

**The Development of Resilience in Two Cohorts of Older, Single Women, Living On
Their Own, in a Small Rural Town in Australia**

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Abstract

Australian rural women are stereotypically perceived as stoic, self-reliant, and used to handling adversity. Since this iconic portrayal of resilience is traditionally (and contemporaneously) located in the harsh countryside, it is surprising that there are few articles examining this environment, person, and resilience nexus. This thesis addresses this omission by exploring the development of resilience in two cohorts of single, older women, living on their own in rural Australia. Accordingly, an ethnographic study was conducted in a small Australian town in 2012. Documentary evidence, participant observation, and interviews captured the separate and intersecting environment and person related contributors to resilience, mediated and moderated through situational relations over time. The results revealed the persistence and reinforcement of rural historical cultural stereotypes about older women, and the systematic exclusion of younger women retirees who chose to move to the town but did not fit these embedded cultural norms. When confronted with a societal attitude that socially constrains their social identity and role, and *boxes them in*, the older old women pragmatically accepted their situation, and successfully adapted to their new circumstances. For them, resilience is a reactive response to regain and maintain equilibrium in their lives. Conversely, the late middle-aged retirees were *boxed out* from actively participating and contributing to the community; for these women, resilience is equated to resignation and endurance. And as there is a symbiotic relationship between a town and its residents, this community represents a constraining force, both in terms of its stalled response to sociodemographic and structural change, and its passive indifference to the older women as exemplars of resilience. In effect, the community exerts an oppressive, dampening effect on the

women's agentic resiliency; thus contradicting the prevailing literature where resilience is widely portrayed as a positive and active agentic concept.

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Chapter One

The purpose of this study is to explore the developmental trajectories of resilience in two cohorts of older, single women, living on their own, in a small town in rural Australia. This goal is accomplished by examining the independent and interactive influence of temporal processes, and situational relations on the separate, and intersecting environment, and person related contributors to resilience. Profiles of resilience are also constructed for each cohort of women, as well as the sample community.

As such, the study makes a formative contribution to the limited literature about resilience in the social sciences (Olsson, Jerneck, Thoren, Persson & O’Byrne, 2015), such as sociology (Dupre & George, 2011, p. 136), in addition to countering Mohaupt’s (2008, p. 67) deficits in resilience research. It also responds to Pendall, Foster, and Cowell’s (2010) concern that the temporal and situational dimensions of resilience tend to be under-investigated. These research deficiencies are particularly relevant in an Australian setting, where resilience is deeply ingrained in the national script (Bohensky & Leitch, 2014) via its representation of “the [little] Aussie battler” (Moore, 2010). Here, resilience is associated with endurance and perseverance, with the *underdog* battling against all odds to overcome hardship under adverse conditions (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014, p. 22). Since this iconic portrayal of resilience is traditionally (and contemporaneously) located in the harsh and remote (rural) outback, it is surprising that there are relatively few articles interrogating the environment and person nexus in the development of resilience in rural Australia.

To bridge this gap, Mohaupt (2008, p. 67) proposed that a relational, process orientation that accommodates different levels of analysis, is required to account for both

environment (external, structural) and individual (person) related influences on the evolution of resilience.

At the level of the environment, the study captures the sample town's historical and cultural responses to sociodemographic, economic, and political situational change to trace the processual trajectory of community resiliency (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003), and its interaction and impact on the older women's lives. The study also circumvents Boschma's (2015, pp. 742-743) observation that the role of the nation and state in the resilience literature is largely neglected.

Similarly, at an individual level, the study begins to remedy (in part), the paucity of studies exploring resilience in later life (Mohaupt, 2008, p. 67). Again in an Australian setting, while the resilience imagery characteristically favours men, women are also depicted as being resilient (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012). Equally unexpected then, is a lack of scholarly work relating to resilience and ageing women in rural Australia¹—an oversight that is compounded by the population growth of single, older women in small, rural towns (Hugo, 2013). This sociodemographic trend is bolstered through in-migration from late middle-aged Australian women seeking a *tree or sea* “C” change² lifestyle in selected areas (Davis, Crothers, Grant, Young & Smith, 2012, p. 338), including the sample town. These younger, single women provided the study with a complementary cohort from which to compare the older old women's experience of coping with crises throughout their lives. Consequently, the study is well positioned to unravel some of the effects of crises and long-term hardship on the development of resilience in these two

¹ Although some literature references women's experiences of life in a rural context, for example, health (Harvey, 2007), and environmental challenges (Rickards, 2012), none are specifically focused on resilience, and/or resilience in older women in this setting.

² A ‘C-change’ lifestyle is a colloquial reference to the phenomenon of late middle-aged and older Australians relocating to seaside or rural communities to ‘retire’ and/or pursue a new phase in their lives.

cohorts (Mophaut, 2008, p. 67), as well as meeting Keating, Swindle, and Fletcher's (2011) challenge: "is there a triple jeopardy of being old, female, and single" (p. 334) in terms of decomposing rural disadvantage.

Hochhalter, Smith, and Ory's (2011, pp. 22-23) metaphorical lens also inform the study, whereby any two adults who face adversity at any given time, vary in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, protective resources, risk factors, and personal history of past and/or present misfortune. As a result, the requisite conditions for resilience unfold uniquely for each person, as dictated by their individual life trajectory (temporal processes) within particular psychological, social, and environmental contexts (situational relations).

1.1 Research Puzzle

In brief, the study aims to build an understanding of how a local, historical, community culture and/or a specific life course, enables or impedes the development of resilience in older, single women, in a small town in rural Australia. However, these dynamics are complicated by the elusive and emerging conceptualisation of resilience in the literature. Meanings are differentially contextualised to diverse audiences such as positive coping in popular psychology, and settings as in rural Australia. This patchwork approach is replicated in academia, with resilience primarily embedded in the disciplines of psychology and social ecology. Psychological resilience is a person-centric, developmental perspective, anchored on two relational responses to an individual's perception of life stressors—coping and bouncing back. By contrast, social ecology adopts a macro level, systems view of resilience, and encompasses multiple layers and complex iterative loops to enable an organism to adjust and adapt to threats, or disturbances to its

equilibrium. These broad generalisations signal some elements in common, for example, the underlying assumptions that resilience can be learned, and the respective outcomes (coping, bouncing back, adaptation, transformation) are positive and successful strategies to overcome adversity; but other factors, such as the intersection of ageing with resilience, are less conclusive.

Traditionally, ageing has been typically presented as a downward curve, characterised by decline and loss. But for Hardy, Concato, and Gill (2004), this negative perspective was disputed by older people's resilience in minimising adversities and maximising well-being. This early link between age, positive adaptive preference, and resilience has since been advanced by others (Al  x, 2010; Hildon, Smith, Netuveli & Blane, 2008; Ong, Bergeman & Boker, 2009; Zeng & Shen, 2010), and related to specific contexts such as health (Harris, 2008), bereavement (Bennett, 2010; Hahn, Cichy, Almeida & Haley, 2011), war (Kimhi, Hantman, Goroshit, Eshel & Zysberg, 2012), and disasters (Tuohy & Stephens, 2012). Although psychological constructs dominate adult resilience (Wild, Wiles & Allen, 2013, p. 147), recent research into resilience in later life often embraces broader historical, sociocultural, and situational dimensions as an adjunct to the personal level attributes (Windle, Markland & Woods, 2008).

An enduring and overarching historical and cultural sense of Australian identity exemplifies this conceptual mix. Resilience is widely portrayed in Australia as heroism, determination, courage, and resourcefulness in the face of hardship, particularly in the context of men overcoming the harsh outback (rural) environment (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014). Australian rural women too, are stereotypically perceived as stoic, self-reliant, and

used to coping with adversity (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012)³: a representation that clashes with Kimberley and Simons' (2009, p. 47) observation that older, single, and poor [*sic*] women are highly disadvantaged in Australia.

Empirical age and gender specific findings related to life course trajectories and transitions in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada demonstrate that women live longer than men, but they are more likely to be poor, with less social support (Gadalla, 2010, p. 525), and failing health in older age (Christensen, Doblhammer, Rau & Vaupel, 2009). These conclusions are affirmed in an Australian context (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Azpitarte & Bodsworth, 2015). And controlling for other factors, both divorce and widowhood significantly increases a woman's risk of poverty (Glaser, Nicholls, Stutchbury, Price & Gjonca, 2009, p. 26), and loneliness (De Jong Gierveld, Keating & Fast, 2015). Ageism also actively discriminates against older women (Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008).

While this sociodemographic profile underscores the vulnerability of older, single women, it is often compounded in rural areas where poverty tends to be hidden and services under-resourced (Commings, 2004). But despite many older rural residents experiencing multiple types of disadvantage (Dorfman, Méndez & Osterhaus, 2009, p. 305; Keating, Eales & Phillips, 2013), most want to stay in their locality (Burholt & Naylor, 2005, p. 116). This desire is grounded in a strong rural identity, associated with a sense of belonging and attachment to a local community (Bowles, 2010). Here, duration of residence in a rural setting reinforces social bonds, local traditions and customs, and contributes to locational stability (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace & Hess, 2007, p.

³ Harvey and Rickards' papers do not address resilience in older women living in rural Australia specifically, but as both studies are based on a comprehensive evidence base, they have been selected as representative of the genre. Neither though, focuses on older women.

311). As these close social connections can positively mitigate against rural deprivation (Heenan, 2010), it is plausible that smaller, tightly coupled, rural communities will enhance an individual's resilience when dealing with sudden detrimental circumstances, such as living alone, health and/or employment related crises, and/or age discrimination.

The veneer of neighbourliness and mutual support that defines localism in small rural communities also masks social norms, values, and expectations of gender, rurality, and class that are replicated across generations (Bryant & Pini, 2009, p. 48). The insularity embedded in this culture is often expressed as a deeply held suspicion of outsiders. If newcomers to small Australian towns are perceived to threaten the community spirit, they may be classified as undesirable, unwelcome, and socially excluded by the long-term residents (Birchip Cropping Group, 2008, pp. 171-173; Patten, O'Meara & Dickson-Swift, 2015).

This rhetoric of community cohesion also shapes rural resilience (Hegney et al., 2007, pp. 9-10); a relationship that is supported by Buikstra et al. (2010) in one of the few Australian studies to unpack these nascent conceptions: "Interactions between individuals, the community, infrastructure, the environment and the economy [are key components] in the process of building resilience" (p. 976). Analogously, at a structural level, a combination of political, economic, societal, and environmental factors contribute to regional resilience (Christopherson, Michie & Tyler, 2010). A distillation of this literature provides a working definition of community rural resilience: the capacity and capability of a town and/or region to anticipate, prepare, develop, and transform effectively, and/or adapt to major change (Buikstra et al., 2010, pp. 977-978; Hudson, 2010). For Buikstra et al. (2010, p. 978) though, the role of individual community

members in rural resilience is central. Therefore, this study focuses on older women, while concomitantly respecting the evolving interdependencies between people and their environment.

Summing up, resilience in rural settings is an amalgam of the person, the community, and the remote environment—a social interaction suggesting that communities have distinct personalities and cultures that affect the residents, and vice versa (Flaherty & Brown, 2010). This approach, nesting individuals within the society (community) and its wider economic, political, and environmental settings, facilitates the operationalisation of the ageing, community, and resilience dynamic in older, single women, living in rural Australia. In this context, and with regard to the ageing demographic of these small towns (Hugo, 2013), it is noteworthy that there are no Australian studies about older, rural women's resilience.

1.2 Research Questions

To date, a consensual definition of resilience has not been determined, so “to understand the bases of...individual-context relations that may be characterised as...positive, adaptive or resilient...scholars must ask a complex, multi-part question” (Lerner, Agans, DeSouza & Gasca, 2013, p. 181). Accordingly, this exploratory study is designed to investigate a primary, and three ancillary research questions:

1.2.1 Primary research question. What is the influence, and interaction of temporal processes, and situational relations on the specific, and combined environment, and person related contributors to the development of resilience, in two cohorts of older, single women, living on their own, in a small rural community in Australia?

1.2.2 Ancillary research questions. Research question one focuses on the wider contextual and spatial, environment related, temporal and situational contributors to resilience in the two cohorts of older women. The second research question identifies the person related influences on resilience in the older women, in different situational relations, over time. Finally, research question three examines the intersecting elements of time, place, and social relationships, and how they relate to resilience for these two participant groups.

1.3 Research Design

The study is underpinned by a realist ontology to facilitate the logical integration of these research questions in terms of the research design (Staller, 2013, pp. 403-407). Very simplistically, the essence of realism presupposes a reality that is external to a person: interpreted in this study as the environment (external) related, and person related contributors to resilience. Social phenomena are believed to exist independently outside human experience, and social reality is due to the relationships and interactions between people and society (Boag, 2008, pp. 505-508).

Even though there is an extensive library devoted to (critical) realism, spearheaded by Bhaskar (2008), Archer (1996), and more recently, Elder-Vass (2010), situational or Australian realism (Anderson, 1962) is selected as a closer ontological and epistemological match with the researcher's personal world-view, and the research context. A major difference between critical and situational realism rests on the perception of layers of reality. For Anderson, reality exists on one level, whereas critical realism proposes that reality consists of different levels—in Bhaskar's theory, these are the empirical, the actual, and the real.

Two caveats are relevant at this point. Firstly, Anderson's philosophic writing is underdeveloped. It was subsumed by his editorial and teaching scholarship (Hibberd, 2009, pp. 66-67), leaving his work scattered in parochial journal articles, course syllabi, lecture notes, and/or student accounts (Cole, 2012). And while the Anderson archive at the University of Sydney was consulted for primary material, the following synopsis also utilises secondary sources for an additional interpretation of Anderson's thinking. Secondly, an in-depth explanation of situational realism is outside the scope of this study. (The reader is referred to Baker (1979, 1986) for a comprehensive analysis of Anderson's philosophy.)

Notwithstanding these qualifiers, Anderson's situational realism encompasses seven main tenants (Petocz & Mackay, 2013, p. 218). These are condensed into the following précis: Situational realism describes one level of reality (Hibberd, 2010, p. 38) that integrates the physical (structural) and social domains (Hibberd, 2009, p. 84). Although entities (things) stand alone in external relations with each other (Mackay & Petocz, 2010, p. 54), situations are complex and evolving spatiotemporal occurrences that are dynamically in flux (process) with respect to history and context (Petocz & Mackay, 2013, p. 218) As such, causality is pluralistic and non-linear, with the context (conditions or background) constrained, and constraining both cause and effect (Petocz & Mackay, 2013, p. 218). These principles encapsulate the definitions of situational relations, temporal processes, and their interdependencies as interpreted in this study. In essence, situational relations capture the relationships between a person and the external world, and temporal processes chronicle the change in these occurrences over time.

This ontological platform also accords with the broad landscape of resilience, namely, a dynamic, relational process involving complex, person and environment, contextual and temporal interactions, in response to situational crises, adversity, and change. And since “realist scholars have asserted that epistemology is always flavoured by ontological presuppositions or assertions” (Olsen, 2014, p. 103), then Anderson’s emphasis on the salience of critical inquiry in furthering knowledge, and clarifying the logic of relations (Hibberd, 2009, p.64), meets Staller’s (2013) advocacy of conceptually consistent research. In this study, situational realism is the relational bridge that connects epistemology, methodology, and methods to “acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and the other limits of reality” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

A consistent, sequential alignment within and across chapters is an important facet of the study’s research design as well. Each of the review (Chapter two), analytical (Chapters four to seven), and discussion (Chapter eight) chapters commence with temporal processes; proceed to situational relations; and lastly, examine the interaction of temporal processes and situational relations on the respective environment, person, and/or intersecting environment and person related contributors to the development of resilience in older, single women in rural Australia.

1.4 Thesis Outline

These interrelationships are illustrated in the following review of the chapters that comprise the thesis:

1.4.1 Chapter two: Literature review. “Rural women may suffer triple jeopardy—they are old, rural and female” (Dorfman et al., 2009, p. 305). Chapter two describes the literature underpinning this assertion with respect to older, single women, living alone in a small town in rural Australia. It begins by examining the phased evolution of resilience as a concept (temporal processes), and then relates the contemporary perceptions of resilience to older, single women, nested within a locally situated, rural milieu (situational relations).

The literature pertaining to resilience is highly diffuse, but after a comprehensive synthesis, it distils into the following definition: Resilience is a dynamic, relational process, with trajectories influenced by a complex range of events, actions, and interactions, offset by situational and structural forces, and personal issues and experiences. This broad conceptualisation is reflected in recent representations of resilience in later life as an interactive, negotiated process, influenced by the interplay of personal and environment related factors and resources, rather than a static personality trait (Wild et al., 2013, p. 144). These attributes of late life resilience often embrace wider sociocultural and situational dimensions, such as good quality relationships, integration in the community, and developmental coping and adaptive coping styles (Hildon, Montgomery, Blane, Wiggins & Netuveli, 2009).

Moreover, in an Australian rural setting, resilience is influenced by the individual, the community, and the remote environment (Buikstra et al., 2010; McManus et al., 2012; Stain et al., 2011). Here, resilience in women is portrayed as stoicism and endurance (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012). A culture of independence and self-reliance nurtures this strong, gendered, rural identity, together with the societal expectation of coping with

hardship, without substantive support (Harvey, 2007, pp. 7-9). Patriarchal constructions of rurality also suppress women's personal needs in deference to those of the home, family, and community (Alston, 2006; Harvey, 2007, p. 10, 2014, p. 610), thus signalling that rural women's agency is significantly curtailed by sociocultural norms.

1.4.2 Chapter three: Methodology. The methodological approach chosen for this study, ethnography, is presented in Chapter three. Since the research is exploratory, the methodology must be open, dynamic, and flexible to enable a loose unfolding of the empirical data (Punch, 2014, pp. 26-27, 31), while maintaining a coherent research design, and following procedural and analytical rigour and transparency. Consequently, the chapter systematically maps the rationale for the research design; strategy for the sample frame (selection of the site and participants); data sources and collection; and the methods of analysis (community revisit, Framework method, and intersectionality). Finally, ethical integrity, and quality assurance are considered, along with an account of the researcher reflexivity.

Ethnography is a methodology designed to reveal the social world of others (Bajc, 2012, p. 82), and is “best suited to the study of multiplicity, complexity, contingency, ambiguity, and indeterminacy in ways of living” (Bajc, 2012, p. 73). It also aligns with Wild et al.'s (2013, p. 150) approach for uncovering the contextual and collective scales of resilience in older age, where individual resilience is situated within overlapping and interdependent national, community, and family envelopes. Accordingly, an ethnographic study of resilience in older, single women in rural Australia was conducted between November 2011 and December 2012.

Historical, and census documents, a previous study of the community (Dempsey, 1990, 1992), together with contemporary information, contributed to comparative demographic, political, and socioeconomic profiles; key informant interviews provided community, social, and rural contextualisations; and personal biographies in the form of journals or interviews added individual level information. These data sources were supplemented with extensive field notes based on in-depth participant observation by the researcher.

Women aged 55 years of age and older, single (widowed, separated, divorced, and/or never married), and living in the town or within the area boundary, were eligible to participate. Potential participants were identified primarily through personal contact, and secondarily, via other participants and/or gatekeepers (Clark, 2011). In spite of the researcher's initial intention to sample across age ranges, the participants coalesced into two natural demographic pools—a late middle-aged group of women aged between 55 and 65 years, and an older old cohort who were 80 years of age and over.

This dichotomy enabled a differential comparison of the older old women (long-term, rural residents) with the late middle-aged, C-change newcomers, as well as their interactions with the community. It also facilitated the researcher's dual insider and outsider integration into the community, and across the three neighbouring comparator towns: as an insider with a local, rural background in common with the older old cohort; but concomitantly, sharing the sociodemographic profile of the late middle-aged outsiders.

1.4.3 Chapter four: Environment related contributors to resilience—the community. Chapter four addresses the first research question (Section 1.2.2) by

investigating the interrelationship between the wider environment, the community, and resilience. For instance, small, tightly coupled, rural communities are alleged to enhance older residents' resilience by providing resources and opportunities to mitigate detrimental circumstances (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012). However, "Anyone who has lived in several country towns knows that while these towns have certain similarities, each town has its own individual atmosphere."⁴

These community⁵ characteristics and interdependencies are examined in this chapter. At first, the town's historical and cultural development (temporal processes) is traced; and then both cohorts of older women are situated in this context through their relational sense of place attachment and place identity (situational relations). The chapter concludes by teasing out the town's response to sociodemographic and associated structural challenges in terms of its community resilience, specifically, social vitality, political efficacy, and economic viability. Neighbouring towns are also appraised with these indicators to compare and verify the findings.

An overview of the town's developmental trajectory shows that its historical standing as a political and economic centre of power has slipped. In 2011, the town occupied a position that recorded the lowest index of disadvantage in comparison with adjacent, smaller towns. This relatively recent decline was attributed to "rural depopulation, technological change, environmental stress, collapsing international markets, rising debt" (Davidson, 2005, p. 53), resulting in a static economy, and depleted political status. To counter this situation, the town adopted a relatively conservative

⁴ Location specific, historical sources are not referenced throughout the thesis for anonymity reasons.

⁵ While the nomenclature relating to community is explicated in Chapter four, the following conventions are used for this study: town and place refer to the physical and structural components of a location, whereas community relates to its broader sociocultural relationships. In the wider literature, community is the default term for general (non-specific) references.

strategy of preferential young family in-migration in an attempt to restore its former elite status. As a result, the C-change newcomers (the late middle-aged, single women) were sidelined.

For the older women in the town, these demographic and situational changes were recast as a weakened sense of community, a fragmented place identity, and a relational place attachment. Nevertheless, many of the older old, long-term local⁶ women remained steadfastly committed to the town, valuing its age-friendly infrastructure and services. Yet, when asked about the town's future, they opined that the town would survive, but it would not evolve, invoking a scenario of *survival by stagnation*. In effect, the town's response to change (resilience response) was oriented towards resuming its previous elevated state, rather than proactively seeking out new opportunities and solutions as promoted in the resilience literature (Chapter two) and pursued in neighbouring communities. This "withstanding force" (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 8) exerted a dampening effect on change initiatives, and failed to recognise and/or capitalise on the older women's lifelong resilience experience and expertise.

The fifth and sixth chapters explore individual resilience in the 16 older old, and 14 late middle-aged women respectively as per research question two (Section 1.2.2).

An identical sequence is followed in both chapters: the first step consists of inductively tracing the women's life course in the context of their trajectory of advantage and/or disadvantage, and their responses to crises and adversity; next, these real world situational accounts are cross-checked for congruence against the attributes of later life resilience derived from the literature; and lastly, temporal processes (life course) are

⁶ A local is a lifelong resident of the town and/or area, with a local family lineage of at least five generations.

juxtaposed with the situational relations (resilience responses) to formulate predominant and anomalous profiles of resilience. A comparison of the cohorts in terms of the women's life trajectories, situational responses to disadvantage, and resilience profiles completes Chapter six.

1.4.4 Chapter five: Person related contributors to resilience—the older old

women. Of the 16 older old women, only three women experienced relatively crisis-free lives. The remaining 13 presented a surprisingly uniform, hourglass shaped life trajectory until older age, namely: a relatively carefree, idyllic childhood; change (marriage) imposed by World War Two; a volatile middle life, punctuated by individual adversity and crises; change (retirement) due to inheritance norms; followed by successful adaptation to singleness and ageing in a new environment. When confronted with repeated hardship during their middle years, the women persisted in bouncing back to regain, and retain a sense of equilibrium in their lives. On relocating to the town in later life, they adopted an accommodative adaptation to retirement, and their new personal, social, and structural circumstances.

Although the majority of the women approached crises and adversity in accord with the intrapersonal, interpersonal, existential, and social attributes of resilience cited in the literature, their responses were significantly attenuated by outside influences. The addition of the new attributes of resilience (personal integrity, courage, inner strength, and self-reflection) detected in this study did not diminish this effect, resulting in a muted, passively reactive acceptance of life's challenges. In this predominant, pragmatically realistic profile of resilience, external forces override the women's personal agency.

By comparison, three of these 13 older old women actively and intentionally acted to change their futures. As such, their proactive profile of resilience conformed to the literature on resiliency, where the decisive role of personal agency is purported to override societal impositions and structural constraints, and positively remodel the life course. Two variations of this anomalous profile are evident: two women are mavericks, and forcefully rebelled against personal setbacks, and/or external barriers to achieving their goal; while the other adopted a more quietly introspective, reflectively active, approach to improving her situation.

1.4.5 Chapter six: Person related contributors to resilience—the late middle-aged women. Conversely, childhood for all of the 14 late middle-aged women was marked by personal and social rejection. This poor start was curtailed by active rebellion in the mid to late teens and early adulthood, which led to a series of failed relationships and divorce for all but two of the women. The women's adult years were characterised by recurrent crises and prolonged adversity, especially, severe financial hardship. In their late middle age, the women suddenly and proactively decided to start a new life in the study town. But because of selective discrimination, and persistent societal expectations attached to the women's age, singleness, gender, and newcomer status, their hope for a better future unravelled when they were systematically excluded from community life.

Against this lifetime of accumulated disadvantage, the women's resilience responses displayed an arduous, tenacious, yet generally positive, upward trend—a trajectory of personal growth. This pattern of resilience is distinguished by active agency (actively reactive and proactive action), supported by inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection. Ironically, after the women's midlife catharsis, and

subsequent new beginning in the town, their jagged pattern of developmental coping was methodically undermined by restrictive rural norms and local values. These situational limitations *collude* in the women's social isolation, their abrogation of personal agency, and ultimately, a truncated profile of resilience.

Only three of the late middle-aged women portrayed different trajectories of resilience. Throughout their lives, these women demonstrated a proactively focused commitment, determination, and drive to overcome obstacles to their long-term ambitions. Therefore, their successful life course is complemented with proactively focused profiles of resilience.

When most of these late middle-aged and older old women are confronted with challenging individual, social, and structural contexts during their lives, they represent the Australian ideal in their fortitude and determination (resiliency) to counter these impediments. The following chapter analyses the impact of these temporal and situational influences on the synergistic relationship between the environment (community) and the person in shaping the resilience of both cohorts of older women.

1.4.6 Chapter seven: Environment, and person related contributors to resilience—the older women in the community. This chapter focuses on research question three (Section 1.2.2) to examine the intersecting elements of time, place, and social relationships, and how they relate to resilience in the two groups of older women.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) provides the analytical scope to tease out the situational intermix of resilience, the older women, and the community over time. It also unpacks the relational interaction between the town's social structures and the women's agency: "the epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating" (Haraway, 1988, p.

589). These “situated knowledges” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581) are depicted through the historical and cultural status of women in the town (social positions); the agentic resiliency of each cohort in relation to these local structures (social positioning); and the women’s positionality—the dynamic interplay between these cohorts vis-à-vis the person (agentic) and environment (external and structural) related contributors to resilience.

A combination of social structures, specifically age, gender, marital, and outsider status, intersect to suppress and repress the older old women, and isolate and exclude the late middle-aged women. Furthermore, even though nearly all of the older old women are local, their marginalised social positioning leaves them with a limited social identity, while requiring that they continue to fulfil their social and civic role in society. On the other hand, since most of the late middle-aged women are regarded as outsiders, they are systematically curtailed from fully participating and contributing to the community. Here, the older old women are *boxed in* and the late middle-aged women *boxed out* by their positionality in the town.

Where social position (structure) is a significant shaper of social positioning (agency), it is not surprising that the women’s predominant resilience profiles reflect these temporal and situational relations: the pragmatically realistic profile of the older old women, and a truncated profile in the case of the late middle-aged women. As such, the older old women minimise and accept their *lot in life*, and for them, resilience is a reactive response to restore and maintain equilibrium. For the late middle-aged women who are alienated by the community, resilience equates to *staying the course* (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012, p. 104).

Despite these oppressive strictures, the social relations between the cohorts exhibit subtle signs of change in terms of the women's resiliency. When their social positioning is perceived to be under threat from the late middle-aged women, the older old cohort springs into action to preserve their social functionality, and by association, their value to the community. Instead of staying in the background and sustaining *the* status quo, these older-old women are now protecting *their* status quo. This personal and purposeful action moves beyond these women's characteristically passively reactive response to a crisis, and trends towards a more forthright, proactive resilience response.

Alternatively, the late middle-aged women attempt to create a more favourable positionality by comparing themselves to the older old women, and the younger, unemployed people in the town. This action signals an emerging awareness of the town's social hierarchy—a critical step in understanding and relating to the local community, and rural context, and maps a potential way to re-engage with the community through a more adaptive pattern of resilience.

1.4.7 Chapter eight: Discussion. Chapter eight presents a capstone⁷ (summation) of the study's findings with respect to the relevant literature, and the primary (overarching) research question (Section 1.2.1).

As stated previously, Chapter four to Chapter seven focuses on the environment (community) and/or person (older women) dimensions of resilience, with each chapter cycling through temporal processes, situational relations and then their integrated effect. Rather than discussing the research findings according to these separate environment and/or person foci, this chapter interrogates the results by sequentially foregrounding the

⁷ Capstone relates to the North American practice of using a comprehensive, culminating project to conclude an educational programme.

time and situational influences on resilience, across the person and environment nexus. Hence, the first section of the discussion is framed around temporal processes impacting resilience in the community, then the older women, and lastly, the older women in the community. The next section centres on the situational relations of resilience in these community, older women, and community and older women contexts; while the intersection of temporal processes and situational relations on the person and environment related contributors to resilience comprise the third section. Section four revisits the primary research question in the form of a general discussion.

Relevant literature is inserted into the discussion when appropriate to expedite the interpretation of results, and draw out areas of convergence, divergence, exceptions, and new findings.

The study provides a window into the temporal and situational interrelationships between resilience, the person, and the community for older, single women, living in a small town in rural Australia. It indicated that these women manifest stoic resiliency when confronted with challenging personal and external (environment related) contexts, thereby conforming to the Australian iconic imagery, and supporting the conclusions drawn from research by Harvey (2007) and Rickards (2012), among others. However, the efficacy of this resilience response was undermined by the women's marginalisation and/or exclusion from social relationships, material resources, and community settings (Provencher, Keating, Roos & Warburton, 2012), propelled by restrictive, rural and local historical and cultural customs.

