within her employment brought with it a greater awareness of racial differentiation. Her perception that the segregation increased as the town grew is also one expressed by other women and is further described in Chapter Six. Nevertheless Betty's early socialising with Indigenous people created problems for her. "It was very um... Coloured people walked on one side and you walked one side", she said (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

The Hospital Matron considered Betty was becoming too familiar with the 'local coloured' people. Due to these associations the Matron threatened on many occasions, to send Betty home on the plane. However Betty remained in Broome. "And I got my mum because I was under 21 ... to write a letter to the Matron and just tell her that I shall mix after work with who I want to mix with. My mother wrote that letter" (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Jenny was also below the legal age of 21 when she arrived from Carnarvon in the early 1970s. As an Indigenous person, she was keenly aware of the limitations on her social life:

At that stage we weren't even allowed to go near the pub because it was the age of 21. The only thing we could do really was go to the movie or if there was a dance at the Parish Centre we used to go to that (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Although the restrictions she described were possibly in place because of her age, the exclusions for her ran deeper. Strict segregation, along racial lines, had been legally enforced until the 1967 Referendum when racial discrimination became illegal in Australia (Mann, 1991, n.p.). Yet remnants of these racist policies still prevailed in Broome, as those in positions of power were reluctant to relinquish their privileges (Yu, 1999). Jenny recalled the designated seating areas at Broome's outdoor picture theatre, the Sun Picture Gardens. "When you would walk into the movie you'd sit to one side and the whites, gardiyas used to sit the middle. They used to have reserved seats and everything" (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Jenny mostly mixed with her partner's mates and her own work contemporaries. "There was mainly Aboriginal girls at the hospital at that time and there still is" she said. Jenny also mixed with the non-Indigenous nursing staff:

Well we used to meet them down at the Conti and it was really nice the set up. We used to go to the beer garden. They used to have a little dance in a little round house outside there. Yeah people used to mix. But like people still used to question you and why you are dancing with them and whatever (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Both the Continental and Roebuck Hotels were popular meeting spots for after hours socialising. The patrons separated themselves into specific areas of the hotel. Claudine described the segregation at the Roebuck Hotel. "The Aboriginal people drank in the front bar, which is commonly referred to as the 'animal bar' by those who did not patronise the hotel (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

Conversely, Carol's impressions in the early 1970s were of the easy mixing and good times shared:

There was always bands. Everybody used to get together and have fun. You knew mostly everybody. There was a lot of pearl divers and that sort of stuff in town then. What I liked about it in those days. I suppose it was because the roads weren't open and you didn't get a lot of people coming to town. It was really a close-knit place and you used to have a lot of fun all the time, (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

At times Alice, like Minna, who also mixed with the 'locals', felt a communication barrier. She could not understand or speak the 'local' dialect:

Well I sort of thought I've got to make myself known to people. People say hullo and make friends with them.

Yes. Yes it was [hard]. People were talking in language and that but I didn't know. You've got to live here for that many years to know how to speak the language of what's it called here in Broome?

Oh, well, I didn't really know much about it. What the words all meant. I'm sort of pick up now and then when I first came. Now I can sit down and listen and have a laugh about what they talking about.

Yes, I mixed with Aboriginal people. They are very friendly too. Wherever they see you walking they will sing out you know that yourself (Alice, personal communication, August 10, 1998).

The significance of previous lived experience is well illustrated in the expectations Minna held regarding racial stratification. She explained that she grew up in a part of Indonesia that had been dominated by the Dutch and believed that the colonial thinking of white superiority was ingrained in her. She considered her boss at the hospital, a white housekeeper, along with the white nurses to be her superiors:

And I was really surprised when we went to have dinner at lunch time and bosses and nurses and what not you know are mixing at the table to eat and I was really...I eat, so I am very quiet and don't want to move and this white person is beside me and all this kind of thing.

White people are the high race and um so that affected me meeting people in Broome (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

As a newly arrived Asian woman from a non-English-speaking background, Minna was at the lowest level in the social hierarchy of the Broome Hospital. Those in supervisory positions were 'white' people and the domestic staff was generally 'coloured girls'. Many of these 'local' Broome women, the 'coloured' girls, were also of Asian descent (Choo, 1995). The newly arrived Minna was oblivious to Broome's complex history and intermingling of races:

There was lots of coloured people and I asked one girl where she came from and she said she came from Broome. In my thinking, you're not from Broome. I was thinking this Asian girl she doesn't want to say she comes from an Asian place. You know Asian and I couldn't think that she is a bit snobby because she didn't want to acknowledge her Asian country. That was [a Broome girl]. Laugh. Then I learnt about the history and she comes from Broome. They made me feel at home. I practised my English with them (Minna, personal communication, March 26, 1998).

This lack of awareness of racial origins and the subsequent introduction to the tension of race relations was significant for several of the women.

#### **Kristine - 1962**

Kristine an Anglo Australia first arrived in Broome with her parents in 1962. They had leased the family farm in the York region of Western Australia, to travel around Australia. Kristine grew up and was educated in the country. Since leaving primary school she had worked on the family farm and sold her own handicrafts in York.

When Kristine arrived in Broome her impression was closely aligned to Minna's perception of the Asian presence. It also reflected Kristine's view of the world as a person raised in a small, mid west, rural community. "Well when I first came here I had never seen a Malay person or Chinese, Singhalese and it seemed just about unreal to me. We'd always be seeing someone different or something different (Kristine, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

**Ainslie - 1967**

Ainslie is of Anglo Australian descent. She was raised in the Mid West of Western Australia on the family farm. After completing high school Ainslie moved to Perth to undertake teacher training. Qualifying two years later, she was posted to Broome to commence the school year of 1967.

When the 19-year-old Ainslie moved to Broome in 1967 the local Government school was considered by the 'white ' population to be the 'better' school. Non-Indigenous, Catholic children often attended the State School and received special religious instruction, rather than attend the socially less acceptable convent school:

In those days it was sort of regarded as the better school, you know. The 'better' children went to State School as it was called then. The rest went to the Catholic School, but no white children went to the Catholic School. They all went, even if they were Catholics, to the State School. And the 'better coloured' children, even if they were Catholics too, that came from the good families, what they thought were the good families, you know, they came to the State School too. So there was quite a little segregation thing there, because it was considered better (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

At that time St Mary's Catholic School was considered to be for the disadvantaged; its enrolment mix consisting predominantly of Indigenous students and children from mixed races.

**Kerry - 1981**

Kerry, a Warriyanga (skin group) Tindjibarni woman had grown up with her grandparents on stations 400 – 500 kilometres out of Camarvon<sup>1</sup>. She started Year 7 at St Mary's Primary School, Broome in 1981 and lived with her aunty and uncle before returning to Camarvon. Sixteen years later Kerry moved to Broome with twin daughters.

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<sup>1</sup> Not all of the Indigenous women in this study provided me with the details of their Indigenous groupings.

Recalling her early times in Broome as a teenager at the beginning of the 1980s, Kerry reinforced the continuing reputation of the Catholic school as a place predominantly for Indigenous students:

Yeah, when I first got to St Mary's which was over at the old end, I was actually shocked. I couldn't believe how much Aboriginal students did go to the school and it wasn't just Aboriginal it was mixed race...and there was hardly any white people and I thought wow.

In Carnarvon due to racism and everything, I found it hard to cope in school. But when I came up here I found that my education lifted. And I did find that town, Broome itself wasn't racist. I suppose it was a multicultural area (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

#### **Chelsea - 1982**

Chelsea, an Anglo Australian country girl, was born in Northam. She relocated to Broome with her parents and brother when she was 10 years old in January, 1982. The family lived in a caravan at Chelsea's aunty's home and her parents ran the TAB with her grandparents. She was surrounded by extended family and had been to Broome on several occasions, to holiday with her aunty, uncle and cousins. She commenced Year 5 at the Broome Primary School, one month after she arrived.

Chelsea recalled the trauma of transition:

I remember going to school with these huge mossie bites all over my legs on the first day. Broome was so different to primary school in Perth. I was scared. It was horrible. Oh yeah it was shocking but after that it was fine (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

The memory of the rivalry between the two schools and the physical fighting was vivid. Her recollection was of 'white' children against 'black' and one school against the other:

I think up here it was more Aboriginal versus white person. All the Aboriginals went to the other school. Maybe it was Catholic, but all the Aboriginals in my class didn't get picked on though. And even then I had fights with them as well even though they were at the same school (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

**Pallas - 1985**

Pallas, a young Indigenous woman from Queensland, experienced a strong contrast from her previous familiar environment when she commenced Year 4 at the Broome Primary School in 1985. After a family holiday to Western Australia, the nine-year-old Pallas reluctantly relocated to Broome with her family.

Pallas, who said she identifies as "Aboriginal mainly", entered a new world when she started at the Broome Primary School in 1985. Not only disadvantaged by her cultural background, she also found communication barriers to mixing with the local Indigenous students:

Totally scary. It was called the Annexe at the time. We had no friends. We didn't know no one [sic]. All the coloured kids would slowly get to know you. A bit freakish at first. Because it was totally different here. They've got totally different language. I didn't understand what was going on. Because they'd talk differently and we had our own language and they had their own. So getting to know the kids was a bit hard. But slowly I found friends (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Similar to Chelsea, Pallas also mentioned the physical fighting that occurred between primary school students. "It was when something blew up at school. That's when the colour issue would come into it and it would be one big fight like that yeah" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Pallas explained she didn't understand what the aggression was about and put it down to rivalry between the Government and convent school. "At first I thought it was an issue between the schools but then I thought well some of it is this colour business. I tried to get away from that if I could help it" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Relocating to Broome and changing primary schools had a major impact on Kerry, Chelsea and Pallas. Chelsea and Pallas referred to the 'warfare' between primary schools as being vastly different to their experiences at their previous school environments. They attributed this aggressive behaviour to racial disharmony. Their descriptions reiterated the notion that there existed a demonstrated hierarchy of class and race in the enrolment composition of the students at the State and Catholic Schools. Their portrayal of race relations between the children at the Broome primary schools does not support the attitude of Kerry and others that race relations in Broome were better than elsewhere (Rabbitt, 1995).

In contrast to Pallas and Chelsea, Kerry spoke of a 'racial' harmony at St Mary's unknown to her at her previous school in Carnarvon. The gap between these two sets of impressions is indicative of the mind set shaped by previous individual experience, which causes perceptions to evolve. How these young women's experiences of racial divide were translated into their adult world is explored in Chapter Five.

Linda also experienced identity definition by race and status as she relocated to Broome from Carnarvon. Similar to Kerry's perception, her view of Broome in the 1980s was one of racial harmony. She compared the 'local' families to those she was accustomed to in her homeland. She considered the Indigenous community to be 'close-knit':

Yeah, Broome is still very quiet at that time. It was still bushy. It reminds me of the Philippines atmosphere you know. Aboriginal are a close-knitted family just like the Filipinos. I observe that too. From Carnarvon it is different. I was mixing with people from all different nationalities (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

An understanding of racial differences from her homeland was extended when Karima moved to Broome, in 1995. Employed as a worker in the pearling industry she recalled:

The town reminded me a lot of New Guinea. The town and the people so I felt quite at home in the small town. I fitted in quite well with the half-caste being half Aboriginal as well. I felt I fitted in. I was more comfortable around the um er mixed people, I guess.

And also like being in the boat there is so many people with so many different backgrounds, you just learn how to get on with everyone. And that was good too, that helped me.

Because when I first started I was really shy. I was a bit more New Guinean, where it is rude to question too much. It's just a really complicated sort of thing. When I got to Broome I thought, 'wow', on the first day in Broome (Karima, personal communication, June 16, 1998).

#### **Arlene - 1985**

Arlene, a South Sea Islander born in Queensland, arrived in Broome in 1985 with her husband and three children. They had travelled overland from Queensland to relocate to Broome and initially stayed with her husband's cousin. Her move was not condoned by her parents in Queensland whose opinion was that 'wild' Murri's (Indigenous people) lived there and they were concerned for the well being of their grandchildren. Arlene's expectations were based only on her high school studies, from which she knew that pearling was conducted in Broome.

When employed at the hospital, Arlene, who was unaccustomed to stereotyping, was surprised by the racial distinction she encountered from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people:

I'm just a South Sea Islander - nothing else. But everybody gets me mixed up for a Thursday Islander but I'm a South Sea Islander. The same as Melanesian. Even Aboriginal people think I'm TI. Everybody thinks that.

I hated it. I hated Broome. I'd never seen so many Aboriginal people in my life. Even though ... is part Aboriginal and where I come from we hardly ever saw Aboriginal people, we never knew who they were. I never knew what an Aboriginal person was until I went up Northern Queensland nursing.

Where I went to school they were all Island people. Because where all the blackbirders were it was all up the Queensland coast until about Townsville. So the majority of where we went was all Island people. And most of them, well we're all related anyway. We did not know what an Aboriginal person was.

Going to school - all we ever went to school was with cane farmer's kids. And they were all white people.

Blackbirders went to work on cane farms you see and we all went to school with their kids. And I never saw an Aboriginal person (Arlene, personal communication, March 6, 1998).

Arlene's initial experience of discrimination left her reactive on the topic of her racial identity. She was angry when people mistook her for a Torres Strait Islander:

Very angry because they thought I was TI mmm. And I think that was because of my parents putting that into us. That we're not TI and we have nothing to do with TI. Because TI's and South Sea Islanders they fight like cat and dog. And that's just one of the things.

A lot of them know me through the hospital as a TI girl but you can't tell them any different, that I'm not TI. They think people with curly hair are TI's because they came here to work the pearling (Arlene, personal communication, March 6, 1998).

Even so the Broome Torres Strait Islander community has adopted Arlene. She is happy to respond to the invitations she receives to participate in their cultural gatherings. Underlying this change of attitude and acceptance by Arlene is her perception of the Torres Strait Islander community. The process of Arlene's transition including her acceptance of Indigenous people and her establishment in the Broome community is further commented upon in Chapter

Five.

The ethnic identity of women settling into Broome affected their experiences. They were conditioned by their familiarity with their former environment and brought expectations, both positive and negative with them. They compared their lives and circumstances in Broome with the place of their previous residency.

Another influencing factor on the lives of many women interviewed and one which related strongly to previous experience was that of isolation. The following section details the responses of women to this potentially physical as well as mental state.

### ***Isolation***

The concept of isolation, although relevant to the lives of the women whose stories are portrayed, is also relative to the individual's perception. As previously discussed in Chapter One there is a tendency to make generalisations about the remoteness of Broome based upon an Anglo-European paradigm. The following section is explored with acknowledgment of this construction. The wife of the Western Australian Governor, Lady Dorothy Edwards addressed the Women in Isolation Conference in Broome in May 1974.

It is not easy to be free of the worries of isolation. When the children are sick, or when the husband is worried about his job, or when the truck does not arrive with the food supplies or when a loved one is seriously ill in Perth, it is hard to be cheerful. This may be called a man's country, but it is the wives and sweethearts behind them that keep them going and keeps development continuing.

Feelings of isolation in their new environment affected most of the women in their early days of relocation and settlement.

The vows of religious life were stringent for Rose, thus compounding her isolation in the 1950s: "I missed my family because our communication was restricted in those days. There is no restriction now" (Rose, personal

communication, May 15, 1998).

For Minna in the 1970s it was the lack of support for newly arrived migrants that affected her adversely:

In those days there was no school for migrant people or community centre in town like CIRCLE House. The thing is I missed out on this migrant service because those days nothing for migrants. Now they have things for migrants but they are based for new migrant:

So nothing for old ones because we have been here too long. So I didn't see any justice in that. I can't get a good job, I am just staying on the level where I am now because, yeah, like I have to pay for classes to get my certificate and things like that which is new migrant they get taught. So if I want to gain my what do you call it, like work experience. Like if I want to get my qualifications recognised overseas then its hard (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

For Pallas in the mid 1980s as already stated, her experiences, as a child moving to Broome were negative. Apart from her difficulties of settling into school life, she was homesick for her grandparents and missed the tropical rainforest country.

In 1990, Jodie from Perth considered Broome to be distant and remote:

"That time it was like a little town, really isolated, so far away from anything else. It was an eye-opener" (Jodie, personal communication, June 7, 1998).

However for other women the move to Broome was their choice and they found their new lifestyle invigorating rather than isolating. Sue, for example, despite her complaints about issues affecting the standard of living in Broome, was strongly supportive of the lifestyle it presented. "It was a place of freedom for me because it wasn't too big; the weather was beautiful, I happened to meet great people soon after I arrived. I liked the fact that the people came from various backgrounds" (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Similarly Claudine's exhilaration as an immigrant from Switzerland outweighed a sense of isolation: "Because a new thing is always exciting. So at the beginning I didn't miss anything I was happy to be somewhere else and look at something new" (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

Over time the initial euphoria of life in Broome mellowed for both Sue and Claudine as settling in is a process. Their perspective of the town's shortcomings as well as advantages are discussed in the following chapter.

The recollections of the seven women described in this section offer responses from feeling homesick through to seeking new horizons. The process of adjustment took varying amounts of time however for many the move into paid employment created new connections.

### ***Employment***

Employment provided women with opportunities to mix with a range of people, learn about Broome lifestyle and for some it gave access to staff accommodation. Many of the non-Indigenous employees who had relocated to Broome lived in the 'staff quarters' as Government personnel. Workers from several other industries were also provided with housing. It was an incentive to attract them to the north west as there was a shortage of homes. Accommodation was provided at the hotels or alternatively at a few boarding houses and the Caravan Park.

Ainslie was posted to Broome to commence her teaching career:

I came straight to Broome. You didn't have a choice in those days where you went. Because it was like a bond system. When you did your training you were paid a minimal amount, something like Abstudy that you get today. But you signed a contract to say that you would teach for two years, wherever you went. If you didn't accept the posting and if you didn't want to teach there you paid all the money back that they paid you.

We had a duplex, the one opposite Fong's store. We had three girls in one side. We thought that was pretty great. Yeah, very impressed. Not like today they have only one teacher in there. We didn't mind. You see in a lot of those days teachers didn't get accommodation. When my sister went teaching in Northampton she had to live in a hotel for a while before she found somewhere to board. It was only really in the north west that they provided accommodation (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

When Sue was transferred to Broome in 1989 to work in a Commonwealth Government Agency, she was provided with housing. "It was part of my employment contract. We had a three-bedroom house supplied at subsidised rental rates" (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Further Government employee allowances to Sue and other workers included the provision of annual airfares to Perth or Darwin for herself and the family, power bills subsidised for an air-conditioning allowance, payment of district allowance and six weeks annual leave. Despite these benefits Sue outlined the disadvantages of being based in Broome on the edge of a remote region:

There's also limited opportunities for workers to rise up the corporate ladder in an area like Broome. Some people simply come to work in areas like Broome as they see it as a way of advancing their careers. So once this is achieved they move on. Supervision and other work supports are fairly limited (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

The proliferation of transient workers affected the lives of many long-term residents. Members of the permanent community considered the cost of their investment in a relationship with a potentially temporary resident. The annual cyclic movement of workers impacted upon the women's networks and their sense of belonging. The concepts of 'local' status and 'long-term residency' are notions that are further developed in 'Patterns of Residency' in Chapter Five.

Pat, who arrived in Broome without employment, was soon working in the office of the Continental Hotel in the Accounts Department:

It was very hard at that time to be accepted by the community. I think it was because in those days the prison officers the police officers the bank johnnies, teachers, Ansett, in those days those people would be transferred to Broome and stay perhaps two years and go again.

And the local people I found, when I met people they would say how long are you here for because they thought you too were an itinerant and weren't going to be here very long it was very hard to get to know people.

I can see now why and it has probably happened to me. I have made good friends with people in the police service or somewhere and they have transferred.

At the time I didn't understand but now I can understand. However, once we stayed here a long period of time and we got to know the local people, some fabulous people and I find now they are my true friends, (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Her reflections on the challenge of forming relationships with Broome 'locals' convey the reality of being accepted in many country towns across Australia. The question of who counts as a local and how long one has to reside in a town before they may be considered a local is taken up by Dempsey (1990).

The notion of transient workers also applied to seasonal and hospitality employees. Not all employees received these allowances and incentives provided to their counterparts in the Government and larger, private industry. There existed a hierarchy of housing according to employment.

### ***The Hospitality Industry***

During her first twelve-month stay in Broome, Kristine lived with her parents in the Roebuck Bay Caravan Park. The Park offered basic services and very few people lived there. Even so, Kristine and her family made friends with the other people. One of these friends helped her secure a position at the

Continental Hotel as a house maid. "It was something different and I had never even been in a hotel until I went there" (Kristine, personal communication March 23, 1998).

The hotels in Broome were a major source of employment for single or married women both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. These women were employed predominantly as housemaids, barmaids and domestics in the kitchen and laundry, as well as in the office and on the reception desk. Each hotel had its own staff quarters and discounted meals for employees.

On her arrival in the dry season of 1990, Claudine found she gained an insight into Broome lifestyle and socialisation processes by working at the Roebuck Hotel. For Claudine, a future in the hotel industry, particularly in the bar was unappealing. Unable to gain employment elsewhere she commenced working as a barmaid at the Roebuck Hotel. "One reason I tried to get a job there was so I could meet the locals and from then on you can find another" (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998)

She soon became accustomed to the different types of customers, the members of the Broome community who patronised the hotel. She spoke of the pearl divers who worked long hours and visited Broome when their boats came ashore in between tides. They, along with meatworkers and small business owners such as tourist operators, were classified as seasonal workers. Their working lives were dictated by the extremes of seasons, a phenomenon described in Chapter One of this study.

Over the years 'seasonal workers' have become a part of the area's employment culture. The income they earned during the 'season' had to be accrued and carried over to the next season. For many, other employment needed to be found elsewhere to off-set the seasonal income. Thus, for these people employment in Broome and the opportunity to earn 'good' wages was a cyclic activity. At the end of the 'season', many relocated to the South West and returned to Broome the following year; they were a transient population returning on an annual basis.

The itinerant nature of people employed as seasonal workers was a dominant characteristic of the cattle and pearling industries.

### ***The Meatworks***

The Broome Meatworks was also a major employer of seasonal workers. Carol quickly found employment there, in 1973. It was the last few weeks of the 'season':

I started off the job as a spotter packer. You just look for diseases in the meat, hair and that sort of stuff. And you pack it. Along the chain each girl had a different job and I ended up being able to do all of them, (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

She recalled approximately ten women working at the meatworks at the time:

And most of the girls that worked there, had a guy there who was either their friend or they were married to one of the guys. And a lot of the girls and I know I did for a few seasons actually did cleaning after. We used to work two or three jobs and we never used to get as much money as the blokes did. So we would try and supplement it like that.