Consequently, the community signifies a constraining force, both in terms of its stalled response to crises and change, and its passive indifference to the older women as

exemplars of resilience. These persistent and potent social norms and structures exert an oppressive, dampening influence on the women's agentic resiliency; thus contradicting the prevailing literature where resilience is widely expressed as a positive and progressive, active process.

1.4.8 Chapter nine: Conclusion. The final chapter, Chapter nine, summarises the main outcomes from the thesis. It then considers the study's contribution to the scholarly literature in relation to limitations and outstanding issues. Questions for further research are proposed by way of the concluding comments.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In Australia, resilience represents a heroic signifier in the national, cultural imaginary (Butera, 2008; Tranter & Donoghue, 2014). Furthermore, Australian rural women are widely perceived as resilient—stoic, resourceful, and used to hardship, especially when confronted with harsh physical conditions (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012). This stereotype is suggestive of a symbiotic person and environment relationship, with resilience in a rural context mutually shaped by the setting and the individual, over time (Buikstra et al., 2010; McManus et al., 2012; Stain et al., 2011).

This chapter describes the literature underpinning these claims in relation to older women living alone in a small town in rural Australia. It commences with a review of the developmental trajectory of resilience as a concept (temporal processes), and then relates the contemporary understandings (situational relations) of resilience to older, single women (Section 2.2.2), nested within a locally situated rural milieu in Section 2.2.1.

While every effort was made to obtain Australian sources, evidence from research in Europe and the Americas has been included to supplement this background literature, and to provide a comparative international benchmark for the Australian data.

2.1 Temporal Processes

The developmental trajectory of the resilience follows Masten's (2011) four evolutionary phases:

2.1.1 Phase one: Resilience—a diffuse and malleable concept. With definitions extending from a vague “ability to withstand bad things” (Davis, 2014, p. 5) to the more precise “capacity of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and

disturbances as a result of social, political or environmental change” (Adger, 2000, p. 347), resilience is at risk of becoming a chimera (Pendall et al., 2010). To an observant consumer of popular culture, the notion of resilience litters disparate contexts such as spaces and places (Walker, Abel, Anderies & Ryan, 2009), organisations (Ledesma, 2014), and security (de Lint & Chazal, 2013). Similarly, diverse applications extend from the structural rigour and redundancy in engineering and materials science (Hollnagel, Woods & Leveson, 2006), to the responsiveness of entrepreneurial resilience in fostering economic recovery (Huggins & Thompson, 2015). This definitional quagmire is muddled further with widely diffuse understandings of resilience, ranging from the happiness and subjective well-being of positive psychology (Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2015), to the small town politics of disaster resilience (Irwin, 2009).

Over the past decade, numerous authors (Atkinson, Martin & Rankin, 2009; Bonanno, 2012; Bottrell, 2009; Luthar, Sawyer & Brown, 2006; Manyena, 2006; Mohaupt, 2008; Plodinec, 2009; Rutter, 2006; Ungar, 2011; Windle, 2011) have attempted to redress this “faddism” (Atkinson et al., 2009, p. 144), and counter Rutter’s (1999) indictment: “Resilience as the Millennium Rorschach.” Two approaches predominate the literature:

Reductionist. Some studies condensed the broad representations of resilience into typologies, including Bahadur, Ibrahim, and Tanner’s (2010) ten characteristics, and the tripartite categories of Brand and Jax (2007), and Strunz (2012). These initiatives subsequently spawned a debate about the relative merits and drawbacks of definitional precision and stability, versus ambivalent and vague “Janus-faced” (Brand & Jax, 2007) depictions of resilience. On one hand, the operational advantages of empirical clarity are

conveyed through the proliferation of instruments designed to measure resilience (Ahern, Keihl, Sole & Byers, 2006; Windle, Bennett & Noyes, 2011); while on the other, the advocates of a loosely indecisive portrayal of resilience attest to its value in facilitating interdisciplinary praxis (Downes, Miller, Barnett, Glaister & Ellmore, 2013), interpretative understanding (Brand & Jax, 2007), and creative problem solving (Strunz, 2012).

Comparative. Although there is a wealth of research about attributes that parallel resilience, such as flourishing, hardiness, thriving, and coping, very few articles connect these concepts. Notable exceptions include Leipold and Greve (2009), Rutter (2007), and Gloria and Steinhardt's (2014) cross-examinations of coping and resilience; Maddi's (2013) analysis of resilience and hardiness; and two early companion articles exploring resilience and thriving by O'Leary (1998) and Carver (1998). Here, resilience is variously conceived as a link between coping and development (Leipold & Greve, 2009), the outcome of hardiness (Maddi, 2013, p. 9), and a rung in a hierarchical ladder of thriving (Carver, 1998; O'Leary, 1998).

Since coping is most commonly affiliated with resilience in the literature (Folkman, 2010a; Schetter & Dolbier, 2011), it warrants a deeper investigation to draw out areas of convergence and divergence. This comparison is based on Folkman (2010a), and Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck's (2007) compilations on coping, and a synthesis of the researcher's personal library of approximately 2,500 academic articles about resilience.

On the surface, coping and resilience appear remarkably similar, with both concepts associated with stress. An overview of the literature about coping (Ziegelmann

& Lippke, 2009) reveals that coping and stress are dyadic. When a situation is appraised as stressful, an individual copes through regulatory processes, or active re/action, with a repertoire of responses; most frequently, support seeking, problem solving, distraction, and escape (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Analogously, Bottrell (2009, p. 323) defines resilience as the competence and capacity to cope effectively with sudden and/or cumulative stress and adversity, and recover from trauma. Multiple levels of analysis are common to each concept as well. According to Masten (2007, p. 923), resilience is predicated on different levels of analysis and varying timescales, while Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007, pp. 137-138) posit that coping is a function of time and scale, an “adaptive process on the scale of developmental time, an episodic process across intermediate time [days and months] and an interactive process in real time” (p. 137).

The concepts are also most differentiated at these scope and scalar levels. Coping may extend beyond the self to encompass interpersonal, societal, and situational relations. However its focal point is always the person, thus locating coping firmly within the psychological domain. In addition to this “disciplinary isolation” (Folkman, 2010c, p. 461), coping is often presented as deterministic, static, and linear in research (Litt, Tennen & Affleck, 2010, pp. 387-406), whereas resilience is governed by changing, and evolving, temporal processes and pluralistic scalar dimensions (Wu et al., 2013). Another locus of difference is the emotional orientation of the concepts. Resilience is widely perceived as a positive effect, but coping is largely attached to negative emotions. Some conceptual contradictions are evident in these distinctions though: Firstly, coping’s negative overlay is at odds with its health and well-being affiliations, and secondly, Folkman (2010c, p. 460) advocates a representation of coping as more dynamic and

transactional, resilience-like (processual), yet describes resilience as a product of coping (Folkman, 2010b, p.3).

Despite these entanglements, the literature signifies that resilience is a preferred, optimal path and/or outcome, with coping functioning as an intermediary—an emotional and/or behavioural enabler that facilitates the resilience passageway and/or endpoint (Gloria & Steinhart, 2014).

While acknowledging the previous conceptual contributions, two pivotal categories; the defining characteristics, and conditionality of resilience, continue to be unresolved: When considering definitions and classifications, it is uncertain if resilience is an: outcome, process, or agenda (Bristow & Healy, 2014; Manyena, 2006, pp. 438-439; Mohaupt, 2008, p. 65); trait, state, behaviour, or pattern; personality variable (Atkinson et al., 2009, p. 139; Bonanno, 2012, p. 754; Rutter, 2007); deficit or asset model (Mohaupt, 2008, p. 67); distribution of vulnerability (Wild et al., 2013, p. 152); latent, exceptional, or normative “ordinary magic” (Masten, 2001); and/or an (in)finite condition (Rutter 2006, pp. 9-10).

In terms of conditions and dependencies, the relative influence of: social context and cultural modifiers (Bottrell, 2009, pp. 324-325, 331; Mohaupt, 2008, p. 66); salient, enduring, and generative risk, vulnerability, and promotive indicators, and destination trajectories such as resistance, recovery, and reconfiguration (Norris, 2010, pp. 3-4) on resilience, is also in doubt. Clearly, many contentious issues remain.

Nonetheless, a further distillation of this extensive literature suggests that in very general terms, resilience is associated with a positive capacity to withstand and/or adjust to adversity and crises.

2.1.2. Phase two: Resilience—differentiated and fractured domains. For Berkes and Ross (2013), this consensus masks a significant rift in the academic domains of resilience. Within academia, the study of resilience is primarily located in the disciplines of psychology and ecology. Psychological resilience adopts a development perspective centred on two related responses to an individual's perception of life stressors—coping and bouncing back (Smith, Tooley, Christopher & Kay, 2010). Alternatively, the ecological view of resilience is embedded in a systems approach that encompasses multiple layers and complex iterative loops. These interdependences enable an organism to adjust to threats, or disturbances to its equilibrium (Holling, 2001); a dynamic process of adaptation and transformation that is often symbolised as “panarchy” (Gunderson & Holling, 2001, p. 21).

These domains are reviewed sequentially to articulate with the relevant chapters and contexts of the thesis: hence, (social) ecological resilience aligns with Chapter four, and psychological resilience relates to Chapters five and six.

2.1.2.1 Social ecological resilience. Resilience in the ecological domain is grounded in a complex, adaptive systems structure (Holling, 2001), and tends to be tethered to research associated with global challenges, including climate change (Nelson, 2011), environmental sustainability (Walker et al., 2009), and emergencies and disasters (Crowley & Elliot, 2012). It is also tied to three contiguous concepts—risk, vulnerability, and adaptation in terms of their reciprocal and/or antithetical relationships, and mediating and moderating influences, over varying time scales (Aven, 2011).

At an ecosystem level, resilience, risk, vulnerability, and adaptation are often associated with relatively mechanistic, instrumental interpretations. However, these

demarcations are gradually becoming more expansive and fluid to account for social and personal level impacts (Biggs et al., 2012, p. 436; Manyena, 2006, p. 444), as in Redman, Grove, and Kuby's (2004) juxtaposition of the social dimensions of ecological change with the ecological dimension of social change. And in spite of Adger's (2000) initial concern that the complexity of panarchy mitigates against clear relationships between global and social systems, and Davidson's (2013) later doubts about the relationship of resilience and social systems, an integrated social ecological framework has evolved. It is accompanied by an emergent conceptualisation of social resilience (Folke, 2006), as illustrated in the following examples:

According to Amit and Fleischer (2005):

Social resilience is represented by the level of the society's general performance in the public sphere, which is expressed in the area of education, welfare, democracy and government, as well as in the society's ability to cope with internal schisms and conflicts while protecting its basic structure and goals. (p. 92)

These authors then developed a multilevel model of social resilience, using bridging and bonding social capital to empirically operationalise positive and/or negative relationships between the levels of society (p. 100).

Friedland (2005, p. 7) also emphasised a societal and multilevel perspective. In his conception, the core capacities of social resilience are oppositional: firstly, hardiness, toughness, and resistance; and secondly, elasticity and flexibility. Therefore, social resilience is a society's ability to withstand adversity with its values and institutions remaining intact. Moreover, the society is enabled to cope with a changing, sometimes hostile environment, by re/adjusting in new and innovative ways (p. 8).

Similarly, Cacioppo, Reis, and Zautra (2011, p. 44) defined social resilience as intrinsically multilevel. They adopted a person centred focus that bridged individual qualities such as fairness, compassion, and openness, with interpersonal and collective resources and capacities. In their view, the uniqueness of social resilience rests on coordinated effort, where individuals pool their personal resources to collaboratively participate in enabling and enhancing collective well-being in the face of adversity. Individual resources are “effective primarily when mutual and reciprocal, and when social tasks and situations encourage their expression” (p. 45). Depending on the architecture of the social situation, resilient behaviours can result in virtuous cycles that promote group problem solving and solidarity, or conversely, non-resilient behaviours lead to downwardly spiralling group dissent and deterioration (p. 45).

Finally, Obrist, Pfeiffer, and Henley (2010) linked inter(national), intermediate, and household levels to associate resilience-building with an individual’s access to different forms of social capital in specific social fields (p. 288). As such, social resilience is allied with an individual’s capacities to deal with threats, either coping and adjusting (reactive capacity), and/or seeking and creating alternatives (proactive capacity) to ultimately develop increased competence and a positive outcome (p. 289). Here too, the authors underscore the relativistic “dimensions and dynamics of resilience processes and manifestations” (p. 290).

In essence, resilience in social ecological systems encompasses three capacities: to absorb perturbations and retain a similar function; to self-organise; and to adapt and transform through learning (Adger et al., 2011, p. 758). And when interviewed by Transition Culture (2010), Adger also proposed that high resilience in societies is

matched by high levels of social capital, community interaction, collective action, and self-efficacy, with fewer marginalized and excluded groups.

The recent upsurge of research into community resilience is perhaps a *test bed* for these person and environment interdependencies (Berkes & Ross, 2013, p. 6; Herrenkohl, 2013). At present, a consensual definition of community resilience remains elusive, but for a comprehensive appraisal of its developmental progress, the reader is referred to Kulig, Edge, Townshend, Lightfoot, and Reimer (2013). A survey of this currently sparse literature shows that community resilience is beset with the theoretical fuzziness and practical blurring (Kulig et al., 2013, p. 772) that is common to nascent concepts (Stirling, 2010, p. 1030). This lack of clarity is evidenced by: overlap or substitution of community resilience with similar approaches such as community development (Zautra, Hall & Murray, 2008); context dependent and diffuse determinants of community resilience (Chaskin, 2007), with few robust measures (Kulig et al., 2013, p. 765); scalar imprecision, where community is replaced by regional (Bristow & Healy, 2014) or local resilience (Shaw & Maythorne, 2013) as equivalent entities and/or levels of analysis; and openly contested as in Davidson's (2013) critique of Berkes and Ross' (2013) emergent model of community resilience.

The conceptual coherence of community resilience is also severely impeded by the ambiguous meanings of community (Mulligan, 2015), amplified in a rural setting (Skerratt, 2013). Rural (community) resilience is transposed to an Australian context later in this chapter (Section 2.2.1), and subsequently analysed in the community selected for this study in Chapter four.

Nevertheless, the literature broadly supports Wilson's (2010) notion of multifunctionality, and Forgette and Van Boening's (2010) proposition that community resilience is a collective assessment of various attributes (political, economic, environmental, cultural, social, and personal) that are dynamically incorporated into a vertical structure, as modelled by Chandra et al. (2013). Community resilience is also associated with temporal processes and situational relations (Pendall et al., 2010, pp. 79-80, 83); the existence, development, and engagement of networked resources that shape a community's response to change, uncertainty, and unpredictability in the natural or social environment (Magis, 2010, p. 402; Sherrieb, Norris & Galea, 2010, p. 228).

2.1.2.2 Psychological resilience. On an individual level, resilience is associated with attributes such as positive relationships and social support, flexibility and even temperament, self-esteem and self-efficacy, sense of humour, high expectations and self-determination (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007, pp. 75-77), self-control, persistence (Howe, Smajdor & Stöckl, 2012), optimism, and hope (Norris, 2010, p. 8). The relative proportions or weights of each factor are prioritised, and/or adjusted according to the time sensitive and situation sensitive dimensions of the life course (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013, p. 335).

Life course research is already well placed in sociology (Mayer, 2009). Trajectories selectively isolate specific age, period, and cohorts, or alternatively encompass the entire lifespan. When combined with significant transitions or turning points, the complex dynamic of internal and external influences, upstream and downstream effects, and protective and predictive contributors to resilience throughout a life journey, can be disentangled as follows:

2.1.2.2.1 Early years. For children and adolescents, psychological resilience coalesces around personal confidence, security, and self-efficacy engendered through close family relationships with at least one caring adult (Luthar et al., 2006, p. 111). Much of this literature distinguishes between protective, promotive, and vulnerability characteristics apropos countering the negative effects of adverse life circumstances in different cultural and situational contexts (Henley, 2010), such as poverty in rural Australia (National Rural Health Alliance, 2013). Interventions designed to compensate for these disadvantages (Evans, Marsh & Weigel, 2010) tease out moderators, mediators, and outcomes of resilience, for example, parenting style (Alvord & Grados, 2005), and a rural environment (Chawla, Keena, Pevec & Stanley, 2014; Wells & Evans, 2003). However many of these interventions are not empirically grounded in research (Ong et al., 2009, p. 1779), leading to a mismatch of theory and practice (Masten, 2011, p. 503). Despite this inadequacy, Masten (2011, pp. 501-503) reinforces the importance of positive processes at all levels.

2.1.2.2.2 Transition to adulthood. Burt and Paysnick's (2012) literature review of young people transiting to adulthood substantiates the value of these protective and promotive influences (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012, p. 2299). Strong positive relationships are critical (Burt & Paysnick, 2012, p. 298) for emerging adults "seeking safe and secure connections...finding opportunities to test out identities...and building a sense of agency" (Munford & Sanders, 2014, pp. 7-12).

The well-documented challenges of emergent adulthood are exacerbated for rural youth out-migrating from their home communities to further their educational and/or employment opportunities. This is especially salient in rural and remote Australia

(Alloway, 2009; Gabriel, 2006), where the rural-to-urban transition is “a risky business” (Jones, 2004) for young women.

Overall, resilience during childhood and adolescence is synergistic, and encompasses multiple interconnected pathways that extend across different biological, psychosocial, structural, and cultural systems (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013, p. 335).

2.1.2.2.3 Adulthood (midlife). An integrated approach also underpins much of the burgeoning research relating to resilience in adults (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013), as evident in studies of well-being and health throughout the life course. Even though a detailed examination of this voluminous literature exceeds the remit of this study, it is important to recognise the symbiosis between resilience and the biopsychosocial determinants of mental (Davydov, Stewart, Ritchie & Chaudieu, 2010), physical, and emotional (Ong, Zautra & Reid, 2009) health. Many of these studies also embrace theoretical models and conceptual distinctions that are applicable to resilience, for instance, Antonovsky’s (1987) sense of coherence construct that “provides a cognitive frame for...making sense of negative events” (Silverstein & Heap, 2015, p. 98). Four of these crossover articles have been selected as particularly informative for the present exploration of resiliency trajectories. Collectively, and with some overlap, they also address Mohaupt’s (2008) five deficiencies of resilience research initially referenced in Chapter one. These articles are signposted with brackets in the following quote:

There are relatively few studies investigating resilience among adults and old people...complex adversities—multiple events occurring simultaneously (for example unemployment, low income, poor housing, bad health and family breakdown)—are rarely analysed together [Ferraro, Shippee & Schafer,

2009]...most use short-term timeframes [Ryff et al., 2012]...more research with different levels of analysis such as networks, organisations and policies is important [Bonanno & Diminich, 2013]...and finally, there is a lack of comparative studies [Norris, Tracy & Galea, 2009]. (Mohaupt, 2008, p. 67)

For consistency, the articles are reviewed in descending order.

Reductionist. Ferraro et al. (2009) moved beyond the accepted explanations of advantage accumulated over the life course, and the stress and coping dyad, to explore why some people thrive in unfavourable conditions. To understand this apparent paradox, they inquired into how lives are shaped by the accumulation of risk, available resources, and human agency (Schafer, Shippee & Ferraro, 2009, p. 233). The authors then conceived the life course as a series of exposures to adversity, and isolated three resilient outcomes that could be experienced in one trajectory—overcoming adversity, maintaining stability, and decline (Schafer et al., 2009, p. 246).

Ryff and colleagues (2012) analysed the data obtained through the MIDUS (Midlife in the US) longitudinal study of American adults to differentiate between different types of resilience. They identified three variants that related to the maintenance of health and well-being in the presence of inequality, ageing, and targeted life challenges. In the first instance, the disadvantage conferred by inequality in the form of low educational and socioeconomic standing was buffered with psychological resources, such as self-acceptance, a shift and persist approach, cognitive engagement, and positive interpersonal relations (pp. 795-796). Changes in subjective health, functional abilities, and psychological well-being in ageing adults were also analysed for resilient outcomes (pp. 797-798). A combination of psychosocial attributes, including purpose in life and

environmental mastery, and pro-social behaviours (altruism and volunteering) delayed or compensated for age related declines in physical and mental health. The third type of resilience emerged as a response to acute shocks, for example, cancer and bereavement, interspersed across the life course (pp. 798-800).

Comparative. By contrast, Bonanno and Diminich (2013) examined the trajectories of minimal impact, and emergent resilience, in adults exposed to isolated and/or single incident traumas. As such, they differentiated between resilience that accompanies chronic versus acute adversity. Their results demonstrated that even though chronically stressful and challenging circumstances alter a wide range of physiologic and psychological functions, these changes are relative, and tempered by time and specific situations. For these authors, emergent resilience is the distal outcome that follows a prolonged struggle with chronic adversity (p. 380), whereas minimal impact resilience is a short-term stable trajectory of healthy adjustment to one-off, potentially traumatic events, such as the World Trade Centre incident (pp. 385-386).

9/11 is also one of the points of reference used by Norris et al. (2009) to analyse stress related health trajectories following mass disasters. In their study, the researchers compared adults in two major cities impacted by catastrophic disasters, and uncovered four trajectories of stress: resistance, resilience, recovery, and chronic dysfunction. These responses differed primarily in terms of degree and rate of improvement, as gauged by post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology (pp. 2192, 2197). The use of post-traumatic stress disorder as a surrogate measure of resilience is an unexpected choice, considering the availability of an empirical Multidimensional Trauma Recovery and Resilience instrument (Harvey et al., 2003; Liang, Tummala-Narra, Bradley & Harvey,

2007). Other resilience scales normed for adults, namely: the Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993); the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003); the Resilience Scale for Adults (Friborg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge & Martinussen, 2003) and the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008), are also widely in use.

Taken together, these studies suggest that individual trajectories of resilience will differ “across demographic profiles, personality, life history, past and current stressors, social and economic resources” (Bonnano & Diminich, 2013, p. 287).

2.1.2.2.4 Transition to older age. The traditional view of older age is typically depicted as a downward curve characterised by decline and loss (Hildon et al., 2009). This deterioration is purported to undermine all aspects of a person’s lifestyle through deleterious physical, social, emotional, and economic changes. Of late, this negative attitude has been challenged by new research into the ageing process (Pruchno, 2015), and re-worked into more positively oriented retirement planning, wellness, and successful ageing programmes. These initiatives have also triggered lifestyle choices, including residential mobility in later life (Clark, 2013; Sander & Bell, 2014), and the related C-change phenomenon of late middle-age return and/or in-migration to seaside and rural communities in Australia (Costello, 2006).

With respect to this recent shift in age related perceptions and behaviours, it is surprising that resilience and its emphasis on a holistic approach and positive processes (Masten, 2011, pp. 501-503) is not equally represented in the literature. Ong et al.’s (2009, pp. 1792-1796) conception of positive emotions and a resilience cascade in later adulthood reinforces this omission. For them, resilience is “generative of other assets, catalysing or setting into motion a cascade of positive daily experiences” (p. 1795).

Wilhelm and Geerlings (2014) also adopted a strengths-based, positive psychology approach in their research into the strategies used by baby boomers [*sic*] to transit to later life. They interpreted high resilience as the ability to achieve a highly satisfied life, and by extension, to age successfully in spite of a history of repeat episodes of depression. But by delimiting the scope of their study to psychiatry, and using a proxy (life satisfaction) to measure resilience, their conclusions have limited generalisability.

Although Henning (2011) does not directly focus on older age, she provides one of the few papers to discuss resilience in terms of the developmental transitions of adulthood. Resilience, for her, is a healthy way of emerging from life's challenges. Henning anchors her interpretation of resilience in the resolution of flux and disequilibrium encountered during everyday living, where resilience is achieved by struggling well, working through, and learning from, these disequilibria (p. 448). This route of personal growth is substantiated by Leonard and Burns' (1999, 2006) examination of turning points in the lives of middle-aged and older Australian women.

Dupre and George (2011) studied adults transitioning from midlife to older age as well. These authors focused on the puzzle of some middle-aged and older adults' exceptional (good) health in the face of long-term, low socioeconomic standing. Their results indicated that a complex combination of demographic, familial, socioeconomic, behavioural, psychological, and biological indicators buffered this social disadvantage; an outcome that the authors attributed to resilience (pp. 135-136). Their appeal to "understand how and why some disadvantaged individuals are able to sustain exceptional health into old age" (p. 137) signals the next phase of the resilience trajectory.

2.1.3 Phase three: Resilience–promotive and protective qualities. Measures of resilience, and life course patterns of risk and protective influences, were also specified by Dupre and George (2011, p. 137) as high priorities for research into resiliency in older age.

2.1.3.1 Older age. A synopsis of the literature about resilience in later life coalesces into two categories as previously:

Reductionist. From Brandtstädter and Greve (1994), and Hardy, Concato, and Gill's (2002, 2004) early references to older people's resilience in minimising adversities and maximising well-being, this link between elders' [*sic*] positive adaptive preference and resilience has since been advanced by others, including Aléx (2010), Hildon et al. (2008), and Ong et al. (2009). Later life resiliency has also been related to specific circumstances such as health (Harris, 2008), war (Kimhi et al., 2012), disasters (Tuohy & Stephens, 2012), and non-Western countries (Cheung & Kam, 2012; de Paula Couto, Koller & Novo, 2011). The attributes of resilience associated with these situations include equanimity, perseverance, self-reliance, meaningfulness, and existential aloneness (Wagnild & Young, 1990, 1993); self-efficacy, sense of humour, patience, optimism, and faith (Connor & Davidson, 2003); and personal competence, self-esteem, and interpersonal control (Windle et al., 2008), among others. All factors related to resilience in later life have been extracted from the literature, abridged, and transferred to Table 5 (Appendix C.1.2) for further analysis.

Comparative. Comparative approaches to resilience in older age aim to unpick the influence of push and pull occurrences, and upstream and downstream effects, within and between life course trajectories. This is an evolving area of research, but some promising

advances are appearing, notably genetic and biological markers (Luthar et al., 2006, pp. 109-111, 113; Manyena, 2006, pp. 439-443, 445; Rutter, 2006, pp. 4-6); individual and environment interactions; multilevel dynamics (Masten, 2007, pp. 924-925); and integrated and interdisciplinary frameworks, such as Szanton and Gill's (2010) society to cells model. At this time though, psychological constructs continue to dominate the perception of resilience in middle age and older adulthood (Wild et al., 2013, p.147).

Theoretical understandings and practical applications of resilience are also being revised (Rutter, 2012), updated (Ryff et al., 2012), and supplemented with new domains, such as behavioural neuroscience (Wu et al., 2013), and culture (Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Ungar, 2008, 2012, 2013), but critical gaps in research knowledge persist. For instance, it is not yet clear if age and age related effects, such as disadvantage accumulating over a lifetime, confers resilience on adults at different ages, or renders them more vulnerable to these stressors. Recent research by Gooding, Hurst, Johnson, and Tarrier (2012) suggests that this resilience differs. Even though the authors purport to compare resilience in young and older adults, they focused on the relationships between resilience and ill health, instead of resilience and age. As a result, their claim that adults over the age of 65 years are more resilient than those aged between 18 to 25 years, is methodologically weak. In a contemporaneous review of age specific reactivity to daily stressors, Diehl, Hay, and Chui (2012) determined that personal risk and resilience factors intersect in complex ways across individual, situational, and structural stress domains, and the life course, to shape outcomes. Their finding demonstrates that "no universal generalisation...can be made regarding whether chronological age, in and of itself,

confers greater vulnerability or resilience on adults” (p. 13); a caution that will be observed in this study of resilience in two age groups of older women.

Alternatively, there is a substantive body of literature pertaining to gender related resilience in later life, enabling cross-referencing across genders. These encompass the relative responses of older women and men to different events and turning points, such as bereavement, and late divorce (Shapiro & Cooney, 2007, pp. 193-194); in effect, determining how structural (environment related) and individual situational relations and temporal processes interact with gender, age, and resilience. A recent study by Al  x (2010) ascertained that resilience in very old men and women varied according to gendered norms in society. Women were portrayed as carers who valued their close interpersonal relationships, whereas men tended to focus on themselves, their economic success, and concomitant social activities (p. 428). Similarly, a range of studies investigated older women (Bonnano, Wortman & Nesse, 2004; Hahn et al., 2011; Lee, 2014; Ong, Fuller-Rowell & Bonanno, 2010) and men’s (Bennett, 2010) resiliency on losing a spouse. These responses varied between individuals and contexts, but they were highly gendered, with men generally experiencing greater loneliness (Pinquart, 2003), and difficulty in reconciling their widower status (Bennett, Hughes & Smith, 2003). On the other hand, when Perrig-Chiello, Hutchinson, and Morselli (2015) examined psychological adaptation to divorce occurring after a long marriage, they identified a profile of “resilients”, yet failed to detect significant gender discriminants within their typology.

Despite Ryff, Singer, Love, and Essex’s (1998) seminal study of women’s resilience in mid and later life, the new longitudinal surveys of ageing, and more powerful

statistical methods and tools, the early promise of longitudinal, gender biased, life course research into resilience is largely unfulfilled. One exception is Consedine, Magai, and Krivoshekova's (2005) paper linking (physical) resilience with gender and age differences in socioemotional functioning. The scale and scope of their study was comprehensive, but the authors' primary research goal was directed towards social and emotional attributes rather than resilience per se. As such, they employed a restricted definition of resilience, functionality relative to health impairment (p. 220), in lieu of a specific resilience measure. A second project conducted by Walter-Ginzburg, Shmotkin, Blumstein, and Shorek (2005) analysed gender similarities and differences in resilience and mortality in older Israelis via the cross-sectional and longitudinal ageing study (CALAS). The authors found that both older men and women are resilient. However, as the gender differentiation was highly context and culturally specific, these results are limited in their transferability. Most recently, Perrig-Chiello, Saphni, Höpflinger, and Carr (2015) explored cohort and gender differences in older people's psychosocial adjustment to bereavement. Their results indicated that cohort effects did not affect individual (psychological level) distress, but historical and social changes benefited socioeconomic status and physical health at older ages, particularly for widows. Although the study did not focus on resilience, these conclusions illuminate the differential impact of time and situations on personal and environment related well-being.

Along similar lines, Wild et al. (2013, p. 144) define resilience in older age as a dynamic and negotiated process, influenced by the interplay of personal and environmental factors and resources, rather than a static personality trait. Consequently, the attributes of late life resilience often embrace broader sociocultural and situational

dimensions, such as good quality relationships, integration in the community, developmental coping, and adaptive coping styles (Hildon et al., 2009), cognitive and emotional complexity, emotional poignancy, historical and cultural identity, and ambiguous loss (Randall, 2013, p. 10). These gender-blind qualities have been incorporated into the analytical framework of Chapters five and six.

2.1.4 Phase four: Resilience—refreshed and refined. The preceding three phases have provided staging platforms in the developmental trajectory of resilience. This fourth, current phase remains a work in progress, replete with unresolved issues or “hot spots” (Masten, 2007, pp. 925-926) for future investigation. Of these, two problems are particularly salient to this study:

First is the perennial challenge of discriminating between age, period, and cohort factors in multilevel longitudinal research (Bell & Jones, 2013, 2014). At present, this appears to be only possible in quantitative studies using sophisticated statistical analyses (Bell, 2014; Reither et al., 2015), and therefore lies beyond the reach of this study.

An ongoing debate over the structure and agency dialectic is the second obstacle. In terms of resiliency, agency overshadows structure in the literature. The dominance of agency is expected at a personal level, as in Schafer et al.’s (2009, pp. 232, 234) definition of resilience as an actor’s deliberate, conscious, and purposeful response to an unsatisfactory situation. However, this synergy is less apparent at a societal level, as revealed in a recent disagreement about the significance of agency in a group context. Bristow and Healy (2014, pp. 929-930) champion collective agency, whereby individuals and a region or community are dynamically coupled in their interactive response to environmental shocks, and social and cultural change. Even though they advocate the

primacy of agency, the authors also recognise the mutual role of structure: regions are “critical containers and shapers of different...agents and their activities [where] the integration between them—their patterns of co-evolution—are also key” (p. 933). The co-evolution of regional level agency and resilience is reaffirmed by Bristow and Healy (2015) in their latest paper; a perspective that is disputed by Davidson (2013):

Agency—the pursuit of personal goals—is and can only be an individual trait, one that is absolutely key to resilience. This is so because the forms that agency takes, and who takes them, define just if and how social institutions change. At the same time, events that occur within our socio-ecological systems...such as drought...present information for individuals to reflect upon, which may in turn lead to changes in their own actions. (p. 23)

Regardless of this disparity, each author concurs that the symbiosis between structure and agency is fundamental to both personal and community resilience. Here Ryff et al.’s (2012) definition of resilience succinctly captures these complexities: “Resilience is best formulated as the successful adaptation to adversity, with emphasis given to recovery (how people bounce back from challenge) and sustainability (the capacity to continue forward in the face of adversity)” (p. 794).

Finally, a working definition drawn from this chapter proposes that resilience is a dynamic, relational process, with trajectories influenced by a complex range of events, actions and interactions, offset by situational and structural forces and personal issues and experiences, over time. And when overlain with gender, age, and rurality, as in the context of older, single women living in country Australia, Davidson’s (2013) hanging questions about resiliency: “What sorts of constraints [structures] limit [agents] efforts?

Does trauma reduce the capacity for reflexive agency or enhance it?” (p. 23) are highly relevant.

Accordingly, the next section explores these situational relations of the community and the older women, separately and then together, in terms of their influence on resilience.

2.2 Situational Relations

2.2.1 Environment related contexts: Australian rurality. “Rural is an ambiguous and complex concept. The rural is a messy and slippery idea that eludes easy definition and demarcation” (Woods, 2011, p. 1). Although rural is delimited according to the classification scheme of the Australian Government in this study (Chapter three, Section 3.2.1), rural locations in Australia are typically revered as idylls; tranquil havens of the simple or good life, founded on traditional family values, and a strong sense of community (Allen, 2002; Benson & O’Reilly, 2009, p. 612). This normative identity is reinforced through an idealised rural landscape of “vast blue skies, red earth, white beaches” (Alexandra & Riddington, 2007, p. 326), and empirically supported with higher life satisfaction rankings compared with urban conurbations (Ambrey & Fleming, 2012, pp. 13, 20). It is also credited for recent phenomenon of sea (C) and tree lifestyle change migration from metropolitan cities to coastal and country areas (Costello, 2006; Stockdale, MacLeod & Philip, 2013).

This imagery romanticises the reality of country living. Poverty is often hidden in rural regions (Commins, 2004). The sample state recorded the second highest poverty rate in Australia in 2006 (Miranti, McNamarra, Tanton & Harding, 2011, pp. 153-154), and nine of the ten most disadvantaged Statistical Local Areas (SLA) were situated outside its

city metropolitan region (Mission Australia, 2006, p. 42). These rural areas also comprised the greatest proportion of lone, elderly, and lone elderly people in poverty (Miranti et al., 2011, pp. 155-165), specifically, older women (Tanton, Vidyattama, McNamara, Vu & Harding, 2008, pp. 14-15). In addition, rural and remote locations, particularly the drought affected, broad acre farming districts, are populated by more people with low incomes, and/or in receipt of government pensions and benefits (Mission Australia, 2006, pp. 19-21, 42). Moreover, because of the unfavourable environmental conditions, reduced productivity, decreased income, less spending, and lower employment, cycle (Mission Australia, 2006, p. 39), rural communities are caught in a downward spiral of economic and social disadvantage (Shervall & Askew, 2012). (See Aslin and Russell (2008), and Rickards (2012) for a detailed analysis of these impacts.)

These farming areas are also experiencing a classic catch-22 situation: On one hand, population decline and increasing deprivation due to multiple challenges, such as geographical isolation, low population density, an ageing demographic, poor socioeconomic status, restricted services, and limited or non-existent transport options (Cubit & Meyer, 2011, p. 588; McGuirk & Argent, 2011), impinge on rural economies, communities, and families (Mission Australia, 2006, p. 42): “To survive in dryland...farming, you *survived on little* – even on *hope* [italics in original]” (Anderson, 2008, p. 76). Yet, on the other hand, ex-urban migration negatively impacts local housing markets (Beer et al., 2011, p. 6), reduces rental stock, and often creates schisms between long-term residents and newcomers (Costello, 2006; Rickards, 2012, pp. 130-131).

Some older residents of small country towns are compelled to leave their communities to gain better access to services such as specialised medical care (Beer et al.,

2011, p. 6), but the majority want to stay in their locality (Burholt & Naylor, 2005, p. 116). This desire is embedded in a sense of belonging, social networks, and the benefits of rural life (Bowles, 2010; Ewen, Hahn, Erickson & Krout, 2014, p. 306). Age and duration of residence in a rural community also reinforces social bonds, local knowledge, and contributes to place attachment and locational stability (Hernández et al., 2007, p. 311; Shamai & Ilatov, 2005; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008, p. 151). As these close social connections can positively mitigate against rural deprivation (Heenan, 2010), it is plausible that smaller, tightly coupled, rural communities will enhance an individual's resilience when dealing with sudden detrimental circumstances such as health related crises or age discrimination (Batty & Cole, 2010, pp. 68-69), as well as prolonged adversity, for example, drought (Stain et al., 2011). However, related research into community disadvantage posits that the strength of this cohesion is threatened in extreme conditions. Alston (2004) found that the unaddressed stress and overwork associated the recent long-term drought in rural Australia led many residents to disengage from their local community, largely because of a lack of time and money. A parallel study by Caldwell and Boyd (2009) uncovered evidence of community fragmentation, where social cohesion was compromised due to competition for resources.

This fragile veneer of neighbourliness and mutual support that often defines localism in small rural communities also obscures the social norms, values, and expectations of rurality, gender, and class that are replicated across generations (Bryant & Pini, 2009, p.48). In rural Australia, these symbolic and cultural connections are important components of a rooted belonging to a place (Raymond, Brown & Weber, 2010, pp. 421-414):

The ‘Outback’ or ‘Bush Myth’ has...epitomised the national character by being synonymous with the characteristics of ‘mateship’, hard work, resilience, and ingenuity in the face of harsh geographies and precarious economic conditions. Distance and geography are entwined in the socio-historical construction of the rural, just as degrees of disadvantage are connected in the popular imagination with distance and the fertility or otherwise of the land...wealthy fertile areas bring forth an image of the rural idyll while marginal semiarid land suggests isolation, desolation and even fear. (Roberts & Green, 2013, p. 766)

Two images have emerged from this struggle to tame the hostile environment: the *digger* (Seal, 2004) representing “courage, patriotism, bush values...of Australian men in adversity” (Bennett, 1994, p. 59), and the *little Aussie battler* (Anderson, 2008; Whitman, 2013, p. 51), where the underdog perseveres against all odds to overcome hardship in extreme situations.

At centre stage is the determined strong willed individual – the ‘man on the land’ – heroically, aggressively and stoically fighting the vicissitudes of nature to provide for his family, community and nation. Much further downstage is the ‘good wife’ who is equally strong and hard working, but whose focus is domestic life. (Pini, 2005a, p. 74)

It is striking that these national icons are so disproportionately male dominated in the face of contemporaneous evidence to the contrary (Allen, 2002; Liepins, 1998). When faced with repeated threats to their local livelihood (prolonged drought, failing economic viability of farming and forestry, increased unemployment, and population decline), some Australian rural women pursued new on-farm industries such as home stay

accommodation to increase their chances of survival (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2001, pp. 47-48). Others sought employment in nearby towns: 84 per cent of off-farm work was performed by women in 2006 (Sheridan & McKenzie, 2009, p. 6). In spite of this major contribution to the social and economic assets of agricultural communities, these women continued to be relegated to a subservient, *taken for granted* status in comparison with *real* (male) farmers (Alston, 2006). Narratives of two Australian farming families researched by Bryant and Pini (2009) highlight “the ambiguity of class, the gendered and classed nature of voluntary organisations in rural spaces, and moral values and signifiers associated with what it is to be a ‘good’ farmer and a ‘good’ community member” (p.48). Here, many women experience tension between adhering to a rural identity that fosters a culture of stoicism and self-reliance, vis-à-vis their resistance to this societal expectation of coping, without substantive support (Harvey, 2007, pp. 7-9). Similarly, patriarchal constructions of rurality suppress women’s personal needs in deference to those of the home, the family, and the community (Alston, 2006; Harvey, 2007, p.10, 2014, p. 610).

The strength and endurance of these social and community ties are reiterated in a study of (male) farmers’ sociocultural and environmental affinity to two different regions of Australia (McManus et al., 2012). Despite a declining and ageing rural population, coupled with increased pressure on agricultural production, the farmers’ maintained their connectivity and engagement with the community, and retained their community spirit (McManus et al., 2012, p. 27). This collaborative interaction, sense of belonging, and collective action, bundled together as community engagement, is identified as a pivotal component of rural community resilience (Kulig et al., 2013, pp. 761, 770). In an Australian context, Buikstra et al. (2010, pp. 977-978), Hudson (2010), McManus et al.

(2012, p. 28), and Tonts, Plummer, and Argent (2014) demonstrate that rural resilience consists of a combination of social vitality, amenable and responsive policy, economic viability, and the biophysical environment. At this point, it is important to recall that both community and rural resilience are emerging concepts (Section 2.1.2.1), subject to inconsistencies and discrepancies. For instance, Kulig et al. (2013, p. 771) specify that a non-adverse geography (a locational environment that is salutary, and not isolated or remote) is a dimension of rural community resilience. But since many small, Australian communities struggle with political, economic, demographic, social, and physical challenges, rural resilience in this setting is associated with an adversarial (non-salutary) environment. A related issue for these towns is the rural ageing demographic (Hugo, 2013).

2.2.2 Person related contexts: Older women. Women now comprise the largest proportion of an ageing population (Lutz, Sanderson & Scherbov, 2008). Empirical age and gender specific evidence related to life course trajectories and transitions (Hugo, 2013) indicate that although women live longer, they are more likely to be poor, live on their own (de Vaus & Richardson, 2009, pp. 9-10), with failing health, in older age (Christensen et al., 2009). Similarly, in their analysis of life course influences on poverty and social isolation in later life, Glaser et al. (2009, p. 26) established that while divorce does not affect life expectancy for women, both divorce and widowhood significantly increases a woman's risk of poverty (controlling for other factors). Divorced older women in Australia are less likely to receive help from others when needed; they also feel lonely and isolated (Gray, de Vaus, Qu & Stanton, 2010, p. 10). Furthermore, it appears that while widows may not be as socially isolated as married women in later life (Glaser

et al., 2009, p. 45; Isherwood, King & Luszcz, 2012; McLaughlin, Adams, Vagenas & Dobson, 2011), this advantage could potentially be offset by a loss of the sense of meaning in their lives (Koren & Lowenstein, 2008).

Frankl (1970), Pinquart (2002), and Silverstein and Heap's (2015) conceptions of meaning and purpose in life resonate with much of the contemporaneous literature about subjective well-being and successful ageing (Boyle, Barnes, Buchman & Bennett, 2009; Reichstadt, Sengupta, Depp, Palinkas & Jeste, 2010), as well as complementary age relevant theories such as gerotranscendence (Tornstam, 1997), and wisdom (Webster, Westerhof & Bohlmeijer, 2014). An interaction between contemporary understandings of a meaningful life (Heintzelman & King, 2014), religious beliefs (Jewell, 2010), and spirituality (King, 2011) is also evident in the literature, for example, studies related to older women (Manning, 2012) in the context of resilient outcomes (Vahia et al., 2011).

This resiliency informed by two theoretical orientations: The primacy of personal agency in shaping later life is foregrounded in Heckhausen, Wrosch, and Schulz' (2010) motivational theory of life-span development, and Baltes and Baltes (1990) and Baltes and Carstensen's (1996) selection, optimisation, and compensation model, whereby older adults strategically re/utilise resources to manage a changing personal and social landscape. Alternatively, the theory of allostasis (Ganzel, Morris & Wethington, 2010) and Dannefer's (2003) theory of cumulative advantage/disadvantage emphasise the role of structural determinants in influencing the life course. Notwithstanding this conceptual dichotomy, each approach reinforces the importance of accounting for the personal and structural pieces of the resilient and successful ageing (Depp & Jeste, 2006; Dillaway & Byrnes, 2009; Montross et al., 2006) jigsaw, in older women (Lamond et al., 2009).

Research on health and ageing that helps untangle this psychological and social nexus is also relevant, since many of the determinants of health correspond to the attributes of resilience (Table 5, Appendix C.1.2): “Internal or personal characteristics are deeply embedded in social and physical contexts...and resilience can mean acknowledging and incorporating vulnerability and balancing well-being across a range of areas” (Wiles, Wild, Kerse & Allen, 2012, p. 416). For instance, Gadalla (2010) probed the relative impacts of socioeconomic conditions, physical health, chronic stress, personal mastery, and perceived social support on psychological distress in older Canadians. Significant gender discrepancies were apparent. Generally, older women experienced higher chronic stress and psychological distress, poorer physical health, lower socioeconomic conditions, and less social support compared to men (p. 525). These deleterious effects unite to project an image of age related decline (Clarke & Korotchenko, 2011, pp. 498-500) that attracts ageist attitudes (Bodner, Bergman & Cohen-Fridel, 2012, p. 899), and discriminatory practices (Rippon, Kneale, de Oliveira, Demakakos & Steptoe, 2014; van den Heuvel, 2012). The activation of this negative ageing stereotype precipitates a downward spiral of more frequent help-seeking behaviour (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010), underperformance (Popham & Hess, 2015), and an increased risk of hospitalisation (Levy, Slade, Chung & Gill, 2014). It also contributes to loneliness (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010).

In this context, an overview of loneliness, social isolation, and the complex interactions between a person and society (Victor, Scambler & Bond, 2009) is germane to older women. Most authors separate loneliness; a personal attribute, the “quintessential individualistic experience” (Cacioppo, Fowler & Christakis, 2009, p. 985), from social

isolation or social disconnectedness that is regarded as minimal contact with the wider community (Cornwell & Waite, 2009). These depictions are significantly extended by two further studies. Heylen (2010) explored the impact of social isolation on feelings of loneliness among older people, and Cacioppo et al. (2009) examined the structure and spread of loneliness in a large social network. In both cases, the quantity and quality of social relationships were critical to the perception of loneliness (Cacioppo et al., 2009, p. 982; Heylen, 2010, p. 1187). Similarly, both studies demonstrated that contrary to popular belief, older adults actively and selectively cultivated rich and rewarding social networks (Cacioppo et al., 2009, p. 987; Heylen, 2010, pp. 1185-1186). Cacioppo et al. (2009, pp. 982, 987) also revealed that loneliness is both a cause and consequence of becoming disconnected from society, and spreads in a contagious-like process among friends more quickly than family. This finding is indicative of the complex and evolving research into the interdependencies between older age, loneliness, kin and non-kin social networks, and the larger community. Three examples from the literature are singled out as particularly salient to this study.

The first project juxtaposed the nature and frequency of family contact with the geographical proximity of older adults and their children (Royal Voluntary Service, 2012). In a UK sample of 500 people over the age of 75, almost half were visited only once in a two to six monthly period if their children lived at least an hour's drive away. Older parents who saw their children on a monthly (or less) basis were twice as likely to feel lonely than those whose children visited daily. Nearly three quarters of the older, single parents experienced loneliness, yet they were visited less often than the still married, older couples. While these statistics do not transfer directly to an Australian

context, it is likely that these conclusions are equally applicable, especially with respect to Australia's "tyranny of distance" (Blainey, 2001), and Australian's locational mobility (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Rote, Hill, and Ellison (2013) investigated the impact of non-kin relationships on loneliness in older adults. They found that involvement in religious institutions might protect against later life loneliness by integrating older people in supportive, larger, social networks. However, as the authors did not account for many of the ancillary activities associated with religious groups, such as choir practice and charitable volunteering, they underestimated the integrative function of religious participation (p. 48), and by extension, its potentiality to assuage loneliness in later life. Again, these results are relevant to Australia, where religious attendance is important for older people (Moxey, McEvoy, Bowe & Attia, 2010) in rural areas (Peach, 2003, 2013).

Third, Stanley et al. (2010) established that loneliness in older Australians is influenced by a sense of belonging to their community, and a connection with the society at large. In Australia, policies to counter loneliness, and revitalise older person's social contact and community engagement are frequently directed towards volunteering (Warburton, 2006), as "an essential and exceptional form of social solidarity that binds society together" (Hustinx, Cnaan & Handy, 2010, p. 417). For older people, volunteering is a proxy for social engagement (Kimberley & Simons, 2009, p. 40), with associated personal and interpersonal benefits (Tang, 2006, p. 376). Women volunteer at higher rates than men across all ages and educational levels in the United States of America (USA) (Rosenberg & Letrero, 2006, p. 330), but Australia's pattern of volunteering in later life is not as straightforward. Warburton and Stirling (2007) showed that while gender was not

predictive of volunteering, age, ethnicity, and location, independently, and in combination, were important. A person older than 75 years, with a migrant background, and/or living in a city, was much less likely to volunteer than their younger, Australian born, rural counterpart (p. 37). Another Australian study (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010) identified gender polarisation in volunteering, with men dominating civic activities, and women's roles revolving around fund raising, event catering, and supporting services.

According to Victor, Scambler, Marston, Bond, and Bowling (2005), the prevalence of severe loneliness in older people is not differentiated by gender. This conclusion was refuted by later research by Cacioppo et al. (2009) and Heylen (2010), when they detected gender discrepancies in the perception of loneliness. Heylen (2010, p. 1186) determined that women were less socially isolated (hence less lonely) than men, whereas women reported higher levels of loneliness in Cacioppo et al.'s (2009, p. 984) research.

Living arrangements also modified this dynamic (Banks, Haynes & Hill, 2009). Living alone (single, separated, divorced, or widowed) reduced older women's daily social contacts to a greater degree than for older men (Cornwell, 2011, pp. 608-613), and contributed to persistent loneliness (Newall, Chipperfield & Bailis, 2014). And when compared with men, the life satisfaction of older European women who live alone was more dependent on sociocultural (Gaymu & Springer, 2010, p. 1169) and environment related factors, such as home ownership, and physical and material independence (Gaymu & Springer, 2010, p. 1170).

Analogously, "in Australia in 2009...one of the most disadvantaged demographic profiles for a person to have is to be old, single, poor, female and in private rental

accommodation” (Kimberley & Simons, 2009, p. 47), a condition that has since become entrenched (Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 2015). Here, interdependent and unfavourable characteristics over the lifespan create multiple disadvantage and severe deprivation among many older Australians (Azpitarte & Bodsworth, 2015, pp. 33-48; Kimberley & Simons, 2009, p. 49). A groundbreaking study by McFerran (2010) augments this scenario. Even though most women successfully manage their life circumstances until their fifth or sixth decades, sudden adverse situations such as living alone, health and/or employment related crises, or age discrimination may result in unemployment. The shock of losing work, exacerbated by the lack and/or low superannuation contributions of late middle-aged women (Vidyattama, Cassells, Harding & Mcnamara, 2013, pp. 737-738), puts these women at housing risk (Dewilde & Stier, 2014; McFerran, 2010, p. 4; Sharam, 2011). This vulnerability is compounded by the withdrawal many late middle-aged Australians from the job market (Kimberley & Simons, 2009, p. 5). As such, the “combination of a very low income and lack of a partner is a high risk factor for extremely low wellbeing” (Australian Unity, 2010, p. 17), and when superimposed on the declining life satisfaction of Australian women in general (Ambrey & Fleming 2014, pp. 695-696, 770; Australian Unity, 2010, p. 18), older, single women occupy the lowest rung of the Australian Unity well-being index.

Asset rich, income poor, older adults were also affected by the recent economic recession, particularly in terms of the financial, mental, and social well-being components of their quality of life (Fenge et al., 2012). Although the impact of increased living costs was partially compensated by the elders’ [*sic*] financial resilience: life-long savings

habits, budgeting skills, an aversion to credit (Fenge et al., 2012, pp. 621, 623), and “making do” (Anderson, 2008, p. 76), the recession precipitated a negative cascade of constrained lifestyle choices, restricted social contact, increased isolation and loneliness, and compromised physical and mental health (Fenge et al., 2012, p. 622).

Both McFerran (2010) and Fenge et al. (2012) underscore the precariousness of the social safety net for older adults, albeit at different levels of intervention; specifically, health and social care policy (Fenge et al., 2012), and family support (McFerran, 2010). Allen and Wiles’s (2014) research into the assumptions and attitudes held by childless older Australians around receiving support offers an additional perspective here. Support was interpreted in different ways, and associated with a complicated balance between independence versus incapacity, and a blurring of the boundaries between refusing, accepting, and receiving support. Nonetheless, McFerran’s conclusion that “families are expected to be the first line of support for older [single] women. This was not the case for this group of women” (p. 27) reinforces the vulnerability of these women. Considered in tandem with a rural context (Section 2.2.1), it is not surprising that “rural older women are disadvantaged when compared with both urban women and rural men in terms of income [and] incidence of poverty” (Dorfman et al., 2009, p. 305), and access to social services and care (Brändström, 2007, p. 226).

2.3 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

The intermixing of these personal, social, and structural elements illustrates the synergistic relationship between individual and environment related aspects of resilience (Steiner & Markantoni, 2014): “These components entail interactions between individuals, the community, infrastructure, the environment and the economy in the

process of building resilience” (Buikstra et al., 2010, p. 976). This symbiosis is also noted by Flaherty and Brown (2010, p. 511), and following Salamon (2003), they suggest that communities have “distinctive personalities” and cultures that impact residents and vice versa. Complementary research in rural Australia by Hegney et al. (2007) indicated that at a personal level, resilience is shaped by gender, the community, and the remote setting.

For Buikstra et al. (2010, p. 978) though, the role of individual community members in rural resilience is paramount. In this context, and with respect to the ageing demographic of rural towns (Davis & Bartlett, 2008; Hugo, 2013), it is unexpected that older women are not widely represented in this literature. There is a sprinkling of articles from the USA, where resilience in rurally situated, older women is associated with personal qualities such as self-reliance and independence, coping ability and mastery, and minimisation and acceptance in dealing with adversity, together with strong social ties and relationships (Dorfman et al., 2009, p. 305; Stark-Wroblewski, Edelbaum & Bello, 2008; Wells, 2009). However, no articles specific to resilience in older women in rural Australia were available.

This research is designed to address this omission, and clarify the complex, situated interconnections between resilience, older women, and their community, over time. Consequently, it requires a methodology that is sympathetic to multilevel variations in the representations of resilience. The selection of a suitable methodology, and its contextualisation to this study, is explained in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology employed in the study. It follows a logical sequence, systematically tracing the rationale for the research design, strategy for the sample frame (site and participants), data sources and collection, analytical methods, and finally, ethical integrity and quality assurance. And in accord with the two interpretations of reflexivity: an iterative methodological reflection on the research process; and a reflexive gaze (Hastings, 2010), where the researcher critically self-evaluates the interpretive influence of personal, ideological, and conceptual assumptions, values and/or biases on their research (Grant, Rohr & Grant, 2012, p. 231), a formative methodological reflection underpins each section of this chapter, with the researcher reflexivity conducted as a summative critique in Section 3.6.4.

As the research is exploratory, the methodology must be open, dynamic, and flexible to enable a loose unfolding of the empirical data (Punch, 2014, pp. 26-27, 31), while maintaining a coherent research design, and following procedural and analytical rigour and transparency.

Similarly, the exploration of resilience in older, single women, living in a small Australian rural location requires a comprehensive, multidimensional methodological approach. Here, qualitative methods are most advantageous for “investigations of everyday practices, including...organisational, community or small-group cultures” (Griswold, 2007, p. 153) to determine “how participants understand their [life] experiences” (Chenail, 2011, p. 6), and expose these embedded sociocultural and psychological interrelationships.

3.1 Ethnography

Since ethnography is a methodology designed to reveal the social world of others (Bajc, 2012, p. 82) and the “cultural context of lived experience” (Forsey, 2010, p.567), it is “best suited to the study of multiplicity, complexity, contingency, ambiguity and indeterminacy in ways of living” (Bajc, 2012, p. 73).

With origins grounded in anthropology, ethnography has now diffused across other social science disciplines, and permeated different academic domains such as business, and literature (Alder & Alder, 2012a, p. 26). In the sociological genre, ethnography is associated with Van Maanen’s (2011) realist, confessional, and impressionist tales, and/or Alder and Alder’s (2012a, pp. 27-31) four “faces”—classical, mainstream, public, and post-modern ethnography. A mainstream (Alder & Alder, 2008, pp. 10-14), realist perspective (Jobling, 2013; Van Maanen, 2011) is adopted in this study in an “attempt to portray the ‘truth’ of the world by gathering in-depth, firsthand, naturalistic data that incorporates the subject’s perspectives and to weave various (often competing or conflicting) perspectives into one presentation” (Alder & Alder, 2008, p. 11). This intention informs the research aim of this study, namely, to tease out the relational influence of temporal processes, situational relations, and the person and environment related contributors to the development of resilience in older women, living alone in rural Australia (Chapter one). To this effect, an ethnographic study of resilience in older, single women, living on their own in rural Australia, was conducted between November 2011 and December 2012.

The hallmark of ethnography is “in-depth, context driven fieldwork” (Duneier, 2007, p. 37), where a researcher engages with the site of interest over an extended period

of time. Empirical evidence derives from the unique relationships, cultural knowledge, and protracted social involvement built on rapport and mutual trust (Kawulich, 2005; Schensul, 2009, pp. 244-245). Long-term immersion in situ also enables researchers to modify the research design to accommodate emergent and evolving situational relations. In this study, the researcher discovered an additional cohort of older women only on her residency in the town. The unexpected presence of this group of late middle-aged newcomers provided a natural, comparative sample, thereby strengthening the study's findings, and creating a new, dualistic insider and outsider orientation for the researcher. (While the researcher's personal and family profile complemented the older old women's insider background (rurality and localism), it also serendipitously reflected the late middle-aged women's age range and new resident (outsider) status.)

Ethnography then, enables an intensive exploration of how people experience their sociocultural contexts, processes, and meanings (Whitehead, 2005, p. 5), through changing temporal processes and situational relations (Gellert & Shefner, 2009, p.195), from multiple viewpoints. As such, this deep ethnography (Block, 2012) aligns with Wild et al.'s (2013, p. 150) comprehensive approach for unravelling the contextual and collective scales of resilience in older age, with individual (person related) resilience situated within overlapping and interdependent national, community, and family (environment related) envelopes. It also resonates with the researcher's first hand exposure to the symbioses between the person, their contextual environment, and resilience. Her interest in these interrelationships was initially piqued by a childhood immersion in rural Australian women's determination to rise above extremely challenging circumstances; then extended through her subsequent professional experience of a health

paradox where (some) older patients thrive in spite of debilitating physical limitations; and finally consolidated via her later academic exploration of the individual and societal (community) level interactions in shaping resilience.

The formulation of the study took place in the UK, but the ethnographic fieldwork was located in a rural town and contiguous area in Australia. From November 2011 to June 2012, the researcher lived continuously in the sample town. However, a second interval between September and December 2012 was characterised by frequent, intermittent revisits to the town, necessitated by an involuntary break and subsequent relocation to a neighbouring community (Section 3.2.1). During this time, the researcher retained her connections to the town by travelling there at least three times weekly, for periods of at least six hours per occasion. This commute also enabled her to spend *off* and in-transit time in three en-route, intermediary (anonymised) towns (X, Y, and Z). As such, it provided an ethnographic window from which to compare towns (Chapter four, Section 4.1), and a concomitant opportunity to identify outsider key informants (Section 3.3.1.2).

3.2 Sample

3.2.1 Community. For Schensul (2009), ethnography is a vector to generate “a multilevel understanding of community history, sociogeographic and demographic composition, cultural and linguistic dynamics, social and political organization...points of friction” (p. 246). These intertwined nodes intimate that the nomination of a local community as an ethnographic field site is not a straightforward process:

How we gain trust, information and even access, or conversely, how we are inhibited in our ability to carry out research is part of a larger set of socially

embedded practices. The cultural practices and meanings found in any research site influence the ability to conduct research. (Bondy (2013, p. 586)

This selection process also involves weighing potentialities: the opportunity to integrate into the setting and easily access data (Case, Todd & Kral, 2014, pp. 64-67; Kawulich, 2005), logistical challenges, and the implications of gender in rural locations (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013, p. 321).