And it was not very good money for the physical work we did. It is very physical work. It takes a toll after a while. Hmm, (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

Feeling the tension of undertaking the double shift of parenting and working full time for six months of the year, Carol admitted that it was a struggle for her at times, juggling these multiple shifts.

First I used to think this was where the money was for us when we were young and we were trying to get our family together and you know how you struggle. The money was good and you could make it in six months and I could be a mother for the other six months. I could work and still be a mum and give my kids some time for the other six months (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

### ***The Pearling Industry***

The prohibition of women working on pearling luggers in WA, legislated in the 1870s, remained in place until it was successfully challenged by the operators of a Broome pearling business in 1980. This paved the way for the few women employed in the pearling industry in the 1980s and 1990s to perform a range of duties, from 'crewing' to sorting shells and cooking. Like Carol in the meatworks, they worked long hours in trying conditions. The incentive was the opportunity to earn a good income over a seasonal period.

Claudine, while employed at the Roebuck Hotel, was offered a position at the same pearling company where her husband was employed as a foreman on one of the cleaning boats. Her job was pearl cleaner, a physically demanding job, working in trying conditions:

I knew that you could earn money in the pearling industry and that was my aim at the time really. I didn't know anything about it, nothing at all.

Most people don't do it for a very long time. Well the job itself is very boring, very hard... I hated the actual job but it was so beautiful up there that it never bothered me as other people (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

Like Claudine, Kazue and Karima worked in the male dominated pearling industry. Day long operations meant their work hours were long and demanding.

Kazue, whose husband also worked in the industry, was employed initially as a farm and yard hand. Her command of English and Japanese, coupled with her training as a dental technician in Japan, provided her with the opportunity to work on the boats and train as a pearl technician. Kazue explained: "Working on the boat is not for all sorts of girls. The boat work is like a male job sort of thing. Each year more girls are working on the boat and in pearl farms. It is still the boy's job I think" (Kazue, personal communication, May 9, 1998).

Generally, working conditions did not cater for allocated, gendered facilities on board, although in 1998 one of the company's boats provided a separate room with four bunk beds (Kazue, personal communication, May 9, 1998). Although the affirmative action – Equal Opportunity Acts had been passed in 1985, changes in policies were not taken up quickly in the north and male dominated industries in particular were slow to make the changes.

The three women in this study employed in the pearling industry were not Anglo Australians and all secured their jobs through personal contacts. Karima had cousins working for the Paspaley Pearling Company while Claudine's and Kazue's husbands worked in the industry. This means of gaining employment, through word of mouth typifies the way many people get jobs in the Kimberley<sup>2</sup>.

Karima, performed a variety of tasks in her employment in the Paspaley Pearling Company:

I started off as a deckie. The boat I started on was the operations boat. We do all the seeding for pearls, cultured pearls. And basically we just go out to where ever we have to be.

Our normal day is 5.30 to 6.30ish. If the shell is not finished by then you keep going until it is done.

And then I did drift diving for two seasons and that was a lot harder than what I expected it to be in my first year. And that was getting dragged by the boat basically (Karima, personal communication, June 16, 1998).

While women were employed for the unskilled jobs, their role as pearl divers was less common:

When I started in '96 I don't know how true this is but a few people were saying that I was the first female diver. But I don't know if they meant for Paspaley which I am. As an overall diver I don't think I am because I have heard that there were a few down in Exmouth that were drifting but they were doing a lot of shallow stuff and I was doing both (Karima, personal communication, June 16, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> I recall looking for a job in Broome in 1979. I went to the office of one major employer and was told they had no vacancies but was given the name of another company requiring staff. Upon enquiries I was immediately appointed to the position of secretary.

A new Pearl Fisheries Act (1989) allowing women to become pearl divers heralded a change in the pearling industry. This replaced the 1912 Act which barred women from becoming pearl divers (West Australian, August 8, 1989). The change in attitude came about at a time when there were concerns that Western Australia's \$60 million pearling industry could be undermined by South East Asian competitors unless there was greater industry investment in pearl hatchery technology (Hill, 1989).

The roles of seasonal workers illustrated that employment for women was varied. The spectrum of jobs performed by the women covered stereotypical and non-stereotypical roles. In some instances the women changed jobs because their initial work did not provide career satisfaction.

#### **Cheryl - 1988**

Cheryl, an Indigenous Australian, was born in 1959 and grew up with her mother and extended family in Brisbane. After completing Year 10 Cheryl was employed as a factory worker in Brisbane but moved to Perth to live with her cousin as she wanted to escape the boredom of her assembly-line job. While in Perth she met her future husband, an Indigenous man from Derby. They lived there for ten years and then moved to Broome with their children, as part of his employment in the State Electricity Commission.

When Cheryl explored employment opportunities in the late 1980s she was again faced with the reality that her lack of training could only provide unskilled work. It was dissatisfaction with her current job that motivated her to undertake further study:

I started doing some work at Cable Beach Club, house- maiding. So I thought I don't want to be a cleaner all my life. That was in '89, so I started doing a health worker's course in '91 at BRAHMS. So I really enjoyed that. It was a real struggle that year because Colin was the sole bread winner. That was a really hard year for us. After completing that course I was able to get some work out at Beagle Bay from December. We graduated and a week later a friend and I got work out at Beagle Bay to relieve while the other staff went on holidays (Cheryl, personal communication, April 27, 1998).

Further education and training was a priority also for Barni, when she relocated to Broome from the Roadhouse in 1991.

I left with the children. Yeah and worked out what I wanted to do. So education became essential. So first year, like 1990 that first term I did a night class at TAFE (Tertiary and Technical). Then in 1991 I enrolled as Broome High's first mature age high school student doing one subject only. I wanted to start writing, get that creative flow happening again - going back to school and doing TEE English was the way for me to do it for me (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

After completing courses in English and computing, Barni, unsure of her prospects, bought a horticultural block 20 kilometres from Broome, (known colloquially as the '12 Mile'). It was here that she cultivated her herb farm. "I established it in 1992 and got a business name put on it at the end of '93" (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

On the other hand, Alice was a full time home maker and did not share the problems associated with seeking employment such as qualifications and training.

Clearly employment was a significant factor in providing support networks for the women. This section has presented examples of work gained by the women and its significance in their lives in forming social networks across possible ethnic divides. While women supported each other in the workforce, there still existed a social hierarchy within Broome generally. Their positions influenced the company they kept, the times they were free for leisure and community involvement, their disposable income, and even the location of their

homes. Issues such as expectations and stereotypes relating to race have also been touched upon. However a more detailed investigation of these is beyond the scope of this study.

### ***Support Structures***

All the women's stories revealed that a network of support structures was vital to their relocation and settlement in their north west environment. This section of the study introduces connections which provided them with much needed assistance in practical and emotional terms. A more detailed examination of networks and associations formed by women for women out of a need for support and companionship will be presented in Chapter Five.

Many women removed from their families, found solace amongst other women. They supported each other and friendships grew. This situation is demonstrated in Rose's circumstances. Her commitment to religious life meant that her established support network was limited to the Catholic community. Her vocation severely and literally curtailed her freedom to mix outside her religious community:

But most of life centred around the church and the convent and the people that I met, the Aboriginal people who were my main interest were those that were working with the sisters. And we had connection with them through our work (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Her opportunities to socialise and form friendships arose from her duties, particularly in her early days when she was confined to the convent:

I worked for quite a while in the kitchen with one of the Aboriginal girls. I can say we have formed a life long friendship and even in that first 12 months when things were unexpected traumas, I think her example of serenity and just peace or something. Just held me together. I can honestly say that. It was a gift for me because that prepared me for a lot of encounters (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

The Catholic Church paid a major role in assisting Catholic women with their settlement into the Broome community. This was particularly applicable for the Filipino women.

Linda soon found herself immersed in the Broome Community. She was the first of the Filipino women to arrive in Broome during the 1980s. Through the support of her husband and her associations with the Catholic Church, she was quickly introduced to a cross section of people living in Broome. "Sr ... told me about the early Filipinos that came to Broome and she said that the church was built with Filipinos" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

The nuns introduced Linda to the Catholic women of Broome, particularly those of Aboriginal and Filipino descent, women who have remained her friends:

I come to the church too. The people are more friendly. In Carnarvon they are a little bit cliquey but I heard from the old people before that, that Broome is cliquey. The lives of the people are – especially Aboriginal their ways are similar to Filipino ways when it comes to religion. They are very close-knitted [sic] like at the funeral all the family and things like that (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Involvement in sport was succour for Pat, and aided her integration into the local Broome community. Being a keen sportswoman she joined the Broome Basketball Association. "I played basketball and that's where I met a lot of local people. Through the local people I met other local people who we used to go shelling and camping with, and it just goes on from there" (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Others gained assistance from women friends through their employment or through their husbands' contacts:

The people I knew were from a range of places including some local Aboriginal people. I had a particularly close friend who was from a really large Broome family. These friendships led to introductions to a lot of other people. There were lots of different links at the time. This and my employment helped me to meet more people (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Sue and her husband also made contact through work.

My husband and I also owned a small business. Through this, we met a range of people including tourists and locals. Our shop was attached to a local hotel so we met a lot of people through there - both staff and customers (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Some found their experiences of integration into Broome lifestyle and community changed over time as they entered different phases of their lives. Many of the women spoke of feelings of isolation and separation from their family and old friends when they started having their own children. As women without children, they had not needed the same level of support they yearned for as new mothers. Women depended upon one another to look after their children. Working mothers relied on women baby-sitting in their homes to care for their children.

Carol, a married woman, also found her social support structures to be inappropriate for her as a mother of young children. "I used to have a lot of problems getting a baby-sitter. First off with Belinda [her daughter] I had to get my sister to come up here because she wouldn't stay with anybody" (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

Old Ma Lucas we used to call her, used to baby-sit nearly all the meatworkers' kids. We used to go in there at 5.30 in the morning and all little cots were all the way round. She had a big verandah around the house. She'd have all these little kids as there was no such things as Chu Chuu's or day care centres and all that (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

When Sue's son was born she missed her family and felt isolated from them:

I miss my family more. Particularly, my mother. I wish she was here to see [her son] grow up. Also the support that family can provide in terms of childcare. I rarely ask others to baby-sit because I don't want to burden them and I'm fussy about other carers. With family, that's much easier. Mum actually asks to mind ... when she's around. No matter how close friends are, the level of unconditional support is never the same as that between family members (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Minna's isolation from her family and culture was exacerbated when she became a mother. When she found herself no longer in the workforce, and without the support of an extended family, Minna was lonely and isolated at home. She lived on a 20 acre lease of land 50 kilometres out of town and relied on friends to visit, as trips to town were few and far between for her:

I felt isolated. Like these days they have community house and places to go but I'd go once a week to town and just stay home. There was no family to tell you about how to look after the baby, what baby need and things like that. Of course in the hospital they teach you how to change nappy and feed the baby, how to bath the baby, nappy rash and that's about it. So I learn from a book, but of course the book have wrong climate. We didn't have fridge so I always express milk. When he was a few months old and he started teething I was wondering all these things, like what food to give him (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Over time this situation was relived for her with the arrival of other Indonesian people to Broome and the introduction of migrant services. Minna's involvement with other migrants and her input into the formation of migrant support structures is discussed in Chapter Five.

#### **Bernadette - 1992**

French speaking Bernadette is from Belgium. She grew up in the city with her parents, and gained a university degree in speech pathology. A multilingual speaker, Bernadette travelled the world and met her Australian born husband in the United States. At first she had no plans to visit Australia but her future husband lived on a farm near Broome and so she decided to visit.

Although Bernadette had a good command of English on her arrival, settling into the Kimberley environment was challenging for her. She felt isolated from her own family. When her son was born in 1995, she commented on the value and support her friends in Broome gave her and her family:

I suppose one thing that makes it hard to settle somewhere is that friendship is not built over night. I've got friends in Belgium that I went to school with, childhood friends. So when I came here and I needed to build the relationships with people. It takes a long time to make friends. We went to Belgium this year. When we came back to Broome, I was amazed at the number of people who looked very happy to see us again. People kept dropping in. Some friends came to pick us up at the airport and we didn't even expect them to be there. They had bought groceries for us and put them in the fridge. And we had just about everybody dropping in and going, 'oh so good to see you'. I thought we really have got good friends here and that means a lot to me (Bernadette, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

The support networks for the women in this study crossed ethnic divides. However there still existed a strong desire to ensure their cultural links were maintained. How the women developed these links whilst establishing themselves in the Broome community is discussed in Chapter Five.

### ***Conclusion***

In presenting this chapter detailing the analysis of the interviews, I have taken steps to draw meaning from the large volume of information by reduction into six themes. Although many themes could have been further developed in the analysis, I have outlined those with the most common, frequent responses to create an understanding of the variables which affected the lives of the women in their move to Broome.

Throughout this discussion major emphasis has been placed upon the significance of individual perceptions and their link with past experience, in portraying the impressions of the women. Most of the women relocated to Broome with little understanding of the realities which would challenge their settling process. This chapter has outlined the impact of their initial experiences on reshaping their lives as they adjusted to Broome life. It has portrayed the diversity of the women in their backgrounds, perceptions and responses to challenges.

In developing the issues which surrounded their lives, a picture has emerged. Some women described the hardships they faced in their relocation while others seemed to cope with relative ease. They spoke of the processes and strategies they required to assist them in managing change. Their individual comments expressed the multiple realities of Broome lifestyle for each woman. For some, living in Broome meant being included as a 'close-knit' member of the community, and yet for others their settlement process was one of confusion, conflict and exclusion.

While the women's first impressions of relocation are as diverse as the women themselves, it is possible to make some generalisations about their experiences of settling into their new environment. As demonstrated, most of the women knew little about the north west, the Kimberley or Broome. They entered a new stage of their lives and the transition was not without its difficulties. Living and mixing in a new environment that maintained protocols based on the legacy of racist colonial traditions became a part of their day-to-day lives. Despite the culture shock of their relocation and the inadequacy of facilities and services experienced by many of the women, they have stayed.

The subsequent chapter will explore the organisations, both employment related and community based, which helped these women and others over several decades. The women's involvement in various associations and organisations is discussed drawing on a feminist, historical paradigm in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter Five: Belonging**

### ***Introduction***

The previous chapter discussed the women's initiation into Broome society and culture and the challenges it presented to them. The ways in which the women coped in their new surroundings and how they responded to their relocation and settlement processes were investigated. Six themes were developed from the expanse of information gleaned from their accounts. Issues of isolation and lifestyle, race relations, health and employment were recurring topics in the women's stories. The women's first impressions of Broome and the Kimberley region were analysed. It was argued that each woman brought her past experiences and cultural background with her. These mental models helped shape the women's efforts in making a remote locality home.

This chapter will explore the women's sense of 'belonging' to the Broome community and their 'identity' within that community. A key component to their positioning as newcomers was their involvement within groups and associations in the town (Dempsey, 1990). This in turn required processes of introduction and initiation into new cultures. The ways that their involvement in the community has impacted on the social, economic and political life of Broome and its people is explored.

The focus is upon the women's involvement in organisations which influenced and assisted them to shape their existence as part of the Broome community. While the study has reviewed aspects of the lives of 24 women, the experiences of more than half of them are relevant to this section of the project. The experiences of Pat and Minna who were introduced in the previous chapter, will be used to illustrate their personal responses to relocation and to exemplify the situations of other relocated women.

Components of the other women's stories, along with secondary sources are interwoven throughout this investigation of how the women created a 'sense of belonging' in a place remote from their family roots. Community organisations such as family support groups, the Broome Multicultural Association and Broome's hotels have provided opportunities to meet and socialise with other community members, both men and women. Other women specific organisations such as the Broome Netball Association, the North West Women's Association and the Country Women's Association have offered women leisure activities as well as support. The influence and assistance of church groups, although touched upon only briefly in this chapter, is also acknowledged.

The following exploration of selected community groups is not an all-encompassing representation of what was available in Broome. I acknowledge that other groups and workplaces have impacted upon the lives of many women. Services such as Community Health, The Lioness Club of Broome, St John Ambulance Service and Broome's Lotteries House, as well as workplaces such as schools and banks have made significant contributions. However, this study will limit its scope to five organisations that the women identified as major groups that assisted their integration into the community.

In selecting these organisations I was mindful that some of the women had their lives influenced by a cross section of community groups. Through my own involvement in various associations I had prior knowledge of some of the women's connections. Coupled with the information revealed in their interviews, it affirmed my understanding that several were linked with many groups. This awareness strongly influenced the direction of this section of the study. It became apparent that there was a reciprocal influence taking effect. The individuals worked to establish the groups, and once formed, these associations shaped their lives as well as affecting their wider community (<http://www.communitynetsa.gov.au/index.html>). The major organisations to be explored in this chapter are: the Country Women's Association, the Broome Netball Association, the North West Women's Association, the Broome

Multicultural Association and Broome Community Information Resource Centre and Learning Exchange (CIRCLE) House.

To a lesser extent, the influence of the hotels and support services for families and the wider community services will be touched upon. While these are not less important to Broome community life, again, the parameters have been set by the frequency and relevance for the women interviewed.

### ***Women and their Associations***

People use different concepts such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, class, religion, and sexual orientation to describe and organise their social environments (Dempsey, 1990; Lange, 2000). They use these concepts to identify and to be identified as belonging to a specific group. People's acceptance into and membership of a particular group acts as a means of categorising them. Ideals ascribed to the followers of a group are indicators of a group's character. Knowledge of a person's group membership can be used by others to 'include' and 'exclude' people from other groups.

Dempsey (1990, p. 29) examined the relationship of 'insiders and outsiders' and drew the following conclusions from his observations and communications with members of his 'Smalltown':

Some of those who are defined as 'outsiders' actually reside within the community boundaries. They include local 'ner'er-do-wells' and recent arrivals from the city 'who are trying to take over'. The negative stereotypes of both local and non-local 'outsiders' are as much a part of Smalltown culture as the positive stereotypes of local people, institutions and activities.

Each of the women's stories depicts the challenge of socialising in an environment new and foreign to them. Their strategies for coping required learning the ways of their adopted community. For many, this learning was a process by which interaction and sharing with people of similar interests took place in a social setting. As discussed in Chapter Four, most of the women learnt about Broome and were accepted into Broome society through their involvement with groups and associations linked to their work place and/or

leisure pursuits. Their association with a particular organisation or groups of people became a means of identification in the community.

Some found the 'smallness' of the town to be an attraction. The outback feeling of being on the edge of the frontier and a vast wilderness, in addition to living in the country, was for some a new and exciting experience. They were thousands of kilometres away from 'home', family and old friends. There was a common need for essential services such as day care facilities for their young children, health requirements and leisure pursuits. Under these conditions there was an incentive for involvement in forming groups and associations, to cater for their own needs.

### ***The Country Women's Association (CWA)***

After World War II, as discussed in Chapter Four, it was acknowledged by Government officials that the provision of social amenities and medical facilities was a necessity to attract families to the north west. Not just men, but women and children were needed on the Kimberley frontier. It was in this climate that the CWA was established in Broome. On the 21st July 1949 the Broome Branch of the Northern Division or North West Postal Division was formed. No records remain in Broome, at Perth CWA House, or the State Archives to reveal details of the women who instigated the formation of the CWA in Broome. Brief minutes of the meetings from the 1970s onwards have been preserved, and my discussions with CWA members at their Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1999 did not reveal any further information.

Over the years various Government departments have consulted the Broome CWA as an active lobby group on community matters, particularly those pertaining to women and families. On October 8, 1963, the Administrator for the North West, Harry McGuigan, wrote to the Broome CWA to encourage members to attend the seminar on north west development. "I think that women should be encouraged to come along as there are aspects of the development of a Tourist Industry which I am sure will appeal to them". (The letter was addressed to the Broome CWA President, Mrs J. De Castilla and the Honorary

Secretary, Mrs P. Clifton).

In 1968, members formed a deputation and approached the Shire Council seeking permission to administer the vacant Public Works' mess hut and transform it into Broome CWA Hall. This hall was, and still is, used for meetings, public speakers and small functions. In the 1960s, members' activities included the making of handicrafts, catering for functions and providing transport for pensioners' shopping trips. CWA Hall also housed a library collection.

From the scant remaining records of the Broome CWA, it can be ascertained that the members were predominantly Anglo-Australian women married to men working in the town. Records kept over the years indicate that membership comprised hospital matrons, the wives of pearlers and of Shire Councillors and other female members of the north west community. Records of attendance at meetings from 1970 onwards reveal that a few Indigenous women did attend some meetings of the CWA, but not migrant women of non-English-speaking background.

While the Broome Branch of the CWA was not an exclusively 'white' group, some traditional protocols were maintained. Under the committed leadership of President, Mrs Phyllis Knox, wife of a stockman, the women sang the National Anthem at the opening of the 1970 Annual General Meeting. The Broome Branch held eight meetings per year, adjourning for the wet season between December and March. CWA members entered a float in the first Shinju Matsuri parade in 1970, and the following year the CWA made a donation towards the fundraising activities of Indigenous Pearl Queen Entrant, Elizabeth Stracke.

The CWA was an avenue open to women to meet other country women and form friendships. The Association provided a means for the women to actively participate in the community. Four of the women in this project have been involved with this Association during their settlement in the north west, Broome and the surrounding areas. Of these, Merle and Minna, who lived on

properties out of Broome town but within the Broome Shire, became members of the CWA. In contrast, Kristine and Linda both attended a few meetings and decided not to get involved.

For Merle the incentive to join the CWA was not only to broaden her circle of friends, but also as a means of becoming involved in the community. She lived 20 kilometres from Broome and, despite the unsealed road being rough by city standards, she regularly visited town. By participating in the CWA's activities, Merle, the only station woman in the Broome Branch, was actively involved in events and functions. Unlike Merle, the majority of station women within the Shire of Broome and Derby West Kimberley do not have easy access to town.

Merle said that after her first 12 months in Broome, she decided she needed 'diversity' and wanted to meet another group of people. She was also an active member of the Catholic Church congregation, attending meetings and helping to prepare functions.

Well I joined the CWA because I needed to do something. I needed to put into the community somehow, didn't I? I also needed to meet other people. Because going to church and that, you only met the church group. But if you go to the CWA you meet another group. You need the diversity. I probably joined after 12 months (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Kristine remembers attending a few CWA meetings and meeting Merle there. Being an enthusiastic dressmaker was the incentive for Kristine to attend some of the Broome Branch's meetings. The CWA regularly had fundraising stalls and was always looking for new ideas for money-making ventures. Kristine attended one meeting to show the women how to make a particular type of doll to sell at a fundraising venture. She was involved when the CWA "were doing or making things" (Kristine, personal communication, March 17, 1998).