As noted in Chapter two (Section 2.2.1), rural is an eclectic and diffuse concept. In this study, rural is delimited according to the Australian Government rural and remoteness classifications,⁸ namely, the Rural, Remote, and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) of Australia (under review, June 01, 2015), the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA, and its successors, ARIA+ and SARIA+), and the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). Under each classification, the town was classed as a rural community—farming areas and small towns with populations up to 5,000.

The rural community was carefully chosen for three main reasons: it was the subject of an extensive sociological investigation during the 1990's (Dempsey, 1990, 1992), thus enabling a longer time perspective, as informed by the recent revival of community re/studies (Phillipson, 2012); second, since the community is near the researcher's childhood town, it offered the researcher a degree of insider familiarity; and thirdly, a growing demographic of small Australian rural towns is ageing women living on their own (de Vaus & Richardson, 2009).

Despite these precautions, personal circumstances can intersect with the realities of the field site, and significantly impact the research plan and process (Billo & Hiemstra,

⁸ A comparative analysis of these classifications was produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 2004. The Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) cited in this report was in use until 2011, when it was replaced by the ASGS.

2013, pp. 312, 324). This research process was changed midway into the fieldwork period to accommodate two unforeseen emotional and logistical events affecting the researcher: the deterioration of a family member's health, and an unanticipated return to the UK; and the lack of housing options in the sample town on her return, necessitating relocation to a semi-adjacent community just over 60 miles (100 kilometres) away. To preserve a presence in the field, and avoid "temporal compression" (Goffman, 1989, p. 130), the researcher distributed participant journals prior to her overseas departure, and maintained regular contact with participants, key informants, and gatekeepers, during her absence. And on her return, the researcher resumed her volunteer commitments and actively re-engaged with the community as previously, regardless of the 125 mile (200 kilometre) round trip to do so.

Here, the researcher was guided by Billo and Hiemstra's, (2012, p. 317) advice to view these changes positively, as flexible and useful tools, rather than a concession or a failure. Similarly, for Kawulich (2005), personal recuperation and reflective space is essential to counter the intensity of being in the field. As a result, an interrupted or punctuated model of ethnographic fieldwork is commonplace (Kawulich, 2005). In actuality, these adjustments enabled the researcher to acquire different situational and temporal perspectives: an early intense insiderness to build up rapport, establish trust, and gain acceptance, followed by a more distant positionality after local acceptability was assured. The enforced off-site living arrangements also facilitated an outsider viewpoint, and extended the research field site to the region, thus permitting locale-based comparisons of some of the environment related contributors to resiliency. These within,

and between town comparisons were salient in terms of assessing if the findings from the in-town fieldwork were unique, or replicated in the neighbouring towns (Section 3.4.2.1).

Three adjacent towns were selected as comparators. They were deliberately chosen to overlap with some of the biophysical and structural characteristics of the sample community: town Z was founded on gold, and is now exploiting its historical roots and bush (forested) landscape for tourism; town Y was settled on a major transportation route, and is also a regional centre for some government services; and town X is located in a rich agricultural landscape, but has recently diversified its economy through some (limited) small scale manufacturing. (As recommended by Damianakis and Woodford (2012) and Crow (2013), detailed site-specific data has not been included for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, but the reader is referred to Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3, and Table 6, Appendix B.1.1 for sociodemographic profiles of the towns.)

3.2.2 Participants. The participant sample was also based on three selection criteria: Older women are over-represented in the population profile of small rural towns in Australia; rural women are presented in the Australian media (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014) and in the academic literature (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012) as stoically persevering to overcome personal hardship and adverse environmental conditions; and lastly, resilience in later life is dynamically shaped by gender, the community, and the environment in rural settings (Chapter two, Section 2.3). Therefore older women living on their own in country⁹ Australia were identified as a prime group to unpick these interrelationships. The inclusion criteria for the sample were women, aged 55 years and

⁹ In an Australian context, country equates to rural. It is also used in a discriminatory sense to differentiate the country from the city in terms of lifestyle and values.

over, widowed, divorced, separated, and/or never married, and living on their own, in a small town and/or neighbouring region, in rural Australia.

Although the researcher planned to sample broadly across the older age spectrum, potential participants who were single and living in the town and/or the nearby area fell into two natural demographic pools: a late middle-aged group of women aged between 55 and 65 years, and an older old cohort who were 80 years of age and above. This demographic divide created two novel and distinct cohorts to compare: older lifelong residents, and a younger group of newcomers. The lack of eligible participants between 65 to 80 years was unexpected, and occurred primarily because the majority of women in this age bracket were still residing with partners—possibly corresponding to the increasing longevity of Australian males (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; de Vaus & Richardson, 2009, p. 24). Some of the older widows also remarried (Koren, 2014). As observed previously (Section 3.1), the relatively recent influx of late middle-aged, single women into the town was not known in advance by the researcher, and only detected during her fieldwork.

Sociodemographic profiles of the two groups of women are provided in Tables 2 and 3 (Appendices B.2.4 and B.2.5) to complement the following synopses:

3.2.2.1 Older old women. A total of 16 older old women participated in the study (Table 2, Appendix B.2.4). Half of the cohort (eight women) was aged between 80 and 84 years. Of the remaining eight, three women were aged between 85 and 89 years, four women were older than 90 years, and Willa, at 72 years, was much younger.

Three of the women were not born and raised locally, but with the exception of one woman who moved from a neighbouring (comparable) area seven years ago, all had

lived in the area and/or town for over 55 years. The cohort was evenly divided in terms of occupational status, with half of the women employed in outside jobs (six worked in the service industry and two were professionals), and the remaining eight women supported their family farms. Unexpectedly, the oldest two women were still actively working; one (aged 98 years) lived independently on her farm, and the other, a 96 year old, remained a hands-on media executive. The majority (13) of the women had formally retired (one at 75 years), and lived in their own homes in the town. Just over half (seven) of the women were independently wealthy; a further five received the government age (four) or disability (one) pension, and the remaining four women were recipients of a war benefit gold card¹⁰.

Most (14) of the women were widows, apart from one long-term (20 year) divorcee, and one life long single. Six women had been widows for 10 years or less, three between 15 and 20 years, and the remaining women were widowed over 20 years ago. Even though none of the women (self) reported mental health issues, ten women experienced some physical health limitations, including one with a chronic medical condition. Except for the woman with the long-term disability, no one received formal home help or personal care, and all were determined to retain their independence for as long as possible.

3.2.2.2 Late middle-aged women. A total of fourteen late middle-aged women participated in the study. The majority (11 women) were aged between 60 and 65 years; two women fell into the 55 to 60 year category and as noted in Table 3 (Appendix B.2.5), Jenny was 70 years old. With the exception of Rae, who was born and remained in the

¹⁰ The war benefit gold card is issued to veterans, war widows, widowers, and dependants of Australian forces service personnel, and provides access to health and other care services, irrespective of the origin of the health condition.

town, all of the women moved to the town at various stages in their lives; most of them (10) relocated within the last five years.

In terms of their socioeconomic status, the women's employment history was generally erratic (refer to Chapter six, Section 6.3.1.3 for details), and again, only Rae demonstrated a steady employment record. Nevertheless, most (11) of the women were homeowners. At the time of the study, 10 women received state unemployment support (benefits), two women were independently wealthy, and two were still working. Few of the women were educated to tertiary level; of these, a kindergarten teacher, two nurses, and a paralegal were represented. Two of these four women also had fine arts degrees.

All of the women were divorced (five had divorced more than once), apart from a widow, and one woman who had never married. The group of divorcees split evenly into a group of six women who had been on their own for less than 15 years, with the remaining six divorced for 15 years or longer.

An unforeseen high number of the women (nine) suffered from clinical mental health problems, with one of these facing multiple chronic medical conditions. Only four women did not report any physical or mental health limitations.

Most of the participants in both cohorts were identified first-hand by the researcher during casual, day-to-day encounters in the town. These interactions were mediated through spontaneous, informal conversations in the street and public gathering places, including the post office and supermarket; memberships of social organisations, such as church and charitable groups; and less frequently, formal volunteer roles at health care agencies and an information centre.

Additional contacts from gatekeepers also supplemented the researcher's participant pool (Clark, 2011), for example, the hard-to-reach and/or socially isolated widows who attended a lunch and entertainment afternoon for elderly *shut-ins*. Since gatekeepers are often instrumental in providing, restricting, or constraining community access, strong researcher-gatekeeper relationships were nurtured across the study. Following Crowhurst (2013), these gatekeepers were approached “as social actors embedded, participating in and influencing relations of power” (p. 463).

3.3 Data

A flexible research design created the possibility to compare and contrast dual temporal (insider and outsider) and situational (site and sample) perspectives. Multiple data were utilised to take full advantage of these opportunities: “Using different approaches to data collection and observation...leads to richer understanding of the social context and the participants” (Kawulich, 2005, para. 19), and to avoid over-reliance on isolated, decontextualised knowledge gained through interviews (Block, 2012, p. 2). With the capacity to accommodate macro systems (Gellert & Shefner, 2009) to “microsituations” (Fine & Fields, 2008), and employ a variety of textual, spoken, and visual data, these affordances are embedded in an ethnographic methodology.

3.3.1 Sources. The study utilised two main sources of empirical data:

3.3.1.1 Non-personal information. According to Charmaz (2006, pp. 35-37), if extant texts (documents encompassing public reports, government records, organisational minutes, media material, and academic and popular literature that are created for another purpose)¹¹ are contextualised to time and space, they provide a valuable complement to

¹¹ This research oriented interpretation of extant differs from the classical definition that means surviving, or still in existence.

other data sources. In this study, a temporal and situational impression of the community was gained through:

Historical records. Regional and local archives including records of the town's Historical Society and artefacts from the community museum, reference texts, and visual ephemera (family photographs and videos) were synthesised to create an historical and cultural backdrop for Chapters four and seven.

Previous research. Dempsey's (1990, 1992) extensive study of the town formed a benchmark for tracking change over time in Chapters four and seven. Personal communication with Dempsey during the fieldwork facilitated this process.

Cultural and policy documents. Policy documents, research reports, and census data supported comparative demographic, political, and socioeconomic profiles of the town and its neighbours (Owen, 2014, pp. 9-11) as detailed in Chapter four, and Table 6, Appendix B.1.1.

Contemporary material. Local media, predominantly district newspapers, service organization and club reports, and public notices (Patton, 2002, p. 4) were incorporated into a present-day snapshot of the community (Chapters four to seven).

3.3.1.2 Personal information. Personal accounts of the lives, experiences, and perspectives of the participants, bridge the private (inner understandings and interpretations) and public (cultural practices, and social norms and values) layers of community life (Alder & Alder, 2012a, p. 18) beyond the structures of societal institutions (Gheorghiu, 2011, p. 33). Moreover, these accounts are constitutive, individually relational expressions of each person's lived reality (Jerolmack & Khan,

2014, p. 237), and grounded in the inherent meaningfulness and privileged knowledge of the biographical “voice” (Denzin, 1990, p. 15).

Researcher. Even though this research design exceeds Crang and Cook’s (2007, p.1) “plus” strategy by supplementing fieldwork with documentary analyses and formal interviews, participant observation remains the backbone of ethnography (Katz, 2012). Through rich data (Ogden & Cornwell, 2010, p. 1060), participant observation may contribute to a more informed, nuanced understanding of the personal motivations, social influences, and cultural overlays of specific peoples, groups, and/or societies. However, the translation of these principles into practice is situated and disputed. Kawulich (2005, paras. 16, 20) counsels that participant observation is open to researcher bias and filtering, whereas Alder and Alder (2012a) extol ethnographers to “embrace subjectivity” (p. 18). For Alder and Alder (2012a) credible research is generated by the degree of researcher and respondent closeness, and the researcher’s involvement in the field. This level of community participation may be determined by either or both parties (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 22), and extends from peripheral (passive participation), active (qualified participation), to full (complete participation) membership roles (Alder & Alder, 2012a, pp. 17-19; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, pp. 19-22). In this study, the researcher was wholly engaged with the local culture, and adopted a full membership role in the sample community.

By contrast, the researcher did not reside in towns X, Y, and Z. However, during the period from September to December 2012, she spent at least one day per month in each of them, plus shorter, more frequent, in-transit visits. In this context, the researcher related to these neighbouring communities in terms of her personal background (Section

3.6.4.1), but as she was not a local resident, her status corresponded to a passive membership role, “observing and interacting closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership” (Alder & Alder, 1994, p. 380). Within this more limited scope, the researcher informally engaged residents in public spaces, attended specific events and functions, and checked her observations and impressions through key outsider interviews (two to three per town). She also supplemented her intra and inter-town perceptions with formal documents (for example, local history repositories) and informal, contemporary information including notices and minutes of community meetings.

Participant observation is characterised by tolerance of sub-optimal conditions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, pp. 57-60), patience (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, pp. vii), and impartiality by the researcher (Kawulich, 2005, paras. 2, 3, 45). Complementary activities, including “fitting in” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 17), “engaged listening” (Forsey, 2010, pp. 560, 567, 569-570), “spontaneous conversations” (de Wit, 2013, p. 131), and “hanging out” (De Munck, 1998, pp. 41-43; Kawulich, 2005, para. 38), aim to develop trust, establish rapport, and build relationships over time. As such, these casual conversations and informal encounters (re)position the ethnographic researcher from an “ignorant intruder to a welcome, knowledgeable intimate” (Kawulich, 2005, para. 38). This phased sequence (Kawulich, 2005, paras. 34-45) paralleled the researcher’s experience of living in the sample town.

In keeping with her access to the community, and familiarity with local cultural knowledge, the researcher was careful not to exploit, betray, or damage her privileged participant standing. Consequently, information identifying participants, the community,

and/or the location was regarded as confidential, and either anonymised or referenced in generic terms only, throughout the text,

Extensive field notes based on brief daily jottings, weekly summaries, and monthly reviews of events and encounters captured unusual and unanticipated occurrences, patterns, changes and trends, and unresolved issues (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). A sample of these field notes is provided in Appendix B.2.1.

Key informants. 16 face-to-face interviews with local, and outsider, key informants provided community and rural “contextualisations” (Brannen, 2012, pp. 10, 15-16) for the study. Local informants included religious leaders, government officials, public servants (hospital and school), care and community service organisation members (age, school, and childcare services), and town champions. They were selected to provide a balance of critical perspectives about residential life (McKenna & Main, 2013, p. 120), and the town, such as social processes—organisational participation, neighbouring, value consensus, social capital and networks, and civic participation (Nicotera, 2007, p. 30). Comparative information was also obtained from outsiders (McKenna & Main, 2013, pp. 117, 119); these were participants living in neighbouring towns and/or the surrounding district who were chosen by the researcher and/or in consultation with key contacts (Kawulich, 2005, para 8.2) for their in-depth knowledge and insights into their respective communities.

Older women. To achieve representativeness and comparability (Teddle & Yu, 2007, pp. 81, 84) across the older, single women living in the town, a purposive sample was used. All women who were aged 55 years of age and older, single (widowed, separated, divorced, and/or never married), and living in the town or within the area

boundary, were eligible to participate. This sampling frame also enabled an analysis of outsiders (newcomers who had migrated to the town from elsewhere) versus insiders (locals with a long-term family connection to the town and/or surrounding countryside) (de Wit, 2013, p. 130). As a result, the sample converged into two cohorts of single, older women: older old women aged 80 years and over, born and living in the town and/or neighbouring areas for the majority of their lives; and late middle-aged women who had relocated to the town within the past five years.

Both groups of older women provided personal biographies in the form of face-to-face interviews or journals to add individual level information to the study. These narratives reflected the spoken and written expressions of an individual's life story, defined by the cultural, temporal, and situational imperatives of the setting (Cucu-Oancea, 2013, p. 235).

All participants were given a choice of interview (spoken) or journal (written) formats to extend the scope and richness of the data (Ogden & Cornwell 2010), and to accommodate individual differences and preferences (Hoffman, 2009, paras. 4, 5.2, 6). Flexible communicative options also minimise non-participation, and accommodate the needs of hard to access, and very busy participants (Hoffman, 2009, para 4). However, in this study, the range of potential choices was significantly curtailed by practicalities: primarily, the limited and unreliable connectivity to digital media such as mobile phone networks, and the resource capacity of the researcher. Consequently, participants were only provided with the two *low-tech* alternatives. And since the rationale for the participant's preferences was not queried, it is not known if a wider selection and/or format, or example, a time-use diary, would alter the quantity and/or quality of the

findings. (One of the late middle-aged women (Judy) compiled a diary describing her day-to-day activities over a period of 41 contiguous days to provide a valuable insight into the everyday reality of a newcomer in the town. While her account did not address the research questions (Appendix A.2.2), with limited direct applicability to the study, it was used to reference and cross-check temporal and situational events.)

Although writing demands literary skills and discipline (Deane et al., 2008), elicited (solicited) texts provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their lives in a structured way and/or address difficult and sensitive issues over time (Charmaz, 2006, p. 35; Koopman-Boyden & Richardson, 2013, pp. 395, 399). Conversely, interviews are time-limited and require immediate responses (Berger & Iyengar, 2013, p. 567), but they are also more intimate and interactive. Unexpectedly, the participants self-selected into two equal groups: 15 elected to complete written journals (eight late middle-aged women, and seven older old women), and 15 chose in-person interviews (six late middle-aged women, and nine older old women).

These spoken and written narratives were compared within and between cohorts via a corpus linguistic analysis (McEnery & Hardie, 2012) to ensure that the communication medium did not skew the findings. This analysis (Section 3.6.3) concurred with Berger and Iyengar's (2013) contention that written text is more refined and linguistically vibrant than spoken discourse. However, these differences were proportional across both cohorts.

While the question: "How many interviews [and/or journals] is enough?" (Baker & Edwards, 2012) does not carry as much weight in ethnographic studies as in other qualitative methodologies, the concomitant issue of data saturation has some salience. To

date, there is no agreement on an indicative quantity that specifies when this saturation point has been achieved. Expert opinion varies widely between 12 and 60 (Alder & Alder, 2012b, pp. 9-10), depending on the total size of the sample, the breadth and scope of research questions, and theoretical underpinnings. For this study, Baker and Edwards' (2012, p. 4) expert informed quota of 14 has been used as an indicator for the participant interview and/or journal sample size. In addition, the 30 (plus one) older women who comprised the personal level, participant sample conformed to Fugard and Potts' (2015) recommended, but contentious (Emmel, 2015; Hammersley, 2015), sample size of 29 participants. It also matched Mason's (2010) mean sample size of 31 for qualitative interviews in PhD studies. This participant sampling frame is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Participant sampling frame

LEVEL	DATA SOURCE	
Community	Key informants (total = 16)	
	Insiders	Outsiders
	Interviews	
	8	8
Personal	Older single women (total = 30) +1	
	Older old (total = 16)	Late middle-age (total = 14) + 1
	Interviews	
	9	6
	Journals	
	7	8 (plus one daily diary)

The women had different reasons for participating in the study, with the older old group motivated to “help me out”, and the late middle-aged women seeking a voice. Nonetheless, there was an excellent response rate from both cohorts. Only one (older old) woman declined to be formally interviewed, and three other older old women who agreed to participate (one interviewee, and two choosing to write journals) ran out of time. All of

the late middle-aged women who were approached readily accepted the invitation to share their life stories with the researcher (Bell, 2013).

3.3.2 Collection. For the study, two types of data were collected: secondary data from historical and contemporary documents (extant texts), and ancillary accounts; and primary data through participant observation and first person narratives.

3.3.2.1 Secondary data. This data collection process involved an iterative cycling between historical and contemporary documents to construct a developmental trajectory of the town and its situational relations for Chapters four and seven.

Secondary data also complemented the primary data for three of the older old women. Glad's sociodemographic profile was supplemented by an external interview conducted by Lovejoy in 2009; Cora's account was based on an unpublished family history, with details confirmed by her children; and Edna was interviewed informally, but she was hospitalised before her more formal interview. Thus, Edna's details are largely based on a 1981 media article, and subsequently updated by other residents of the town. Permission to use these anonymised secondary sources was granted by each participant.

3.3.2.2 Primary data.

Researcher. As noted above (Section 3.3.1.2), the researcher's participant observation field notes provided a comprehensive profile of the community in 2012. These were continually triangulated with complementary primary and secondary data to enhance methodological rigour and trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) per Section 3.6.3.

Participants. Data collection protocols and procedures were identical for both cohorts of older women to increase comparative utility, generalisability, and

transferability. Moreover, all interviews and journals (with the exception of Judy, as noted in Section 3.3.1.2) addressed the topics covered by the semi-structured questions (Appendix A.2.2), but not necessarily in sequence. While the researcher was still in the UK, an initial pro forma of these questions (Appendix A.2.1) was compiled from the literature review (Chapter two). This questionnaire was piloted with a small group (five older old English women living on their own) to gauge congruence between the expected and actual response, and modified according to their feedback (Kim, 2011). However, after spending time in the Australian community, the researcher decided that some of the questions were no longer fit for purpose. These questions were then refined and re-piloted with an additional four, single, older women in the sample rural area (two representing each cohort). The final version is provided in Appendix A.2.2, but in summary, the questions were centred around: personal context, self image and self identity, family composition; individual mastery and control, personal resilience, support systems; cumulated life experiences, ageing, social engagement and networks, social resilience; neighbouring and community cohesion, community resilience; and lastly, values consensus, and community culture.

Interviewees were given a choice of having their responses recorded later, or by hand, or audiotape during the interview. All of the women freely and voluntarily signed an agreement allowing the researcher to audiotape record their interviews. This preference allowed the researcher to pay greater attention to the person (Clausen, 2012), and improved the reliability and validity of the data (Dellinger & Leech, 2007, p. 322), even though the researcher was experienced in simultaneously taking notes and conducting interviews, albeit in a health care rather than a research setting.

The woman who preferred to answer the research questions in writing (elicited texts) were equipped with complimentary pens and journals (small, purse sized, fabric covered booklets of approximately 50 lined, untitled pages), and invited to retain them after the researcher had collected their information. No one accepted this offer.

Ultimately, the success or failure of data collection depends the cooperation of the community. Accordingly, the researcher invested in a fully participatory ethnographic residency to create a trusting environment. In this context, it was vital that the researcher respect the voluntary and unique contribution of all participants (Hunt, Chan & Mehta, 2011, pp. 195-196), and ensure that the “participants comfort level always takes priority [over] obtaining juicy data” (Charmaz 2006, p. 30). As such, all formal interviews were conducted towards the end of the study to minimise (possible) lack of cooperation, and reduce the risk of refusal. Likewise, journals were not retrieved until the participant requested collection to avoid time pressure, and potentially preclude unreflective answers. Moreover, the women who were unable to complete their journals were simply thanked for their willingness to participate, and a neutral journal retrieval site offered to mitigate awkwardness. Here, advice and guidance from community gatekeepers, church members, and representatives of organisations (Red Cross, Rotary, Probus) was critical in informing, supporting, and maintaining these precautions.

Sensitivities around an individual’s position in the community were equally relevant for the insider and outsider key informants. Informal interviews with key informants were conducted at various stages and locations during the researcher’s fieldwork to check, compare, confirm, and/or change observations, impressions, and interpretations, and enable verification with secondary data. A free-flowing, unstructured

format facilitated an active and dynamic interchange between the researcher and key informant (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, pp. 140-161). And since some of the topics and content were controversial, these interviews were not recorded or documented in situ, but noted as soon as possible on completion. Again, such open and frank exchanges were only possible after the researcher's long immersion in, and acclimation to, the community and the adjacent region.

Furthermore, asking older, single, rural women about resilience gives rise to some caveats and contradictions. Although Castro, Kellison, Boyd, and Kopak (2010) used a leading question to find out about resilience: "What does being resilient mean to you?" (p. 347), Obrist et al. (2010, p. 287) and Silverman (2013) preferred a more sensitive and subtle approach. For Nicotera (2007, p. 38), both unstructured and structured interviews can provide important and necessary data about people's perceptions and meanings, whereas Rossi and Isaacowitz (2006, pp. 37-38) state that open-ended questions are cognitively more difficult for elders to complete, but circumvent the social desirability and demand bias issue. In addition, it is necessary to recognise that not all people enjoy revisiting the past, and/or retelling their stories (Feldman & Howie, 2009, p. 633), even if they exhibit a willingness to comply with instructions rather than rejecting them. These debates informed the researcher's operationally strategic decisions to minimise the risk of unintentionally prejudicing participant responses, and/or triggering intra or interpersonal discomfort by: not referring to resilience in the question guide; opting for a semi-structured question format; and offering the women a choice of contributing to the study through private journals or alternatively, face-to-face interviews.

Careful advance planning also helped the researcher pre-empt potentially problematic interview situations. Unlike the unstructured approach used in the key informant interviews, the semi-structured format supplied a scaffold and aide-memoir for the older women's life history narratives. Power differences (Vähäsantanen & Saarinen, 2012) were managed by matching the researcher and participant's gender and (general) age range (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2007), and situating all formal interviews in the women's homes. This setting provided a comfortable environment for both the participant and researcher, who was an experienced home visitor via her previous work as a community-based, healthcare practitioner. It also allowed the researcher to adjust the interview process to accommodate the physical and emotional needs of participants (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 656): for example, Wyn and Jean's restricted mobility, and Ruby and Barb's time-out breaks.

Qualitative interviews (and by extension, written journals) often benefit participants therapeutically (Rossetto, 2014, pp. 483-484); as for Nell in this study: "I hope that what I've written is a help to you...It has been to me". However, these mutual exchanges, or in extreme cases, "confessional tales" (Van Maanen, 2011, pp. 73-100) may also affect the researcher, and lead to "researcher saturation" (Wray, Markovic & Manderson, 2007, pp. 1396-1397). Researchers adopting reflexive (Denzin, 2001, p. 24), and empathetic (Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2014) interview styles, or attempting to transit from clinical to research contexts (Hunt, Chan & Mehta, 2011), are particularly vulnerable to boundary crossing and ethical infringement (Bell, 2013, p. 536; Palmer, Fam, Smith & Kilham, 2014). Since "the researcher's role is listener, learner, and observer, not counsellor or therapist." (Rossetto, 2014, p. 486), the researcher was

vigilant in observing the guidelines advocated by Hunt et al. (2011, pp. 193-198) and Palmer et al. (2014, pp. 9-11).

Finally, the research relationship is a situational interaction (Gheorghiu, 2011) that significantly impacts the depth and quality of the data. In this study, the strong connection between the researcher and the older women living in the community contributed to data-rich interviews and journals. Each participant interview exceeded an hour in length, with one requiring two and one half hours to complete. The contemporaneous journal entries varied from two to 35 pages long.

3.4 Analysis

3.4.1 Transcription. The purpose of transcription is to translate or transform sound from audio recordings or images (in this study, interviews and scanned journal pages) into text. As there are few articles discussing transcription in ethnography, Vigouroux (2007) being a notable exception, “a hybrid system of transcription” (Davidson, 2009, p. 40) was devised: words were transcribed verbatim, natural language (colloquialisms and redundancies, *um*, *eh*) retained, and non-speech expressions (pauses, laughter) registered (Bell, 2013, pp. 530-531). All narratives were transcribed by the researcher; aided by transcription software developed by Dresing and Phel (2012). Self-transcription is a time consuming process, but it creates a more intimate, insider translation (Wichter, 2010, p. 127), improved uniformity and consistency across data analyses, and trustworthiness of the overall findings (Wichter, 2010, p. 123).

Even so, “all texts are [constructed] products” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 39), and academic transcription is at best, a subjective representation of the participant’s voice that is then re-interpreted and filtered by the researcher (Davidson, 2009, pp. 37-41). This

relativism underscores the need for greater researcher oversight in terms of transcribing transparency and accountability, especially where transcripts form an evidential foundation of analytical claims. Hence, the researcher ensured that all transcribed segments were time-stamped by the software to directly link back to the relevant audio record. (Refer to Appendices B.2.2 and B.2.3 for sample transcriptions.) The corpus linguistic transcription served as an additional quality control measure (Pollarch, 2012), because each transcript had to be manually re-inspected, cleaned, and the text converted to a different file format (Anthony, 2013, p. 144).

These precautions signal a concomitant requirement for theoretical, methodological, and analytical coherence, as demonstrated by Collier, Moffat, and Perry (2015) in their divergent interpretations of the same transcript. Where meanings are slippery, and contextual representations fluid as in this study, analytic logic must be credible and auditable. Under this imperative, the researcher's decision not to use computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to facilitate data management, appears contradictory. Notwithstanding the scope and value of these software programmes (Davis & Meyer, 2009; Evers, 2011; Odena, 2013), their benefit is diminished by the intensive front-end learning demand for the researcher (Blee, 2007, p. 150; Davis & Meyer, 2009, p. 123), and the trap of "coding fetishism" (Richards, 2002, p. 269). And as these computer packages primarily operate at a textual rather than a conceptual level (García-Horta & Guerra-Ramos, 2009, p. 163), the actual analysis is still reliant on the researcher's craft and imagination to creatively and reflexively shape the data (James, 2012, p. 575).

3.4.2 Methods. For Katz (2012, p. 264), each ethnographic data set is unique in form as well as content. In this study, the primary and secondary data sets (Sections 3.3.2.2 and 3.3.2.1 respectively) are matched with different analytical methods according to the research question and purpose: a community revisit to assess the historical and cultural trajectory, and current status of the town in terms of its resilience in Chapter four; the Framework method to investigate individual (personal) and then comparative resilience for both cohorts of older women in Chapters five and six; and intersectionality to interrogate the interactions of each group of older women with the community and each other, in Chapter seven. This customised approach meets Fine and Sirin's (2008) methodological design challenge "to situate lives in and across historic, cultural and political contexts [Chapter four]; link narratives of identity to distant and local political arrangements [Chapters five and six] and interrogate intersectionality and wide variability within the 'group' [Chapter seven]" (p. 23). An overview of these methods follows:

3.4.2.1 Community revisit. "Community studies' is a maligned sociological tradition" (Back, 2009, p. 203), but in the guise of community revisit, it has been recently revived (Charles & Crow, 2012), and updated to encompass imaginative expressions of place and belonging (Crow, Bardsley & Wiles, 2009, p. 117). Crow (2012) specifies that a community revisit is expressly oriented to recapture community relations, and map social change at a local level over time. A revisit may be conducted by the initial or another researcher, but it must involve new research. As such, it is a fresh lens through which to reappraise the original community in terms of contextual, temporal, and situational variations (Charles & Crow, 2012, p. 403). In an ethnographic setting, this additional fieldwork differentiates a community revisit from: a reanalysis of existing data;

an update where an earlier study is modernised but not re-engaged; a replication (Burawoy, 2003, pp. 646-647); or a re-study, whereby “subsequent researchers may put themselves in the same place, they cannot put themselves in the same ‘shoes’ as the original researcher” (Bruce, 2011, p.215).

Contrary to Phillipson’s (2012) guarded advocacy of community revisit as a powerful research method, the purported benefits (Crow, 2012) are beset with challenges: There is a lack of consensus about the rationale for community studies; and methodological issues (Lyon & Crow, 2012, pp. 502-505; O’Connor & Goodwin, 2012, pp. 484-488), specifically representativeness, reliability, and validity (Crow, 2012, pp. 405-406) are also problematic. For Crow (2012, pp. 407-416), the methodological limitations include redundancy, elapsed time, and sample selectivity. These are countered as follows:

The emphasis of this study is on exploring new ideas or issues (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013, p. 325), rather than replicating original research. While this study rests on Dempsey’s sociological ethnography of “Smalltown” (1990) and “A Man’s Town” (1992) in Australia, it is predicated on a different research question and approach (Phillipson, 2012, p. 540). Dempsey located his research in the domain of community studies, with the town as the focal point, whereas the purpose of this study is resilience and older women, situated in the community. In addition, Dempsey and his research colleagues used a combination of methods to collect their quantitative and qualitative data: 14 major surveys, interviews, and participant observation (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 8-14, 1992, pp. 7-13, 274-277), while the methodology employed in this study is ethnography, supported by context-specific data sources and methods. And as the raw data from

Dempsey's research is no longer available (K. Dempsey, personal communication, November 30, 2012), information from his study forms a benchmark for this analysis, rather than secondary data reuse (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013). Consequently, Dempsey's results formed a time-stamped platform from which to capture situational change in the community over time. And although an optimal duration between returns to a community has not been determined to date, Crow (2012) suggested that a 20 year gap is "long enough for the earlier study's ideas about continuity and change to be examined empirically" (p. 410), as in this research. The sample was also purposefully widened to include informal interviews with men and younger residents to mitigate the risk of age and/or female gender imbalance (Crow, 2012, pp. 408-409).

Furthermore, when data were available, the town was relationally compared with the surrounding rural region, and selected neighbouring towns, to differentiate between factors that are common to the area, versus those that are specific to individual locations. This orientation avoids the "tendency to treat each of the environments...as juxtaposed, discrete blocks...that are nested in a hierarchy of scales...rather than a collection of interconnecting constellation of experiences, structures and practices constrained and enabled through space" (Clark, 2014, p. 723). McKee, Kostela, and Dahlberg's (2015, p. 36) observation that positive perceptions of the wider region, and its socially progressive development play an important role in older person's expectations of their future quality of life, in addition to their neighbourhood and community affiliation, is also addressed.

Lastly, and to balance the fluidity inherent in community studies (Phillipson, 2012, p. 544), O'Connor and Goodwin (2012) suggest that revisits operate within a structured "process/developmental analytical framework" (p. 493). As recorded in

Chapter one (Section 1.3), this processual logic has been implemented across the analyses.

3.4.2.2 Framework method. The Framework method of qualitative data analysis was authored by Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Connor (2003) at first, and then developed under the sponsorship of the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in the UK. It was originally designed as a paper-based tool, but has subsequently evolved into a computer software package that was integrated with NVivo in 2011. It is primarily used in the analysis of healthcare (Ward, Furber, Tierney & Swallow, 2013), policy evaluation (Srivastava & Thompson, 2009), and programme management (Swallow, Lambert, Santacroce & Macfadyen, 2011). However, its applicability to other research and practice domains ranges from an early investigation into the sociocultural impacts of tourism (Brunt & Courtney, 1999) to a recent assessment of a UK criminal justice system pilot (Rahim et al., 2013). For a comprehensive and detailed user guide to the Framework method, the reader is referred to Ritchie et al. (2003, pp. 219-262).

In essence, a Framework analysis provides a systematic and methodical structure to organise and interpret raw data. Its matrix format enables the classification of data according to rows (cases or individual participants), columns (categories or codes)¹², and cells that are populated by raw and/or synthesised information from each participant. An iterative process consisting of interconnected stages, reduces, refines, and transforms the data from descriptive elements to explanatory concepts, depending on the purpose of the research. Within, and across case analyses are supported equally, because the part-whole

¹² A code is the descriptive label or representation of a construct or category that relates to the research questions and/or concepts—in this context, the attributes of resilience.

integrity of the participant voice is preserved (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013).

Although data preparation and management usually comprise a significant part of the actual analysis in many quantitative and qualitative studies (Becker & Burke, 2012, pp. 322-323), they are included in a pre-analytical section here, to conform to recommended data archival practice (Shotton, 2012).

An analysis of the data begins with a thorough familiarisation with the research material (Bendassolli, 2013), resulting in descriptive labels (codes) or units of meaning that are linked to specific contexts or settings (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011, p. 138). Most of these codes are either derived from theory (theory-driven) or evolve from raw information (data-driven). The development of each type of code is an iterative process, leading to broad categories that inform the generation of themes, and ultimately, theories (Bendassolli, 2013). As resilience in later life does not encompass a seminal theory at present (Chapter two, Section 2.1.3.1), codes derived from the literature were substituted for the theory-driven codes in this study, and subsequently identified by the theory/literature prefix. For this study, both empirical (data-driven) and theory/literature-led types of data were used.

Data-driven codes and sub/categories. Research questions were designed to reveal the life narratives of older women living on their own, in a rural environment in Australia (Appendix B.2.2). Information from the ensuing semi-structured interviews and journal entries (and ancillary data for three participants) was manually and iteratively grouped into sub-categories, and then collated into more inclusive, overarching categories

to loosely reflect the life course framework proposed by Alwin (2012). This sequential process is summarised in Table 4 (Appendix C.1.1).

Theory and literature-driven codes and sub/categories. Theory-driven, pre-selected codes (the attributes of resilience in older age) were chosen from the literature outlined in Chapter two (Section 2.1.3.1). Because of the paucity of studies of resilience in older women, notable exceptions being Dorfman et al. (2009), Stark-Wroblewski et al. (2008), and Wells (2009), all studies relating to resilience in later life were included.

Consistent with the previous section, the resultant attributes were then manually sorted and collapsed into working categories (Gale et al., 2013; Saldana, 2013, p. 13; Ward et al., 2013) and recorded in Table 5 (Appendix C.1.2).

Data-driven, and theory/literature-driven codes and sub/categories. These empirical data-driven and theory/literature-driven data sets represent two interrelated strands of inquiry that enable a cross-examination of the participant's life trajectories in relation to their situational responses to crises and adversity—in effect, gauging accumulative advantage and/or disadvantage against resilience. For the data-driven inquiry, the semi-structured questions were designed to support an inductive interrogation of life stages in terms of the incidence and response to adversity and crises over time; while in the theory/literature-based inquiry, the situational attributes of resilience were pre-selected, and provided a grounded reference point from which to deductively test the data-led findings. Although the analyses in Chapters five and six are presented as a linear sequence, foregrounding temporal processes and then situational relations, supported by inductive and deductive methods respectively, this order is an arbitrary choice purely to

facilitate conceptual clarity and logic rather than following any methodological prescription.

As noted above, the Framework method consists of a data management matrix to enable comparisons within and between participant accounts (Swallow et al., 2011). Despite this powerful utility, only one account of an analytical matrix of resilience is found in the literature. The Resilience Theoretical Analysis Matrix (RTAM) is an instrument designed by Cárdenas and López (2010) to assess individual and structural factors influencing the development of resilience in older age, poverty, and disability. While the RTAM is promoted as a tool to evaluate resilience processes in older people (p. 188), it has not yet been widely tested beyond older, disabled, and poor [*sic*] participants in a social and health welfare context, and from a cultural psychological perspective. However, because it encompasses structural, cultural, coping, relational, and individual processes, plus mesosystem (social, community) interrelationships (pp. 184-185), the RTAM is a valuable first step in unraveling this “socio-historical, dynamic, and very complex...multidimensional and multidetermined...process” (p. 188). As such, it informed the format of the framework data management templates created for the study.

These templates were customised for the separate and combined analyses of the women’s life narratives (temporal processes) and the attributes of resilience (situational relations) as demonstrated in Appendices C.2. This logistical procedure is mapped out below:

Data framework for temporal processes. As a starting point, and guided by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014, pp. 109-110, 113-119), individual matrices were compiled to establish baseline life trajectory profiles for each participant. Here, the matrix

framework helped mitigate the challenge of “trying to disaggregate long chunks of talk into specific stories or segments of narratives” (Fraser, 2004, p. 189). And, in contrast with a standard line-by-line approach to analysing transcripts, complete extracts were used to avoid artificially and arbitrarily fragmenting the participants’ stories (Fraser, 2004, p. 190). Consequently, raw data from the interview and journal transcripts populated the cells (Gläser & Laudel, 2013, paras. 44-45, 54), with all excerpts from the transcripts tagged to the actual interview audio recording or journal entry to improve transparency and reliability. (See Appendix C.2.1 for an example.) The extracts from these life trajectories were then inserted into a composite matrix to support inductive comparisons within and between participants, vis-à-vis their life course, life challenges and responses, life review, and life in the future.

Data framework for situational relations. Complementary (individual) matrices were also developed to juxtapose participants’ accounts of their life challenges against the pre-selected attributes of resilience, as in Appendix C.2.2. The synergy between the theory/literature-led resilience attributes and the participants’ real world experiences was then deductively assessed via an integrated matrix. If these pre-selected attributes and sub/categories of resilience were subsequently evaluated as incomplete or no longer valid, they were refined and/or supplemented with new attributes (Cipriani, 2013, p. 78).

Data framework for temporal processes, and situational relations. A final matrix was constructed to cross-check each participant’s life trajectories against the attributes of resilience manifested as resilience responses, to evidence the profiles of later life resiliency. (A sample matrix is provided in Appendix C.2.3.)

Because of this systematic and functional procedural structure, the Framework method contributed to the analytical robustness of Chapters five and six. It also offered a parsimonious audit trail that linked the original raw data directly to the research findings, thus enhancing the study's accountability and transparency. On the other hand, and corresponding to other qualitative research, this application of the Framework method required a critical and reflexive approach to produce rigorous analyses (Gale et al., 2013). In addition, it was highly labour and time intensive; for example, the preliminary data preparation and management procedures.

3.4.2.3 Intersectionality. An intersectional method was selected for the analysis of Chapter seven. Intersectionality sprang from the African-American, black, feminist struggle against racism in the USA in the late 1980's (Crenshaw, 1989). Initially coined as a heuristic term to focus attention on discrimination (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 787), and championed by advocates such as Collins (1990, 2000), hooks (2000), McCall (2005), and Hancock (2007a, 2007b), it is now a stalwart of mainstream feminist and gender research (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013).

Paralleling the Framework structure, intersectionality is also closely associated with axes and matrices, primarily, a "matrix of domination" (Andersen & Hill Collins, 2013, pp. 4-6; Collins, 1990, 2000), where women are assigned a subordinate status relative to men. The early single axis framing, with women treated homogeneously as one category (Smooth, 2011, pp. 437-439), has now expanded to encompass other social identities (age, nationality, and religion); processes of differentiation, including international law and politics (Lombardo & Agustín, 2011), and population health (Bauer, 2014); systems of repression, for instance, colonisation and homophobia (Dhamoon,

2011, pp. 234-235; Yuval-Davis, 2006); and diverse arenas such as planning for climate change (Osborne, 2015), social policy (Strid, Walby & Armstrong, 2013), and crime reduction (Becker, 2013). This extended conceptualisation also resonates with the triple jeopardy disadvantage of older and rural women identified by Dorfman et al. (2009, p. 305). As such, “ethnographic data analysed with an intersectional lens [can] provide an intricate view of [societal] level processes and how [they] are tied to (and potentially challenge and/or reproduce) privilege and disadvantage” (Becker, 2013, p. 36). Again corresponding to the Framework method, intersectionality is an *and/both* strategy that can “facilitate an understanding of the fluidity in and between and within identity categories” (Shields, 2008, p. 308), and “across time, geographic space and cultural contexts” (Smooth, 2011, p. 439).

Because intersectionality embraces theoretical pluralism, it is open to different interpretations (Dhamoon, 2011, pp. 236-239). Nonetheless, most versions circumscribe these fundamental principles: identities and processes are enmeshed and context dependent; structural inequalities are relational, multilayered, and mutually constitutive; social dynamics and relations of everyday life are complex, multidimensional, and situated; and disadvantage is accumulative rather than additive or multiplied (Hancock, 2007a, p. 64). Accordingly, an intersectional approach can discriminate levels of representation, identity, and structure (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 52), and demonstrates a clear alignment with the multilevel requirements of Chapter seven.

Intersectionality is also associated with complexity, flexibility, and responsiveness. Even though these attributes are generally regarded as an asset (Davis,

2008), intersectionality presents a definitional challenge (Mehrotra, 2010, p. 421). Here, Dhamoon and Hankivsky's (2011) characterisation of intersectionality as:

the simultaneous intersections between aspects of social difference and identity (as related to meanings of race/ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion) and forms of systemic oppression (racism, classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia) at macro and micro levels in ways that are complex and interdependent. (p. 16)

is possibly the most comprehensive, if a somewhat unwieldy, description.

Despite this capacity to “inform understandings of core sociological issues, such as institutions, power relationships, culture, and interpersonal interaction[s]” (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 130), intersectionality is currently at a critical juncture in its development, and is at risk of “popular commodification” according to Fine (as cited in Guidroz & Berger, 2009, pp. 69-70). Moreover, for Yuval-Davis (2006), “constructions of self and identity can...in certain historical contexts, be forced on people” (p. 203). Her caveat about belonging, identity, and positionings, and the relationships between locations and identifications, has particular salience for Chapters four and seven, and Section 3.6.4 in this chapter.

Another critique of intersectionality relates to its methodological neutrality (Garry 2011, p. 830). Choo and Ferree (2010) distinguish three distinct understandings of intersectionality in sociological research, namely, group, process, and system centred methods. The first approach focuses on the multiply marginalised; the second examines the interactive effects of different intersectional dimensions through a comparative and contextual analysis of inequalities (Bose, 2012, pp. 68-69); whilst the third refers to

intersectionality as a complex system with inequalities embedded in institutional policies and practices (Walby, Armstrong & Strid, 2012). Since this study investigates the interrelationships of older women in, and with, their rural environment, the second, process centred model that supports a multilevel comparison of social identities and locations (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 134) aligns most closely with this research purpose.

However, as with many evolving methods, there is no agreed procedure on how to conduct an intersectional analysis (Anthias, 2013a, pp. 125-127). After a comprehensive appraisal of the related literature, an approach loosely modelled on Anthias' (2013a, 2013b) heuristic framework is adopted in Chapter seven. Her translocation lens (2013a, p. 131) allows the deconstruction of "social processes, practices and outcomes as they impact on social categories, social structures and individuals" (Anthias, 2008, p. 14). In this context, Anthias' (2008) conceptions of social position, social positioning, and positionality are pivotal: Social position equates to structural entities, a set of social outcomes or effects that occur or trend *at* a specific time; social positioning refers to a process, interpreted as agentic practices, actions and meanings that occur or trend *over* time (Anthias, 2008, p. 15, 2013b, p. 12); and positionality rests on the junction of social position (structure) and social positioning (agency) (Anthias, 2008, pp. 15-16) to form a relational and dynamic marker of these interactions (Anthias, 2008, p. 17).

This intersectional framing accommodates the "importance of context, the situated nature of claims" (Anthias, 2013a, p. 131), and "the spatial and time dimensions and broader social relations of power" (Anthias, 2013a, p. 133) in unravelling "dialogical and contradictory positions [external structures] and positionings [individual agency]" (Anthias, 2013b, p. 129).

3.5 Ethical Integrity

Commensurate with intersectionality, asymmetrical power relations (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2013) underpin ethnographic fieldwork (Pini, 2005b), and requires that researchers exercise moral agency in conducting their research (Ferdinand, Pearson, Rowe & Worthington, 2007, p. 538). Ethnographers must also be constantly alert to the possibility of situated ethical challenges, for the likelihood of “breaching confidentiality standards increases when engaging small groups or networks in which individuals know one another or know of one another [as in] ‘small connected communities’ in a shared locality” (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012, p. 708). Many of these pitfalls coalesce around the trusting relationships formed between an ethnographer and a community. Because of the imperative to fulfil a study’s aims and objectives, researchers purposefully foster rapport with participants; a strategy that risks artifice and exploitation of this “ethic of trust” (Etherington, 2007, p. 600). In this study, the researcher negotiated this *fine line* through her genuine interest in the town and its residents, many of whom recounted personal and/or family connections to the researcher’s background. However, these closer, prolonged relationships also expose both participant and researcher to greater ethical vulnerability (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012, p. 709). On one hand, the participant may disclose highly sensitive information to the researcher (Palmer et al., 2014), yet on the other, there is an equal opportunity for the researcher to over-empathise with the participant and/or setting (Jones & Ficklin, 2012). To mitigate these potentialities, the researcher drew on her former healthcare training and long-term experience in managing difficult conversations (Gair, 2012), and maintaining personal and professional boundaries.

Ethnographic research is also replete with moral dilemmas. While some researchers are deliberately vague about their research intentions, or choose not to divulge important information to bracket participant behaviour (Ferdinand, Pearson, Rowe & Worthington, 2007, p. 533), the researcher favoured a broad rationale (Appendix A.3.1) rather than specifying resilience per se. This strategy accorded with the literature (Section 3.3.2.2), and avoided pre-empting and/or biasing the data. A further conundrum for the researcher related to disclosure of the town's location (Guenther, 2009). Here, the researcher elected to obscure identifying characteristics of the local and regional setting as recommended by Damianakis and Woodford (2012, p. 710), and to respect the anonymity preserved in Dempsey's (1990; 1992) original studies—even though this neutralisation detracted significantly from the analytical colour of the community.

This study was designed to conform to the British Sociological Association (2002), Statement of Ethical Practice. Ethical approval to proceed with the study was obtained from the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) prior to commencing ethnographic fieldwork. Copies of the submission and approval forms are provided in Appendices A.1.1 and A.1.2 respectively.

Written and verbal information about the ethics approval process and authorisation, archiving and storing of research data, and future dissemination and publication of the research outcomes (Cucu-Oancea, 2013, p. 236) was also distributed to each participant in advance/prior to any data collection (Appendix A.3.1). This was complemented with an individual, detailed, verbal explanation prior to each interview and journal handover. Consent to participate (Appendix A.3.2) and permission to audiotape interviews was then obtained verbally and in writing from each participant (Ahern, 2012).

At that time, and as appropriate during the research process (Allmark et al., 2009), the women's confidentiality and anonymity, including the town's location, and their option to withdraw from the study at any point, was re/assured.

Every participant was ascribed a pseudonym, and the town's identity referenced generically as "the town" in the text. The raw data (audio recordings and transcripts) and the key linking real and assigned names were filed separately on a password protected computer, with back-up copies stored on an encrypted hard drive kept in a securely locked, alternative location.

3.6 Quality Assurance

Specific quality assurance procedures were applied across the entire research process to complement the measures implemented to strengthen the rigour of each analytical method (described in Chapter one, Section 1.3, and Section 3.4.2 above).

Since qualitative research is not a unitary domain, consensual agreement on the criteria to assess quality, and/or a *gold standard* (hallmark) of qualitative excellence has not been reached as yet (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008; Morse, 2015, p. 1220). In the absence of a "single interpretive truth" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 30), recommendations for the critical appraisal of qualitative research have proliferated (Hammersley, 2007), as per Tracy (2010). To gain some clarity, the researcher reviewed the evidence ranking taxonomy of healthcare (Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine Levels of Evidence Working Group, 2011). The ensuing core indicators (below) are based on an amalgam of the guidelines proposed by Cohen and Crabtree (2008, pp. 333-334), and Hannes (2011, pp. 3-4), informed by a realist perspective (Hammersley, 2007, pp. 297-299; Porter, 2007).

3.6.1 Credibility. The credibility of a study refers to its truth-value or the authenticity of its results. Different techniques were implemented in this research to evaluate credibility, including persistent immersion in the data (ethnography), and verbatim quotes from participants to ensure that the results were not influenced by researcher bias or motivation. Member checking is also used to build confidence in the fidelity of a study (Section 3.3.2.2). It was widely employed in the research interviews to clarify, summarise, and/or confirm participants' opinions and meanings:

Researcher: You seem quite focused in what you want: You would like a companion, you kind-of have more of an idea of where you want to live, and what you want to do,

as well as substantiating the researcher's observations and/or conclusions:

Researcher: It's survival. You don't seem to have any choices?

Barb: That's exactly right. That's right. I've...cooked the pork outside tonight and...now I've got to decide...I haven't had a gas bottle for...I'd say four months. Now the gas bottle is \$118,¹³ but if you...collect it yourself, it's \$4 cheaper. And I'm thinking, well I'm doing ok with the electric frypan at the moment, and the light bill...with the direct debits every fortnight, and the bill on top of that was \$226. Well I paid the \$100...so the gas bottle'll wait. I've got the electric frypan and that piece of pork will last me...so the gas will come later.

Researcher: You seem to be constantly projecting. It's constantly prioritising but not prioritising through choice. It's prioritising through necessity.

Barb: That's right. We're eligible for nothing. Nothing.

¹³ All monetary references in the study are quoted in Australian currency.

Researcher: As we talked about, it seems to be this shadow age from about 55 to 65 where you don't fit anything.

By contextualising the lived experience of the participants, the excerpts also verify the accuracy and plausibility of the research findings for both participants and readers (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008, p. 334).

3.6.2 Transferability. Rich, contextual meanings and thick data are equally important in helping a reader discern if, and to what extent, the research is transferable and/or generalisable to other situations. (In brief, transferability indicates whether the conclusions are applicable to different settings, whereas generalisability relates to the degree these outcomes represent other people, times, and/or situations.) Because each ethnographic experience is situated and relational (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 30), the transferability of this study is limited. Its generalisability is also restricted with respect to the five “moderations” (breadth, time, precision, contingency, and relative conditionality) advocated by Payne and Williams (2005, p. 306), and as such, only extends to resilience in older, single women, living on their own, in rural Australia. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the study resonates with the reader, in addition to stimulating further research beyond this exploration to incorporate how and why explanations (Small, 2005, p.169).

3.6.3 Consistency. A study's consistency or reliability depends on a logical, transparent, and clearly audited research process. Various procedures were combined in this study to improve its consistency. These encompassed: conceptual, procedural, and analytical coherence across the research design; cogency of the written report; disclosure of the researcher's decision-making processes for each section; and self-critical evaluation of researcher subjectivity around issues of potential bias.

For example, the researcher felt that the evidence supporting the emergence of new (additional) attributes of resilience in both cohorts of women (Chapters five and six) was relatively weak. The reliability of this result was subsequently tested with a corpus linguistic analysis, using a stepped approach. (The reader is referred to Baker, Hardie, and McEnery (2006) for a glossary of linguistic terms, and to McEnery and Hardie (2012) for an overview of corpus linguistics analysis.) As corpus linguistics is a theory neutral, quantitative analysis of language¹⁴, it provides a supplementary toolkit from which to scrutinise a study's quality. A brief synopsis of the analytical process used in this study is outlined below: At first, the spoken and written transcripts were combined to form one corpus per cohort. Then, each of the new attributes of resilience in the corpus representing the late middle-aged women was compared to the older old women's corpus, through a sequential analysis of word frequencies, keywords in context (KWIC), and meanings (semantic domains); parts-of-speech tags (grammatical classes); and textual representations (concordances, collocations, and semantic tags) to strengthen or refute the qualitative claims.

Each of the additional attributes of resilience was examined in turn, with these analyses supporting the researcher's conclusions that inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection were present in both groups of older women. These findings were peer reviewed and substantiated by linguistic and corpus linguistic experts during a seminar presentation for the University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language (UCREL) at the University of Lancaster on July 19, 2014.

¹⁴ Corpus linguistic analyses are enabled by computer software such as Wmatrix, a programme developed by P. Rayson at the University of Lancaster, and used by the researcher.

This analysis was particularly significant for the self-reflection attribute. Although the qualitative analyses in Chapters five and six indicated that the late middle-aged women demonstrated active self-reflection, the presence of this additional attribute was not as apparent in the accounts of the older old women. Here, the corpus linguistic analysis showed that the late middle-aged women's contextual word use (KWIC), such as "attitude", "learn", and "change", mirrored Mezirow's (1981, 1994) reflect-learn-act cycle, while the older old women references to "dealt", and "experiences" related to their life review. Furthermore, the late middle-aged women's expressions were more dynamic, and oriented to the present or future, for instance, "I will change", whereas the older old women's word representations were generally passively equanimous (grateful, "accept"), and predominantly located in the past "I would not change anything". However, both groups evidenced similar word type categories, including "challenge" and "relationships", and variants of reflective emotions ("thought/think" and "felt/feel"). In effect, the corpus linguistic analysis reaffirmed the action focus of self-reflection in the late middle-aged women, and revealed that the older old women's mode of self-reflection was more passively retrospective, thereby matching the related findings signalling a muted representation of resilience attributes in the older old cohort (Chapter five).

While corpus linguistics is a powerful, a-theoretical, quantitative adjunct to qualitative analyses, it requires a working knowledge of two additional domains—linguistics and statistics. The researcher was comfortable with statistical analyses from her previous academic background, but linguistics was an entirely new field. As such, it

demanded a significant *front-end* learning effort that was enabled and supported by the Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS)¹⁵.

And since methodological triangulation of researchers, methods, theories, and data (Denzin, 1978, pp. 291-307) is an additional route to greater consistency (Konecki, 2008, pp. 14-15), this corpus linguistic analysis also contributed to the triangulation of analytical methods employed in this study (Sections 3.4.2.1 to 3.4.2.3). As noted previously (Section 3.4.2), these methods were specifically selected to articulate with the focus of each chapter. The triangulation of data types and sources (Section 3.3) within a single research study also adds to its reliability. These multiple data were synthesised and woven throughout the text to increase the rigour of the narrative analyses (Morse, 2015, pp. 1218-1219).

3.6.4 Confirmability. In this context, confirmability specifies the effect of the researcher on all stages of the research venture. It is enabled through researcher reflexivity, where “the researcher engages in an explicit, self-aware meta-analysis of the research process” (Finlay, 2002, p. 531).

There is a voluminous body of literature about reflexivity that reflects a multitude of interpretative nuances, for instance, Ben-Ari and Enosh (2011), and Probst and Berenson (2014). Nevertheless, the constituents that are deemed essential to a reflexive agenda have broad endorsement; firstly to disclose the researcher’s philosophical and theoretical assumptions, and personal biases; and then to account for these influences on the research question, plan, data selection and collection, analyses, and final report.

¹⁵ CASS is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded centre at the University of Lancaster created to bridge linguistics and social sciences with a new approach to studying language–corpus linguistics.

Chapter one delineates the researcher's conceptual affinities, and sets out how these ontological, epistemological, and theoretical foundations ground and integrate the ensuing research design and delivery (Staller, 2013, pp. 403-407) throughout the chapters. This methodological "reflection-in-action" (Schön, 1991, pp. 49-69) on these processes has been executed throughout this chapter.

To address "reflection-on-action" (Schön, 1991, p. 278), and to preserve structural consistency across chapters, the researcher used positionality as an entrée into her personal reflexivity: "Investigating positionality involves a reflection upon social location and the self as situated within broader social structures" (Day 2012, p. 73). Anthias (2008, pp. 15-16) and Day (2012, pp. 71-76) locate positionality at the juncture of social position and social positioning, whereby positionality refers to social relations; social positions are societal structures and norms such as gender, class, and age; and social positioning is an agentic process, building social identity and roles. These reflexive dialectics are applied to Chapter seven (Section 7.3), and also contextualised to the researcher's ethnographic fieldwork as follows:

3.6.4.1 Social position of the researcher in the community. The researcher is an Australian born, older (aged over 60 years), single, white woman who grew up on a farm associated with a small rural town. As a result, her social position in the community was governed by age, gender, and rurality (Chapter two). While the researcher was fully cognisant of the personal and cultural barriers associated with this demographic profile (Chapters two and seven), her status conveyed a research advantage in this context (Enguix, 2014, p. 86) because it matched a predominant social group in the town (Li, 2008, pp. 108-109). In addition, "the researcher from a rural area consciously or

unconsciously: understands social system nuances; ‘checklists’ for unexpected social or service dimensions; understands and speaks the language of rural communities; and is attuned to rural activities and patterns” (Farmer, Munoz & Daly, 2012, p. 1207).

Although the researcher had retained close ties with family and friends in the area, and refreshed her rural roots through return visits, her identity and role as a female researcher was new and untried:

After familiarizing myself and getting to know the community for nearly a month, I decided that both the timing and occasion would be appropriate for ‘coming out’ as a researcher on Australia Day (January 26, 2012). As it is traditionally a day of formal acceptance and welcome to ‘new’ Australians, I felt (and hoped) that these sentiments would extend to me. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Firstly, I was singled out as ‘being different’ when I discovered (too late) that there were no vegetarian choices at the community breakfast. Then, when I could not see anybody I recognised in the crowd, I sat down at a random table that had space – this also turned out to be a mistake as the other people at the table were unfriendly and openly resented my intrusion. (I was informed later that they were members of the local ‘elite’; the former Mayor, ex-councillors, and wealthy and influential farmers/businessmen and their wives.) My third misjudgement of the day occurred when I then went to the Country Women’s Association (CWA) sponsored morning tea – while some of the women made an effort to welcome me to the town in their ‘official’ role as hosts, in reality, they were mostly only interested in checking me out as a potential new CWA member, and very quickly lost interest when they realised I was not ‘into’ crafts. (Field-note excerpt, January 30, 2012)

Here, the researcher contravened the town's cultural norms and values by inadvertently exceeding her social position (Bryant & Pini, 2011). From then on, she ensured that her fieldwork was tempered by the "practical implications of gender, physical and emotional limits, and local circumstances" (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013, p. 324).

Similarly, in keeping with her realist world view, and Campbell, Gray, Meletis, Abbott, and Silver's (2006) advice to abandon "the notion of fully understanding and controlling relationships in the field" (p. 118), the researcher tacitly acknowledged that she could only partially effect the hierarchies attached to her default social position as an older and single woman.