As there were no babysitting facilities provided at the meetings, Kristine found she was unable to attend the afternoon meetings when her son was small. Some years later, when her three children were enrolled at school she tried participating in meetings again but found that having to leave to pick up the children from school was very disruptive.

Although a women's group, the lack of child care facilities at meetings meant that attendance was limited to an older group of women. Kristine did not pursue her membership of the CWA, as she felt the group did not cater for the needs of a widowed, single mother of three. "So you sort've had to be an older woman I think, to join it, to really get the most out of it" (Kristine, personal communication, March 17, 1998).

Linda, who attended a CWA meeting in Carnarvon with an older neighbour, expressed similar sentiments to Kristine. "They always invite me but sometimes I feel out of place because I'm too young for them. You know they are old people. I'm out of place with what they are talking about" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998). She did not join the Broome CWA.

Minna, who lived on a property 50 kilometres from Broome, joined the West Kimberley's CWA Air Branch, rather than attend meetings in town. She home tutored her children through the Kimberley School of the Air, so she was familiar with speaking in English over the two-way radio. One of the benefits of being a member for Minna was access to the Association's cottage in Derby when she needed accommodation there.

The CWA represented a 'frontier serving' Association, one that was invaluable due to the lack of alternative services. During the 1980s the CWA still had a strong presence in the Broome community. As the town grew steadily and new services and supports were introduced to women and families, the focus of CWA changed. Women in Broome now had a variety of groups and organisations to join and form relationships with other women and the community. The active membership of the CWA has declined and by 2003 the functions of the Broome CWA had lulled.

Paralleling the decrease in support for the CWA was the increase in the establishment of several new associations. These, coupled with the change in people's entertainment options, had a strong influence on the directions women chose for activities outside of work and/or family commitments.

### ***The Role of Sport***

Involvement in sporting activities was a natural extension of many women's lives. The playing of sport is an integral part of community life in the country. At sporting activities families and friends enjoy participating, watching and helping others prepare for their particular event. The common bond of an interest in sport is a means of drawing together people from many disparate backgrounds.

This social connection was a major incentive for Pat's enthusiasm and commitment to establish a formal netball competition within Broome. Pat worked some evenings, played basketball and her husband played football and cricket. Much of their socialising was done at her husband's sporting functions. Socialising was important for Pat. She embraced one of Broome's favourite sporting activities, fishing. Frequently she and her group of friends would go to Simpson's Beach (near the Broome Port), drag a net for fish and then eat the fish and rice at one of their homes. "They were great social times", she said (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

As mentioned in Chapter Four, Pat soon found herself mixing with the local Broome people through her work and involvement in sport. She had mingled with Indigenous people previously. "In Carnarvon yes, not to a great extent like Broome. The people that I met and became friendly with because I liked them and I liked their company was the local Broome people" (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

On a social level, the small town of Broome in the 1970s fulfilled Pat's needs: "I don't think we wanted much to be quite honest. I was happy. We had everything we wanted... Not having the shops didn't worry me at all" (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

### ***The Broome Netball Association***

Pat missed playing netball, one of her favourite pastimes which she had enjoyed since childhood. In 1976, when Pat had commenced work with the State Government, an officer's wife, Pam, asked her to assist in organising a netball meeting to be held at the Uniting Church. Pam was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, but in her absence Pat was elected the inaugural president of the Broome Netball Association (BNA):

It was in 1976 that netball came on the scene as well. I was actually nominated the president at that meeting and hence netball started. From then on I was heavily involved with netball. I took on the presidency and I was president from that year until 1987/88 something like that. And that was only a little break, and I took it back on again.

I loved the sport. I loved playing netball but the achievement of netball growing, to see people enjoying the game, to see Broome doing so well. I enjoyed the challenge. It was a challenge to try and do something different every year. To get bigger and better every year. To improve our umpiring. I thoroughly enjoyed it. They were good years (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

The Broome Netball Association has played an important role in bringing together many woman and girls in Broome. As a well organised leisure pursuit offering a mixture of fun and fitness, it appealed to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls. In the early days, netball was played in the grounds of the Catholic Church on a single court. Each week every player paid 'light money' to reimburse the church for electricity.

The teams were grouped together in one grade and often represented the players' work place or associations. They included players from the Broome Meatworks, State School teachers, Catholic School teachers, nurses, 'bank

Johnnies', public servants and 'locals' teams. The teams were grouped according to the members' affiliations or networks. Playing netball was a way of socialising, but paralleling this was a highly competitive team structure, indicating personal and professional networks. During the 1980s games were played at the netball/basketball courts at the entrance to town.

### ***Netball Volunteers***

For Pat and committee members, like myself, there was much organising to be done in preparation for each season. The association was incorporated in 1981. As netball president, Pat organised the Annual General Meeting for the election of office bearers and ensured that all positions on the committee were filled. For years, Pat continued to be elected president and frequently the same group of women would also volunteer to carry out specific duties, as delegated by Pat.

These volunteers were predominantly players representing the diverse teams in the association. The committee members, mainly Anglo Australian and some Indigenous women, have formed lifelong friendships and networks.

A feature of Pat's leadership style was her charisma. Through her skills in the organisation of netball she kept the committee working collaboratively. Each member met deadlines and performed tasks out of a commitment to her, rather than the netball association. Committee meetings which were planned and well organised were often held at Pat's workplace. On other occasions she and other committee members hosted the meetings in their homes around the kitchen table, where business was mixed with pleasure and alcohol was consumed. "I did enjoy it. I didn't enjoy being so busy. We had a great group of girls. We had a lot of support. We always had a great committee. I enjoyed it" (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

As netball publicity officer and submission writer for many years, I too formed working relationships and friendships with both committee members and players. Being a committee member was not a desired position. While players

recognised the need and expected the sport to be organised, few were willing to be involved at this level. My personal impression was that the general membership accepted the roles that I and other volunteers undertook. The women volunteered their skills and time not only for their personal satisfaction, but for the betterment of the community. As committee members we worked as a team to organise the sport each season, but on the court our loyalties remained with our individual teams.

Funds to maintain the association, the standard of the courts and insurance premiums were recouped from the players through annual registration fees. It was supported by organisations such as Ansett Australia, the Broome Shire Council, the Ministry for Sport and Recreation and the Women's Sport Foundation. In the 1980s, it was a common occurrence for the Broome Netball Association committee members to have a fundraising cake stall at the shopping centre on a Saturday morning, or to be running a raffle. This activity included organising the permit for the raffle, baking the cakes and managing the stall. The day-to-day maintenance of the courts was also undertaken predominantly by the committee members and their families. Other voluntary activities included gardening, maintenance of seats and fencing, stocking and managing the kiosk and maintaining lighting facilities.

Playing netball was a leisure activity pursued by Arlene, Jodie, Chelsea and Sue. Although not involved in the organisation of the sport like Pat, these women played competitive netball. Their membership in the Broome Netball Association gave them space and time to be free from home and work duties, opportunities to mix socially, as well as to engage in physical exercise. Over the years they had all played in a variety of teams and had met many women from all aspects of Broome town life. Their connections with the Broome Netball Association span many years and this made them known to me prior to my research work.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Broome Hospital provided some women with a social network as well as employment. Arlene joined the hospital netball team and so became a member of the Broome Netball Association. This involvement introduced her to a wide circle of Broome women and their families. Arlene was often called upon at the netball courts to use her nursing skills by assisting injured players:

I also played netball with the nurses; one of the nurses asked me. We played with the teachers in the state school. Indoor cricket and netball were the first two things I played when I came here. Sport is a very good way to meet people.

Then later on, a few years later, we joined up with softball. Most of the people in my team were coloured people. And all different, they didn't all work at the hospital. They were from everywhere else, against Government offices and all that. But playing netball was good that's where I met most of the people (Arlene, personal communication, March 6 1998).

For Chelsea too, her participation in netball was also a significant part of her social life:

Netball was my main thing. But I wasn't on the committee you know I don't think we ever did like team things you know. We had a couple of drinks after a game maybe or something like that. I did mix socially with the team because they were mainly my group of friends. But I wasn't in any clubs or anything like that, no. It was just social and I would do my sport, that was with my friends (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

Netball and the friends she had established through it influenced Edwina's decision to move to Broome. As one of the most highly qualified umpires in the north west, Edwina had been invited to Broome on several occasions to umpire netball grand finals. With her subsequent employment as Western Australian Netball Association's (WANA) Coaching Coordinator for the North West Region, her relocation was encouraged by the need to be based in Broome with the region's Netball Administrator.

For her the attraction to the town was the people. "The locals of Broome. Not so much the itinerant tourist but the locals and the lifestyle of Broome. That was an attraction" (Edwina, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

When prompted to define her perceptions of 'locals' Edwina explained:

Oh locals European Australians or the Aboriginal people. I was dealing with sport, netball, and you have to be a person's person. You mix with everyone, whether they are white, black, brindle or indifferent. So that was my attraction, the friendliness of people here in Broome on the netball court and also off it. And also the more times I came to Broome and the length of times I stayed, I just liked the areas and the people are really friendly.

Yeah. You have the same thing in the Pilbara too. When we grew up. You know a lot of the talented people are our Aboriginal children. And if you are able to enhance and encourage them for their development they come across. That was an attraction and also their culture. It's not only the culture of Aboriginal people (Edwina, personal communication. April 7, 1998).

Edwina's articulation of the cross-cultural connections through netball and other sports offered typifies the experience of several women in this study.

Sue's choice to play sport was a social one. She explained that during her early days in Broome she liked to meet others at the local hotels, parties and the beach. In later years she became more involved with sport as a form of leisure, playing netball, cricket, tennis and touch football. She confirmed the connections netball and other sports offered:

I find it really interesting and like the fact that in Broome, it's relatively easy to meet a wide range of people from a variety of backgrounds, with a range of occupations and lifestyles and interests. In the city, it's more likely that friendships will be formed with people from similar backgrounds. In Broome I have friends that are European, Aboriginal, Asian or Anglo backgrounds. They may be cleaners, lawyers, unemployed, doctors, sole parents, teachers, plumbers, and Government workers.

After living here for a while, it feels like you evolve with the community so your personal network keeps expanding and changing, according to the time of year, what events are happening, who's visiting etc (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

While it is acknowledged that sport has generally been a dominating factor in developing Broome's community, netball in particular has played a significant role in the lives of the women and their families. The objectives of this section have been to describe the efforts of women to form the netball association and illustrate the links it has offered them across age, ability, social status and race

Again parallels can be drawn with Dempsey's (1990, p. 62) Smalltown where community members "are alienated by the 'physicality' of Smalltown culture, especially by the domination of sport and the focussing of social life on the pubs".

In addition to activities such as sport, Broome women also identified a need for the establishment of other organisations. An example of this can be gleaned from the experiences of migrant women with a specific allegiance to their own culture. Bridging the gap between cultures was central to the settlement process for Minna from Indonesia. Her associations with other 'coloured' and Anglo Australian people were essential to her assimilation. How she and other non-English-speaking background women developed and responded to potential involvement in the community is outlined in the following section.

### ***Cultural Uncertainties***

Australia is home to peoples of diverse cultural and ethnic histories, reflecting the pattern of Australia's post war immigration policy (Lange, 2000). A feature of Broome society is the town's multiracial population base. Minna's introduction to other Broome women and their culture was through her experiences of employment as a domestic at the Broome Hospital. There she worked alongside local Broome people, 'coloured' people, and learnt about

Broome culture through the hospital culture.

Not knowing the local customs and 'lingo' left Minna feeling different and isolated. She was an enthusiastic employee and her colleagues advised her to work at their pace. "I think I'm doing a good job. I'm cleaning and cleaning and was told to slow down because we will run out of work" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

She said things changed for her once her grasp of English became stronger. "Once I learn to speak English I talk more than I do my work! (Big laughter). I appreciate that" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

In Chapter Four, Minna's employment at the Broome Hospital until 1981 and her overcoming the challenges of being a new mother without extended family and cultural supports were described. As her children grew up and she continued to work with her husband developing their horticultural block, she experienced isolation. Added to this was the pressure she shared with her husband of being a migrant from non-English-speaking background, not being able to speak fluent English or understand the 'Australian way' of life. Despite this, Minna was determined to assimilate her children.

In their home the children were spoken to in English by both parents although Minna often interspersed her English with Indonesian words when with them. Conversations with her husband, not directly related to the children, were spoken in Indonesian.

When her children reached school age, the Kimberley School of the Air educated them. This is a Government service for children living in remote areas where children are unable to attend school due to the travelling distance. Equipment such as the two-way radio, desk, chairs and even a computer were supplied to the remote students. They received instructional booklets outlining lessons for the school term. These booklets were supplemented by a guide book of instructions for the adults assisting the children. Minna was her children's home tutor and they had daily School of the Air sessions over a two-

way radio.

Given her different cultural background, Minna found this additional role challenging. She was educated about Australian history and culture, the 'Australian way of life' as she put it, along with her children. "I taught my kids from pre-primary. I don't want my kids different. Like other kids could say their nursery rhymes like Baa Baa Black Sheep, English ones and I can't. So it is like I went to pre-primary school to learn these things" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Minna took the responsibility of the success or failure of her children's education upon herself. Her comments indicated that she equated their success with her ability and skills to teach them. She was an Indonesian woman who grew up in a time when her country was gaining control of its territories from the Dutch colonialists. Her dialogue may be interpreted as challenging the myth of 'white' racial superiority. "In the beginning I was trying very hard to make it for my kids. Because if they come down it comes back to me that I am Asian and I am stupid, I'm low and I'm not same level with these people" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

It also appeared to be a matter of self-esteem for her. The children, Minna considered, could look to a brighter future if they grew up as Australians feeling proud of their migrant parents:

That was my first attention to do that. That was my first goal. Try to make them feel that they are Australian and not just part of migrant kids only. So they can feel proud of having migrant parents. They can be proud of being Australian kids as well (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Desperately wanting to understand the Australian culture, Minna found her children had more in common with their 'air' classmates than she had with the other home tutors:

Well on the school of the air we had our kids in common. We could talk about our kid's education and all these things. But in the break time my way of living, they were pastoralists and mining people and I'm the mango grower so when they talk about cattle and wool sale and all these things.

They were white Australians, yeah. There were two Filipino tutors and I was OK but they left and I still carry on with the School of the Air. Then I feel different because I am the only woman of non-English speaking background.

I'm just like a sore thumb in the middle of them. So I didn't feel comfortable with it but to make my kids. But my kids have lots in common with the other kids. Sometimes I bring them to the rodeo and my kids feel comfortable with the other kids (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Given Minna's physical and cultural isolation her commitment to understanding and passing on the Australian *morés* was a massive effort. This challenge for her and other women in similar situations has been relieved over time as new non-English-speaking background migrant women have arrived and their numbers increased (Rabbitt, 1995, p. 17).

### ***Migrant Services***

It is very true. Here people get along together. There are towns where people are very cliquey. They don't like Asian people. They are all right here. Nobody cares; they don't worry what race you are. They are all friendly (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Non-English-speaking background women living in the Kimberley come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some came from villages and others from large cities, and were in many instances joining their Australian partners or husbands. They are now living in small towns where the number of women who share their own cultural background may be small or non-existent (Rabbitt, 1995, p. 17). The opportunities for friendship and support beyond the nuclear family are limited. Non-English-speaking background women, like many other women in the Kimberley, do not have the assistance of the extended family. This exacerbates the problem of remoteness and has led to a situation where non-English-speaking background women are not only isolated, but are

disadvantaged and marginalised. "In our own country we would not even speak to each other...here we are the only two Asians...we have to be friends" (Rabbitt 1995, p. 28).

The majority of non-English-speaking background women in the Kimberley come from Filipino, Malay, Thai and Indonesian backgrounds and have young children in their care. Out of necessity, those in the larger towns such as Broome, Derby and Kununurra have formed their own support networks and strengthened cultural links. In 1995, 24 Filipino women living in the Broome area, made up the largest group of non-English-speaking background migrant women in the Kimberley (Rabbitt, 1995, p. 10).

Linda's involvement with other women was an example of this phenomenon. As mentioned in Chapter Four, she initially sought support from the Catholic Church, and was subsequently introduced to Broome society.

As more Filipino women migrated to Broome with their Australian husbands, the women organised their own network. They developed a practice of holding a 'Filipino' gathering, a 'Filipino-Australian' party to welcome the new arrivals. These social events were rotated between their homes and all contributed by bringing a dish of food:

Sometimes when the new one come we have party and things like that to give them a little bit of support because sometimes they miss their family. But sometimes when they have problems they drop in and stay for a short time (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Linda explained that the women used their national language to speak to each other. "Of course some husbands don't like it. They say, 'You speak English'. But that is our thing; we want to speak our own language because we enjoy speaking it. Most husbands are understanding and don't care" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Linda also joined the Broome Multicultural Society. Over many years she participated in community events such as the Shinju Matsuri, Filipino Float and International Women's Day celebrations as well as joining the Catholic Church's prayer meeting group. "It doesn't worry me I mix with all the nationalities. It doesn't worry me at all. I can mix with everybody. The other Filipinos, we usually mix with each other" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

The non-English-speaking background Asian women living in Broome have formed their own cultural groups. Women like Linda and Minna, as 'elder' women have been instrumental in bringing the other Asian women together. They rally on festive occasions as ambassadors for their respective countries and the Asian women of Broome.

In some instances the Asian women who have moved to Broome in recent decades have found that they have cultural and historical links with long established Broome families. The latter's ancestry is such that their multiple heritages have sometimes created commonalities with the more recent arrivals. These migrant women have invited the 'locals' of Indigenous and Asian descent to join them in their dancing and festivities. Some have embraced these opportunities because, as Indigenous people they also identify with their Asian heritage. They may belong to groups such as the Broome Chinese Association or participate in festivities adorned in the Asian cultural dress of their forefathers (Yu & Tang Wei, 2000).

The following section details the development of a wider group, the North West Women's Association which also affected the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and migrant women, including Minna and Linda.

### ***The North West Women's Association***

A new women's group, the North West Women's Association (NWWA) was established in 1989. The formation of the association was a result of the North West Regional Women's Summit, 'Believe and Achieve', held in Karratha that year. This gathering of women, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including

migrant and Anglo Australian women, was the first women's meeting of its kind "to take place outside of an Australian Capital city" (North West Women's Regional Summit, 1989, p. 1). "The major recommendation which was overwhelmingly supported and accepted by the Summit was the formation of the North West Regional Women's Association" (North West Women's Regional Summit, p. 3). A non-Government organisation, funded by the Office of Women's Interest (OWI), it comprised members from the Pilbara and Kimberley. Women from all walks of life, from many different areas of the north west and of all ages supported this organisation, particularly the biannual gatherings.

This women's organisation influenced the lives of many north west women over an eight-year period. The coordination of the group was a difficult task, as distance separated members and the membership of the group was diverse. Therefore, an extensive communication system for members via regular teleconference link ups, newsletters, radio, television, letters and newspapers was established. The group's objective was to identify, discuss and develop strategies to meet the needs of north west women, their families and communities. The aim was to voice these opinions to key decision and policy makers (North West Women's Association, 1991 & 1993).

Some of the women in this study were members of the group and had attended several gatherings. Minna, Linda, Sue, Barni and Kristine were amongst those who put pressure on the Government for supports such as the women's refuge, which opened in Broome in 1989 (Broome Study, 1989). It was within this political climate that the State Government responded to the need for women's services in Broome and the north west in general.

However it was not until the early 1990s that north west migrant women placed the need for migrant services on the agenda of the North West Women's Association. Women such as Minna and Linda, along with other members, became instrumental in successfully lobbying the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) for funds to undertake a Kimberley Migrant Research Project. Minna, in particular, was involved in securing funding for a migrant

worker. "We went to a migrant conference in Perth. After that I was involved with my friend to get that migrant centre happening in Broome. And last year we got a migrant worker" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Many of the issues raised by the migrants, both men and women from around the state, during the consultation process were not new concerns for women in the Kimberley region. Except for language proficiency, the issues relating to isolation, employment, health, counselling services and child care had been concerns already voiced by other Kimberley women. Due to changes in Government funding, however, the migrant worker was employed only temporarily in Broome, and the North West Women's Association became defunct in 1997. The closure of this Association left some women in the north west without a political voice. In practical terms it meant that advocacy for the services they needed had to be gained elsewhere. The formation of the Broome Multicultural Association became a support for migrant women.

### ***The Broome Multicultural Association***

An outcome of the North West Women's Association's Migrant Settlement Needs Research Project (Rabbitt, 1995) was the linking up of migrant people in Broome and the Kimberley. In 1996, the Broome Multicultural Cultural Association was formed and a festival in the Court House Gardens was held. The concert was a showcase of the variety of Broome's multicultural society and the diversity of the people, 'local' Indigenous Asian people and migrants who had made the Kimberley frontier their home. Minna was the inaugural Vice Chairperson of the association, with women and men members from a range of Broome's cultural groups. This cohesion amongst residents working as volunteers crossed ethnic and class boundaries and acted as a means "to maintain the bondedness of residents to the community" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 107).

By 1997, Minna was mixing with a broad cross section of Broome residents. Like the Filipinas, the eight Indonesian women living in Broome would meet on special occasions. During Shinju Matsuri 1997 they performed

traditional and national dancing. "Last Shinju 1997 we met each other and we learnt some of the dancing we had learnt at school. Traditional dancing and national dance as well" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

They too formed their own support network. Of the Indonesian born women residing in Broome, Minna has been here the longest and is the oldest resident:

Apart from coming here first I am the oldest as well. Sometimes they look at me as a mother or big sister. They come for advice or ask me to help them on other things, like explain about school or whatever (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

She is also the most highly educated. Not all of the women are literate and as with the Filipinas, their first language is their local dialect. To communicate with each other the Indonesian women speak their national language, Bahasa: "Or sometimes we just switch to English to make it easier. We mix together" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

In contrast to Minna's search for cultural identity, Bernadette, a migrant from Belgium, did not wish to be labelled as a 'minority' woman of non-English-speaking background. Rather, she was a professional working woman, with a son and partner who managed a fruit and vegetable farm. Although there are other French-speaking residents in Broome, none are from Belgium. Bernadette said when they meet they speak French, but there are colloquial, cultural subtleties that she misses (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998).