3.6.4.2 Social positioning of the researcher in the community. Within this sociocultural envelope, the researcher's inauspicious entrée into the community was amenable to change in different situations, and over time (Enguix, 2014, p. 82), as demonstrated through her active (agentic) social positioning. This process consisted of creating a community-friendly social identity, and a credible social role to facilitate her acceptance and acceptability in the town (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 366). The following reflective vignettes illustrate how this social positioning evolved during the researcher's fieldwork:

Social identity.

Shortly after I arrived in the town, I attended a meeting of one of the local charitable organisations. The woman in the adjacent seat 'greeted' me with: "Are you another one of them", in other words, a 'blow-in' (an undesirable) from the city. A few months later, my offer to collect door tickets at a forthcoming 'old-timers' dance was treated with reluctance and scepticism. And after I turned up at

my allocated time on the day, her response was unconcealed surprise: “Oh, you’re here!” Obviously she did not expect that I would remember and/or meet my commitment, as ‘my’ place had been allocated to somebody else and I was “not required.” After that time however, I was acknowledged in casual encounters in the street, whereas beforehand I had been ignored. Finally, just prior to my return to the UK, she commented, “I hope that you will return to stay.” (Field-note reflection, January 10, 2013)

This gradual shift in the attitude, held by an older, long-term (female) resident towards the researcher, is an indication of the perseverance and personal investment needed to nurture these influential relationships.

Social role. As part of her fieldwork, the researcher volunteered with four charitable organisations on a regular basis, helped at special ad hoc events, and participated in the everyday community activities. Unbeknown to the researcher, some local residents perceived this level of engagement by a newcomer, as over involvement. Their censure was expressed as indirect sarcasm at first: “I see you’ve got an extra little helper”; then, direct criticism when a procedure was not followed exactly; to culminate in the ultimatum: “A word from the wise—you are doing too much. Back off!” delivered by different people on two unrelated occasions. The researcher’s immediate reactions were shock, discouragement, and disappointment, but she treated this admonishment with respect and scaled back her voluntary obligations accordingly. Her subsequent reflection on these reprimands and explicit warning, served as both a timely reminder, and a valuable lesson about the ramifications of violating the normative boundaries governing

locally sanctioned roles. In retrospect, the researcher had become complacent about her insider-by-association, social positioning in the community.

3.6.4.3 Positionality of the researcher in the community. The researcher is over 60 years of age and familiar with small Australian towns. While she is chronologically younger than the older old women and new to the community, her rural upbringing and family background were comparable to those of local long-term residents, resulting in her default insider status. Conversely, her adult circumstances closely resemble the profile of the late middle-aged women in terms of age and urban lifestyle. And because the researcher has not lived in the area for more than 40 years, she also qualified as a newcomer, and thus as an outsider.

A dual, insider-outsider positionality is feasible, albeit challenging (Berger, 2015), and requires flexibility and skill to navigate between these oppositional social identities and roles. Again, to draw from the researcher's experience: When she moved to the town, there was no accommodation available to rent, so the researcher spent the first part of her fieldwork as a permanent resident of the local caravan park. Living in a caravan park is typically regarded as a "place of last resort" (Connor, 2004, p. 9) in Australia (Wensing, Holloway & Wood, 2003), and on more than one occasion, well-meaning locals obtained social (low cost) housing application forms for the researcher. Meanwhile, she was accepted as a volunteer in the two most prestigious community organisations in the town; appointments that were selective, scarce, and highly coveted. The remark: "Oh, you got one of those!" underscores the mismatch between the researcher's outsider social identity and insider social role, and as such, represents the ambiguity inherent in her positionality.

The rural context adds an extra layer of complexity to these social relationships. At this point, Pini's (2004) reflexive account of her research positionality as a farmer's daughter, a "country girl" (pp. 173-175), and an Australian woman, provides a precedent for the researcher's experiences. For Pini and the researcher, the legitimacy associated with "a nice down-to-earth country girl" (p.173) was converted into default insiderness. This identity also dynamically framed and reinforced the researcher's social positionality, according to locally situated and tacitly understood norms, values, and behavioural expectations (Chapter seven). The practical reality of negotiating these fluid insider and outsider positionalities is difficult (Bucerius, 2013; Couture, Zaidi & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012; Edmonds-Cady, 2012; Ergun & Erdemir, 2010), even though rural researchers are purported to possess "an in-built radar to the effects of place and relationships" (Farmer et al., 2012, p. 1207).

As shown, reflexivity allows ethnographers to adopt emic (insider) and/or etic (outsider) perspectives (Block, 2012, p. 2) to account for "the wider historical, cultural and political contexts in framing and reframing the understanding of social phenomena" (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011, p. 154). This layering, placing personal and social patterns within larger external structures (Duneier, 2007, p. 37), forms an analytical scaffold for deciphering the community in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Environment Related Contributors to Resilience: The Community

This chapter addresses research question one (Chapter one, Section 1.2.2) by focusing on the influence, and interaction of temporal processes, and situational relations on the community, and wider environment related contributors to the development of resilience. It is informed by Bell's (2003) notion of a "national mythscape...conceived as the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstituted and negotiated constantly" (p. 75), and where "time and place combine [to shape] feelings of community and the construction of an inside/outside distinction" (p. 76). Here, the imaginary of resilience (Chapter two, Section 2.2.1) is reinforced through the Australian *battler* iconography, and underpins the culture of rurality (Bell, 2005, p. 13), and the collective and individual narratives of community.

To reiterate from Chapter two, it is proposed that smaller, tightly coupled, rural communities will enhance an individual's resilience when dealing with sudden detrimental circumstances such as living alone, health and/or employment related crises, or age discrimination. This premise is augmented by Aldwin and Igarashi's (2012) suggestion that contextual and community resources enable resilience in later life by providing opportunities for older people to use key resources. In rural USA locations, these options are severely curtailed by the harsh and isolated environment (Dorfman et al., 2009, p. 305). Similar constraints apply in an Australian context (Rickards, 2012), where in later life, resilience is dynamically shaped by gender, the community, and the rural setting.

These relations imply that communities have distinct personalities that affect the residents and vice versa, with individuals nested within the society and wider economic, political, and environmental structures. This chapter unpicks these community dependencies by examining “how macro-sociological and economic forces...work on the ground to influence the daily lives of older people as well as the neighbourhoods in which they live” (Phillipson, 2007, pp. 336-337). The analysis is also mediated through the town’s community capacities (resiliency), in concert with the literature about community and rural resilience (Chapter two, Sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.3).

At first, the town’s historical and cultural development (temporal processes) is traced across three timelines, the past, the cusp of change (1970 to 1990), and the present (2012) to discern its sense of community (Section 4.2). The next section situates both groups of older women in this context through their relational belonging, in this case, attachment to the town and place¹⁶ identity. Lastly, the chapter teases out the town’s response to sociodemographic and associated structural challenges in terms of community resilience. These (selected) indicators of community resilience, social vitality, political efficacy, and economic viability, are then compared with neighbouring towns to verify the findings.

An outline of the town’s developmental trajectory reveals that its historical standing as a political and economic centre of power slipped to a position recording the lowest index of disadvantage compared with other adjacent smaller towns. This relatively recent decline is attributed to “rural depopulation, technological change, environmental stress, collapsing international markets, rising debt” (Davidson, 2005, p. 53), resulting in

¹⁶ Although place and community are often interchanged in the literature, place is used synonymously with town to represent a physical location in this study.

a static economy, and depleted political status. To counter this situation, the town adopted a conservative strategy of preferential young family, in-migration in an attempt to restore its former elite position, thereby sidelining some of the newcomers, especially the late middle-aged single women.

For the older women in the town, these demographic and situational changes were recast as a weakened sense of community, a fragmented place identity, and relational place attachment. Nonetheless, many of the older residents remained steadfastly committed to the town, valuing its age-friendly infrastructure and services. However, when asked about the future of the town, they opined that the town would survive, but it would not evolve—essentially, survival by stagnation. In effect, the town’s response to change (community resilience) is oriented towards resuming its previous elevated state, rather than proactively seeking out new solutions as in neighbouring communities.

4.1 Analytical Plan: Community Revisit

“Anyone who has lived in several country towns knows that while these towns have certain similarities, each town has its own individual atmosphere.” While this anonymised quote encapsulates the spirit of individual locales, it also underlines the inherent difficulty in defining a specific town or community (Bertotti, Jamal & Harden, 2011; Skerratt, 2013, p. 37). Community is often associated with place in the literature (Crow, 2012, p. 415), but even with the recent post-place (Brennan & Brown, 2008), post-modern mobilities (Urry, 2000), and subsequent rural mobilities (Bell & Osti, 2010) refinements in the meaning, community continues to be associated with a physical location (a town and/or area), and/or the collective representation of its residents in terms of geographical propinquity. Therefore, community as place embraces a relational and

dynamic “interplay of physical-spatial and socio-cultural” forces (Wiles et al., 2009, pp. 664-665). This chapter takes a pragmatic, small-area (Voigtländer, Vogt, Mielck & Razum, 2014), classically “conventional” (Cummins, Curtis, Diez-Roux & Macintyre, 2007, p. 1827), physical spatial view of community, whereas the following analyses in Chapters five through seven are oriented towards a more sociocultural, relational delineation.

A classical interpretation of community enables a comparative analysis with the previously conducted study of the town by Dempsey (1990, 1992) through a community revisit approach (Crow, 2012, 2013), as outlined in Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.1. It also resonates with Burawoy’s (2003) conception of an ethnographic revisit, where the “purpose is not to seek constancy across two encounters but to understand and explain variation, in particular to comprehend difference over time” (p. 647). Both methods of revisiting a location seek to “capture the intersection of biographical, historical and generational [temporal] change” (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013, p. 326); however by favouring a community revisit, this study aligns more closely with that of Dempsey (1990, pp. 8-10).

Analogously, Phillipson (2012, p. 540) justified his community revisit on the basis of extending a previous study that illuminated the family life of older people (Phillipson, Bernard, Phillips & Ogg, 1999). A similar rationale applies to this research, where Dempsey’s community study provided an intricate *time-stamp* of the town’s conditions, characteristics, and ordinary, everyday information (Crow, 2012, p. 418) “that could not be recovered retrospectively even by the most diligent historian” (Bruce, 2011, pp. 214-215). Therefore, the community revisit created an opportunity to benchmark and track

these shifting and vital “social connections and divisions” (Phillipson, 2012, p. 547) over time. For example, there have been major social changes in Australia since Dempsey’s original work. Of particular salience to this study are the feminist movement and its influence on the status of Australian women (Colley, 2014; van Egmond, Baxter, Buchler & Western, 2010), and the implications of demographic ageing, especially in rural contexts (Davis & Bartlett, 2008; Dobson et al., 2011; Hugo, 2013; Winterton, Warburton, Clune & Martin, 2014). These influences are threaded through the following analyses.

The broad definitional kaleidoscope of sociospatial place-making (Pierce, Martin & Murphy, 2011) is an additional interpretative consideration in this study. Here, these variants are intentionally delimited to sense of place, place attachment, and place identity (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012, pp. 121-123; Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 24; Kil, Holland & Stein, 2014, p. 477; Mannarini, Tartaglia, Fedi & Greganti, 2006 p. 203; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003, p. 274). These dialectical concepts are useful anchors on which to accommodate the growing appreciation of how a local environment interacts with the ageing process (Andrews, Evans & Wiles, 2013, pp. 8-9; Moore & Ekerdt, 2011; Phillipson & Scarf, 2005), as described in the early (Wahl & Lang, 2003), re/emergent (Phillipson, 2004, 2007), and expanding (Rowles & Bernard, 2013) environmental gerontology literature. As such, it builds on the prolific body of literature connecting ageing and/in place (Buffel et al., 2014; Menec et al., 2015a; Wiles et al., 2009; among others). A related, but as yet more limited literature, links gender, age, and place. For instance, Phillipson et al. (1999, p. 741) found that older women act as informal kin-keepers within family constellations, and in closely-knit communities, they may also take

on the role of “neighbourhood-keepers” (Phillipson & Scharf, 2005, p. 72). With respect to these mutually constitutive relations between community, gender, and ageing individuals, the spatial turn towards “places make people” rather than “people make places” (Andrews et al., 2013, p. 7) reinforces the overarching aim of this chapter to investigate the “dyadic interdependence” (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012, p. 128) between age and place specific resources, with resilience.

Accordingly, this analysis concerns the local settings and institutional infrastructure that influence a community’s response (resilience) to structural and demographic change (Magis, 2010; Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2014, p. 10; Wilson, 2010) in rural Australia (Mayberry, 2009; McManus et al., 2012; Tonts et al., 2014). While this literature underscores the positive components of resiliency (Chapter two), Abramovitz and Albrecht (2013) adopt a different perspective. Their social index of place-based, community resource loss captures the relationship between collective stress, and locational disadvantage, to serve as proxy measure of resilience. Since its parameters relate to large urban conurbations rather than small rural places, the indicator was not directly applicable to this study. Alternatively, Mayberry’s (2009) Australian study that parallels the generic model of community resilience developed by Magis (2010) is highly relevant. It focuses on community assets (capacity) as determinants of resilience—the responses of small, rural towns to exogenous and endogenous stresses; an approach that aligns with the community strengths orientation of regional government in Australia (Regional Development Australia, 2015).

In this context, rural capacity encompasses four dimensions: assets, catalysts, relational spheres, and outcomes (Beckley, Martz, Nadeau, Wall & Reimer, 2008, pp. 60-

61). Assets are defined as a town's resources, and catalysts are the threats, opportunities, and challenges that influence their realisation; relational spheres refer to the internal workings of the town; and outcomes (resilience) “emerge from community-level resources [that provide it] with the ability to adapt in positive ways to risk [and/or change]” (Mowbray et. al., 2007 p. 670).

These four dimensions are then mapped to the following sections to unmask the differential, place-based effects on resilience (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012; Andrews et al., 2013, p. 9). Thus, assets and catalysts are related to sense of place as developed through the historical and cultural trajectory (temporal processes) of the town (Section 4.2); relational spheres (situational relations) refer to the town's internal and external situational infrastructure, in particular, the older women's place attachment (McKee et al., 2015, pp. 33-34) and place identity in Section 4.3; these characteristics are then synthesised as community resilience in Section 4.4. The rationale and research evidence to justify these linkages is included in each section, but neither the communities nor historical and/or individual sources are named to minimise the risk of identification and alienation of the community (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012), especially if the findings are controversial (Crow, 2013).

At this stage, it is important to acknowledge that some literature assumes capital to be the lynchpin of community development and progress (Gutierrez-Montes, Emery & Fernandez-Baca, 2009). In part, this is driven by Putnam's (2000) seminal research connecting social capital with community well-being. Other studies (Lovell, 2009; Poder, 2011; Radcliffe, 2004) have critiqued this relatively uncritical, panacea-like adoption of socially oriented capital to resolve a myriad of societal challenges, such as the social

determinants of health (Sirven & Debrand, 2012; Williams & Ronan, 2014). Even though there are some studies relating social capital with resilience, for example, in post-disaster recovery (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011; Elliot, Haney & Sams-Abiodun, 2010), and climate change (Smith, Anderson & Moore, 2012; Wolf, Adger, Lorenzoni, Abrahamson & Raine, 2010), the conceptual elusiveness of social capital diminishes its utility for this analysis.

4.2 Temporal Processes

As noted above, the town's assets and catalysts were tracked over time to discern its sense of place. This historical and cultural developmental trajectory reveals a relatively recent shift from the town's dominant, long-term, prosperous and privileged power base, to a position characterised by structural disruption and disadvantage.

4.2.1 Sense of place. Sense of place is labelled as a multidimensional, fluid, dynamic construct (Carter, Dyer & Sharma, 2007, pp. 756-758) that is difficult to define and measure (de Wit, 2013, p. 139). This sense of place or "essence" (Stedman, 2003, p. 674) of the town and region is informed by the symbiotic interaction between place-based assets and associated risks and opportunities. Individual community profiles and patterns of growth can also signal which developmental characteristics are shared and/or specific to one context (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009).

The town's sense of place is analysed at three critical time periods: the historical past, the cusp of change from 1970 to 1990 (Anderson, 2009, p. 7), and the present (2012).

4.2.1.1 Historical past (1850~1970). The historical prosperity of the town and surrounding region is due to a fortuitous combination of economics and geography. In

common with many Australian settlements, the area was discovered¹⁷ in the push to open up the central hinterland of Australia in the early 1800's, and remained the domain of squatters¹⁸ until the 1850's gold rush. Even though the deposits of alluvial (surface) gold fizzled out relatively quickly, they formed the bedrock (literally and figuratively) of future commerce in the town. When miners invaded their land, the squatters turned this illegal intrusion into fledgling businesses by providing provisions, supplies, and infrastructure, such as makeshift toll bridges across rivers and creeks, to the gold-seekers. Further development of the town involved more complex mining operations that required financial backing, organisational management, and related services and resources. Again, the squatters invested judiciously in these new enterprises, resulting in a small, select power base of miners and business elite who exerted a monopolistic control of the town's economy and politics. For them, it was imperative to "attain [a] social, political and commercial position" for the town. Their relentless drive to achieve economic stability and political status reflected the early resident's surety that the town was both "important" and "populous"—a pronouncement that was issued when the town consisted of only 200 people. Subsequent years brought a greater population, and growth of the town as a regional centre of administration and infrastructure (rail and eventually road transportation systems), a business hub for small-scale local manufacturing, and a supplier of goods (flour mill, brickworks) and services (a hospital). This positive politico-economic trajectory was complemented by favourable geography that supported agriculture. Population density in the surrounding area was also stimulated by the land act of 1869 that reduced squatter sheep runs to 3,000 acres (1,215 hectares) and released land

¹⁷ Discovery here refers to the colonisation of Australia by white Europeans. It is not intended to disregard the original landowners, the Aboriginal people.

¹⁸ In early Australia, a squatter was associated with respectability, wealth, and high status.

for new settlers. However, some of the squatters were wealthy enough to reacquire and consolidate their holdings, thereby establishing large land conglomerations and family farm dynasties.

On the contrary, the settler's blocks of land were much smaller (320 acres, 130 hectares), and settlers were legally required to cultivate the land and build a house within their first year of ownership. A burst of activity ensued, creating new small towns and dramatically diversifying the rural landscape from large pastoralist grazing to more intensive dairying and grain farms. These smaller settlements nurtured the formation of farming collaborations, as well as an allegiance to the local rural community, rather than the larger town. They also stimulated a self-reliance and resourcefulness to:

Overcome the harsh reality of taming Australian landscapes or to gear-up levels of production achievable over the enormous areas available to them. The results of home-spun research and technology development...were shared through many avenues...[most] commonly through generous community co-dependence that supported free exchange. (Price, 2012, p. 51)

A subsequent onslaught of adversarial weather conditions left many of these fledgling farmers struggling financially. As a result, some farmers were forced to sell their land to wealthier neighbours, while others managed to obtain private loans from the town's businesses (shop keepers, money lenders, seed companies), thus reinforcing the town's economic power base. Its dominant position was also solidified during the War years.

This differentiated impact of adversity illuminates the significant divide between the town and the smaller regional communities. The town was oriented towards

opportunistic mining and business interests, sustained by an ethos of wealth, power, and a sense of superiority. Conversely, the smaller centres evolved organically to meet local community needs, such as cooperative ice factories and creameries, underpinned by a spirit of communality and egalitarianism. These contradictory contexts, a town embracing a privileged centralised power base, immersed in a hinterland grounded in collective cooperation, set the scene for later development.

4.2.1.2 Cusp of change (1970~1990). This time period was chosen to articulate with Dempsey's (1990, 1992) 17-year study of the town. It also "heralded a marked change in the overall ideology and rationale for Australian agricultural policy. These changes can be understood as...part of a broader ideological transition in the Australian economy and a changed conception of agriculture's social and economic manifestations" (Smith & Pritchard, 2012, p. 41). The shift in politics towards a global market culture signalled an associated re-conceptualisation of farmers as business people, where:

The early 1990's left much of rural Australia in a state of considerable flux in which many people could see their financial prospects in farming either diminished or virtually destroyed, the prospects for government support to be disappearing, and the state of health of themselves, their families and their communities deteriorating. (Anderson, 2009, p. 7)

Nevertheless, residents of the town maintained their belief in its superiority and dominance over the neighbouring area, by claiming that "it is more physically attractive, it has a more interesting history and it has a stronger sense of community than the other settlements in the region." (Dempsey. 1990. pp. 40-41) As this sense of place is at

variance with the historical profile outlined in Section 4.2.1.1, these suppositions are potentially spurious and invite a further investigation.

From a biophysical perspective, the town presented as a rural idyll: “Nestled in foothills...[the town] is surrounded by bushland...that is criss-crossed by attractive riding and vehicle tracks. Beyond is rich agricultural and pastoral country” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 17). This picturesque appearance was “heightened by well-treed streets and parks [enveloping] a main street characterised by a wonderful display of...old and impressive buildings” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 17). On a more utilitarian level, these buildings served as “an assortment of shops, banks, stock and station agencies, garages, a post office, a court house, local government offices and...hotels” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 17).

The town’s advantageous geographical setting was supported both logistically and strategically. Located on a railway and at the intersection of two highways, the town was (and remains) the largest for approximately 60 miles (100 kilometres) in all directions. Its population base was also sufficient to sustain some local-based industry (Dempsey, 1990, p. 23). But when some key industries closed in the 1970’s, no new businesses were created to compensate for this loss (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 14, 17).

Even so, the town was able to retain its primary function and reputation as a service and business centre for the surrounding region. In fact, approximately 41 per cent of the town’s workforce consisted of professional and white-collar workers, predominantly employed in the education, health and welfare, and government administration sectors (Dempsey, 1990, p. 23). Some locals had obtained tertiary qualifications in larger centres and then returned to work in the town—in rare instances, female teachers or nurses (Dempsey, 1992, p. 20), but many of the professional and

managerial roles were filled by male out-of-towners. This in-migration of professionals and management personnel helped offset the out-migration of younger people leaving the town permanently for higher education and employment in the city (Dempsey, 1990, p. 27. 1992, p. 19). The youth who remained sought work in construction, manufacturing, and road building (Dempsey, 1990, p. 24), but many were employed on family farms. Even with the escalation of larger holdings, with most farms averaging approximately 2,000 acres (810 hectares), and a concomitant decline in rural (region) population from more than 4,500 in 1901 to just over 1,000 in 1986, 32 per cent of the total community workforce was farmers or farm workers (Dempsey, 1990, p. 22).

Although this occupational profile showed that the area remained relatively dependent on the rural economy, it was not as pronounced in the town as for neighbouring communities. The town benefited from a larger population (approximately 2,500 residents in 1990, whereas adjacent towns had at most, 1, 500 people), a more diverse resource base, and a regional service and supply focus. But, because of its professional and civil service orientation, the town was subject to the vagaries of political will, for instance, the policies of regionalisation and decentralisation (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 14-15). A consolidation of government and agency services resulted in the town *losing out* to other centres to become “a petit-bourgeois economy servicing a petit-bourgeois farming industry” Dempsey (1992, p. 19).

In an attempt to preserve its economic and political credibility, locally and within the region, the town responded to this destabilisation in two mutually reinforcing ways: they framed the city as “bad” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 41) and “the enemy” (Dempsey, 1990,

pp. 37-39); while reaffirming their allegiance to the country, tempered by the underlying caveat that their town is “easily the best town in the region” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 41).

For Dempsey (1990), the town:

will stay what it has been throughout most of its history: a service centre offering modest facilities for the surrounding farming district and for its own population.

The scale and patterns of ownership of local economic enterprises, the diminishing number of professional and quasi-professional positions coupled with the absence of tertiary educational institutions, will ensure that [the town] also remains, for the great majority of [the town’s] young people, a no-career town. It will, however, have to cope with the economic cost of a rapidly ageing population.
(p. 316)

Regrettably, Dempsey does not provide a complementary critique of the adjacent communities. Nonetheless, his prediction about the town’s future acts as a benchmark for the following sections.

4.2.1.3 Present (2012). Along similar lines, Beckley et al. (2008) caution that “demographic pressures, information technology, environmental concerns and global economic interests create new and complex contexts, some quite different from historical contexts in which rural communities have developed in the past” (p. 57). This quote sets the scene for this section: An analysis of the town in 2012 is presented first, followed by a contemporaneous examination of the surrounding rural region. Both analyses are evidenced by the researcher’s first-hand ethnographic observations, supplemented with information from other primary sources, and secondary resources.

Data from the 2001, 2006, and 2011 census are extracted from two sources (Australian Bureau of Statistics; id), compiled, and tabulated in Table 6 (Appendix B.1.1) to detail shifts in population (gender and age), ethnicity (birthplace), educational attainment, employment/occupation, unpaid work (volunteering), marital status (lone person households), and income in the town. This information is also supplied for three neighbouring (smaller) towns, the adjacent rural area, regional state comparators, and a national index of disadvantage (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, SEIFA) to broadly identify the relative ranking of the town and local area against state and Australian standards (Table 6, Appendix B.1.1). These data are contextualised into the analysis where appropriate, to illustrate the town's response (resiliency) to structural change. (An alternative index of rural well-being for Australian regional towns (Burns, 2011) used empty shops as an indicator of community loss, but as it has not yet progressed beyond an exploratory *proof of concept* phase, it was not used here.)

The recent economic downturn (Gross, 2012, p. 132) was heralded by the amalgamation and/or collapse of many of the long-term political and economic institutions in the town—local branches of banks closed, businesses failed, and there was reduction in the provision of public goods and services. For example, one of the largest national banks now operates a sub-agency in a shop, rather than a full service branch. A key government department was also permanently closed during the researchers residency. Moreover, one of the biggest structural adjustments occurred when the town was defeated in its bid to remain the political and administrative centre of the region during a state mandated harmonisation of local governments. This loss was universally

regarded as relegation to a secondary or inferior status, and continues to be a major source of contention and resentment for the town's residents.

Following the relocation and/or downsizing of regional offices, many of the previous professional and managerial opportunities no longer existed; a change that directly influenced the type of in-migration to the town, and altered the sociodemographic profile of the town. According to the 2011 census, the town's population was just below 2,500, a slow decline of over 100 people over the previous decade¹⁹. There is a slightly higher number of women versus men overall, and an increasing age differential between the young and older residents. Women of post-retirement age (60 years and over) now make up the greatest proportion of the town's residents consistent with the demographic profile of ageing in small rural communities. Lone person households have also risen; 34 per cent compared to 27 per cent of rural state region in 2011. These increases are particularly notable in the middle-aged (ages 45-64 year) and older (aged 65 years and over) age ranges.

While late middle-aged women aged between 55 and 64 years are the fastest growing group in the town, another group of in-migrants (colloquially, the *ferals*) is also swelling the town's population. The *ferals* are younger, unemployed people who relocate to area to circumvent the conditions associated with the government job-seeker allowance (Department of Human Services, 2015). On the contrary, only seven overseas immigrants moved to the town between 2006 and 2011, irrespective of the Australian Government's active promotion of international migration into rural and remote areas (Hugo, 2014). Similarly, although approximately 10 per cent of the state's rural population was born

¹⁹ The data in the text are *smoothed* to preserve the town's anonymity, but precise figures are provided in Table 6, Appendix B1.1.

overseas, only six per cent of the town's residents were immigrants to Australia. Of these, the largest ancestries were UK and European (German, Italian and Dutch), rather than visible minorities. (Two of the 31 study participants were born in Germany.)

Consequently, the town's ethnic composition remains highly homogenous—predominantly Australian born and white. In spite of intensive and extensive engagement with the community, the researcher personally encountered only two *black and minority ethnic* (BME) residents during her entire period of fieldwork. One, an allied health professional, was living in the town to meet immigration rules that compel a visa holder work for two years in an under-serviced, rural location. He left as soon as his obligatory residency was over. The other person had nursing qualifications from the USA, and was seeking work. And even though nurses were classified as a high-demand, immigrant group, this nurse was unable to find employment at any level, including lower skilled in-home or aged care work.

A broad sense of sociodemographic categories can be generated by cross-referencing labour force, occupational, education, and income information. In this context, size and composition of the labour force are major contributors to economic viability, while occupation, education, and income are principle measures for evaluating socioeconomic status and the skill base of the town's work force. Accordingly, a synthesis of these indicators shows that the town's labour force participation rate (relatively stable at 50 per cent in 2011 and 2006) was lower than the comparative rural state region of 58 per cent in both 2011 and 2006. More people were employed in sales, technical work and trades, and as labourers in 2011 compared with 2006. However, many of the employment opportunities associated with part-time and casual work in clerical,

administration, and community and personal services that were traditionally filled by women, had decreased compared to the rural state region in 2011. This reduction was compounded by the closure of a factory, a grocery, several family run businesses, and the general stores that were once ubiquitous in most larger country towns: “We had a very flourishing flour mill that employed half the town, but it closed...and in the Returned Services League [RSL] hall we used to have a factory...and that employed a lot of married women, a lot, so they were sort-of two big industries that closed” (Beryl). Work in manufacturing industries also declined between 2006 and 2011, but continued to provide jobs for 20 per cent of the men, primarily in animal feed processing plants, pig and poultry farms, and metal fabricating factories. During the researcher’s visit, the animal production and processing units were struggling economically and have since ceased to function, but the equipment manufacturer remains financially viable, and employs many local young men. While both men and women filled lower skilled jobs, gender disparity was evident in professional and managerial level employment. Only one woman (an outsider) held a high-ranking position of authority in the town at the time of the study. This woman planned to resign and move from the town by the end of 2012, citing locals’ hostility, uncooperativeness, and inflexibility, as the main reasons for her decision.

Nonetheless, more townspeople, especially women, had acquired higher (university) qualifications across the decade (2001 to 2011). However, this percentage was approximately half of the rural state region’s 13 per cent in 2011. A larger proportion of the town’s residents reported no qualifications (59 per cent) versus 48 per cent of the state’s rural region as well. Weekly incomes were also generally lower in 2011, with 35

per cent of the town earning a low income (classified as less than \$600.00 per week) compared to 25 per cent for the rural state region. When equivalised²⁰ incomes are compared, then the lowest income range is the most prevalent in the town.