The Broome Multicultural Association was not a group in which Bernadette wished to participate. After receiving several invitations to join the group, she felt obliged to attend some meetings:

No, they called me several times and I went to a few meetings out of a sense of duty really. I think the group meant to be a support group. I came in contact with the group, it was too late. It was like yeah it has been awful and maybe if we had had that group two years ago that would have been fantastic. It would have really made a difference. But by then I had got myself out of my isolation by myself, and the migrants' group was pulling me backwards a bit. I just want to see myself as part of the society. Not as a migrant (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998).

In her study of Western Australian migrant women, Lange (2000) considered the role played by multicultural associations in the settlement process for migrant women. Her research indicated "that ethnic organisations continue to be a bridge between the socio-cultural and the political and their input plays a vital role in multicultural policy formation" (Lange, 2000, p. 6).

Lange (2000) commented on the change over time of the need for migrant women to belong to an ethnic organisation. In the immediate Australian post war period "women were part of, and saw their role as being very important in, male dominated organisations" (Lange, p. 6-7). These associations acted as a vehicle for those involved to pass on "language, cultural and family traditions" (Lange, p. 7) to their family members and others in a safe environment:

In contrast, many women who have arrived in more recent years frequently find that the established associations fail to cater for their needs and interests. Their lack of interest in joining is just one indication of the diversity found within ethnic groups, which are often wrongly represented as being homogenous (Lange, p. 7).

The complexity of individual experiences linked to personal, social, cultural and economic ideologies is vast. This is exemplified in the comments of Edwina, a New Zealand born, Maori woman who grew up with her family in the Pilbara before moving to Broome:

It's not only the culture of Aboriginal people. Coming from a New Zealand background we brought our culture with us and we had cultural Maori clubs and stuff like. You have your Christmas Islanders like, all nationalities you are learning bit from everyone. And that comes out in your community, whether it is sport or the environment and how you are involved in them. You can't just be locked up (Edwina, personal communication, April 3, 1998).

This section has examined the way the women from a cross section of Broome's society responded to the formation of a group, which would both link them and proclaim their cultural identities. A common bond among the migrant women interviewed was that they arrived in Broome accompanied by their husbands/partners, or met them soon after their arrival. Socialising in the hotels, a feature of many of the other women's stories, was not mentioned in the migrant women's stories. The one exception was Claudine, who spoke of her disdain for working in the hotel industry but also her desire to meet the 'locals'. However for single women arriving in the town, the hotels provided a meeting place as well as opportunities for employment.

### ***Socialising in the Hotels***

Pubs have played a crucial part in the Anglo-European domination of Australia. They were central institutions in colonising the continent in the early nineteenth century and, through a series of laws and exclusions, they were significant in the twentieth century in the creation of an 'Australian' culture that was both racially exclusive and androcentric. Both Aboriginal people and women were prohibited to drink in them (Kirkby, 1997, p. 2).

Most of the women in this project have had some associations with the Broome hotel industry as either patrons or employees. Hotels provide an essential service to north west residents. In the early days on the frontier, hotels were quickly established and became the 'life line' for many remote localities (Hunt, 1986). Broome was no exception. The Roebuck Hotel, established in 1890, was one of several hotels built in Broome's 'heyday' around the turn of the century. It continues to be a focal point and meeting place for socialising and for business.

The drinking of alcohol as a social pastime is synonymous with life on the hot and dry north western frontier (Hunt, 1986). After World War II the hotels in Broome included the Continental Hotel, originally built in 1904 and rebuilt in 1972, the Mangrove Hotel, built in 1975 and the Governor Broome Hotel, demolished and rebuilt as the Tropicana Hotel, in 1973. By the 1970s a new generation of women across Australia considered it their unequivocal right to patronise hotels as drinkers. Pubs were the focal point for social contact and entertainment for men and women.

The hotel scene has played a major part in the social history of Broome. Over the decades, the town's hotels have continued to be a meeting place for members of Broome's diverse community and have been a major source of employment. For some of the women in this study working in the hotel industry was a new and rewarding experience; for others it was merely a means of earning an income.

When Betty arrived in 1962, the Continental Hotel (the Conti) was the place where she and her friends met and congregated. Although under age, (the legal age limit for alcohol consumption then was 21 years) she mixed and danced with people from a cross section of the Broome community. The Indigenous and non-Indigenous hospital staff, the nurses and domestics, would meet and socialise in the Continental Hotel Beer Garden. It was here that she met her Aboriginal/Filipino husband:

Well you see the Conti was the hotel. The Conti and the Roebuck. Mainly the Roebuck was people that really drank a lot. But the Conti had everything to offer. That's where I met... and all those lot because that was the centre of attraction. Everyone went down there to play table tennis and darts and the juke box and dance. You had to make your own fun in those days. And we did. We had lots of good laughs and fun and everyone sang. We had sing alongs.

It was a garden area you know. A place you could go and play pool. So people didn't know. I mean sometimes the matron would send her husband down to pimp on us to report back to her to see who you were mixing with but we were pretty well one jump ahead. We had a few Europeans [we mixed with] you know. (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

Similarly, teacher Ainslie spent some of her leisure time at the hotel and was introduced to another component of Broome's multicultural society by socialising there. She mingled with Broome's Asian men in the Continental Hotel in the late 1960s, particularly, Japanese men, but acknowledged that she did not know any Japanese women at that time.

Ainslie's description of the socialising and mixing of the patrons at the Continental Hotel suggested there were divisions amongst the hotel patrons according to age and race. "The Japanese people drank in a group. The other Asians and Aboriginal people tended to drink with those of their own age group, who were younger than the Japanese" (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

Jenny liked to go to the Continental Hotel to dance in the 1970s. She recalled her earlier experiences during Broome's multicultural festival and gatherings at the hotel and compared them to recent times:

Well we used to meet them down at the Conti and it was really nice the set up. We used to go to the beer garden. They used to have a little dance in a little round house outside there. Yeah people used to mix.

Oh we had a great time, more than what they do now at the hospital. Especially at Shinju we used to have a party just before it started. It was really great at the nurses' quarters. Really mixed yeah (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Just as the Matron had questioned Betty a decade earlier about her socialising at the hotel, (Chapter Four) Jenny also spoke of being queried by others about her intermingling. "But like people still used to question you and why you are dancing with them and whatever" (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Jenny (personal communication, June 15, 1998) explained in those early days she mixed with Indigenous and non-Indigenous nursing staff but "there was mainly all Aboriginal girls at the hospital anyway at that time [early 1970s] and there still is." The lack of training for Indigenous (Whitebeach, 1992) and migrant women, and the lack of recognition of migrant women's overseas qualifications (Rabbitt, 1995, p. 18) meant that women such as Jenny and Minna lacked employment opportunities. They were relegated to labouring jobs such as hospital domestic staff, deemed to be unskilled.

Carol was employed at the Roebuck Hotel at the end of the meatwork's season in 1973. She socialised there and at The Conti, often with other young barmaids:

We used to go to the Conti a lot and play pool and stuff like that. Because the Conti had that bar you know where the bistro and everything is now. Well that was actually like a lounge. We used to go there. Like the Roebuck, [Hotel] when I first came to town I worked there. Because I used to work there too, I used to do a lot of socialising with all the barmaids and all that sort of stuff Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the Broome hotels continued to be a meeting place and avenue for socialising for some of the women in this study. Both the Continental and Roebuck Hotels were popular meeting spots for after hour's activities.

Claudine as mentioned previously, considered working in the Roebuck Hotel in the 1990s as an opportunity "to meet the locals" (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

She described the segregation at the Roebuck Hotel where the patrons separated themselves into specific areas of the hotel. "The Aboriginal people drank in the front bar, which is commonly referred to as the 'animal bar' by those who did not patronise the hotel" (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

With the advent of motherhood, the lives of many of the women in this study completely changed. Seeking avenues of support for themselves and their families took precedence over socialising in the hotels. By the 1990s, Jenny for example, now older and a mother of three, found she was no longer interested in socialising in the hotels and did not have the same rapport with her work colleagues. She referred specifically to the lack of socialising between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff who were recruited from other parts of Australia.

But now it is different the ones that come up. Only a couple of them will talk to you now. But they would never mix with you after hours, that was never heard of. But like years ago we would say right we will meet you down here, you know. And it was great" (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

### ***Family Support***

Family support services were lacking for the majority of women relocating to Broome. In this study, it was found that the Anglo Australian women and non-English-speaking background migrant women who tended to be involved with community organisations, and used them as support networks. The majority of the women married to local Indigenous men were from Indigenous backgrounds and like the Asian women, had been brought to Broome by their husbands. They coped with motherhood primarily by themselves, even though some had the support of their partners and their new extended families.

When Alice arrived in 1971 with her infant son, she said there was no one to help her with the baby. "I did it myself. I didn't need help" (Alice, personal communication, August 10, 1998). In contrast, Carol as a working mother in the mid 1970s, relied on her own network established through her employment in child minding.

In 1976 Broome's new social worker, Frances Crawford, a university graduate from the city, arrived. She acknowledged in retrospect the parallels of lack of child minding facilities, and feminist consciousness of women in the north. "At this time I, like most other women then, did not have a highly

developed feminist consciousness" (Crawford, 1994, p. 18).

She mentioned:

Of particular note in the context of a rising feminist influence in policy considerations was the lack of local surveillance of the operation of child care facilities. In Broome this meant in particular a woman, who operated child care from her home for the children of meatworkers during the season that the meatworks was opened (Crawford, 1994, p. 259).

Kerry declined the child care assistance she was offered by her family in the 1980s and did not seek help from the broader Broome community:

I had a rough time trying to settle down. I've never left my kids with anybody. I've always had my kids and my uncle and aunty had offered to help me look after them and things like that. But I've always been independent, so when I went anywhere I've always taken my kids. And they tried to say just leave them for once. Don't make them walk around. I couldn't do that. So that was a big hard thing for me (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

As a young mother, Kerry felt the tension of responsibility. "I said no, no I can do it. I'll take them. They are my responsibility. They just tried to give me a bit of freedom but I didn't want it" (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

In the early 1980s the Infant Health Clinic was operating, offering child health services to all members of the community. However the town was without public child minding facilities and support for parents with young children.

### ***Circle House***

At this time a group of predominantly Anglo Australian women banded together and called a meeting for parents with young children at the Broome Uniting Church Hall. The purpose of the meeting, attended primarily by women, was to establish a group to support parents who did not have any extended family to assist them. Even though I had the support of my extended family, I

attended this meeting to support my friends who were not in such a fortunate position. The outcome was the formation of the Community Information Resource Centre & Learning Exchange, referred to as 'CIRCLE House'. The founding members were mainly the wives of Government workers whose initial intent was to establish a support mechanism for themselves.

At first, a house belonging to the Catholic Church was made available as a place where the women could meet and bring along their children. The 'church' house was used until the Department of Community Welfare (known as the Department of Family and Children's Services in 2003), provided their old office building to CIRCLE members. It was refurbished to cater for their needs and included limited crèche facilities in a renovated garage. There was a rule that parents had to remain on the premises while their child was in care. A large meeting room was also used for yoga and craft workshops.

In the mid 1990s, I became acting coordinator of CIRCLE and encouraged Minna, Linda and Bernadette and other migrants to use the facilities. Minna became the first non-English-speaking background migrant woman to volunteer as a committee member at CIRCLE House in the 1990s. She explained her desire to include others: "With my friend I became involved with CIRCLE House" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998). I was that friend and subsequently other Indonesian women as well as Asian and Anglo Celtic migrants began to feel welcome at the centre, and use the facilities. I recall a couple of non-English-speaking background men attending migrant meetings in the evenings but cannot recall any men attending workshops in the daytime.

### ***Day Care Facilities***

It was not until the 1980s that the women of Broome were provided with public child minding facilities. Religious organisations in Broome continued to assist the town's women. During the early 1980s, the Uniting Church and the Broome Shire Council supported the community by allowing a temporary day care service to operate from the church premises during week days. At this

time a purpose built day care centre, Chu Chuu's, was under construction, being built by the Broome Shire Council. It was officially opened in 1983.

Pat became involved in the operation of the Broome's day care centre once her daughter was born. She juggled family life, her work and community commitments:

I know that once ... was born I went on the management committee of Chu Chuu's Day Care Centre. At the next AGM I went on the management committee, 1988. I was still involved with netball at the time. I remember whenever we were fundraising people would hate to see me coming and say 'who are you raising money for this time?' Netball, Chu Chuu's. I was involved in both at the same time. But being involved with netball when ... was a baby was much easier than even now because she is at school (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

In 1989, an Aboriginal Children's Services group, called Jalygurr Guwan (children of the pearl) was formed as a support for Aboriginal families. Commencing as a playgroup, the service aimed to provide quality and culturally appropriate child care for Aboriginal children. The primary target group for care was Aboriginal children with working parents on low incomes.

Jodie was the only trained Aboriginal child care worker in the centre in 1997. As a full time worker with both her daughters in day care, Jodie was the main wage earner of the family. Her husband worked part time. She had been employed at the day care centre as an assistant previously, prior to leaving the paid workforce to have her children. The children, families and staff at the centre knew her well.

She found it to be extraordinary that young 'local' women were not taking the opportunity to be trained in child care services. Opportunities for training were available in Broome:

One thing I find strange is being from Perth, completing two years up here, graduated in Darwin and working at the child care centre. There are not many young Aboriginal girls in this profession. I know only one. There should be more 'coloured' girls from here.

I don't know what people say because I'm from down south. I'm there. They know me. I've been there for years (Jodie, personal communication, June 7, 1998).

Although, Pallas as a young mother had the support of her own family and her inlaws, she also used the support for families offered by Jalygurr Guwan. She was preparing to return to the workforce and felt secure with the facilities provided and with her daughter mixing with the others. "A lot of coloured women go there who I have known through growing up so I'm pretty much right with all the mothers" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Similar to Pallas, who said she had to grow up quickly being a mother, Bernadette considered her status as a woman in Broome changed when she became a mother:

I think it was a big milestone for a lot of people to finally accepting me as a part of the community when I had my child. There was a lot of people that thought I was just staying here for a while ...once my child came along they said, 'Oh no, she is going to stay'.

And suddenly I had people talking to me that had never spoken to me before. As if I existed suddenly. It gave me some status (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998).

This perception described by Bernadette is one to which other women in the study also alluded. The concept of differing life stages and ages is referred to as 'passages' by Sheehy (1996). Drawing on the development theory of Erik Erikson she said:

Unlike childhood stages, the stages of adult life are characterized not by physical growth, but by steps in psychological and social growth. Marriage, childbirth, first job, empty nest, are what we call marker events, the concrete happenings of our lives (Sheehy, 1996, p.15).

Further assistance was offered to the families in Broome with the appointment of the Kimberley Day Care Coordinator in the mid 1990s. This was the first remote appointment of its kind. Her task was to advise and guide families wishing to undertake registered family day care services within their

own homes. No more than four children under the age of six were permitted to be cared for in one house. Children could also be cared for after school within this scheme (Shire of Broome, 1994).

### ***Other Associations***

As they entered different stages of their lives Minna, Pat and many of the other women joined various groups and associations. They extended their involvement in the community and continued initiating services for others.

Some of the women participated in organisations associated with their own settlement and that of their children. This is portrayed in Minna's networks:

I was a member of CWA and the Isolated Children and Parent's Association. I was on the P & C [parent committee]. Those three when the kids were doing School of the Air. I was a member of air branch, West Kimberley [CWA] and I gave a speech" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

She joined the Broome Branch of the Labor Party and accompanied her European husband to the meetings. Together they formed the Kimberley Indonesian Friendship Association (KIFA) in the early 1990s:

One other thing is my husband and myself are involved in the Indonesian community and we call ourselves the Kimberley Indonesian Friendship Association. Not only are Indonesian born people in it, there is Anglo Saxon people in there, descent of Aboriginal, I should say Aboriginal. Why we formed this group its because you know like in Broome Fisheries and Coastwatch patrol our Australian water and these Indonesian their island close to Australia they still believe that's their fishing ground.

It's the place where they usually come and fish from the olden days so we want to form this group to be a, not a watch-dog or anything like that, but to help these people to see that they are not all alone in this country when they got caught. We would like to be there and support them as much as we can (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

In contrast, Pat decided to enter Broome's local political arena and was elected a Broome Shire Councillor in 1992. She was spurred on by her dissatisfaction with previous Shire dealings on sporting matters:

I was always involved and interested in local politics, in what was happening, Broome, local issues. I wasn't very happy with the support, I guess, that the Shire contributed to sporting facilities and organisations. I thought they really fell down in that area. I guess, other things I was interested in were the youth and health and aged care. I always did feel that we certainly required better health facilities here (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

To be an effective Councillor, Pat found it necessary to spend many hours on council business. This demand on her time restricted her family time and made socialising difficult due to time restraints.

I found that I didn't really socialise with my friends because I didn't have time. I actually resigned from the committee of netball. I couldn't play netball consistently only when and if I was available. So it affected my social life and sporting a great deal. It is a huge commitment. If you give it your full commitment it is very rewarding (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

The Broome community supported Pat's re-election to council for a second term when she was voted in as president in 1997. "I was elected for a three year term and then a four year term and I thought seven years would probably be enough for me. So I guess it was five years as I didn't sit that four year term out" (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Due to a change in her family circumstances, the support Pat needed to maintain her busy life was no longer available. Having to prioritise her roles of mother, full time worker and volunteer she resigned from the position of president and from the council (Bolton, 2000):

How I made that decision was that even when I was just a councillor I used to put as much time into the council, a lot of time. Not as much, but just about as much as when I was the president. So I didn't really think it was a good idea and be fair to ... for me to be still on the Council, and be at meetings and not be here on weekends too busy visiting people and people visiting me and reading, reading, reading (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Pat did not relinquish her community involvement completely. She continued as a volunteer community member of the Broome Aged and Disabled Services which commenced operations in 1991. The services offered included frail aged hostel, day care, home nursing, home help, coordinated activities, transport, respite care, meals on wheels. Pat found the work rewarding (Bolton, 2000):

It is a challenge, a huge responsibility but very very rewarding. It is something that I've always tried to work for, for Broome and I do enjoy being on that committee. I'm also on the Aged Welfare Association Committee which was originally a lobby group lobbying for a nursing home for Broome. However with the change in the Health Service and changes for aged care and nursing homes are no longer called nursing homes and now we are aiming at a facility for Broome where we can have everything under one roof.

So really the Aged Welfare Association are working with the Broome Aged and Disabled Services to further improve aged cared for Broome (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

The stories of the women in this project are a précis of their relocation and adjustment to a new lifestyle. Their individual experience of life in the community, and their need for membership of groups and associations has changed over time. As they have entered different phases of their lives the women's stories reveal that their needs for support structures have altered. Regardless of their family circumstance, for most of the women in the study the continuation of links with their origins was of major importance.

### ***Maintaining Home Links***

"Like a magnet you go and come all the time. It is like a magnet it draws you back. That's the way I go. Living here, I go and come back" (Alice, personal communication, August 10, 1998).

Some of the women have coped with their resettlement by preserving close bonds with their families and communities of their birth. Jenny and Cheryl maintained family links by taking the children home to visit their relatives.

Because at the College [Nulungu Catholic Boarding School, known as St Mary's College, in 2003] I could more or less work it in where I could have holidays with [her niece] as well and the both of us go down. That was three years of doing that for her until she left.

I try to go back every year when I can for a couple of weeks. Years ago when Mum and Dad was still with us I used to go down and spend three months with them out bush (Jenny, personal communication June 15, 1998).

I go back every few years. I took the kids over for a holiday when they were smaller, went over by bus twice. We did that trip to show them a bit of country you know (Cheryl, personal communication, April 27, 1998).

For both Kerry and Arlene, family commitments drew them home rather than a desire to be away from Broome. "Once every three years. The latest now has been five years. We go for funerals, but that is only for a short while. I don't want to spend too long in Carnarvon" (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998):

I never got homesick because I was used to being away and plus Innisfail wasn't my home you know. That's where I was working and that's where I had my kids. Mackay was my home. But I never felt homesick for there because I ran away from there.

I used to go over about once a year cos [sic] we had an airfare and all that from the hospital and we could go home and I would just spend two weeks and go see my parents or Richard's family (Arlene, personal communication, March 6, 1998).

Pat, Sue, Betty and Ainslie were also provided with annual airfares to Perth as part of their workplace agreements. This afforded them, as Western Australian residents, the opportunity to visit family and friends on a regular basis.

The situation was different for the migrant women from non-English-speaking backgrounds because the combined factors of cost and distance to Europe and Asia prevented them from regularly returning home. "It's not so much the speaking French I crave, it is relating to the same culture" (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998):

I don't miss the Philippines because I have my family with me. I adapted very quick anyway. I went back there once and that was three years ago. And when I go back there something different again, I miss Australia. I'm not fit with them anymore. I am stranger to them because I am used to the life in Australia. In the Philippines too it is the American way of life and things like that. I notice that they are modernised now, very Western way of living (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

"In twenty years I been four [times, home to Indonesia]. I am happy and content here. I use all my energy in this land and I could call it home now and I can't see myself leaving town" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

### ***Conclusion***

The stories of the women in this project are a précis of their relocation and adjustment to a new lifestyle. All of the women experienced a settling in period where they adapted and adjusted to their new environment. Whether Australia born, Indigenous, non-Indigenous, or international migrants relocating to the north west, all came with a wealth of experience reflecting their backgrounds. Their individual knowledge and skills have enriched the Broome community in many ways. Traditions, political policies and social attitudes influenced the way the women were able to conduct themselves and in some instances with whom they could associate. Selected recollections from the women's stories have been used to portray their need for different support structures.

This chapter has explored the women's sense of 'belonging' to the Broome community and their 'identity' within that town. All spoke of their need to be introduced to Broome culture. As newcomers through their introductions to other residents, and being involved in groups and associations they learnt more about Broome and its people.

The focus of this chapter has been the women's involvement in organisations which influenced and assisted their settlement in the Broome community. They sought social interaction with 'like minded' people who

shared similar interests. Many of the women, arriving as young, single women socialised in the Broome hotels with the colleagues and their associates. Some married women sought companionship through the CWA and family support services. Women of all ages spoke of the integral role that sport had played in broadening their social networks. Other women such as Pat and Minna became instrumental in forming a community association that not only met their needs but fulfilled the needs of others.

Yet, as they have entered different phases of their lives the women's stories reveal that their needs for support structures have altered. Minna, Pat and many of the other women extended their involvement in the community and continued initiating services for the community. The type of groups they were interested in and committed to depended on their life stage and age, and the needs of their families. Their individual experience of life in the community, and their need for membership of groups and associations has changed over time. The women themselves have not only observed changes to the Broome community but are an integral, contributing factor to those changes.

Regardless of their family circumstance, and their social networks around town, for most of the women in the study the continuation of links with their origins was of major importance. Many of the women lamented that Broome 'was no longer how it used to be'. This notion is linked to the individual needs of each woman which changed, as they reached different periods of their lives. The women's stories illustrate that they themselves have contributed and been involved in many of the changes that have transformed the town. They have formed sporting groups and established organisations to assist each other.

Central to this analysis of a group of women's relocation to north western Australia is their contribution to its development. In particular, the women's stories bring recognition to their influence upon these changes. It emphasises their place within the context of Broome's social milieu and how they as 'outsiders' were assimilated and became 'insiders' over time. The women's views of Broome, the impact of development and how it has affected them personally is scrutinised in the next chapter, 'Changing Times'.

## **Chapter Six: Changing times...**

### ***Introduction***

"Broome...it creeps up on you and it takes over. It's lost a lot of its charm but then that comes with development. By charm I mean things like jump in your car and go to Cape Leveque" (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

"But I think development always has a scary aspect. We like things to stay as they are and stay beautiful. And when it develops you think things are going to get out of control. I just hope the town can continue to develop in a smart way" (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998).

The women's stories revealed changes in their circumstances and personal requirements from their early days of settlement in Broome through their transition over time to the north west community. These adjustments coupled with a constantly changing community environment have affected their lifestyles in Broome.

This chapter will explore the women's views on the changing nature of the Broome community and environment. Some of the women considered the changes to be inevitable, whereas others experienced a discontent that grew over the years. Many of them compared their first impressions and experiences of Broome and reflected upon them with the benefit of hindsight, at the time of the interview.

The impact of change on the women's lives as residents of the Broome community is examined. All of the women in this study were asked questions about the impact of 'change' and 'development' upon their lives in Broome. The major issues the women raised were changes in relation to the growing population and diversity of new people arriving, the availability of facilities and services, and employment and training opportunities.

Some referred to their uncertainty about their future in Broome and anticipated a change of lifestyle. When interviewed in 1998, several women indicated to me that they were planing to leave Broome. They anticipated the move to be in the near future or had plans to leave at a later stage of their life or when their children were older.

Since that time some of these women have left Broome and resettled elsewhere. Comments from their stories about their lives in Broome and the effect of change for them personally will also be analysed. Synonymous with the changes the women have experienced is the impact and nature of development to the town's infrastructure.

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**Table 7: The Women's Circumstances in 1998**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Length of Stay</b>	<b>Family In 1998</b>	<b>Age In 1998</b>	<b>Occupation In 1998</b>
Rose	42	single	70+	nun
Betty	35	husband mother of 3 & grandchildren	55+	hospital housekeeper
Ainslie	31	husband mother of 2	60	public servant
Kristine	30	widow mother of 3	55+	home duties
Jenny	28	husband mother of 3	47	public servant
Merle	28	widow mother of 8 & grandchildren	66	station woman
Alice	27	widow mother of 1 & grandchildren	68	home duties
Carol	25	husband mother of 3	45	small business owner
Pat	24	mother of 1	45	public servant
Bami	21	mother of 3	38	small business owner
Minna	20	husband mother of 2	47	public servant
Chelsea	16	single	25	office duties

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**Table 7 cont.: The Women's Circumstances in 1998**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Length of Stay</b>	<b>Family in 1998</b>	<b>Age in 1998</b>	<b>Occupation in 1998</b>
Kerry	15	husband mother of 6	30	student
Linda	14	husband mother of 2	68	home duties
Arlene	13	husband mother of 3	46	nurse
Pallas	13	mother of 1	22	home duties
Kazue	10	husband mother of 1	38	pearl technician
Cheryl	10	husband mother of 3	39	community worker
Sue	9	husband mother of 1	36	social worker
Jodie	8	husband mother of 2	30	childcare worker
Claudine	8	husband	42	small business owner
Bernadette	6	husband mother of 1	33	speech therapist
Edwina	4	husband mother to be	34	professional assistant
Karima	1	partner	24	light duties

Development is a problematic term, used in a variety of contexts to mean different things. To some 'development' is progress and inevitable, to others it is change and differences. "In the Australian context [development] invariably refers to a process whereby the material well-being of a population (national, state, regional community) is improved" (Altman, 1988, p. 8). It implies change and progress which have an amalgam of meanings based on individual perceptions.

The topic of 'change' and 'developmental changes' to the town of Broome is a complex one. Over the years bodies such as the State Government and the Broome Shire Council have undertaken numerous studies to ascertain and plan the changing direction of Broome (Broome Study, 1989). These secondary sources are a useful reference for understanding the transformation of Broome into a tourist destination and one of Australia's fastest growing country towns (Salt, 2001, p.151).

In order to manage the 'wealth of material' available on Broome's development and to make decisions on which particular aspects of development are referred to, I have taken my lead from the women stories. Therefore an overview of Broome's unprecedented development is given. Particular emphasis on developmental changes in the 1980s and 1990s is made.

### ***On the Road of Change***

It is just synthetic or something. A lot of the changes sadden me I suppose. Alcohol and drugs and all those prevalent problems that are really affecting the lives of so many people. About Broome in the sense that it is becoming 'glossy' or something. Some of the reality of life seems to be smothered by this glossy look that it is trying to take on (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Western Australia has been considered a frontier state, in a peripheral position in a national and international context (Harman, 1982, p.167). The road across the Nullabour Plain connecting Western Australia to the eastern states was only bitumenised in 1976. Five years later after years of lobbying by local and state Government authorities the road between Port Hedland and

Broome was sealed with Federal Government funding. The 'bitumen' was a significant milestone in Kimberley development.

All Western Australian Governments were keen to undertake development in the north west but were hindered by the lack of essential services such as a reliable water supply, communication links, roads, transport and community infrastructure (Layman 1982, p. 241). Layman (p. 258) claims little change eventuated in Western Australia until the 1960s resources boom in the north of the State. From then, the Government began to initiate and contribute to new developments.

The notion of 'opening up' the Western Australian frontier and 'civilising the north' had long been on the agenda of progressive Western Australian Governments (Hudson 1989, p. 179). The views of the WA Minister for the North West, the Hon. C. W. Court were reported in the media:

In today's international climate, the North of Australia is both dangerously rich and dangerously empty. We in Western Australia are probably more conscious of the need for early Northern development than most other parts of Australia. We in the Western Third of the Continent, with an Indian Ocean outlook and with South East Asia as our nearest neighbour, can see clearly what can and must be done (*The News*, August 7, 1963, n.p).

In his chapter on *Ideology and mineral development in WA 1960-1980*, Harman (1982, p.169) refers to Western Australia as having maintained "a strong sense of a frontier mentality, which places a high premium on taming harsh, unsettled northern environments". The view of the north as a 'wild and uncivilised frontier' revived imperial ideology that the frontier was an available open expanse of land. This was despite other social objectives and interests of local labour, Indigenous rights and the environment.

'Colonial' type thinking influenced the 'neo-liberal' approach, which justifies large scale projects, technology and a corporate partnership between state and capital. Local entrepreneurship was backed by transnational capital. The local Indigenous people were rendered invisible and irrelevant. They were

not given respect and acknowledgment as the traditional landowners. The clash between the Indigenous people of Nookembah and the mining giant, Conzinc Riotinto Australia, in 1980, highlighted nationally and internationally that the principle of equality does not inform all aspects of development ideology. "Underlying the Aboriginal confrontation with resource development is a clash of cultures as much as economic power. Social considerations have been sacrificed in the interests of development" (Harman 1982, p. 188).

Capital invested in the Kimberley led to the upgrading of services and extensive infrastructure. On a national level populating such an isolated area in the north was perceived to be crucial to the defence of vulnerable borders. At a Special Shire Meeting with the Minister for Lands Mr J.J. Laurance (March 10, 1982, p. 337), it was reported: "The Government wants Broome to develop and the land was previously a restricting problem. It does not wish to have a similar situation arise again and it is hoped that some private developer would help alleviate the problem".

The town of Broome, dubbed 'Port of Pearls' also became known as the 'Gateway to the Kimberley'. Lord McAlpine and other investors began intensive building programs as Broome began to be marketed as a tourist destination. The ramifications of their investments in Broome are outlined in the following section.

### ***The McAlpine Era***

"Broome was a neglected spot with only a dirt road into and the same dirt road out of town" (McAlpine, 1997, p. 138).

As mentioned in Chapter One, the 1980s was a period of unprecedented change for the Kimberley region. The township of Broome was transformed as a new influx of overseas dollars and investors set the town on a path of modernisation and development.

These were the fledgling days of the Kimberley tourist industry and the State Government, along with the Shire of Broome, welcomed private investment in the region. Lord McAlpine developed his world famous zoo, The Pearl Coast Zoo, including a ten-acre lake on an area of approximately 150 acres of bushland within close proximity to Cable Beach. The zoo and its animals became a major tourist attraction along with Malcolm Douglas' Crocodile Farm.

This development began in the early 1980s when the majority of the old Broome buildings reminiscent of the heydays of the pearling industry had either been destroyed by white ants, demolished or were in a bad state of repair. The old wooden pearling master's houses were elevated and had been built on stumps to catch the cool breeze. The large homesteads, corrugated iron buildings with long wide verandahs, featuring latticework, were dirty and dusty and in the majority of cases, in a state of disrepair. Prior to the 1980s, it was commonplace for developers to demolish, rather than restore these historic old buildings, which depicted an architectural design unique to Broome.

Unable to afford, or not interested in restoring these buildings, some private developers as well as the 'The Crown' (The Government) made deals with McAlpine who relocated the buildings to his own land. Thus, some pearling master's homes were restored after being moved from their original site.

McAlpine's aspiration was to turn Broome into a major tourist resort. He planned development that would lure thousands of visitors to his zoo, his picture gardens and Broome's first 'club med' style accommodation. "My every move, my every investment was dominated by the desire to develop a tired old town into a modern tourist resort without destroying the soul of the place" (McAlpine, 1997, p. 141).

At this time, in the early 1980s the town was small and relatively unchanged. Linda from the Philippines spoke of the town's changes and referred to the development as 'progress' even though she lamented the loss of native flora. "We lived in Guy St, still very bushy. The population I think was only about 4,000 and now it is about 11,000. Big difference, a lot of progress since we arrived here. We arrived in early May 1984" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

By the mid 1980s business was flourishing in Broome and the influx of people taking up investment opportunities created employment prospects for job seekers. This accounted for the increasing estimated resident population base. The building industry was flourishing and there was a demand for land to be released for sale. The arrival of a greater number of people such as builders and tradespeople, tourists and tourist operators put pressure on the existing services and indicated to the need for new facilities.

When Ainslie returned to Broome in the mid 1980s with her husband and two children, she explained her life was different. Her primary focus was to ensure her children adjusted to their new lifestyle. She noticed changes and commented on how the expansion of the town affected the pace of life in the community. "It was the fact that you had to drive everywhere and people rushing up behind you at 100 mile an hour in their car. I noticed things" (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

She observed that dress codes had become more up market and fashionable and recognised new groups of people networking in new ways. "People really dressed up a lot more and very much the social scene. The Lady Lionesses, not them so much but that sort of thing" (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

The advent of an increasing number of investment opportunities being taken up created fears amongst long-term residents of the Kimberley that McAlpine's 'Pearl Coast' would become another Queensland 'Gold Coast'.

Cheryl summed up her concerns about the impact of the development that was catering for the needs of tourists and the tourist industry rather than the local community:

I think it is growing too fast. I wouldn't like to see Broome get like the Gold Coast or anything with high rises. I think slowly it is getting like that with all the back packers we are getting now. They seem to be catering for the tourists, you know (Cheryl personal communication, April 24, 1998).

After being away from Broome for a period of five years Kerry was surprised with the town's transformation when she returned in 1987. "Oh the first thing that I noticed was the big difference. Broome grew and I just couldn't believe how fast it grew. And I think it was shell shock" (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

Despite the rapid growth in the town's infrastructure, Kerry still felt a familiarity with the town by knowing where to locate people. "Even though the streets had got bigger and there was more housing, I still knew where people lived. So that difference from 1982 to 1987, the town just grew enormously. Like over night. I couldn't believe it" (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

Cheryl reflected upon the Broome of the late 1980s and compared the town with Derby from where she had relocated:

The town was really starting to go ahead. You know there was more developments happening. More people. It was starting to grow whereas Derby was more or less at a standstill, you know. The difference I think would be is that people moved here because they wanted to and in Derby a lot of the people apart from the locals were transferred there for work reasons you know. They only stayed a short time and we had a pretty large transient population I think. Made up of nurses and Government workers and such (Cheryl personal communication, April 24, 1998).

The National pilot's strike of 1989 crippled the Kimberley and in particular the town of Broome. Traditionally, business investors had to rely on the prosperous 'dry season' to carry them through the often unprofitable 'wet

season'. Thousands of visitors were expected that year and did not arrive; the town's economy was depressed. Businesses failed and land prices dropped temporarily, so that investment capital was either lost or withdrawn:

Yes it was it really affected us because we had a small business and the tourists stopped coming. It was the one time I've felt really isolated living in Broome. I missed fresh food and newspapers the most. Our interest repayments on our business were almost 22% at the time of the strike, which made survival impossible. A lot of other businesses struggled as well (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

### ***Into the 1990s***

When I moved to Broome it was the recession of the first boom. 1990 we had recession all year. Money counts. So what I found when I came to Broome was that there was pay offs for that. People had gone bust; people were hurting (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

Broome entered the 1990s in a depressed state. McAlpine closed his zoo, his pearl harvest did not reach expected yields, and he sold the Cable Beach Club and the majority of his investment interests in the town. His private jet was no longer sighted at the Broome airport and his residence in Broome, was transformed into 'boutique accommodation' for the upmarket tourist.

After a decade of massive economic growth the slump of the 1990s was a huge blow to the community. At this point the town's economy had changed dramatically but investor optimism driven by the tourist industry was soon recovered. The women's observations and how they responded to the changes is discussed in the following section.

### ***Talking about Development***

"When I first came to town do you remember all the mung beans that lived in the sand dunes? There are none of them any more are there. It has changed like that. It is not the little hippy town that it used to be (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

"As long as they leave the ocean alone, I'm fine with it. As long as they don't start building anywhere along the dunes and stuff" (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

As the population of Broome has continued to steadily grow, so too has the demand for services and facilities. This increased need has led to expansion in the building industry, shops and traffic. Referring to consequences of development in the 1990s, Alice (personal communication, August 10, 1998) referred to the priorities of 'new comers' taking precedence over 'local' customs and past times:

There's no space at all left. That's where the Aboriginal people used to sit down there, daytime on the beach and that. Today you hardly see them because everything is knocked down and everything is built up there and there is no place for them to sit down.

Coming from densely populated Europe, Bernadette made some pertinent observations about Broome's development:

It is expanding all the time. They are building new things. You can't drive twice through the same street without seeing a new building there. Initially I was very repelled by it. Especially again having come from Europe. It is so old. It's built. Whatever you are going to add to it, it is not going to change the scenery very much. So to come here and see it just mushroom like that, I found it a bit scary. (Bernadette, personal communication, May 1, 1998).

Conversely for Pallas, (personal communication, June 2, 1998), a younger person, the availability of goods and services brought about with the growth of Broome changed her lifestyle positively:

I like it. I really do only because there is more things to do I suppose. Yeah and plus I have lots of relatives that come over and I can show them this and that and what I've done and where I have grown up. They always hear about this place and the beaches and everything.

Former Broome Shire President Pat (personal communication, March 19, 1998) considered the changes she had witnessed in Broome over two decades with a particular emphasis on race relations and lifestyle in general:

I guess a lot of the changes are better for the environment. But a lot aren't. I think a lot of the changes are restricting the local people from what they could do in the past more freely.

Over the years, I can't really judge or say that Native Title has anything to do with it or whether it is the changes to Broome and the influx in the population.

Now the population has increased so much, I find that the relations between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people are not as harmonious as they used to be. I guess that has a lot to do with Broome's growth. And now you don't know everybody like you used to know everybody. So that may have something to do with it.

An interim agreement was signed between the Rubibi Working Group representing local Indigenous people and the Shire of Broome in 1997. This historic agreement of respect acknowledged Indigenous people as the original inhabitants of the Broome region. Their right to speak for their country according to customs laws and traditions was formally accepted. The parties made a commitment to work together to advance Indigenous interests and those of the whole community in a harmonious way. Thus communication was established between the traditional owners and the Broome Shire Council as development continued to take place in Broome.

By the mid 1990s Broome was one of Western Australia's top tourist destinations. The increasing demand for goods and services necessitated the building of larger modern shopping facilities.

### ***Shopping***

Lifestyle changed for many in Broome with the opening of two new major air-conditioned shopping centres in the early 1990s. Chinatown was expanded to accommodate a new post office and the Paspaley Shopping Centre. An area within close proximity to the airport was also developed as the Boulevard

Shopping Centre. This led to competition between the major food chain stores and the inevitable closing of two smaller supermarkets, Streeter & Male in Chinatown and Farmers at the Seaview Shopping Centre. However, Fong's Store, another small locally owned Asian supermarket prospered being the only remaining supermarket at that end of town servicing mainly the local resident population and long-term residents living within walking distance.

Although all of the women agreed the development of modern shopping facilities had changed their lifestyle, as goods were easy to access, not all their comments were positive. Both Ainslie and Merle made mention of earlier days when the town was much smaller and how they enjoyed socialising in the local stores. They reflected on this intermingling of people and lamented the loss of such social interactions:

I think because I expected to slip back into that lifestyle that I had before. Of course most of those people had gone and things had changed. I liked to go to Streeters No 2 and have a little chat or Fong's in those days to have a chat to the people and of course that had all gone.

And it was like different group of people lived here. You know the balance had changed there were so many white people here. Not that there is, but with different aspirations I suppose. Even different things that they wanted in life. We had lost that casual thing that I really liked about it (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

Food supplies were transported from Perth and vigilant shoppers monitored the arrival of the twice weekly trucks closely in the 1980s and early 1990s. Foodstuffs were sold quickly as there was a high demand for fresh fruit and vegetables. Demand exceeded supply and a shopping expedition on the wrong day of the week could lead to disappointment.

But because I now don't go to Streeters to shop I don't meet many people of our varied population, as I would have. You don't, you see, you are spread out. Once I'd go down and I would go shopping once a week and we'd all get together and have a cackle on the street and all that sort of thing. [Named local women of mixed racial background] (Merle, personal communication, June 20 1998).

This building of new facilities heralded the beginning of a new era of development that was welcomed by many women and men of Broome. Some of the women who had grown up in the city and were accustomed to more facilities and services. Cheryl, originally from Brisbane, commented: "Well what I would like to see is cheaper costs for food and things and that's what I mainly like about it. Just growing up in the city you know you take a lot of things for granted. Whereas in the country town it is a different sort of ball game, I guess" (Cheryl, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

European overseas migrants Claudine and Bernadette considered aspects of Broome's development as positive as it made living in Broome less demanding for them.

The building side has changed and grown something unreal and that's what hits you when you go away and come back. In some ways it is easier to live here than what it was a few years ago. Just by being able to shop a bit cheaper and more outlets etc (Claudine personal communication, May 19, 1998).

I think that there are some good aspects though, that come through that which are um more people so more possibility of meeting new people and the town has more shops and more choice. Maybe a bit of competition between the shops is good to get them to be a bit less arrogant (Bernadette, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

The availability of a wider range of consumer items made life easier for women like Jenny who had previously relied upon relatives and friends to send items to them previously:

I don't know. They need changes in this town. Like years ago I used to go down to Carnarvon for clothing and things like that. I used to ask my sister to send a lot of stuff up because of the prices and things like that. Because clothing here was so expensive.

I've got to know the ones that work in the shop and things like that. They'd say, "Hullo and how are you?" It is totally different to what it was years ago, you know.

It is good in a way, to have these shops. It is not a big shock when you take your kids down to Perth (Jenny, personal communication, June 15, 1998).

Being able to buy a broader range of consumer items in Broome made life easier for the Broome community as a whole and in particular the women in this study. A regular supply of goods was now available. Conversely, the choice and size of the new shopping centres dispersed the 'local' community who had shopped at the same smaller supermarkets.

### ***Residential Subdivisions***

"There's a lot of people that came here to make their home here. They came from everywhere. There's people that come here and build houses, sell it and away they go" (Alice personal communication, August 10, 1998).

By the mid 1980s a new residential area known as Cable Beach was in the early stages of development. Land was released in stages for private development and Homeswest housing. Broome's catholic primary school, St Mary's School (established in 1907) relocated from 'old' Broome to the new area. A second Government primary school, Cable Beach School was opened in 1991. A Christian church was built in the area, and a modern one stop service station was opened. As residential mail delivery was still not available in Broome, the post office built a small complex of private post boxes for residents and the Cable Beach postcode was introduced.

The closing of the Broome Meatworks, in 1994 ended an era in Broome. As a major industry it had provided employment for 'locals' and seasonal workers and had boosted the town's economy. The growing tourism sector replaced it as the dominant industry and has subsequently influenced all aspects of Broome's culture. At the end of 1995 it was recommended to Council that the old meatworks site be rezoned to 'prestigious resort development', encouraging garden and pool settings fronting Roebuck Bay. Resort development did not take place. The area is a now prestigious residential precinct.

The irony was the meatworks end of town was not considered to be a prestigious development area by 'locals' and long-term residents, despite its proximity to and views of Roebuck Bay and Town Beach. This was due to the stench of the slaughtered cattle at the meat works. Furthermore, the foreshore adjacent the old meatworks site is culturally and historically significant to some local Broome groups and families. Some Indigenous people had lived in camps on this foreshore in the past. This section of the foreshore remains a popular spot for picnics and fishing, cooking seafood and overnight camping. "These people are often members of the lower socio-economic groupings, do not own automobiles to enable them to travel to other locations, and often have to walk to the area as their only means of getting there" (Dureau, 1995).

In this period of spiralling land prices with an increasing demand for residential land stage one of the Roebuck Estate was opened in 1997. A modern marketing campaign was undertaken to attract families to the area. The opportunity to buy land in Broome was quickly taken up and the Roebuck Estate Primary School was opened in 1999 and a small supermarket in 2001.

However, the prospect of Broome, the small town changing and developing, left Chelsea uneasy. She was apprehensive at the pace of development.