The census data also captures unpaid work and volunteering activity in the town. In 2011, more residents volunteered (29 per cent) compared with the rural regional state benchmark of 23 per cent. 32 per cent of these volunteers were women, and based on participant observation by the researcher, most were older women. These women provided a multitude of community-based services, ranging from running charity shops and their associated welfare functions (the Salvation Army and Vinnies²¹); managing health related services such as Meals on Wheels, and at-home and hospital visiting; providing supplementary and adjunct services such as a before-school breakfast programme; and supporting service organisations (the Red Cross, Neighbourhood Watch); to holding fund raising events for special occasions including the Australia Day celebration. Their numbers were increased by a special job seeker allowance for people aged 55 years and older, requiring that they undertake approved voluntary work for a minimum of 30 hours per fortnight (two weekly period).

In terms of the younger unemployed, immigrant, and late middle-aged women's voluntary and mandated labour, it is surprising that the town did not take advantage of these proactive government policies, especially as the town occupies a low rank on the SEIFA disadvantage index. (The town's SEIFA index is 910, compared to the Australian national (1,002) and equivalent rural regional state (978) benchmarks. As the SEIFA index is an indication of the relative level of socioeconomic disadvantage based on low

²⁰ Equivalised incomes assume that all households are the same.

²¹ Vinnies is the trade name for the St. Vincent de Paul Society charity shops.

income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations, a lower score indicates a higher level of disadvantage, with the average population weighted SEIFA score for Australia set at 1,000.)

The surrounding area was not immune from these structural sociodemographic, political, and economic changes either. This once vibrant and independent agricultural region was slowly being eroded, primarily as a consequence of “double exposure” (O’Brien & Leichenko, 2000), resulting from a highly competitive, global market neoliberalisation coupled with a relentless 10-year drought (Burton & Peoples, 2014). The effect of the long-term drought on individuals (Alston 2006, 2009; Alston & Kent, 2008; Guiney, 2007; Gunn, Kettler, Skaczkowski & Turnbull, 2012; Stain et al., 2011; Staniford, Dollard & Guerin, 2009), families (Caldwell & Boyd, 2009), communities (Hart, Berry & Tonna, 2011; Kiem et al., 2010; Pearce, Willis, Wadham & Binks, 2010; Sherval & Askew, 2012), and the rural lifestyle in country Australia is extensively documented in government reports (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2008; Productivity Commission, 2009), academic studies (Alston, 2009; Hanigan, Butler, Kokic & Hutchinson, 2012; Hunter, Gray & Edwards, 2013; Raphael et al., 2009), and the popular media (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014).

Carroll, Frijters, and Shields (2009) attempted to operationalise some of these factors to account for the economic impact of the drought on life satisfaction. They predicted that the poor growing season between 2001 and 2004 reduced life satisfaction in rural areas by the equivalent of an \$18,000 decrease in annual income. Furthermore, they suggested that this drop in life satisfaction was related to the psychological distress associated with a significant drop in anticipated income (pp. 459-460), as represented by

the rise in male farmer suicides during the drought years (Alston, 2012; Cheung, Spittal, Pirkis & Yip, 2012).

Farming was also perceived as a less viable career path for many sons standing to inherit the family farm, with the possible exception of large farm dynasties (Smith & Pritchard, 2012, p. 44). This perspective amplified the earlier trend of young people moving to the city for work, and with older people selling up and/or relocating into the town to retire, the downward spiral of rural depopulation accelerated. Census data for the immediate rural region confirmed this trend, with the young workforce (ages 25 to 34 years) numbers dropping from 149 in 2001 to 80 in 2011, and the area population contracting by approximately 300 people in a decade (2001-2011). As a result, many of the very small rural communities became a location in name only.

The repercussions of this depopulation and an ageing workforce are pervasive, as demonstrated in the following three vignettes, chosen amongst many comparable situations noted by the researcher:

Immediate impact. A school that was created to consolidate student enrolment through its strategic location equidistant between three rural catchment areas, closed within 20 years because of dwindling student numbers.

Escalating impact. Australia's volunteer-based Country Fire Authority (CFA) is at risk of "shrinking brigade membership in many small remote rural (and ageing) communities—in parts of south-eastern Australia, this is likely to be exacerbated by climate change and declining agricultural production" (McLennan, 2008, p. 8). Moreover, the intersection of economic and demographic factors; the financial implications of volunteering at sudden, inconvenient, and often sustained time periods for both self-

employed (farmers) and employed workers, and an age and gender bias towards young fit men to meet the physical demands of fire-fighting, have augmented this high risk region's vulnerability to a predicted increase in frequency and intensity of bush fires (Foster & Hoy, 2012, p. 7).

Long range impact. Many local, small farmers no longer purchase expensive seasonal plant (agricultural equipment); instead, they hire contractors to bale hay and harvest grain crops. Ostensibly minimising outlay costs, this practice also precipitates a break-down in neighbouring by curtailing the long-standing tradition of sharing very expensive machinery between close neighbours, friends, and within families. It also makes absentee landowning more economically viable, leading to less affiliation and contribution to the area.

With a reduced residential base, small towns in the area also struggled to provide more than a minimum level of goods and limited services. For instance, the only bank in town Z closed in 2012, leaving a population of approximately 1,000 people without access to in-person banking services. Similarly, a branch of another bank in an adjacent town offered such restrictive opening hours so as to be effectively non-operational. And since transportation options within and between towns are non-existent, or extremely limited at best, many older residents are dependent on one supplier for their everyday essentials, such as pharmaceuticals and groceries. This captive market left many elderly at risk of monopolistic pricing, and in some cases, abuse of trust. (The researcher discovered a *community* chemist in one of the towns selling medicines that were at least six months out of date, to unsuspecting older customers.)

Table 6, Appendix B.1.1 also provides specific demographic and socioeconomic details of the three smaller adjacent towns (X, Y, and Z), the following outline highlights the main similarities and differences: All the towns are smaller in size and population than the study town, but their overarching sociodemographic profiles are relatively uniform. Each town demonstrates relatively flat labour force and occupational profiles consistent with small, *all-purpose* communities, and their need to provide a basic level of goods and services. Here, town Z displayed the greatest deviation from this local, rural, normative pattern. Of the four towns, it is the smallest and most ethnically diverse, with lower income levels, and the lowest house values and rents. These data are reflected in its lowest SEIFA disadvantage index reading of 922, compared to town Y (960) and town X (974). While the three towns rank less than the adjacent rural region (1,000), and rural state region of 978, they all score higher than the study town's index of 910.

These figures present an interesting dilemma. Residents of the study town remain convinced that their town is inherently “better off than neighbouring towns” (Beryl), a perception that is contradicted by the SEIFA data. It is also widely assumed that smaller communities are more exposed to the “cumulative effects of lower incomes, higher prices, fewer jobs and educational opportunities, less services, less supports and ongoing socio demographic decline” (Hall, 2005, p. 3). However, according to Abramovitz and Albrecht (2013), “a group’s vulnerability to the adverse effects of community loss depends on where they live” (p. 713). These discrepancies stimulate an examination of the concordance between place attachment and place identity:

[Place] attachment and sense of community have implications for community dependence [identity], in that the affective, cognitive and behavioural features of

both can enter into a person's assessment of the quality of a town and the comparison of this quality with alternative communities. (Pretty et al., 2003, p. 276)

4.3 Situational Relations

Accordingly, this section is concerned with the older women's attachment to the town in relation to its internal and external infrastructure (relational spheres). These interrelationships also contribute the unique identity of the town.

Each group of older women rated the town's private and public services and facilities positively, both in terms of immediate needs and anticipated requirements. Although the older old women did not entertain the idea of moving elsewhere, place attachment for the late middle-aged women was less secure. This stability-instability cleavage parallels the town's weak external, and fractured internal identity.

4.3.1 Place attachment. Notwithstanding the extensive literature devoted to place attachment (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Lewicka, 2011), place attachment here is loosely defined as an affective, positive, emotional bond between people (older women) and place (a specific rural geographic location). As such, it aligns with research relating age, the physical environment, and attachment to place (Buffel et al., 2014; Burholt, 2006; Scharf, Phillipson & Smith, 2005), in terms of scale (Hernández et al., 2007, p. 311), rural contexts (Burholt & Naylor, 2005; Menec et al., 2015b; Spina & Menec, 2015), older women (Phillipson et al., 1999; Scharf et al., 2005; Young, Russell & Powers, 2004), older women living alone (Walker & Hiller, 2007, p. 1161) and critically, resilience (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012, pp. 122-123).

And as noted previously, this section maps the interaction between the women's attachment to the town and their relational spheres—"the black box of places" (Macintyre, Ellaway & Cummins, 2002, pp. 131-132). In this context, relational spheres include the town's material resources such as physical features of the locality, availability of healthy environments, and the provision of public and private services (Macintyre et al., 2002, p. 131). These interrelationships inform the questions about place attachment and the workings of the community in the interview guide (Appendix A.2.2), namely: "What are the positive and not so positive things about living in the town? Would you consider moving from the area? Why or why not?"

When asked about the positive aspects of town life, the older old women focused on the provision of resources, especially the availability of health and social care related services: "We have doctors, a lot of people haven't" (Beryl), as well as a hospital, nursing home, and hostel (Mabel; Glad), district nursing (Beryl), medi-alert (Jean; Jess), handyman (Beryl) and home help (Glad). A wide selection of recreational options were also highlighted, including sporting facilities (Beryl; Nell); churches (Jess); community events, including the annual (agricultural) show (Grace); and leisure and special interest clubs, "Probus is very good for widows" (Beryl). Local shopping was "sufficient" (Nell), possibly because other options existed though the common practice of out-of-town, car-based shopping trips with family and friends (Mabel). Similarly, transportation to medical specialist appointments was supplied by relatives, neighbours, or via the community car programme (Beryl; Pearl). This age-friendly infrastructure and community support enhanced the older old women's attachment to the town.

Instead of discussing the disadvantages of living in the town in terms of themselves, these older old, local women decried the lack of employment (Maud) and social (Nell) opportunities for young residents: “They [youth] all have to go don’t they, there’s nothing between school, and they come back sometimes when they’re married or when they’re older, but you lose them and you generally lose them forever” (Beryl). And even though the women realised that “my kids will never come back...the grandchildren are [city] kids...they like to come for a day or two, but they’re all anxious to get back” (Beryl), none wanted to move from the town: “I have no thoughts about moving” (Maud), and “Why would I leave, where would I go, and who would I know?” (Jess).

Considering their less-favoured status in the community (Chapters six and seven), it is surprising that the late middle-aged women also weighted the town’s biophysical environment (Alice; Penny; Wyn), and its provision of public and private amenities (Gert; Linda) favourably, both in terms of immediate requirements and future needs. “The size of the town is positive” for Nola:

It’s big enough to have things that are essential to me—doctors, chemist, supermarket, banks, coffee shops, nursery etc. Yet it is small enough for me to walk most places. It has the church that I want to attend and plenty of clubs for people who are interested in joining. It also has the facility to move sick/urgent cases to [a regional centre or the city] when necessary and has a small hospital, a hostel and a nursing home for the aged which [*sic*] I don’t want to end up in, but it is too small (Marg) and isolated (Jane) for some of the other late middle-aged newcomers. Nevertheless, most of the women were committed to staying in the town (Berta; Nola; Rae; Ruth; Trudy), with Alice, Gert, and Marg considering relocating to be

closer to family. Only Barb and Linda had not developed an attachment to the town and were adamant about moving: “I would very much like to leave...I do not want to live and grow really old in this town because there’s nothing here for me” (Linda).

The questions designed to elicit attachment to place were non-directive. However, all of the women pragmatically referenced the town’s built environment and physical infrastructure in their assessment of its liveability, thus indirectly acknowledging “the effects that limitations and possibilities inherent in the natural setting have upon human and social activity” (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009, p. 906), and by extension, resilience (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2012, p. 116). With regard to deeper emotional ties, community sentiment (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009, p. 903), and local “rootedness” (Hernández et al., 2007, pp. 311, 318), then underlying differences emerge: witness Beryl’s “I have always loved the town”, compared to Alice’s comment:

The town is going to be a place where older people are going to come back and retire. The younger ones are wanting to move on because there’s nothing here, it’s so far away. Um, it’s a farming community...which is unfortunate as it’s a nice town, it’s a pretty town,

as a segue into an examination of place identity.

4.3.2 Place identity. In contrast to much of the literature about place identity that reflects the influence of a place on people’s identity formation, for example, Burholt, Scharf, and Walsh’s (2013) interpretation of the Irish islander identity, this section re-emphasises the place rather than the person. Here, place identity refers to the unique biophysical and sociocultural representations of a specific locale that evolves over time (Beckley, Stedman, Wallace & Ambard, 2007, pp. 914-915). As such, it incorporates the

town's historical and cultural development (Section 4.2) and its situational relations to form a distinctive identity.

These interdependencies underpin an investigation of the town's identity from the perspective of older women, supplemented with the researcher's ethnographic observations. They indicate that the town is associated with a weak external, and fractured internal identity.

The majority of women in both cohorts validate the town's image as "a great little country town" (Maud), and "a pleasant and pretty town" (Gert). Although some of the older old women extol its community spirit, for instance, a now defunct multi-faith celebration (Jess), and assisting and volunteering in a neighbouring town severely impacted by a sudden crisis: "Some of our church ladies, didn't say anything to anybody, they just went over and helped out. Marvellous" (Jess), others hold antithetical opinions: "The town is a very closed community...you can have people that are friendly and kind, but has anyone asked you back to dinner, has anyone asked you to be included in a social function?" (Linda). Similarly, in spite of being accepted as an *honorary* local, and demonstrating extensive community engagement, the only social invitations received by the researcher were from newcomers, rather than long-time residents. Well-meaning locals also focused on instrumental help by pointing out potential housing and employment opportunities for the researcher, rather than a more intimate involvement on a personal level.

This insularity was partly attributed to the town's larger size: "maybe our town was a bigger small town...somebody said about our town, it's just big enough to be divisive, or can be...I thought it was an interesting comment, it doesn't mean it is, but the

potential's there" (Jeff, informal interview). In actuality, this hypothesised divisiveness is manifested as an intense rivalry and an enduring rift between the two prestigious service organisations established in the town. During the entire period of the researcher's fieldwork, only one event where these oppositional groups collaborated, or cooperated, was held. Analogously, a key informant observed: "if a working bee [clean-up] is needed at the local school, all of town Y turns out to help; in town X, people who are currently connected with the school attend; but in our town, nobody comes."

A recently commissioned report (2014)²² provides additional, formal evidence of this divisiveness:

While there is no lack of energy or commitment to [the town], there is a lack of consensus and disquiet around a number of issues. For this reason, it is recommended that any investment in the physical fabric of the town works in tandem with policies and programs that help build community, and help the residents and businesses unite to reach shared goals.

Taken collectively, these examples are indicative of a fractured sense of community identity.

Equally, where "communities carry with them a specificity that binds them to particular locales, [and these] locales provide a set of parameters, or boundaries, to the possibilities of what can be symbolically drawn upon" (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009. p. 901), the town's biophysical and structural demarcations are indeterminate. Its location comprises differing geographic and agricultural zones: undulating forested landscape; dry flat plains; small scale, mixed, intensive farming; and large holding, pastoralist, and grain

²² This report is not referenced for locational anonymity reasons.

and oilseed crops. The provision of essential goods and services is also highly dispersed: civic governance is centred in one direction; the town's water supply and social welfare services originate from another; a third direction creates the demand for local industry and supplies health services; and the nearest regional shopping and cultural facilities are situated in the remaining quadrant. With these multiple allegiances, and since "community identity represents the degree to which natural landscapes symbolise the local identities, character, and culture that lead to community association and pride" (Kil et al., 2014, p. 478), it is reasonable to infer that the town lacks a strong sense of externally situated identity at the present time.

4.4 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

The contrast between the historical portrayal of the town as a decisive political and economic leader of the region (Section 4.2), and its contemporaneous image of a community with a diminishing sense of place and a fractured and weak sense of identity, is striking. This schism is contextualised in terms of the interactions between these characteristics and how the town activates its community resiliency (Berkes & Ross, 2013, p. 16) to deal with change, challenges, and adversity (Beckley et al., 2008, pp. 65-67). It also addresses Berkes and Ross' (2013) assertion that "We know about sense of place, formation of social identity...but we do not know about their significance for community resilience" (p. 16).

4.4.1 Community resilience.

Community resilience is proposed to emerge from community-level resources that are embedded within or accessible to communities, which can provide a community with the ability to adapt in positive ways to risk. Additionally, we

suggest that resilient communities have the capacity to identify and access resources to replenish utilised resources to prepare for future risk events.

(Mowbray et al., 2007 p. 670)

In the absence of a definitive model of community resilience (Chapter two, Section 2.1.2.1), this potentiality is examined through Buikstra et al.'s (2010) research in rural Australia, juxtaposed with the Carnegie Trust's (Wilding, 2011) theory informed and practice-based work in the UK. For these authors, a community with the capacity to develop and transform effectively and/or adapt to major change rests on a combination of social vitality, "a strong and inclusive sense of identity, belonging and place" (Wilding, 2011, p. 59); political efficacy, including supportive intercommunity relationships; and economic viability—a vibrant local economy operating within environmental limits (Wilding, 2011; Buikstra et al., 2010, pp. 977-978; Hudson, 2010). These characteristics are now re-contextualised to the town and its neighbours:

4.4.1.1 Social vitality—sense of place, place attachment and place identity. As recorded previously (Section 4.2.1.3), significant demographic shifts occurred in the town over the past five years. While reflecting the overall ethnically white, ageing profile of rural Australia (Davis et al., 2012, p. 338), the town was unusual in attracting two dissimilar types of newcomer. The ferals, stereotypically young, unemployed, and drawn to the town because it fell outside the geographic boundary for government work-to-earn requirements, were generally discounted and ignored as peripheral outsiders. By contrast, the C and/or tree changers (Ragusa, 2010), single women aged between 55 and 65 years, came because of the availability of cheap housing, and the town's potential for a viable new start in their lives: "An influx of folk from the city escaping the high cost of city

housing may bring small changes, example, the restoration of dilapidated goldfields houses. Retirees seem to be coming to these rural areas” (Jane). These women were openly committed to actively participating and engaging in all aspects of the community:

I feel that we’re lucky in that some of the newer people that have come into the town have brought in new ideas, and eh, you know, they’ve got onto committees and things...because I really do think that they have made a difference in the town. (Jess)

But because neither group matched the town’s ideal new resident (couples with young families), both were vulnerable to the prevailing suspicion and distrust of newcomers (Davis et al., 2012, pp. 343-344), and excluded from mainstream life. (This situation is addressed in Chapters six and seven.) Although the goal of attracting young families to the town is predicated on the assumption that they will put down roots and provide a long-term contribution to the local economy, an alternative opportunity to capitalise on the ageing demographic (Menec et al., 2015a, p. 15), and the growing trend of amenity in-migration to rural areas of Australia (Argent, Smailes & Griffin, 2007), is perhaps being missed. Instead of enabling “an inclusive and creative culture that generates a positive and welcoming sense of place” (Wilding, 2011, p. 30), and nurturing the newcomer’s participation in the community (place attachment), the town chose a more conservative, restrictive approach to reattain (bounce-back) and restore its previous socioeconomic status.

Thus, this analysis suggests that the town’s declining sense of place (Section 4.2.1) and fragmented identity (Section 4.3.2), coupled with an exclusionary buffer for less-desirable newcomers, impairs its ability to manage change and resiliency, as in

Penny's critique: "I don't think it [the town] will change quickly. We've only just got an [ethnic] restaurant. There is already no available accommodation and prices have jumped but it will stay the same for the years ahead."

Some small towns in rural Australia have proactively mitigated depopulation and attracted new residents through innovative projects such as the "Rentafarmhouse for \$1 a Week" (2008) scheme. This offer of a home for a nominal rent aroused significant national and international interest, and provided potential C-change in-migrants with an opportunity to taste rural living prior to making a long-term commitment. Other communities were associated with initiatives such as "The Farmer Wants a Wife" (van Keulen & Krijnen, 2014).

4.4.1.2 Political efficacy–community interdependence. Until recently, the town was the political centre of the region (Sections 4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2). Structural changes, such as losing the seat of local government, continue to be deeply resented: "We ran our own council years ago, things used to get done, but since we've been amalgamated...doesn't seem to be things done in [the town]" (Ruby). And when viewed in the context of the town's creation by financial and political entrepreneurs, augmented by a strong sense of superiority under a banner of wealth and power, the real and perceived reduction in the town's status compared to adjacent communities, still rankles. For instance, even though there was tacit recognition of drug use in the town by the residents (Jill, Nola), an equivalent acknowledgement by outside sources was regarded as a threat and an affront to the town's status:

And this couple said to us 'where are you from?' and when we told them, they said 'oh, that's where all the trouble is...drugs and people shooting people' and

I'm saying what? And she said 'it's always in the (another regional) paper, about this one's been on that drug raid, or they went and found guns in their house', and I said 'well I don't know anything about it.' So it was just interesting to hear what they thought of the town and where they are getting their information. That paper getting the information, yet the local paper doesn't. (Wyn)

This sense of distrust and suspicion also points to the town's discomfort (as yet) with collaborating rather than competing with its neighbours. Two first-hand examples are drawn from the researcher's fieldwork: In rural football matches, revenue from the gate (entry fee payment) is traditionally shared between the opposing teams. The town had a long-standing reputation for "meanness" (Fred, outsider interview), and not distributing the takings from the gate fairly.

Similarly, as a result of declining congregations and reduced resources, clergy in small, rural, mainstream Christian churches are increasingly shared across locations. One of these churches in the town continued to treat a clerical position as their exclusive right, when in reality, it was shared with town X. In response to a query by the researcher, the church officials indicated that it was inconvenient not to have a full time, locally resident clergy, especially as town X was smaller in size. They also resented the clergy's choice to live in town X rather than in their town.

For the neighbouring communities, these occurrences translated into an intense dislike of the town. Many of the researcher's external interviews and casual conversations with out-of-towners included admonishments such as: "Why did you go there? It's a horrible town! They're all awful! Can't you go anywhere else?" This vitriol was

unexpected, and quite alarming for the researcher at the beginning of her fieldwork, but over time, it almost became a fait accompli.

4.4.1.3 Economic viability—a vibrant local economy. Many of the older women held very decisive opinions about town’s current economic situation:

I don’t see it changing at all. I don’t. I don’t see anything changing...you can’t make it a tourist town because we don’t have a tourist attraction...a lot of people pass through...you don’t have to do anything to it – it will just keep on surviving.
(Barb)

Comments such as:

Shops not doing well here...I don’t think it will change...oh yes, it will survive, it’s a pleasant pretty town and they do the endorsements...they do the ups and downs like every small country town, I mean we’re only two and a half thousand people here, but yes, it will survive. And I don’t think much will change (Gert), are indicative of a wider sentiment of inevitability and resignation prevalent in the town.

Perhaps one of the most telling indictments of this ennui is reflected in both cohorts of older women’s instrumental, almost cursory, references to the drought. All of the local women experienced the recent catastrophic drought first-hand, yet only two referenced it when asked about a difficult situation for the community: “We rode out the drought” (Jess), and “I suppose we have held our own” (Rae). However, as per Chapter three, Section 3.3.2.2, it is acknowledged that the women could have been reluctant to share and/or dwell on their experiences of such a traumatic time. For example, one informal interviewee (Olive) dismissed the loss of their five-generation family farm with a curt: “We had to buy and cart water for many years.”

These responses contrast sharply with the emotive stories of the local, older old women in the smaller towns: “dying and death all around—the crops, [live]stock, gardens...years of nothing but dust and bare dirt” (Clarice, outsider interview). Similar accounts were reported by the Birchip Cropping Group (2008), Pearce et al. (2010), and Sartore, Kelly, Stain, Albrecht, and Higginbotham (2008), among others. Despite this personal heartbreak, these women also expressed pride in the collective commitment to support neighbours and preserve the community spirit—a strong sense of community that is corroborated by Sartore et al. (2008, p. 9). Other studies determined that community cohesion eventually splintered as a result of pressures from the prolonged drought (Caldwell & Boyd, 2009) in some cases, but none of these older women mentioned a breakdown of social connectivity in their towns.

Somewhat provocatively, a key informant speculated that the town’s apparent dissociation from the devastating effects of the drought was due to its historical and cultural evolution: “[The] town was created by self-interested and competitive miners, whereas the neighbouring towns were founded by cooperative and collaborative farmers”. For instance, when confronted with the progressive closure of commercial banking facilities in small rural towns, two towns in the area decided to establish community-owned banks (Cutcher, 2014). And in even smaller towns, struggling general stores were acquired and run by the community (Jill). Other regional initiatives involved collective efforts to promote and develop historical, natural, and community assets.

These divergent approaches by a community to withstand and adapt to the recent demographic, political, and socioeconomic changes add weight to the research about rural resilience in Australia (Mayberry, 2009; McManus et al., 2012). Although the adjacent

smaller towns have comparatively limited resources and are ostensibly more vulnerable to economic volatility, they are imbued with a culture of collaboration and progress, whereas the larger (study) town is encapsulated in stagnation: “The town has been the same for years, so I cannot see big changes in the future” (Trudy). One resident opined that this difference is because smaller towns are “probably more inclined to embrace everybody because they need everybody... they’ve got to stick together for survival.”

This analysis suggests that a community’s capacity to thrive in rural crises is associated with a pattern of social inclusivity, political collectivity, and economic innovation. According to Mowbray et al. (2007 p. 670), these community-level indicators are purported to drive local representations of rural, place-based (community) resilience. When confronted with economic threats, political challenges, and demographic change, the town resorted to a repertoire of conservative, *true and tried* solutions (young family in-migration) in an attempt to restore its former elite position. Its response (resilience) to these crises is to maintain the status quo, rather than proactively seeking new solutions, as in the adjacent towns. Thus the town is incubating a resilience profile of inertia and stasis.

Finally, to return to the original charge of deciphering how specific community characteristics, here, sense of place, place attachment, and place identity, enable or impede a community’s response to crises and change over time, and impact the lives of its older, single, female residents. The developmental trajectory of the town signals a relatively recent decline from its locus of political and financial power in the region, to a situation associated with a low SEIFA disadvantage index, static economy, and diminished political status. For the older women in the town, this translated as a weakened sense of community, a fragmented place identity, and relational place

attachment. And in terms of rural and/or community resilience, the town symbolised a pattern of *survival by stagnation*.

The implication of the relationships between older women, resilience, and the community are progressively analysed in the next three chapters.

Chapter Five

Person Related Contributors to Resilience: The Older Old Women

Whereas the previous chapter was directed towards the community, the following two chapters focus on the temporal and situational influences on the person related contributors to resilience in the older women, via the second research question (Chapter one, Section 1.2.2).

This objective is achieved through a sequential, analytical process to gauge individual resiliency, juxtaposed with accumulated advantage and/or disadvantage. The first step consists of inductively examining the participant's life trajectories in line with their situational responses to crises and adversity (Section 5.4); then, to deductively cross-check the participants' actual resilience responses against the pre-selected theory and literature-led attributes of resilience for validity, relevance, and congruence (Section 5.5); and lastly, to synthesise the preceding life trajectory and resilience response relationships to formulate profiles of later life resilience (Section 5.6).

Consequently, this chapter identifies the trajectories, responses, and profiles of resilience in a cohort of 16 single, Australian women who are aged 80 years and over, while Chapter six duplicates this approach with 14 late middle-aged women.

5.1 Resilience in Later Life

The literature review in Chapter two indicated that older, single, women are penalised because of their age, gender, and marital status, in a rural setting. A further study by Boetto and McKinnon (2013) suggested that for women living in rural Australia, lifelong gender inequality amplifies this disadvantage.

In contrast to this negative representation, Australian, rural women are stereotypically and positively perceived as stoic, self-reliant, and used to coping with adversity (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012). Terrill and Gullifer's (2010) inquiry into the textured narratives of older women also emphasised "the construction of later life as one of liberation, resilience and growth" (p. 707).

These divergent perspectives mirror the emerging situational and temporal process oriented conceptions of resilience in older age. For Wild et al. (2013, p. 144), resilience in later life is a dynamic and negotiated process, influenced by the interplay between person and environment related factors and resources, rather than a static personality trait. As such, the attributes of late life resilience often embrace broader sociocultural and situational dimensions, such as good quality relationships, integration in the community, developmental coping, and adaptive coping styles (Hildon et al., 2009). In spite of these advances, a definitive, theoretical core underpinning resilience in older people has not yet been established (Wild et al., 2013). This exploratory study adds to this theory building by analysing resilience in two cohorts of older, single women, living on their own, in a small rural community in Australia.

5.2 Demographic Profiles

The relationship between age ranges and cohort nomenclature is contested (Biggs, Phillipson, Leach & Money, 2007); inconsistent, for example, the discrepancy between the United Nations (UN) definition of old (age 60 years and older) and the standard gerontological classifications (late middle age—ages 55 to 64 years, young-old—ages 65 to 74 years, old—ages 74 to 84 years, and oldest-old—ages 85 years and over); and often confusing, with the ages 55 to 64 years variously referenced as "early wave baby

boomers” (Adams-Price, Turner & Warren, 2013), the sandwich generation (Grundy & Henretta, 2006), or the encore years (Flood & Moen, 2015; Moen & Flood, 2013). At this point, it is important to recall the naturally occurring, demographic gap in the sample of single women who are aged between 65 to 70 years, as discussed in Chapter three, Section 3.2.2. Accordingly, some of the demographic age boundaries have been merged in this study to differentiate each group of participants more clearly. Here, the late middle-age cohort is designated as between 55 to 64 years old, and the older old cohort is defined as aged 80 years and over.

Because of the demographic and contextual differences in the two sample cohorts (identified in Chapter six, Section 6.6), separate, but equivalent chapters are warranted to facilitate in-depth individual and comparative analyses. Consequently, Chapters five and six consist of corresponding analyses of the two sample cohorts in terms of their life course trajectories, resilience responses, and profiles of later life resilience. Both chapters follow the same approach to uncover age-specific similarities and differences, culminating in a comprehensive in-depth comparison (Chapter six, Section 6.6). This chapter focuses on the older old women, while the following chapter centres on the late middle-aged group.