I get worried about it because I don't want it to become a big town. But when they do things like the Boulevard and all that is still compact enough. It's not like they've built this huge shopping centre way out of town. You know what I mean. I've started to think holy hell, it is big with this new Roebuck Estate and everything. It is moving out and taking up more space. Whereas before they were putting things in the existing space. I don't want it to get big. I like it small (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

Many local residents live in Housing Commission homes in the older back streets, colloquially known as the Bronx and the newer area referred to as 'over Cable Beach side'. Broome continues to change at a rapid rate as building applications continue to be lodged and approved. For some long-term residents their Broome took on a totally new 'face' with the opening of the fast food chain

McDonalds in February 2003.

### ***External Influences***

- . It is different now, because Broome is expanding so fast. How do you say it? There is more crime these days because there is more demand in the lifestyle I suppose, more people and influence from outside, I don't know (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

Deliberation on the impact of the tourist industry upon local residents was a theme of Hudson's (1989) study. She questioned who really benefited from development. Pointing out that while some managed to take advantage of new opportunities, others remained disadvantaged by the high cost of living in Broome compared to other parts of the State. Hudson's study was conducted prior to the opening of and competition between supermarket chains. However regional 'basket of food' surveys conducted in the 1990s indicated the cost of living was high in Broome and the Kimberley (<http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/rpi/index.asp>). Despite this, for long-term residents prices were better than what they had previously paid for goods in Broome.

Working in the community sector, Cheryl had first hand experience, on a daily basis, of the problems facing some Broome residents on the 'lower' end of the social scale. She explained the dire need for community housing, particularly for the homeless youth. She considered the focus on developing tourist accommodation to be at the expense of the local residents in need of homes:

There is so much accommodation getting up and yet you know there is problems in the town with overcrowding in houses and there is a lot of homeless people out there. We really need a youth hostel. We really need somewhere for single mothers too and the low income families because they just seem to be getting left out.

With my work... I find that there is a lot of homeless people and we just haven't got the resources. That's one area that is really lacking in Broome. And the Aboriginal hostel [Gularabulu] is not up to scratch. They haven't even got a telephone. That's Gularabulu (Cheryl, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

During the interviews some of the women reflected on their perceptions of Broome. Their reflections indicated their maturity as older members of the community with vast lived experiences. They referred to their sense of loss of the 'close-knit' feeling of the small community they originally knew which disappeared.

I also think too, that lifestyle has changed a lot. I don't think it is just Broome, but everywhere everybody is so busy. And you don't visit your friends like you used to. We've lost that. I don't think it is just Broome, it is lifestyle today. Where everybody seems to be a lot busier than they used to be (Pat, personal communication, March 19, 1998).

This perception was widespread enough for the community to consider strategies to maintain a sense of Broome as belonging to the 'locals' and not just to investors and tourists.

In 1998, the annual Shinju Matsuri Festival was revitalised. Each year, as the town continued to grow it had become more and more difficult to gain volunteers to create the festival. Consequently a group of 'local' community members organised a festival reminiscent of earlier days. It was announced that the next three festivals would be dedicated to three Asian groups, the Japanese, Chinese and Malay communities central to the beginnings and ethos of the festival (Shinju Update June 1998, n.p.). The Shinju Matsuri Festival has maintained its status as a significant state and national Australian Festival.

While the composition and pattern of residency was affected by the rapid influx of entrepreneurs and tourists into Broome so too was the physical shaping of the traditional sights within the town. The response of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to the locations selected for development is outlined in the following section.

### ***Employment and Training Opportunities***

"It doesn't worry me changes and progress because it gives opportunity to the young people, it is a part of life" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

In the 1990s, it was imperative that employment and training opportunities were made available in the Broome area as the town continued to attract more residents. The main industries supporting the economy of Broome were tourism, pearling, construction, Government service delivery, the mining and petroleum industries, horticulture and agriculture (Shire of Broome, 1997).

I feel the development of Broome had to happen because the pearling industry died. Meatworks had gone. So really there is nothing else that is keeping Broome alive except tourism. Therefore you are going to rely on tourism you have to develop. You know you have to have places for them to stay and you have to have things for them to do. That's the way it is (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

The expansion of the tourism industry created new types of employment. In particular, the high demand for workers in the hospitality industry necessitated the design and provision of training programmes so that local residents could acquire skills in this area. In addition, skilled workers travelled to Broome during the tourist season seeking employment within the industry. Previously it was not uncommon for hospitality industry workers to be flown to the remote north west from Perth, at the company's expense, as an incentive to attract them to the remote areas.

I think it is good for people because they have got to have employment. You can't leave people with nothing to do. They must work. I think it should be even more.

I can't see the disadvantages [of development]. The school has certainly come up. We have now got a university.

It can be very traumatic for these young ones going away to school. Very. I think that the benefits outweigh the negatives (Merle, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Pallas certainly held a different view to Merle in regard to the education offered to her at the Broome District High in the early 1990s. By the time she reached year 12 the number of students in her class were minimal. There was little incentive for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to remain at school and complete their final year. She spoke of her class mates dropping out and disadvantaging the others due to the dwindling student numbers. Students had to complete subjects by distance education and class sizes were small.

There was about 20-28, something like that. But it slowly went down because a lot of the kids would drop out. They were either finding jobs or weren't interested in school anymore. It was sad because it disadvantaged us because you had to have a certain amount of people in the class. We were limited in our education for the things that we wanted to do (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Two universities opened campuses in Broome in 1996: Edith Cowan University's (ECU) School of Australian Indigenous Studies, and The Notre Dame University (NDU). In both universities the majority of students were studying education and business. Opportunities to receive a university education in a regional area have been taken up by more women than men in Broome. This opportunity was significant as for many the relocation to the city to study was not an option (Rabbitt, 1999).

Kerry, resigned from her position as teaching assistant at St Mary's Primary School and undertook full time studies in the four year Bachelor of Education at ECU Broome Regional Centre. "Then when Edith Cowan opened up here I thought that's it my dream, I wanted to become something (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

Barni, who had taught her children School of the Air before relocating to Broome said:

I thought it was great finally had access to education, I saw that the progress of Broome was making resources far, more available. Yeah there is pay offs in the loss of colloquial little town, where you knew everyone and people were safe supposedly. Yeah pay offs (Barni, personal communication, June 3, 1998).

Mature women returning to study at educational institutions with the aim of re entering the workforce is a worldwide trend (Sheehy, 1996).

While Kerry and Barni's educational needs were being fulfilled in Broome through a regional education programme, Sue spoke of the absence of security for Government workers in a place like Broome. She explained that the 'system' did not encourage permanent residency for Government workers wanting job security, professional development and promotion.

A lot of the time it is the way people are employed ie on temporary contracts. Often now, Government workers are employed under certified agreements and their contracts may be from as little as 3 months. Although contracts are usually renewed, the lack of security means that staff will usually seek other permanent work to ensure that they have ongoing employment.

There's also limited opportunities for workers to rise up the corporate ladder in an area like Broome. Some people simply come to work in areas like Broome as they see it as a way of advancing their careers. So once this is achieved they move on. Supervision and other work supports are fairly limited (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

This view of the change in work conditions and incentives for government employees challenges the traditional paradigm of conservative, stable employment formerly attributed to Government positions. While this is a nation wide trend, Sue's comments also illustrate a distinction made for those in country postings. It is a perception reinforced by Ross (1989) who suggested that even within the same employment system there is a difference between country and city employment. "For any of us that have worked in remote and rural areas there are obvious differences which come to mind between ourselves and our urban counterparts in the major cities" (Ross, p 1).

Ross (1989, p. 1) further accentuated the point of disparity within regional locations by commenting "there are also major differences between ourselves and colleagues who also live in what they consider to be 'remote' areas". This is applicable to the Kimberley region where there are distinctions between towns, communities and outstations and the services, facilities and opportunities.

The quality of life one is able to lead and expects in the Kimberley is dependent upon one's physical location. The women's stories have portrayed their candid opinions.

### ***Quality of Life***

"I am happy and content here. I use all my energy in this land and I could call it home now and I can't see myself leaving town" (Minna, personal communication, March 29, 1998).

The women's stories reveal that their quality of life has changed over time. As they have passed through different stages of their lives their needs and those of their families have altered (Belenky, 1997). These changing circumstances have affected each woman. Some arrived as young women, without children whereas others relocated with their families. Their reasons for staying, just as their reasons for arriving and leaving are many and varied.

Some of the women recalled former times in Broome to explain how the rapid changes had affected them personally. They recalled that in earlier days they felt secure and accepted within the community, when it was smaller and social interaction with the long-term residents was at a higher level.

You know people. If you don't know their faces you know what family they come from and where they come from. You know if they are from La Grange or out there from Balgo or where they come from. You either know their aunt or their uncle or their brothers or cousins (Merle, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Ainslie compared the Broome of the late 1960s to the modern town of the 1990s. She commented on the diversity of the town's people and their membership of specific groups. She alluded to a class-consciousness that created divisions within the community and compared this subtle separation of people to the 1960s.

It is not classes or segregation like the old days but still a little bit, little groups you know of course there was the segregation a lot. There was only like the whites and the coloureds, and, you know, the Aboriginals. It was pretty distinct but there wasn't that little group of... .

I suppose they are wealthy people now or people that are entrepreneurial type people, you know the sort that I mean. There wasn't that type of people previously. I guess, as a town gets bigger you get those sort of people in (Ainslie, personal communication, May 2, 1998).

Sue also spoke of the segregation of groups within the Broome community in the 1990s:

There are different groups of people in town. There are some people that only frequent certain areas and venues in town and not others and vice versa. There's a fair sized group of people that have moved to town over the last few years that are fairly well off, that maybe mix with each other or other affluent community members but they don't mix with people from other cultural backgrounds such as local Aboriginal people.

By the same token there's local people that don't mix with newcomers. It's almost like you're awarded status according to the length of time you've spent in town.

There's different cultural backgrounds and whilst some people mix with others from backgrounds different to their own, there's still particular groups which have formed and their members are from one cultural group or another (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Jenny's attitude was that times had changed in Broome and implied that as the town grew bigger it was easier to keep to oneself rather than mix with newly arrived residents. "I think it has changed. I don't know why. Like if you are Aboriginal you keep to yourself" (Jenny, personal communication, June 23, 1998).

Linda's comments on racial divisions within the town of Broome inferred that she personally had not experienced racism in Broome. Racism belonged to the past and was not a part of her day-to-day life; it was not a part of her world. "I heard that they say it was racist; the white ones didn't want to mix with the other races. But now everything is changed. The new generation is changing and the old people is already dying and things like that. I think the racist is dying too" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Baldassar, (2000, p. 17) suggested a number of factors such as class, gender, age and regional background have influenced the experiences of migrants to Australia. Motivation and personal goals as well as time of arrival are further significant influential factors she advocated need to be understood in relation to the migratory experience. These factors are relevant to the migratory experiences of the women in this project both English speaking and non-English speaking. Linda like Kerry relocated to Broome from Carnarvon and their impressions of Broome are based on a comparison of the past experiences. "Carnarvon it is different. The people are more friendly. In Carnarvon they are a little bit cliquy but I heard from the old people before that, that Broome is cliquy" (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Linda's comments evoke notions of the 'us and them' syndrome intrinsic to multicultural ideology (Bottomley, 1991, p. 38). This outlook is central to this study where the concept of 'insider' and 'outsider' status within the Broome community has been examined. Baldassar (2001, p. 29) purports, "under the current policy of multiculturalism in Australia, the 'ethnic group' is constructed as 'other', as 'outside' what it is to be mainstream Australian".

### ***Friendships***

The fluctuations in population brought about by the seasons have always affected the long-term residents of Broome. Visitors bring with them their broad range of experiences and as the population swells during the tourist season, one has the illusion of living in a much bigger town. In addition, the coming and going of relatives and friends, old and new, is an aspect of Broome lifestyle to which long-term residents become accustomed:

Maintaining friends is not always so easy as many people are transient and they move on. I'm probably a little sceptical about making new friendships. I become reticent because many people only come for short periods of time. Others come and go so it's nice when people return (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Sue also compared the relative ease of forming friendships and being a known identity in town to the anonymity of a person living in the city:

By the same token, it's hard to run out of friends in Broome because it's so social and many people have remained here on a long-term basis. People are also close by that is, I would know over 100 people that live in my suburb. That wouldn't happen in the city where the people I know are more spread out (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

The transient nature of workers coming and going, and the impact for forming new friendships was of concern to Chelsea. Similar to Sue, she commented on the easiness of making new friends through her various work places and the problems with new acquaintances leaving town.

Fine. It's probably not fine. You know when people leave you think, who am I going to go out with now? Who am I going to do this with? It's never been, I suppose because I've changed jobs a few times, and everyone doesn't always leave and I've always got a couple of people that I still know. And I just make a new group of friends kind of, but I've changed jobs and I met someone else through there.

Yes it is all right. It has been sad because your friends leave and you think that is sad. You know. It has never been like, oh god why does everyone always leave. Not like that. Hmm (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

Barni too spoke of her initial reluctance to devote her time to forming new friendships:

At the high school I met people but I was wary of people who were obviously here for only a short space of time and didn't want to invest emotional energy in people who were gonna be gone in two years time. I'm not so bad on that now (Barni, personal communication, June 23, 1998).

Conversely, Claudine as a new comer to town in the 1990s was on the receiving end of long-term resident's reservations in forming new friendships:

Maybe because it is a small town and I believe a lot of people who came here first had a bit of a hard time to establishing themselves, find a proper job and make a living. So I think they [long-term residents] are a bit on their guard, self-protection. Something along those lines (Claudine, personal communication, May 19, 1998).

Dempsey (1990, p. 213) found in his Smalltown study that residents "widely held beliefs" was that "friendship is an area of unqualified choice". Yet, Dempsey concluded that small towns have their limitations when it comes to selecting friends.

Friendship behaviour is as much about a discernable set of restrictions on choice as about the exercise of choice. Who one has as a friend is affected by cultural and structural constraints. For example, the pool of possible friends may be restricted to people of a similar age, religious affiliation, occupation, and of the same gender. In Smalltown men and women of all classes exercise less choice in the matter of friendship behaviour than they believe they do (Dempsey, 1990, p. 213).

### ***Reasons for Staying***

Shops getting up...more people coming, more houses being built...that's made me want to stay because its slowly growing and I wanted to go back to Qld because it has more shops, and it has more, there was more variety of things to do. But I find now that I'm older I can do more things myself.

When we moved was a really big change because of the people and having to come to a totally different place. I have learnt to adjust to it (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Most of the women have stayed in Broome because they like their way of life. They feel comfortable and secure and have made Broome their home amongst rapidly changing times. The town's long-term residential base remains a small community despite the tourist season bringing a broad cross section of visitors that infiltrate the town.

These visitors bring benefits to the permanent residents and the town. Not just as a boost to the local economy but in a social sense as well. Culturally, the Kimberley is renowned for the unique pool of artists that the region has produced. Amongst the 'local' population there are a wealth of musicians, artists, playwrights, dancers and storytellers, many of who have won national and international acclaim. For example: Jimmy Chi's musicals *Bran Nue Dae*, and *Corrugation Road*, musicians 'Baamba', The Pigram Brothers, Kerry Anne Cox and the Modern Dreamtime Dancers. This wealth of 'culture' attracts other artists to the town to perform and enjoy respite from their touring itineraries. Thus residents are provided with the opportunity to experience first class entertainment and broaden their 'world views' without having to leave their familiar environment.

The sense of being an accepted member of the community was a contributing factor to why most of the women have stayed. As discussed in Chapter Five, all of the women used a form of support network to learn about Broome and establish themselves in the community. The majority of the women had been involved with at least one community organisation. Alice and Pallas both Indigenous women, did not join groups but had the support of their

extended families. Swiss born Claudine and Karima from New Guinea, both overseas migrants relied on their social network of friends rather than being involved in any specific organisations. All of the Anglo Australian women mentioned they were involved in some type of group at various stages of their residency in Broome.

The support networks and the groups the women mentioned such as the Country Women's Association, the North West Women's Association and the Broome Netball Association, as women only organisations welcomed involvement from all women. This was reflected in the membership of NWWA and the Broome Netball Association, but not the CWA, which has traditionally been an association dominated by Anglo Australian women. Conversely, the Broome Multicultural Association, with open membership was dominated by English speaking and non-English speaking migrant women and some non-English speaking background men. Racial separation is maintained in some Indigenous organisations. Cheryl mentioned being a member of Burruguk Indigenous organisation. Not being a Yawuru woman did not prevent Pallas gaining employment at the Jarndu Yawuru Women's Group. Similarly, Cheryl worked at Marnja Jarndu, Broome's women refuge that provides shelter for all women.

Being a part of these groups gave the women a sense of belonging in the Broome Community and eased their adjustment to their new lifestyle. Women like Pat and Minna who were founding members of the Broome Netball Association and Broome Multicultural Association are well known personalities in Broome and have gained a community identity, associated with their involvement in these associations.

After ten years of living in and around Broome and mixing with Kimberley people, Edwina, a Maori, felt accepted. She was confident of her identity within Broome community:

Here in Broome I feel accepted. It is how you present yourself and come forward to people. You know, saying 'giddyay' in the street, and stopping to have a chat.

We are all our own identity so you can't live off one or the other; you've got to mingle in all the time. And then remember to have your own time for yourself. That's why I like Broome. You are not pressured by your peers to be at such and such a place or to come to this committee meeting it is whatever you want to put into it. Or whatever your commitment or feelings are, on any subject or community activity (Edwina, personal communication, April 3, 1998).

For Claudine, being invited to a wide range of social events reflected the multicultural backgrounds of people with whom she had made friends and her level of acceptance in the community (Claudine, personal communication, May 16, 1998).

Although Sue has remained in Broome, she expressed her frank opinion on the formation of friendships. The small town syndrome of people knowing each other and their business, gossiping in fact, had affected Sue's attitude:

Rumours abound in Broome and that certainly gets in the way of some friendships. It seems to be part of the nature of living in a relatively small place that people often know each other's business or think they do.

People tend to make assumptions and facts and fiction become blurred. When a person with some status or authority repeats a rumour it all of a sudden, becomes fact (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Residents acquire a form of insider status 'of being in the know' according to the length of time they have stayed in town. This has become evident to me as I meet new people they usually ask how long I have lived in Broome before asking where I work (Dempsey, 1990).

The concept of local is touched upon in Chapter Four. Some residents maybe referred to as a 'locals' due to their length of residency in the town, but they can never quite become a 'local' in the 'true' sense. A 'local' maybe an Indigenous or non-Indigenous person born, bred and/or raised within the community. Jodie referred to 'locals' as: "People that have been living here for years, who know fishing spots and where to fish" (Jodie, personal communication, June 7, 1998).

Kerry commented on the levels of acceptance within the community that she personally experienced being married to a local Indigenous man. She remarked on the reminder of her 'outsider' status that she was awarded by other people, presumably other 'locals':

People say yeah you are from down that way, what you know? Aye.... Its pathetic, your kids are born and bred here. They're locals but you're not. It is hard, bloody hard. Even if you are married to a local boy you are still not a local. You are accepted in the community but you are not a local (Kerry, personal communication April 24, 1998).

Although Kerry considered she was accepted within the Broome community she had two specific reasons for staying in town. "What's keeping me here is my education. I want to improve. To me it is a safer environment for my kids to grow up and not have, um go back to Carnarvon and have racist remarks chucked in their face" (Kerry, personal communication April 24, 1998).

Pallas and Kerry arrived in Broome as primary school children. Yet Pallas unlike Kerry and many of the other women in this study whose relocation was not their choice originally wanted to return home. Over time she grew into considering Broome to be a good place to live. "I guess I have got used to the place and whenever I went somewhere else I would be homesick for Broome. I suppose that I have really got used to it after a while (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

As her life and circumstances changed Pallas too thought Broome was a good place to bring up kids "mainly because of the mixed races. I really don't want her to grow up in a racist type of world. I really want her to mix with different types of people. Plus being in a small town she knows everyone" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Although Pallas admitted that the intimacy of life in a small town necessitated her going away for a holiday each year. "I try each year to get away...you need a break from the place sometimes" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

The 'Broome' that kept some of the women in town as their children were growing up changed. Just as the circumstances of each woman evolved over time, some women developed 'new' mental models, based on past experiences and planned to leave.

### ***Reasons for Leaving***

"I can't see myself staying here forever though. I don't think I could, but I would always come back to this place and call it home sort of thing and visit everybody. But I don't think I could see myself living here forever in Broome" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Four of the women participating in this project have left Broome and relocated to other areas (Chapter Three). One woman has passed away, and I have made contact with two others since they left town. As I move within the community I see most of the women who were involved in this study.

When they were interviewed five years ago, women such as Betty and Carol, both long-term residents of the town told me they were planning to leave town for Perth.

Betty was waiting for severance pay from the Health Department, as her position was made redundant in a hospital restructuring. After twenty four years of working as the housekeeper and domestic supervisor she waited for her opportunity to move to Perth to be closer to her family.

My attitude has [changed] because I don't want to live here any more. But I wouldn't like Broome to go back to how I started off. I'd like Broome to go into the 70s yes but I know that for our children and the population of Broome you cannot have that. You have gotta have jobs and you have got to have progress. Progress has gotta come and you can't deny it. Doesn't matter where you go there has to be progress. But I don't want it here. I've got no love for Broome any more.

Yes, I would put that down to progress. But as I said it is just people's attitudes. They are not the same. Years ago you could walk down the street and people would say hullo hullo but now you are just a number. I know that is going to happen to me in Perth.

But the reason I really want to go to Perth is because of my family. My sister is getting on and my brother is 70 this year. I want to have a little bit of time with them. And my medical reasons. I am sick of travelling up and down to Perth. So I can be closer to the hospitals and that (Betty, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

The heydays of Broome that Carol had experienced as a young women and mother mellowed as her children had grown up and left the town. She was waiting to sell her take-away business of 10 years before relocating to Perth with her husband to join the rest of the family.

I liked it back then [early 70s]. I don't know. You knew mostly everybody.

We're getting to the cross roads, we just don't know what to do. Not one of my girls is here. The oldest got married. ...is doing a tourism and travel diploma. ... is in Year 12 (Carol, personal communication, May 4, 1998).

Upon graduating Kerry was immediately offered a teaching position and was appointed to a Remote Community School in the West Kimberley. She relocated from Broome with her husband and four of her six children in 1999.

Unlike the other women who have left town, Kerry has remained in the north west. She regularly returns to Broome with her family during the school holidays.

After 21 years Barni, grew restless of living in the North. Her two younger daughters had reached high school age and were 'schooling down south' at a rural agricultural school. Rather than have her girls attend boarding school, like their elder sister, Barni moved to a property within the school's vicinity so the girls could live at home. She had placed her horticultural block at the '12 mile' on the real estate market and it sold promptly.

At the time of her interview Chelsea spoke of her uncertainty for the future.

Sometimes. I go through stages; probably more often than I used to lately but then I think to myself everything is here. I've got my friends here. I've got a good job. There is nothing that you can't get here that you can't get in Perth. Beautiful beach. You know what I mean. Everything is coming. You have got all your sport now and shops and everything.

Sometimes I think that it is wrong to have stayed somewhere for so long. I've got that in my mind for some reason. You know you should be on the move. You should be doing different things.

But then I will come round and think, why? Everything is great here so don't leave something that is great. Very content when I am in the right frame of mind (Chelsea, personal communication, April 7, 1998).

Through my own social network in Broome, I learnt that Chelsea moved temporarily to the city and worked in an office on St George's Terrace before returning to the North to work on a pearl farm.

As stated the Broome population is constantly growing and changing. Similar to Barni some families leave and relocate to Perth once their children reach secondary school. Some plan to return to Broome, but do not because their children have become accustomed to city lifestyle or they can't afford the move. "Others move to the city for the sake of their children's education and some leave due to the hot, humid climate during the wet season. People also leave, as they're unable to obtain employment or affordable housing" (Sue, personal communication, May 6, 1998).

Whereas others like Chelsea leave and are drawn back to the area.

Amidst the massive modifications to Broome's infrastructure and the make up of the community the long-term Broome residential base is constantly shifting and changing. All residents, whether 'locals' or those relocating from other parts of Australia or overseas have been affected by the development of Broome.

## **Conclusion**

The experiences of the women participating in this project exemplify the changing patterns of the Broome community in the second half of the 20th Century. As Broome has continued to steadily grow, distinct groups of residents have emerged. These are the 'local' Indigenous population, long-term non-Indigenous residents entrepreneurs and Government and seasonal workers. In more recent times the seasonal tourists. The way of life has continually changed to adapt and meet community needs.

Hudson (1989) scrutinised the elements of change that affected the lifestyle of residents in small towns. She argued that insufficient attention has been paid to the quality of life for residents of small northern towns. This is due to a preoccupation of decision makers with population changes and projections. Growth and development are seen in positive terms and stability and decline in negative terms. The social/human disruptions and challenges, caused by this approach, like those experienced by the women in this project, are not considered.

Education, health, welfare, housing, commercial land and local Government activities she concluded were the main issues related to the provision of services that implemented change.

Similarly, the women in this study through their comments based on their life experiences have disclosed their opinions of the rate of change within the Broome community and how it has affected them personally. The women have made comment on the changes to facilities, the changes to the population and its residential base, the nature of transient residents and investors and their own quality of life.

Four of the women have left town since they were interviewed in 1998. Two of these women had planned their relocation and spoke about it at the time of the interview whereas for the other two women an unexpected change in circumstances has led to them leaving.

The influx of tourists to Broome and the Kimberley has ensured the economic life of the area. The women in this project acknowledged that the development of the tourist industry has been vital to the survival of the North West. They made comment of the inevitable development as the Broome and the Kimberley began to be promoted in Western Australia, nationally and internationally as a natural wilderness frontier.

Each woman in this project had mixed responses to the changed times they had experienced in Broome and how these have affected them personally. They all made comment on the rapid, unprecedented growth and development of Broome, and how it changed their lifestyles. Most agreed the development of services for residents of Broome and the Kimberley was beneficial. It helped to breach the gap of isolation and being 'in touch' with the rest of Australia.

Some of the women in this project welcomed the changes and advantages that development brought whereas others did not. They have cited a variety of issues related to development of the town and the region that have affected their personal lives and lifestyle in Broome. They have been involved in ensuring the goods and services required for long-term residents are made available to all sectors of the community. They have brought about change.

However, not all of the women in the study felt the anxiety that others expressed about Broome's development. Kristine felt secure:

Yeah, yeah, I still like Broome. I will always like Broome there is something about it.

No. I don't know whether it is the sea or the bushes or trees and palms. No I couldn't say what it is exactly. It is part of me now. It is very hard to say, but I will always like it (Kristine, personal communication, March 23, 1998).

## ***Chapter Seven: Conclusion***

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the lives of a group of women who settled in Broome after World War II. Through the examination of their stories I have investigated how they adjusted to their new surroundings and demonstrated how they coped in relation to their multifaceted and varied life experiences. I have used their stories of relocation and establishment in a small town as a script to illustrate how women have been involved in shaping a community. Their experiences of living in the Kimberley show a particular type of resilience distinctive of the demands of living in Broome, a small town in the tropical north of Western Australia, considered by some to be isolated and remote.

The women's stories were placed into context with information gained from primary and secondary sources. These sources included detailed research of archival materials housed in the Commonwealth and State Archives. This archival research was a major component of the initial stages of the literature review for this study. Although an intensive investigation of Government and non-Government records was undertaken for mention of women and their lifestyle in the Kimberley, little information was found.

The literature review also involved secondary sources. Being an interdisciplinary study, many topics and themes were transversed through the women's stories. The diversity of the women and the scope of their experience necessitated a review of an extensive range of literature. Initially this was to further my own understanding of life in Broome across the various decades that heralded the arrival of the women who participated in this project. The reading of theoretical literature allowed for a critical review of texts related to colonial perceptions and women in history on the Australian frontier, through to contemporary literature on feminist analysis on numerous aspects of women's lives. This review was undertaken to position the Kimberley women within the broader context of literature on women in Australia.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The necessity to review a large quantity of literature continued to grow as further analysis and comparison of the women's stories was undertaken. My bid to be inclusive rather than exclusive necessitated this large review. Yet there was limited secondary information available on the day-to-day lives of women living in country areas.

I endeavoured to listen to and record the voices of a diverse group of women from various walks of life, albeit from a defined geographical location. In hindsight research that focused on one particular group of women, such as Lange's (2000) research on non-English-speaking background women or Middleton & Weiler's (1999) research on teachers, allows for a more refined analysis within defined boundaries. The breadth of this study has not allowed for a refined detailed analysis of a particular theme or group of women beyond the commonality of migrating to the north west. Rather it is a portrayal of a select group of women's stories, which reflect the multicultural nature of the community to which they belong.

Despite the fact that care was taken to ensure a wide spectrum of women were interviewed, language was a limitation. As mentioned, the researcher can only speak English. The hiring of interpreters was beyond the budget of the project so all the interviews were conducted in English. Only non-English-speaking background women with a 'reasonable' command and understanding of English were interviewed. The 'language barrier' reduced the pool of potential participants and limited the cross section of women to be interviewed.

This had implications for the study, as obviously, the experiences of non-English-speaking background women who have learnt English will differ from those who have not. Issues of cultural sensitivity are further compounded. Furthermore, this attempt to incorporate representations of the diverse nature of the women residing in Broome has made it difficult at times to draw correlations about their day-to-day lives. There are many factors and variables that have influenced the women's lives in Broome.

At times I have drawn on information I had gathered previously from other long-term Broome residents, both women and men, through personal communications over the years of my residency. The bibliography of this thesis portrays the scope of literature reviewed for this project. Wherever possible the first names of authors have been included purposely in the referencing to highlight the prominence of female authors works referred to in this study. This tactic is a digression from conventional academic referencing styles. It is a means of ensuring the literature written by women is acknowledged and furthers my purpose of seeking acknowledgment of women's contributions. However, the women's stories are the focal point of this study; their voices are central to this analysis of the lifestyle of women in north Western Australia.

This study challenges the commonly held view that the Kimberley region is a man's world. The region has been ascribed a frontier status by non-Indigenous people since their initial settlement and occupancy. This notion of the area being a male frontier continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the period post World War II. My choice of topic was influenced by my own experiences of relocation and by the directions of other histories that lacked a strong woman's voice. My aim was to provide a portrayal of women that considered their every day experiences and not necessarily those of the rich and famous. To achieve this, the experiences of ordinary women, the day-to-day women of Broome who contributed in their own ways to the development of the steadily growing community, have been documented via the medium of oral history. This study explored the lived experiences of a small group of women within a relatively recent time frame. In many incidents their stories endorsed the perception of the Kimberley being a man's world.

A qualitative approach was undertaken whereby the recording and an analysis of select oral histories was the principal medium used. This methodology was applied for various reasons. This included my desire to record the stories of a multicultural group of Kimberley women of various ages and backgrounds. I considered that recording the interviews would be the most valuable research tool available to me as it would suit the diversity of

women, and accommodate their personal styles of communication and potential to work with me. This personalised means of gathering data, that is storytelling over a cup of tea with the tape recorder playing, provided me with an insight into intercultural attitudes and relationships and gendered discourses.

### ***Collecting History***

Oral history continues to grow in popularity both internationally and in Australia, as it is a means of preserving the stories of marginalised people, such as the women of the north west, who have not lead prominent lives. It is a method of documenting the experiences and interpretations of living in an area in northern Australia.

Although the use of oral history is a valid means of collecting information via personal renditions, the medium has been criticised by those who question the validity of the source. The majority of arguments critical of oral history are based on issues of subjectivity and memory and the relationship between the researcher and the participant. There is a potential for bias and inaccuracy. Intentional or unintentional 'vagueness' on particular topics depends on the predisposition of the storyteller. In this study the relationship between participant and the researcher influenced the type and style of interview and the stories told. In most incidents the participant and I had prior knowledge of each other's histories and our families. This familiarity is viewed by some as unprofessional and creates a constructed bias. Yet it allows for an alternative viewpoint to be recorded. Other sources such as books and manuscripts are not without their biases. The author or researcher has selected particular information for publication from a whole corpus of information available on any given topic.

All artists are coloured by versions of their past. The storytellers involved in this project were no exception. The women told their stories from their perspectives which have been conditioned by their personal experience. Their renditions were tinted with colloquial language and terms that reflected the diversity of their cultures and lifestyles. As the researcher on one hand and friend or community member on the other, I considered myself to be in a

favourable position as a researcher on the inside, sharing information with other women from my community. This was based on my familiarity with the town and its history, people, places and names and links with their families in most instances.

There were occasions in some of the interviews where, because of my insider status, I knew that there was more to the story than was being revealed for the tape. Due to the subjectivity of individual experience and the psychological impact of the anticipated audience, one person's rendition of an event will differ from another's version of the story. This behaviour is a psychological means of reconstructing their stories for an anticipated audience (Thomson 1994; Hamilton, 1996). As explained, on occasion the tape was turned off, silence would follow, and then a story told that was not to be recorded. Followed by more silence, the interview continued with the tape recording.

The stories told to me personally, rather than the recorded version for the tape were usually about people or events known to both of us. Stories of exclusion and marginalisation by particular community members or groups were some of the topics broached off the record. It was inevitable that these off the record renditions were purposely told to me to influence my understanding of their individual relocation and settlement. This information broadened my understanding of individual women's situations. The unrecorded stories played an integral role in my analysis. The untold stories were significant to the overall story of the women's experience as they gave a greater depth of meaning to the words recorded.

As a Broome community member and researcher I was an active participant in the project. From the outset, I knew that during the interview process it would be inevitable that I would share some information with the participants through the topics covered. Utmost discretion was maintained as insider information allowed the women on many an occasion to tell the story without having to provide introductions or provide lengthy explanations. This emphasised the multilayered relationship between the storyteller and the researcher, particularly when the researcher became a part of the story.

The complexities of interrelationships proved to be a central component of this thesis. Early feminist practitioners considered gender to be a universal bond between women as an oppressed species. This universality proved to be naïve as the depth of feminist experience across race, class and religion was outside the realm of sisterhood. In this project the fact that we were all Broome residents interested in recording history was the major unifying factor between the women and myself. The mutual interest was the recording of a gender specific history of a defined geographical area. To achieve this outcome information was sourced from both women and men.

As a community member living and working in a small town on a day-to-day basis I am sensitive to cultural and ethical protocols. As with Smith's (1999) study, I found that knowing the majority of the women prior to their participation in the project was both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage was that levels of trust, rapport and credibility had already been established between us. This was evident to me as the women agreed to be a part of the project but it was further reinforced when all the women except for one decided not to use a pseudonym.

Adherence to university ethical procedures was maintained. The women's stories were taped, transcribed and given back to them, providing them with the opportunity to review and confirm authorisation of their stories. Thus the storytelling process became one of mutual collaboration yet I was acutely aware that the information the women chose to tell me was only a snapshot of their lives.

At times this insider knowledge had its shortcomings, as some questions, particularly pertaining to their lives prior to their relocation to Broome, were not asked out of regard for the women. "It is agreed that somehow insider relationships can sometimes be disadvantageous and that our own positions within the family or community can determine certain forms of access to the knowledge of elders" (Smith, 1999b, p. 66).

Although prior knowledge, underlying personal bias and preconceived ideas can render disadvantages to this intimate type of insider research, in this study, my insider status as a long-term community member was an advantage rather than a disadvantage. From the outset my research was based on my own experience and insider knowledge. I identified the paucity of material available on the lives of country women in Australia, let alone the everyday lives of ordinary women living in remote and isolated areas. Having already established relationships with people in the community provided me with the opportunity to gain participants easily. I did not need to advertise for participants. Although not all the women I approached agreed to be interviewed for various reasons, I had some women ask me if they could be involved in the project.

As a researcher, I have explained how my own local, prior knowledge affected how the project respondents were accessed, the interview process and the type of information given. I have described how established or hearsay relationships between the researcher and the project respondents have had a bearing on this research methodology. I am privy to insider information on the Broome community that I have acquired over my years of residence. On many occasions the women, the storytellers in this project, provided me with details that they would not have trusted to a stranger. This opinion is based on the assertion that the women were aware of my long-term residence and in most cases knew me. My familiarity with the local culture and customs was evident in the way I prompted the storytelling process, which influenced the direction of the stories. Nevertheless the stories belong to the women and they have authenticated their credibility and use for this thesis. I consider my own experience of relocation and subsequent insider status, due to my length of residence, has allowed me to understand the extent to which the women were prepared to reveal their personal details.

Furthermore a stranger coming to town for the purpose of conducting interviews, despite her or his preparation and research on the topic, does not have insider knowledge. A researcher on the outside cannot analyse the data or access the credibility of the stories to the same extent as a long-term

resident. The outside researcher is unaware of the extent to which the interviewee has filtered or censored the information provided. Thus, in this analysis of relocation and settlement to a small country town, as the researcher on the inside, I am placed in good stead to critique the validity of the data.

This thesis has investigated the women's impressions and depicted the influence their previous circumstances and expectations had on their approach to resettlement. The women brought with them images of the Kimberley region and assumptions about Broome. Many of these were influenced by historical accounts which portrayed the area as a frontier, a man's world that held unique characteristics (Idriess, 1937, 1952). They were not prepared for the physical and mental isolation that many experienced initially, as wives and mothers.

### ***New Frontiers***

After World War II there was little to attract white women and men to Broome. The pearl and pearl shell industry remained in disarray. The luggers had been destroyed and there was little incentive to draw investment back to the area. Homes had been looted and vandalised. Broome was no longer a thriving pearling port that served a global market. It was not re-established as a seaport on international trade routes to Fremantle and was no longer a busy international gateway. The pearl and pearl shell industry in Broome was no longer of major financial importance to the state of Western Australia. The depopulating of the town of Broome created a unique situation which called for the re-establishment of the Kimberley frontier.

Post World War II the population of Broome slowly began to increase. Strict Government regulations continued to monitor who was allowed to enter and live in the town, according to race, class and gender. Remnants of the town's strict racial hierarchy were still prevalent into the 1970s. The 1980s heralded the transition of Broome from the small and isolated country town to a thriving international tourist destination by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Broome became a destination for an increasing number of women and men from all walks of life. Those who migrated to the area after World War II have

contributed the development of the area.

Numerous examples of women's involvement in establishing facilities, networks and services for the Broome community have been given throughout this thesis. During their residence many women have played an integral role in the town's expansion. Some of the women interviewed had undertaken leadership roles and become community role models. Over time, as their life circumstances have changed, so have their attitudes and commitment to the area.

### ***Notions of Distance***

The Euro-centric notion of the Kimberley being an isolated and remote area due to its distance from other settled parts of Australia was for some, a major deterrent to settling in the area. This notion remains relevant to some today:

Our consideration of what is remote and what is rural, not to mention what is isolated, is of course all relative. The commonality of all centres is that there is a greater, or lesser degree of isolation from what we consider to be the essential requirements (Ross, 1989, p. 2).

These subjective concepts of distance, remoteness and isolation featured in the women's stories.

From the narratives, it was clear that some perceptions held by those who arrived in the 1950s, 60s and 70s were still prevalent among those arriving in the 1980s and 1990s. The women's previous experiences influenced their expectations in relation to their needs. The distance between Broome and other settled parts of Australia, coupled with the costs involved in visiting family and friends not residing in the area, exacerbated feelings of separation and isolation for some and a sense of satisfaction for others. The reality of their situations, compared to their expectations, impacted strongly upon their lives.

The psychological and physical affect of the Kimberley landscape and environment was a major topic. This coupled with Broome's physical distance from other areas and the ramifications of this remoteness were both positive

and negative, depending upon the individual woman's viewpoint, life stage and age (Belenky, 1997).

Their diverse and varied lived experiences coupled with their stage of life impacted on how they settled into life in Broome. The differing realities and multiple perceptions of the women's lives in Broome are at times inconsistent and contradictory (Davies, 1991, p. 47). Most of the women spoke of their isolation from their families living in other settled parts of Australia or overseas. This physical and psychological isolation was an inevitable outcome of moving away and relocating. Yet the majority of women who made the lifestyle choice of relocating to Broome did not consider themselves to be isolated within the small town community. The Indigenous women had the support of their own family or the support of their extended families. For the Asian women and those migrating from other tropical areas, the familiarity of the climate and Asian faces relieved the sense of isolation. Some Anglo-Australian and European women, more accustomed to the goods and services available in the city, considered that what Broome had to offer was limited.

### ***Settling In***

An investigation of the intersections of gender, race, class and ethnicity in relation to Broome lifestyle has been undertaken within the context of the women's relocation and settlement. This was to investigate how the women were able to mix in a new cultural setting. Factors related to the cultural background of the women have been examined to analyse how this affected their resettlement and establishment in a diverse society. Other considerations such as age, religion, marital status, employment and health have been taken into account.

The majority of the women did not initiate their migration to the north west. Most accompanied or joined their husbands. Only in one case did a married woman's job transfer influence the family's decision to relocate to the area. Some of the women first visited Broome on a holiday, not planning to stay. Others made the move reluctantly. Some were children or young women in the care of their families and did not have a choice. The women

who did initiate their migration to Broome were in the main, single women and none of them had children.

It was revealed that many of the women in this study ignored traditional racial barriers and socialised with women and men across racial divides. Even so, from their stories, it is clear that their class position, age, ethnicity and family circumstances affected their responses to the institutionalised racial boundaries. The way they were able to conduct themselves and in some instances with whom they could associate, were influenced by local traditions, political policies and social attitudes, as well as their own cultural and family responsibilities.

Despite this, the women's responses to the people they worked and socialised with were as diverse as the women themselves. All the women indicated they mixed with a range of women, men and families residing in Broome. This intermingling across race and gender differed from the findings of Ryan (2000) and Vasta (1993-1994) who argued that well embedded racist attitudes were a deterrent to the immigrant women forming close relationships with other women and men of different cultural affiliations.

Yet, for the women migrating to Broome it was different. They found interracial mixing was inevitable and a part of their day-to-day living in their new environment. For some there were no other women or men of the same cultural affiliation living in the area (Rabbitt, 1995). Out of necessity they have broadened their cultural associations. Some Asian women from non-English-speaking backgrounds formed relationships with other Asian born women and men. With relative ease they mix with Broome's Indigenous and Asian population and non-Indigenous population, unlike their Asian counterparts residing in Broome earlier in the century.

It was evident from the women's stories that cultural affiliations created strong bonds between groups of women and that common interests and needs strengthened these alliances. This was apparent from the women's anecdotes on the establishment of groups such as the Broome Netball Association and the Broome Multicultural Association.

I found that the groups and organisations created by the women in this project have cultural bases that serve to fulfil their needs and the needs of others. They provide friendship and assistance in an environment of like minded people. "Friendship groups which, especially for the newer migrant communities, often take the place of the extended family in terms of providing support and help in times of need" (Lange 2000, p. 6). Women and men have created groups across the region as a means to influence and become decision makers, to ensure their community and personal requirements are met.

### ***Accommodating Their Needs***

Out of necessity, when existing services did not meet their needs some of the women created new ones. To fulfil their needs they introduced new strategies to bring about change. These included using established networks and creating their own to fulfil their requirements. For some, their involvement in groups and organisations in the community became their means for continued existence. The friends they made reflected a cross section of Broome's residents. For others their workplaces served as their first point of contact with the local Indigenous residents, many of whom are of mixed racial ancestry. Some of the women found Broome to be exotic with its blend of nationalities and alluring landscape, whereas others did not share this perception.

All of the women involved in this project, regardless of the decade in which they arrived, have been confronted with a different social, cultural, political and economic way of life. The difference in the women's attitudes to their relocation depended on their ability and willingness to adjust to their new circumstances. Due to the diverse background of the women participating in this study it is difficult to draw defined correlations. For example some of the younger women who relocated with their families, such as Chelsea and Pallas, initially were home sick for the lives they had left behind. Yet Kerry was happy with her relocation. The same can be said of the middle aged to older women. Over time some women are content with their settlement and long-term residency in the north west whereas others have relocated and

moved on, and others are planning to relocate. Despite their expectations, their lives were influenced and altered by their relocation and time of arrival in Broome.

Most turned to other people for comfort and support whilst exploring their identity in their new environment. Their need to form new friendships and make community connections required them to mix in unfamiliar circles amongst Broome's small and diverse residential population. This study has shown that as newcomers to town they were invariably aware of the necessity to be introduced to the local culture. As the women learnt more about the history of the town and its people they became aware of a distinctive Broome culture which embraced customs and traditions unique to the locality.

The extent to which the women embraced their new environment and the intercultural challenges presented to them were dependent on two major considerations: their motivation to capitalise on the community's offerings and their needs relevant to their life stage.

### ***Close-knit***

Contributing to and being involved in the community was a survival method used by the women who otherwise would not have found their niche. A striking feature of the women's stories was the many references to and the use of the words "close-knit" to describe the town of Broome. Many of them referred to Broome as being close-knit, a language construct akin to small groups of people and communities. When deconstructed, the term "close-knit" had different meanings for the women in relation to the diversity of their lives in a small town. For example: Betty (personal communication, March 23, 1998), described the hospital working environment of the 1960s as close-knit, and Carol (personal communication, May 5, 1998), used the term close-knit to describe her Broome of the early 1970s. However, Betty's close-knit hospital environment did not include those in supervisory positions and Carol mentioned frequently socialising with her fellow employees from the meatworks. Furthermore the notion of close-knit in this context differs to the blatant segregation evident at the Broome Sun Pictures still, in place until the 1970s.

In 1984, referring to her associations with Indigenous people at the Catholic Church, Linda described the local residents as being close-knit and paralleling Filipinos when it came to religious matters. In contrast, Pallas who arrived in Broome as a child the year after Linda expressed her views.

I thought that you know well gee this is meant to be Broome and it is meant to be a real close-knit place but they really did not like us. At first I thought it was an issue between the schools but then I thought 'well some of it is this colour business. I tried to get away from that if I could help it' (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

Pallas challenged the notion that Broome was "meant to be close-knit" because as a newcomer, she was an outsider still to be accepted by her peers. However, as an adult and young mother her comments revealed that over time she has acquired an insider status. "I suppose I have learnt to adjust to it. It is sort of like I am a Broome girl now" (Pallas, personal communication, June 2, 1998).

### ***Being Known***

Gradually, these women became known as 'somebody' in Broome, a small town where people are recognised by their name, occupation or partner. This equates to Dempsey's (1990) findings in his study of a small town in the eastern states of Australia where other community members knew residents and their business. However, unlike Dempsey's *Smalltown*, and Alston's (2001) research on the decline of inland country towns in Australia, Broome as a coastal town continues to be on a spiralling course of growth and development. This trend compares to Salt's (2001) findings that there is an overall population shift across Australia. Australian values in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century embraced the beach as a lifestyle. "Lifestyle towns are really a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and result from the fact that Australians are increasingly choosing to move to towns for lifestyle reasons (Salt, 2001, p. 176).

For many of the women in this study, involvement in a group afforded them the opportunity to create networks and form friendships. Some women were invited by other women to join groups and organisations, whereas others used their own initiative and sought membership themselves. Their membership initiated a sense of belonging in the Broome community and as insiders they helped shape the future of the town. Their contributions and their work places have helped form their identities. The women in this study were recognised as belonging to and being involved in various groups including women's and sporting associations, hospital and children's services, religious and ethnic groups. Status and kudos have been awarded to several of these women in relation to this membership, particularly their leadership and voluntary contribution to the community.

The voluntary work in Broome of many of the women, demonstrated an Australian volunteering norm based on involvement, commitment, and mutual benefits free of payment and coercion. These women used their leadership skills to lay the foundations for the establishment of several organisations. The strategies they used to inspire others, women and men, to become involved were based on their own enthusiasm, commitment and ability to organise others.

The women used their creativity and with the support of others, were able to realise their visions for the community. Regardless of age, class and ethnicity they were involved in public and committee meetings, fundraising and lobbying to provide services to the town. The extent to which they felt accepted in the Broome community varied. For some, a sense of belonging was related to their commitment to a job or a cause. For others, their marriage to a member of the community and having children helped establish their status.

The women's commentaries however, indicated that their notions of acceptance are subjective. Over time, being recognised and known created a sense of belonging. As they accepted their new lifestyles and community they began to feel accepted by the community. Their levels of involvement in the

community varied. For some women being able to have a voice in the community and being listened to was part of their acceptance process. For others meeting and socialising with the locals, initiated their acceptance in the community. They were invited to local people's homes and taken to local fishing, camping and picnic spots.

### ***Not Quite A Local***

Over time, by adjusting to their new environment they gained acceptance by their peers and acquired an insider status. However, this study indicated that the acquisition of insider status was not gained by years of residence. Rather it was a status earned by an individual's contribution to the community. Nevertheless, insider status does not equate to local status. Although long-term residents may be referred to as locals by other long-term residents, itinerant workers or visitors, the 'real' locals are the traditional Indigenous owners and their descendants and the non-Indigenous people born and bred in the area. Colloquially the Indigenous people are commonly referred to as locals. Locals remain locals whether or not they permanently reside in the region.

For some of the women in this study their yearning to return to their place of origin made the concept of 'home' complex. Earning acceptance in the community for some women did not ease the emotional and physical challenges created by their duality of belonging. Its ramifications were double-edged. This desire to return to their roots impeded their ability to gain acceptance in a new community where the outsider becomes an insider, but never quite a local.

A common theme underlying the women's stories was their resilient adaptation to their new lifestyle and how they responded to the challenges that affected their lives. In most instances they had to become accustomed to a lifestyle with a climate that differed from where they had relocated. For most, their adjustment to the climate spanned many years.

A feature of the predominantly hot, dry climate of Broome is hot sunny days followed by cooler, comfortable evening temperatures for most of the year. Most of the women migrating to Broome came from colder climates and had to

adapt and adjust to the semi-tropical climate. They were accustomed to indoor living and socialising as the weather was not regularly conducive to outdoor entertainment. They were used to a colder climate where cold temperatures in the day are followed by even cooler night-time temperatures. In Broome they did not require the amount and variety of clothing to which they were accustomed.

The women arriving in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s experienced Broome lifestyle where fans rather than airconditioning were the norm. Common interruptions to the power supply created challenges in the workplace as well as at home. For others arriving in later decades, the idea of living in homes not designed for airconditioning was not a consideration. A modern, distinctive characteristic of Broome housing is that homes are built for airconditioning, with verandahs for outdoor living.

Outdoor living and socialising, a characteristic of north west lifestyle was depicted throughout the women's stories. They told tales of Broome's social scene, the parties, the hotels, the festivals and celebrations. Whilst this verandah living is congenial most of the year, at other times the weather comes with challenges, such as insects, dust, tropical thunderstorms and cyclones.

Many of the women have embraced Broome's outdoor lifestyle. The majority of the women spoke of their love of the area and its beauty. Some adopted the traditional Broome outdoor lifestyle of fishing and camping whereas this was not an attraction for others. All of the women who have stayed long-term have adapted to the climate in one-way or another. This is evident in their physical appearance and their style of clothing. The weather dictates the type of clothing required and newcomers to town are often picked by their city appearance. It may be their lack of sun exposure, or wearing of unsuitable and inappropriate clothing and footwear.

For all of the women, the settling in process was not without its complexities. For each individual a diversity of factors contributed to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their life in the town. Multiple factors depending upon the individual's own reality, background, personality, skills and abilities, affected how they settled into Broome. Their personal experiences affected their response to relocating and living in a frontier area. For example, Betty arrived in 1962 and was shocked by the racial stratification of hospital patients endorsed by the Health Department. Less than 20 years later, Minna was surprised by the intermingling of races amongst staff members and bosses at the Broome Hospital. Due to the different time periods covered by the women in their years in Broome, and multiple realities of each woman, it is difficult to draw parallels.

The women's stories have not revealed that any particular group of women of any particular age were more attuned to settlement than others. Even the women who choose to relocate to Broome, either as single women or with their families, were confronted with unexpected challenges to their relocation.

Although many of the women referred to Broome as home and felt comfortable in their surroundings they had all experienced an awareness of their race, social class and gender whilst residing in the town. Their encounters varied according to their time of arrival in the town, the prevailing Government policies and local attitudes. Some women spoke of their personal experience of social stratification and exclusion based on race and gender which lead to feelings of alienation at times. Others were more fortunate in having extended family and/or friends to support them in their re-settlement.

For example, Rose living in the convent in the 1950s led a secluded life based on the strict hierarchy of her vocation, religious values and community expectations of the role of a nun. A decade later, Betty and Ainslie as young, single, professional, Western Australian country women were immersed in race relations as they were courted by non-Anglo Australian men in Broome.

In the 1970s, Jenny and Carol spoke of interracial mixing in the hotels as Western Australian Government policies on drinking rights changed. The Broome hotel scene became the meeting place for people of all ages, classes and cultural groups. The women who socialised in the Broome hotels described them as meeting places, where in certain specific bars the 'unwritten' colour bar was not enforced. Yet, the divers and other pearling industry employees tended to separate into their own groups and drink in specific bars. The underlying link between the groups of men residing in Broome was women.

Alice, Merle, Pat and Minna all accompanied their husbands to Broome in the 1970s. Alice and Merle were wives and mothers who cared for young children. Merle summed up her experience of seclusion, as a newcomer to the Kimberley region. "I found it lonely because the north is a man's place or was. I don't think so much now. But it certainly was then and I had no contacts" (Merle, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

However, Pat and Minna, married women without children, had to find their own employment. They gained work in traditional female orientated jobs. Their employment was secondary to their husband's employment. Whether they performed paid or unpaid work, all the women found the need to socialise and at times, required support from someone or an organisation.

In the 1980s Pallas, Chelsea and Kerry arrived as school-aged children in the care of their families. Pallas and Chelsea elaborated on the racism they experienced at the Broome State School, whereas Kerry favourably compared the Broome Catholic School to her negative experiences of schooling in Carnarvon. The anecdotes given by the women arriving in the 1990s also revealed a consciousness of their race, class and gender. This was particularly evident in the narrations of Karima and Claudine who worked in non-traditional women's employment, in the pearling industry.

Some women satisfied their needs and the needs of other women by creating organisations of their own and participating in lobby groups in a bid to gain the services they required. Women, such as Pat and Minna are natural

leaders and have been given kudos for their contribution to the Broome community. Soon after arrival Pat used her leadership abilities and organised the formation of the Broome Netball Association. Minna, who was an overseas migrant from non-English-speaking-background, and a leader in her community before relocating to Australia, slowly gained a command of the English language and over time began to confidently exercise her leadership skills and take on community responsibilities.

By joining organisations and creating their own social groups the women were able to overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness. It was a means of reconstructing their lives in a new area and establishing their identity here. They created the opportunity to have their voices heard by taking on leadership roles. They have been and continue to be pro-active in the community. Some are considered by others to be leaders in the community as they present and implement ideas that bring about change. They consider themselves to be community minded people willing to volunteer their time and expertise. They were empowered by the community support they received for their endeavours.

For some, growing accustomed to the semi-tropical Broome lifestyle has been a process spanning many years, during which time, many of the women have raised families in the town. Their involvement in the Broome community has made them active agents in shaping the town's changes. They have contributed to the community through their worldviews, their personal experiences and individual skills. The groups they established to meet their needs and those of their families influenced the direction of the Broome community. They took the opportunity to create an environment that suited their needs. They were listened to and were able to gain the support of others and influence them.

Later, as the town changed and grew to accommodate the multifaceted needs of the tourist industry, the women's impressions of Broome have changed. The town lost its 'remoteness' and its appeal to some. The expansion of the town has contributed to the loss of that close-knit security.

The idea of Broome being classified as a remote destination is outdated. It is a clean, modern tourist town offering a broad range of services and facilities. These include direct flights to the eastern states and other parts of Western Australia, all levels of accommodation, numerous tours, local markets, arts, crafts and entertainment.

The town's growth as an international tourist centre has led to an expansion in services, facilities and population numbers. The resident population continues to increase, with new housing areas being established. The development of the tourist industry that draws thousands of national and international visitors annually, has ensured Broome has reclaimed its place on the world stage. This expansion has been at a cost to the Broome community. The women have indicated through their stories that benefits such as employment and education and training opportunities have come with development. Yet, as the developments cater for the increasing tourist trade some women grieved the loss of the safety and security of living in a small community, where people know one another.

The sense of the sanctuary of living in a small town and being recognised, and knowing others was not such a frequent experience in more recent years. Broome no longer fulfilled some of the women's personal requirements, the attitudes and circumstances of some of the women changed and they left. At the time of their interviews, Carol and Betty spoke of their planned relocation to the city in the near future. They both considered they were at a crossroads in their lives. Their children have grown up and moved away. They were finalising dealings with their respective workplaces and leaving town with their husbands. Both met their husbands in Broome.

Barni and Chelsea were not planning to leave when they interviewed in 1998. Both have subsequently left due to a combination of personal factors and the changing nature of Broome lifestyle. Chelsea has returned to live in Broome.

The changing perceptions and lived experiences of the women are reflected in their remarks. Their comments on the changing nature of the Kimberley frontier have provided an insight into their own personal lives and the reasons why they have stayed: "A reason why I have stayed is just that I believe you feel that acceptance is so real because people just treat you as part of their family and you feel part of one big family" (Rose, personal communication, May 15, 1998).

Oh yes. I live here I am. If people don't know me that's too bad. I think because I live here. I am committed. I know a lot of people are surprised to see me still here now that Des had died but I live here. This is my life. This is where I am comfortable (Merle, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

Broome is my home. I like the place and I feel at home here. I have so many friends and I know many people. Town is very friendly. I will stay here until I die. My children have job here and we can go anywhere if we like to but we can still come back here. Both boys live here with us (Linda, personal communication, June 20, 1998).

"My first vision of Broome I hated it. But now I would never leave here." (Arlene, personal communication, March 6, 1998).

### ***Further Considerations***

In this thesis the notion of the Kimberley frontier as a 'womanless world' has been questioned along with predetermined assumptions of the role of women and the way country women are stereotyped through discourse. The perspectives of the diverse group of women in this study differ, as do that of women and men. Their opinions do not and cannot represent the views of all women. Rather, the documentation of their experiences provides a glimpse into the lives of women who have settled on the Kimberley frontier. As Smith (1999) argued by deconstructing their immediate world, the women's lived experiences became a starting point or standpoint for gaining a greater understanding of their lives. A female centred approach has been undertaken through an examination of feminist literature with a focus on standpoint theory relating to the lived experience of women. Unlike the literature reviewed, this thesis

concentrates on not just one group of women but on a diverse group residing in one small country location.

An exploration of the issues of relocation, adjustment and settlement from the women's perspectives has involved a reflection on the historical and contemporary experiences of the women and the town of Broome. An image of their realities has been constructed from these insights. Through the experiences of the women, the critical reader can gain an understanding of social and political conditions that confronted and still challenge the women on the Kimberley frontier. Alternative views of a different world have been portrayed.

Akin to Weiler's (1999, p.43) analysis of her own research I have written this history from my personal experience of relocating to Broome and a desire to acknowledge women's activities and contribution to the town. As an insider who knew most of the women interviewed prior to this study, I acknowledge that this history, like all histories, is not free of bias. It is a result of my own conditioned perspective. My keen childhood interest in Australian history and later in Kimberley history has been a significant motivation in writing this thesis. I have been influenced by my own life story, and the relationships I have formed while living in Broome.

Nevertheless the women's stories reveal that some of their lived experiences may be equated to the lives of other women in small towns around Australia (Dempsey, 1990). Having analysed their stories and viewpoints, I conclude that there is a sense of commonality in that they all had the obvious experience of relocation. While coming from diverse settings at different times they all required and sought the fulfilment of their basic needs. Despite the variations in their length of residence, there is a real perception of sharing the common bond of having played an integral role in the development of Broome. Their presence has impacted upon the ever-changing social, economic and political climate of the area. The interaction of the women with other women and men across the boundaries of ethnicity, religion and class was pivotal to

this examination of women's role in the development of the area.

The women's stories have revealed that gaining membership in a small community is a complex process. Despite the differences in their times of arrival and individual circumstances, all the women faced the challenges of resettlement and adjustment into small town life in Broome. The principal factors that shaped women's lifestyles in Broome were geographic and mental isolation, choices and constraints, identity, cohesion and belonging, marginalisation and exclusion. For the women in this study their sense of belonging has been shaped around how they responded to the community and how it responded to them. The paradox is that while they are remembered for their length of stay, their contribution to and interactions within they community, they will neve: reach local status.

Women re-locating to Broome in the future will not be moving to an area considered to be a male frontier. Nor can they expect to move to a small town where people are known and know of each other. Rather, they can anticipate a modern lifestyle in a multicultural town that is constantly growing and changing. They can expect a wide range of services and facilities to be available to them, but they will need to be prepared for the high cost of living compared to other settled parts of Australia. They will experience new challenges as with moving to any new location. In Broome they can also expect to be asked by Broome residents how long they are planning to stay. They may make new friends and find their niche by joining existing groups, or they may have to create new opportunities for themselves. They have the power to do so.

Women moving to Broome can expect to be:

Oh um, accepted in the community but not accepted as a local. I can't class myself as a local because I'm not born and bred here. So no matter how many years you live in Broome you are not classed as a local. People say yeah you are from down that way, what you know? Aye. Its pathetic, your kids are born and bred here. They're locals but you're not. It is hard, bloody hard. Even if you are married to a local boy you are still not a local. You are accepted in the community but you are not a local (Kerry, personal communication, April 24, 1998).

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **EOWA Annual Report 2000-2001 Media Kit**

Signs of the Times, November 2001

55.8 per cent of women are in the labour force<sup>3</sup> compared with 72.5 per cent of men. In 1970, 40.0 per cent of women were in the labour force compared with 83.4 per cent of men.<sup>4</sup>

There is still a significant pay gap between men and women:

- the ratio of female to male **total average weekly earnings** (including over time and taking into account both part-time and full-time employment) is currently 66.3 per cent;<sup>5</sup>
- the ratio of female to male **average weekly ordinary time earnings for full-time adult employees** (excluding over time) is currently 84.3 per cent;<sup>6</sup>
- the ratio of female to male **hourly full-time adult earnings** is currently 89.6 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

Women are more likely than men to work part-time – they make up 71 per cent of the part-time labour force and 34 per cent of the full-time labour force.<sup>8</sup>

Employed mothers with dependant children are much more likely to work part-time than employed fathers with dependant children – 57 per cent of employed

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<sup>3</sup> Either employed or actively seeking work.

<sup>4</sup> Figures obtained from the ABS Monthly Labour Force Survey (Cat. no 6203.0).4ws

<sup>5</sup> Including managerial employees (ABS, Average Weekly Earnings Survey, May 2001).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Excludes over time and accounts for the fact that men work longer full-time hours on average than women. *Opacity*.

<sup>8</sup> ABS, Preliminary Labour Force Survey, May 2001.

mothers work part-time compared to only 5 per cent of employed fathers.<sup>9</sup>

Women with dependant children are much less likely to be employed than men with dependant children. Unlike women with dependants, who have a consistently lower participation rate than women without dependants, men's participation rate increases with the presence of dependant children.<sup>10</sup>

Women's lifetime earnings are significantly affected by having children – in 1986 a woman with secondary education and two children was likely to earn \$510,000 less over her lifetime than her childless counterpart. By 1997, women were twice as likely to return to the workforce when their children reached preschool age as they had been in 1986. Consequently, the lifetime earnings gap had narrowed to \$172,000.<sup>11</sup>

Men outnumber women in managerial and administrative jobs by more than three to one.

One in every 10 board members on private sector boards is a woman.

By contrast, almost one in three Commonwealth board members is a woman.

Sexual harassment remains the primary ground of complaint under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (making up just under 50 per cent) with 83 per cent of complaints under the Act lodged by women.<sup>12</sup>

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9 Among partnered parents of dependant children as at June 2000 (ABS, *Labour Force Australia*).

10 ABS, *Labour Force Australia*, 2001.

11 Chapman, B., Dunlop, Y., Gray, M., Liu, A. and Mitchell, D., *The Impact of Children on the Life-time Earnings of Australian Women: Evidence from the 1990s*, Australian Economic Review (forthcoming).

12 Data obtained from HREOC, *Annual Report*, 1999-2000.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Consent Form**

I have read Elaine Rabbitt's letter which is a statement of disclosure. I fully understand the nature and scope of her research on *Kimberley Women: Their Experiences of Making a Remote Locality Home*.

I understand what my involvement will be and I am willing to provide information and give my approval for that information to be published. I understand that have the right to withdraw from the project at anytime.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Background Information:**

Family and private sphere:

#### **DOB & Place:**

Main place(s) of residence prior to relocation.

Who lived there? Mother - place of birth, Father - place of birth, other family members – sisters, brothers, extended family?

Where grew up? Type of dwelling/general living conditions

#### **Education:**

Public or private. Level achieved - primary, secondary, tertiary

#### **Marital Status:**

#### **Occupation:**

Prior to relocating –paid and unpaid

### ***Migrating to the Kimberley:***

How did you perceive your role prior to migration?

Were you a 'voluntary' or 'involuntary' migrant and what constituted the nature of your 'voluntary' or 'involuntary' status?

When and how did you first hear about the Kimberley and/or Broome?

What age were you when you moved to the Kimberley?

Why were you motivated to relocate?

What formed the basis of your preconceived opinions of Kimberley lifestyle?

What were your expectations and general knowledge of the area prior to relocating?

To what extent were your expectations prior to migration, shaped by notions of the Kimberley being outback/remote frontier country?

How did your prior perceptions of the area affect the settlement process?

### ***The Settlement Process:***

Was the decision to relocate yours?

How did you feel about that?

How did your actual experiences affect the settlement process? For example: the climate, family circumstances, the social and economic environment, language, access to services.

How did you reconcile your expectations with reality?

***Socialisation:***

Did you find it easy to make friends?

Who do you mix with?

Who have you mixed with?

Major social outings who, what, where?

Visiting - who, what, where?

Community events

Entertainment - sport, clubs – involvement

Leisure activities/ hobbies

What has been your involvement and interaction with community/political sporting groups?

***Adapting:***

Why have you stayed?

How have you adapted to the environment?

Do you feel accepted within the community?

***Changes:***

How have these associations changed over time?

How have your attitudes to living in the north west changed?

How have your individual experiences changed over time? EG: Access to services, availability of consumer items

How have your experiences differed during different time periods? EG: As the town has developed, having children, them growing up, retiring, grandchildren.

***Employment:***

Paid - where, work with? Conditions, wages, employer, hours, leave, training?

Unpaid - type, for who, expectations?

How have you adapted to the environment?

***Accommodation:***

Do you mind telling me about the house you live in? Do you own it, buying it, rent Homeswest or other?

***Community Issues:***

What community issues are of concern to you? EG: Health services, welfare and counselling services, employment education and training, environmental, housing, arrival information, childcare, status of women, other issues?

***Overseas Born Migrants:***

In which country were you born?

In which year and where did you first come to live in Australia?

***Communication:***

What was the first language you learnt to speak?

What language do you now speak at home?

Were your overseas qualifications recognised in Australia?

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