5.2.1 Sociodemographic profile of the older old cohort. Brief sociodemographic synopses of each participant are outlined in Table 2 (Appendix B.2.4), and Chapter three (Section 3.2.2.1). These sociodemographic snapshots provide an entrée into how these older old women balance a lifetime’s disadvantage with their desire to maintain their supportive roles in their families, social networks, and the community. By extension, it

also maps how they addressed adversity and crisis over their life course, thereby creating their profiles of resilience.

Of the 16 older old women who participated in the study, only three of the women experienced relatively crises-free lives. The remaining 13 portrayed a surprisingly consistent life trajectory until older age: a relatively care-free, idyllic childhood; transition to adulthood (marriage) imposed by World War Two; a turbulent middle life, punctuated by individual adversity and crises; change (retirement) due to inheritance norms; and successful adjustment to singleness and ageing in a new environment. When confronted with repeated disadvantage during adulthood, the women coped by bouncing back to regain the status quo, in essence, cultivating a habitual, passively reactive response to hardship and life challenges. Over time, this resiliency was diluted further by external structural influences, and so by retirement, the majority of the women had pragmatically adjusted their expectations for older age—resulting in pragmatically realistic profile of resilience.

Nevertheless, three of these 13 older old women countered this norm. By intentionally engaging their personal agency to actively reinvent their future and overcome obstructions, they represent a (minority) proactive resilience profile.

5.3 Analytical Plan: Framework Method

A rigorous, structured, and systematic approach (Staller, 2015, pp. 149-150) is required to tease out the fine-grained connections between the participants' lived experiences and resilience in later life. Since these relationships “are inextricably intertwined, each implicated in the others and deeply enfolded in the matrix of human experience” (Kaschak, 2013, p. 439), this is a timely reminder of the complexity of the

life course, the conceptual fuzziness of resilience (Chapter two, Section 2.1.1), and the analytical tension inherent in trying to represent these synergic relationships in a linearly structured sequence. As identified in Chapter three (Section 3.4.2.2), the Framework method was selected to meet these challenges. It was also chosen for its capacity to accommodate both inductive and deductive analyses, and concomitantly, to strengthen the rigour and trustworthiness of the findings. Here too, Fraser's (2004, p. 191) advice to avoid social determinism, hyper-individualism, and fixating on one dimension, was extremely helpful. With these cautions in mind, each component of the analytical process is addressed in turn:

5.4 Temporal Processes

This section investigates the temporal relationships between life trajectories, resilience responses, and accumulative advantage or disadvantage. Accordingly, the analysis centres on a data-driven, inductive interrogation of the women's life trajectories, integrated with the incidence and response to adversity and crises over time (Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.2).

5.4.1 Life trajectories of the older old women. A first step was to trace the life course of the single, rural women, aged 80 years and over. The ensuing inductive analysis was based on an iterative cycling of the data-driven information (Table 4, Appendix C.1.1) within and between the individual participant accounts, as captured through the temporal data framework (Appendix C.2.1). Audio recordings and transcripts were re-examined for additional contextualisation and clarity as required. These results are presented as a detailed analytical synthesis in Sections 5.4.1.1 to 5.4.3.2 inclusive, but to recapitulate: a remarkably uniform, hourglass shaped life journey emerged, with the

women experiencing relative equanimity in their childhood and older age, but difficult adult lives. Two anomalous deviations from this generic pathway were also uncovered. Instead of gradually adjusting to their changed circumstances in later life, two of the women rebelled to proactively and decisively influence their situation, and deliberately recalibrate their older-age identity. In addition, three women were largely untouched by major crises and/or adversity, and led comparatively trouble free life trajectories. The incongruous finding here is not that these latter women had a predominantly stress-free life, but that the other 13 women were consistently exposed to pronounced hardship and tragedy throughout their adult lives. This finding also points to a further issue related to the apparently (unintentional) disproportionate representation of older women from this town and area subjected to significant disadvantage across their lifespan. It is revisited in Chapter seven, Section 7.3.2.1 and Chapter nine, Section 9.2.1.1.

The following in-depth analysis provides additional insights into the personal and cohort related contributory influences on these older old women's lives.

5.4.1.1 Early years. In Chapter three, Section 3.2.2.1, it was noted that 13 of the older old women were born and grew up in the town, or on farms in the surrounding district. Despite the very difficult economic circumstances of the Great Depression and the hardship of the pre-war years, nearly all of the women recounted a relatively carefree, almost idyllic childhood: "We were on a farm so I had a wonderful life, animals and you know, horses and everything" (June).

Family and kin relations were similarly positive, with the extended family providing short and long-term support as needed; for Maud, this meant living with her grandmother from the age of five after her father died suddenly. These family bonds were

reinforced when most of the young women returned or remained home to help in the house (Jean), and/or on the farm (Glad, Mabel) after the completing Merit (grade eight) level at the local school.

If outside employment was obtained, it was short-term: working as a household maid in large city houses (Ruby), picking fruit for the war effort (Grace), moving to the city on a temporary basis until marriage to a local *farm boy*, or being transferred back to the country in conjunction with their jobs. Even during this time away, social connections and activities continued to revolve around the young women's rural home via church gatherings, country balls and dances (Nell; Pearl), and local football and tennis matches (Mabel; Cora).

Nonetheless, “things were very, very, tough. It was through the depression years, in the 30's, and there was always patches on patches and things like that those days” (Mabel). Fortunately, many rural families were able to supplement their main farm income with value-added goods such as eggs, butter, and cream, and orchard and garden produce. Children and/or employed workers helped with the more labour intensive chores, for instance, shepherding sheep, milking cows, and lumping (moving) bags of grain (Mabel).

5.4.1.2 Transition to adulthood. World War Two had a significant impact on the lives of all the women. As many farm boys served in the Australian Forces, their absence created an immediate shift in family composition and dynamics. Marriages were delayed (Mabel), advanced (Ruby), and permanently altered, structurally and personally.

For Jill, the War signaled the beginning of a long-term struggle to survive financially:

My husband had been in the Air Force up in Darwin when all the bombing was on, however his brother [also in the Air Force] died and the family couldn't manage without him and he had to come home...I married in 47 which was quite young, but if we hadn't of married, he would never have been able to get anything for himself. The family just expected him to do everything for them. So we battled, it wasn't easy. We didn't have a proper home or money...And we just made...scratched up a [rented] home from an old place that was there and we sort of put two together and made something liveable. But no cupboards or anything...fruit boxes, one on top of another, and a piece of curtain in front and no floor covering or anything. And no running water, no taps. (Jill)

The War's effect on Edna and June's close personal relationships was also long lasting. Edna's husband became severely traumatised after being confronted with the dual onslaught of active war service and the unexpected death of an infant daughter. And although the War indirectly enabled June to marry because her husband (Henry) had been a prisoner of war and "disowned" by his previous wife, her happiness was ultimately marred by Henry's war related health issues, and then early death. She subsequently re-married, but in her words, "well it wasn't, it was partly [pause] you know, we got on well and [pause] but not like your first love" (June).

On the other hand, the War opened up new possibilities in terms of non-traditional roles for women; Grace became a Corporal in the Australian Air Force, and June was one of the first female tellers in a major bank. However, these gender-parity opportunities proved to be short-lived: "I think at that time, we girls...got pushed out because the men were back" (June).

5.4.1.3 Adulthood (midlife). With the exception of Jess who remained single, the women's middle years were defined by marriage: "I was conditioned to marry. Everybody got married" (Edna). The personal pressure and social expectation to comply with this societal norm was relentless, as evidenced by June's prevailing fear that she would be "an old maid", and Jess' severe gastrointestinal symptoms that were psychosomatically induced when she broke off her engagement. Marriage was universally valued by the rural society, but for these older old women, it was often associated with a spate of personal challenges.

Premature and unexpected death was an all too common occurrence. Grace's baby "lived eight hours", and as observed previously, Edna's daughter died in infancy. Adult children were also not exempt from dying early. Maud's eldest daughter died in a car accident just after her 21st birthday, Mabel's only daughter died from leukemia at the age of 41 years, and Jean's son was 26 years old when he was killed in a freak farm accident:

Keith was burned. They were welding and he was sitting on the drum that had been used for years to sit and rest things on...and he had...the welding rod, and he rested his hand on his knee and that touched the drum and it blew...He was 85 per cent burned and my husband 45 per cent...He [Keith] lived three weeks, but it was hell (Jean).

Jean's husband physically survived his burns, but the associated physiological and psychological damage contributed to his premature death. Maud's husband had a heart attack when he was 53 years old; and Lydia's 43-year old husband died of cancer after a three-month illness, leaving her to manage as a single parent of three young daughters.

Economic hardship was also an ongoing reality for many of the women. On her marriage, Glad's status changed from "being young and carefree [to] going into something [where] we had nothing". Likewise, Jean "walked out of home in what I stood up in" to marry. Even though their financial situation improved gradually (Jill; Glad), farming remained a precarious way of life for them. Drought, floods, dust storms, and rabbit, mouse, and locust plagues were constant threats. For Jill:

There were times when I'd have liked to go away from the farm because things weren't easy, but you'd stick it out and afterwards you'd think 'well, I've done that'. I don't think it pays to look back and think you should have changed, you just do it all, you just take it in your stride as you might say. And that's part of your life. But there would have been times I would have enjoyed doing other things, but [pause], no, you just have a go [laughing].

Jill's perspective is perhaps not unexpected when juxtaposed against the paucity of social support from family, friends, neighbours, and local institutions and organisations. The failure of church support, despite a lifetime of commitment and involvement, is particularly disconcerting:

[long pause] No, no support. They didn't have time [laughing]. In fact this cousin...said to me...'I thought the church might have supported you more.'...they all had their things to do...and people don't come near much because they don't know how to cope with it...people just don't do it [pause]. They'd ask you on occasions how things were [pause] but um, they couldn't cope with that. (Jill)

This neglect is even more pronounced in light of Jill's background. As she was *city-born*, Jill was denied access to the tight, support systems inherent in local farming families; kinship ties that were also strengthened by various contractual and partnership arrangements, such as the four farm syndication in Grace's family.

Nevertheless, her personal stoicism does echo the widely held attitude of the other women, in that the ability to endure was valued, and asking for assistance was regarded as being weak. For example, Lydia's statement: "I was working at the high school canteen and as the girls were young, it was quite hard", belies her vulnerability as a new single parent when her husband died suddenly.

Jill and Lydia's accounts also mirror a shrinking social world for these women:

Cliff [husband] used to go in sometimes to a meeting, if they had something to do with schooling an evening, he'd go, I never went... But he played football and cricket, and when we went to footy, it was always winter time naturally, and we'd be late home and then there'd be a heap of cows to feed and milk and that, and eventually I didn't go to football either, and stay home to get as much as I could done before he arrived back [laughing], a pretty big effort otherwise. (Mabel)

And as Glad cared for five men (her husband, bachelor uncle, and three sons), she "seemed to have enough to do on the farm... without joining the CWA"—the *de rigueur* norm for rural women. Notwithstanding the CWA, the women's opportunities for outside socialisation were generally constrained, with most social activities confined to small, neighbourhood, farming communities. Social relations were equally spatially bounded, and almost exclusively revolved around nuclear families, and immediate kin living on

adjacent properties. In fact, Jill describes being “quite nervous going into the town” to shop, because of her social isolation on the farm.

This very strong identification and affinity for the close knit, locale-based, rural (farming) lifestyle, makes the next turning point all the more poignant.

5.4.1.4 Transition to older age. Because of the tradition of patriarchal inheritance in rural Australia, it is customary for farmer parents to transfer the family farm to the eldest son, and then retire into the nearby town. For many of these older old women, this decision was not their choice, as revealed by Mabel’s recollection:

[long pause] I didn’t want to come in. We were getting things that were nice out home. Oh no, I didn’t want to come in and Cliff had to talk me round because it did make sense when you look back on it, but [laughing] I hated leaving home... We were there for a good long while, shifted in 54 I think, and left in 81.

Glad’s move into town was driven by an insidious combination of push and pull factors:

I never had any inkling to [live in the town], and it was very hard to come in here to live. But my grandson...started talking about building a house and I could see that he could take mine on if I wasn’t there, and my middle son and daughter looked around, they thought it would be better for Mum to come into town even though I was only 20 chain [a quarter of a mile] from the eldest son and his wife down the road. (Glad)

While the women’s enforced retirement was clearly unwelcome, it was predominantly a reaction to leaving or abandoning a way of life akin to a *calling*, rather than a response to retirement per se. As such, it involved a profound sense of personal loss:

Loss of meaning. “I found it very hard to shift, yes, leaving all those memories. 60 years there, it’s not easy. I always say ‘I died’ when I left the farm because I gave all my...” (Glad).

Loss of purpose. “Why I came to [town]? I had a nice new home on the [family] farm...and when Rex went [died]...I just, everywhere I looked...[pause] it was all our plans, all [pause] unfinished [pause], so I put the place on the market” (Jean).

Loss of identity.

Researcher: So was it really, was it hard to adjust to being in here [town], for both of you?

Mabel: Well Cliff went out to home often, like to help on the farm...But with me, at first I said ‘there’s nowhere to walk’. You know you go round the paddock at home, but here, there’s just the street, and I didn’t like getting out in the street all the time [laughing].

Loss of role. Glad relinquished her long-term responsibility as the manager of the family business and accounts, and Grace was forced to sell her specialty livestock that required over 30 years to breed.

Equally distressing, was the concomitant severance from the family farm dynasty. These women took great pride in their husband’s family lineage as original, six-generation settlers of the district, and saw their role as custodians and preservers of this heritage. To this end, they subscribed to the tacit expectations that their children “had the land in their blood...their sons would all become farmers, the eldest son would inherit the homestead farm [and] when our [other] boys wanted to go out [on their own farms], we had to buy more land of course” (Glad).

In some cases, this legacy was not valued, with a devastating effect on these women. After her eldest son's (Keith) accident, Jean not only lost the family farm, she became completely estranged from her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren. And although Jill continued to oversee and maintain the farm after she had moved to the town, traveling a round trip distance of approximately 185 miles [300 kilometers] three times a week to do so, her son sold it without consulting with her: "When I came here, my son sold one block, didn't tell me actually, I was a bit upset about that. But um, that's part of our heritage gone, it's gone now, which is very sad" (Jill).

5.4.1.5 Older age. To counter their sense of dislocation and retain a connection with the land after moving into the town, some of the women resorted to compensatory strategies. Grace and Jean bought acreage on the outskirts of the town and brought a few treasured possessions with them, for instance, Grace's stock cart and her ageing Shetland pony. Likewise, Jill kept some plants. Many of the women also maintained strong links with the past, as in Glad's involvement with her former church; however retirement and the shift to town generally marked a change in priorities.

On a personal level, living alone and being solely responsible for all decisions (Ruby) stimulated a reappraisal of capabilities, readjustment in expectations, and created new support alliances. Independence continued to be highly prized (Maud; Willa), but the women were no longer embarrassed to ask for help if necessary. Even though family members usually provided instrumental support, for example, help with shopping (Mabel), mutually beneficial informal arrangements with friends (Jess), and neighbours (Jean), became more important and dependable for everyday problems, such as mobility limitations (Jess). The daily check-ins with neighbours added an extra layer of security

and/or safety (Grace), and supplemented formal services—medi-health alerts for June, and home help for Jean.

Instead of “slowing down”, the women pursued interests and activities to mitigate functional decline. At the age of 81 years, Nell:

Ride[s] a bike twice a week doing 30 km (kilometers) each day. I mow my own lawns and have a big hedge that I cut and the rest of the garden...Just last week, I walked over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, a present from my family. It was the second time I have done it. I was 75 last time.

Mabel keeps her mind alert by following current affairs, and competing in a weekly, telephone mediated, crossword contest against her sister, a niece, and an old friend.

In addition to preserving childhood friendships: “I go out with four friends who are all widows, once a month. Three of us went to school together, so we have a lot of fun”

(Maud), and maintaining their long-term involvement in church (Beryl; Jess; Mabel)

and/or specific organisations (Ruby’s 52 years in the RSL, and June’s 39 years in the

CWA), all of the women widened their social circles. This involved joining new

community groups such as Probus (Pearl) and the Laurel Club (Ruby), and even

commuting to a nearby town to play carpet bowls (Willa). Some of the widows have also

formed ad hoc groups for coffee and lunch outings (Jill).

Because of generous government and war (Gold card) pensions, most of the women were financially secure, often for the first time in their lives. For Jill, farming was a lifelong gamble against the weather and markets, and after “handing the farm over to the boys, in the finish, [I] was left with nothing much, [but now] I live on my veterans pension and I’ve got a gold card, so I’m a bit lucky” (Jill). Jean too, has more money than

ever before: “I’m ok now, I’ve got a pension. I’ve got a pay cheque. The first pension was the first pay cheque in my life...I’ve got more money...than I ever had when we were buying land [laughing]” (Jean).

So in spite of their initial difficulties in adjusting to town life, most of the women were “very happy” (Jean) with their present lives.

5.4.2 Predominant life trajectory. Recognising that each life story is unique, this analytical synthesis revealed a broadly similar life trajectory for these older old women:

5.4.2.1 Hourglass shaped trajectory. The life course for most of the women described: a relatively carefree, idyllic childhood; change (marriage) imposed by World War Two; a turbulent middle life, punctuated by individual adversity and crises; change (retirement) due to inheritance norms; followed by successful adjustment to singleness and ageing in a new environment. Concomitantly, the relationship between life trajectories and accumulated disadvantage for most of these women is broadly hourglass shaped, with the most difficult aspects of the life course occurring during middle adulthood. Neither the ubiquity, nor the degree of hardship, was anticipated in advance.

5.4.3 Anomalous life trajectories. A further examination of the individual trajectories of the women uncovered two deviations from this general profile:

5.4.3.1 Comfortable life trajectory. Compared with the unpredictable life challenges experienced by the majority of the older old women, three women led comparatively stable and crisis-free lives. Beryl and Pearl’s fortunate circumstances were partly due to the socioeconomic advantages accrued from their professional status as teachers, and marrying well. Beryl married a head teacher (school principal), and Pearl joined a prosperous local farming dynasty, but also had her own long-term, local family

credentials. Jess' established community connections also contributed to her relatively uneventful life journey: "[I] wouldn't change anything, I'm very, very contented" (Jess).

5.4.3.2 *Rebellion in later life trajectory.* Jean and Edna's life trajectories match those of most of the other women until late middle age. They then differ dramatically. Whereas most of the women gradually adapted to their changed environmental, social, and personal contexts on their retirement (Section 5.4.1.5), Jean and Edna rebelled to proactively and decisively influence their situation, and deliberately recalibrate their older age identity.

Instead of slowly building new social networks on her relocation into town, Jean suddenly and voluntarily severed her existing social ties by renouncing her lifelong religion. At the age of 70, she was excommunicated from the church, and abandoned by her family and friends:

My own family, my step-brothers, as far as they're concerned, I've gone to hell. You're ostracised by your family and people that I've known all my life. If they saw me, they'd more or less run [pause] because I've done the wrong thing. I've gone out, gone out from the fellowship. (Jean)

Edna's actions were equally radical. After a midlife "mental breakdown", Edna was hospitalized (in the city), prescribed tranquilisers, and "urged to pull herself together". On her return home, she "felt...trapped as a housewife and...that she didn't fit in", an insight that signaled a cathartic change in her life. From then on, she aggressively cultivated her own literary interests and actively pursued outside work, progressing from administrative and social work, to becoming a town councilor, and finally, an executive director of a regional company—a position that she still holds at the age of 96.

5.4.4 Life trajectories and resilience responses. Both Jean and Edna take a very proactive stance against oppressive societal norms; in Jean's case, religious practices, and for Edna, gender stereotypes. According to the literature, when they exert their personal agency to overcome set backs, actively influence, and positively transform their future, Jean and Edna are being resilient. Similarly, the predominant life trajectory (Section 5.4.2) suggests that the other older old women also manifest resilience in dealing with their life challenges, but with a qualitatively different response. When confronted with repeated disadvantage during their middle years, the women are persistently determined to bounce back—in effect, to regain and maintain a sense of equilibrium in their lives. And, on retirement, they pragmatically cope with their new personal, social, and structural circumstances: “You try to look after yourself as best you can because there's no one else to look after you” (Willa).

For the majority of these older old women, bouncing back occurs in their challenging middle years, and adjustment is evident in their less stressful later life, indicating that their resilience response is shaped by both temporal and situational contexts. Moreover, the women's accounts signify that for them, resilience is essentially a passively reactive struggle against external forces throughout their lives. Although this reactivity is more apparent in their midlife efforts to resume the status quo, it also underpins the women's response to the changes occurring in retirement: “we're just lucky to be here and be able to do what we do” (Jill).

Here, Glad's comment “I have had a very happy life and been very lucky” is particularly illuminating. It underscores the mismatch between the structural hardships that characterise her middle years, the reluctant resignation and personal dissonance she

experienced when leaving the farm, and then, this favourable reflection on her situation overall. On the surface, Glad's account implies that a "good life" in older age is due to luck (externalities) in overcoming life's crises and adversity, rather than personal agency (resilience), thereby contradicting the literature (Chapter two). In view of this apparent discrepancy, a closer examination of the attributes of resilience in later life is warranted.

5.5 Situational Relations

The pre-selected theory/literature-based attributes of resilience in older age provide a research grounded, reference point from which to appraise the data-led findings described above (Section 5.4). This section involves an iterative, deductive analysis of the congruence between the theory/literature-led attributes and sub/categories of resilience (intrapersonal, interpersonal, existential, and social) in Table 5 (Appendix C.1.2), and the women's actual situation-specific responses. To align with Section 5.4, the results are also presented as an analytical synthesis.

5.5.1 Attributes of resilience in the older old women. The synergy between the theory/literature-led attributes of resilience and the women's real world experiences was analysed deductively within and across the narrative accounts, via the individual and composite matrices developed per Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.2, and illustrated in Appendices C.2.2 and C.2.3. Again, transcripts and audio recordings were re-consulted for additional detail as needed. Any attributes of resilience from theory/literature that were found to be incomplete, or invalid, were supplemented with new information per Cipriani's (2013, p. 78) guidelines.

These results are documented in detail in Sections 5.4.1.1 through 5.5.3.2, but in brief, they indicate that while the women's responses to their life challenges articulate

with the attributes of resilience cited in the literature, the expression of this resiliency is diluted and suppressed by outside structural factors. Additional attributes of resilience (self-reflection, inner strength, integrity, and courage) were also present in the women's accounts, and similarly stifled by external forces. This muting effect thus promotes and/or reinforces the passive reactive type of resilience response portrayed by most of the women across their life course.

Two exceptions to this usual pattern occur in later life. Not unexpectedly, Edna is noted for her assertive personal and socially non-conforming behaviour. Jean too, demonstrated significant intra and interpersonal courage to abandon her lifelong religion. However, Nell's response to her *annus horribilis* (Section 5.5.3.2) is also atypical. At the age of 83 years, she exercised her personal agency through introspective reflection to actively and positively transform her future outlook.

On the surface, none of the other women appear to have pursued comparable "reflective action" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 226) initiatives. But as revealed in the following situations, and confirmed through the subsequent corpus linguistic analysis, these older old women evince self-reflection, albeit in a more retrospective, acceptance oriented way than forward thinking that "overcomes situational, knowledge, and emotional constraints" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 226).

At this juncture, it is timely to deductively benchmark the theory/literature-based attributes and sub/categories of resilience (Table 5, Appendix C.1.2) against the women's specific resilience responses in terms of the degree and quality of fit:

5.5.1.1 *Intrapersonal attributes.* Perhaps the most compelling attribute emerging from each narrative is the women's consummate perseverance, and fortitude against great

odds, throughout their lives. For example, Beryl showed great resolve, when, at the age of 80, she chose to build a bespoke house amid an unsolicited groundswell of negative opinion: “What on earth are you doing? Do you know what you are doing?” and from a brother-in-law, “he didn’t think I had it in me”.

The women were equally committed to remain as self-sufficient for as long as possible. Nevertheless, this fierce independence often came at a price; many of the women discounted their needs because they did not want to be a burden on families: “Well, you don’t like to be sick and have them to run around and do things, no” (Jill). And even though the women were extremely solicitous not to “impose” on their family, this concern did not seem to be reciprocated. Family members, especially children, freely intervened in life-changing decisions, for instance, driving: “the family feels it’s better if I don’t drive you know, and I can live with it...I’d love to get into the car and go up to [my old town], but [pause] no, I’m, I’ve got to be careful. For the family’s sake, well you don’t want to cause any trouble” (Jill). Jill’s position, where families either override, or actually assume the decision-making process, ostensibly in the women’s best interests, represents a worrying repeat of the disempowerment that the older old women encountered during their transition to town life (Section 5.4.1.4).

The women who have forged independent careers, and display personal mastery and self-assurance such as Edna and Beryl, were not immune to these well-meaning interventions either. Although Beryl was totally debt-free and managed her own and her invalid brother’s affairs, a son challenged her decision to build her own home. Edna was also asked whether her husband encouraged her radical actions, as though her success would only be legitimised with his blessing. In her inimitable style, Edna quickly

dispelled this supposition: “Husband died in 1981 and I have pursued my late blooming career ever since with great joy and satisfaction”.

Since most of the women were not as overtly assertive as Edna, they tended to voice their own achievements in terms of others’ accomplishments, particularly their children (Grace), and grandchildren (June). In essence, they quietly underplayed and discounted their own successes; witness Jess’ nonchalant and dismissive reaction to her community service recognition:

Researcher: I just happened to notice the Citizen of the Year award up there.

Jess: Oh, did you? [laughing]

Likewise for Ruby, who regarded taking sole charge of a remote telephone exchange at the age of 16 as “just getting on with it”. Similarly, when Grace serendipitously noticed an advantageous mutation in one of her animals, she spontaneously embarked on a selective livestock-breeding programme, without any formal genetics training. Her unique product ultimately ended up winning national prizes and international acclaim, but she remained “an unknown quantity in my town...I think they must have kept me hidden [laughing]”. While regrettable, Grace’s lack of local recognition was partly driven by her self-effacement; she continually deflected her personal success to her father and husband for “bringing out something in me that I didn’t know was there”.

5.5.1.2 Interpersonal attributes. This subservience to prescriptive gender identities was not uncommon. Jess’ future was determined without any consultation or prior warning, by her father:

I was expecting to go back to school...I hadn’t decided what I wanted to do, and dad came home and said ‘Would you like a job?’ and I said ‘What would you like

me to do dad?’ and he said ‘Go and have a shower and get changed. Mary has given notice...and I want you to come over and learn the business. You [will] work in the office’. I was a bit startled, but anyway I said ‘Right-oh.’ In those days you did what your parents told you [pause]. Well I did anyway. (Jess)

And despite Jean’s assertion: “I’m a strong minded woman”, she still subscribed to a traditional view of social roles:

I don’t like it today where women want to be top dog...I don’t think we were meant to be equal...we have taken so much away from men in courting, in marrying...[they] were so proud, back in my day, to make a home for his wife.

Similarly, for Glad: “You’ve got to try and buck your menfolk up, look on the bright side and try and say ‘Look, don’t worry.’ That’s what you’ve got to...always, that’s my job. I’m still doing it”.

As a group, the women minimised their own needs in lieu of supporting their husband, and enhancing their children’s life chances. Again, Jill’s situation is especially indicative. Throughout their struggle to survive financially and her wish to leave the farm, Jill remained loyal to her husband and dedicated to her children’s welfare: “We had 24 years of boarding schools...four children with six years each”. For the other women too, commitment to the family was paramount in their lives, as in Nell’s account of caring for her terminally ill son who also suffered from (violent) Schizophrenia: “I was turfed out of Dennis’ flat twice when he was having an episode. This was at two o’clock in the morning. Fortunately I knew that there was a motel nearby. The next one, I went to a friend’s house”.

Although Nell's rejection by her son was temporary, many adult children did not maintain regular contact with their parents. This oversight was frequently excused as "being busy with their lives" (Jill), and exemplified in her sequence of self-rationalisation: at first, defense: "The eldest son and his wife lived across the road...[He] always said he knew where I was, but he didn't always, they didn't come very often. They were busy"; then assuming responsibility: "Well, that's the way it goes. That was my problem, I had to sort that out"; and finally, justification: "That's the boys. They didn't have any need to worry us, they could do their own thing, which they did".

Some of the women were estranged from their children. The root cause of this divisiveness was often related to farm inheritance, usually where family traditions did not seem to be valued or respected. In some cases, these transgressions were dismissed: "Now that's [the farm] gone. But anyway [pause]. We can't be regretting these things" (Jill), and "his father gave him a farm that we'd paid for and they've never said 'thank you' to this day...Anyway, it's alright" (Jean). But in other instances, the sense of betrayal persisted: "Family hurt you most of all" (Jean).

Compared with these volatile intergenerational relationships, marriages were consistently described as a life highlight: "I only discovered me when I married Roy [her husband]... We believed in each other. It's what you do, he believed in me, I believed in him" (Grace).

5.5.1.3 Existential attributes. Mainstream Christian beliefs were also a constant guarantor of strength and support for nearly all the women. With the exception of Edna, the women professed a strong religious faith and emphasised how important their church was to them—for example, at the age of 90 years, Glad still drove a 20 mile [32 kilometre]

round trip to attend her home church every Sunday. The women believed that their faith enabled them to accept life's vicissitudes and losses with equanimity. For Grace:

Researcher: You mentioned that you lost a baby. Was your baby born [alive]?

Grace: Yes, it lived for eight hours.

Researcher: I'm so sorry.

Grace: Not for the baby, it wasn't meant to be.

With this collective belief in mind, it is surprising that not one woman felt hopeful or optimistic for the future. All of the women expressed an overwhelmingly pessimistic vision of the world. Their comments ranged from: the world is "very bad" (Maud), and "too fast and too greedy" (Mabel), to "there's nothing I feel proud about" (Grace), and "everybody's fighting and carrying on you know, it's just so dreadful" (June). Many of the women blamed this deterioration on a paucity of values in today's society: "I'm very sad...that the kids of today are not taught to respect their elders, respect of people's property or anything like that" (Jess).

5.5.1.4 Social attributes. Even though "the coming generations don't have standards to go by" (Nell), the women compensated for this trend by fulfilling their Christian duty to "do good works" (Ruby), and support church events (Beryl). In fact, much of their social life was dominated by their involvement in church related activities (Jean; Mabel; Willa).

Section 5.4 indicates that the women's social engagement over the life course follows an hourglass shape, with later years broadly represented by increased socialisation—greater social support, social ties, and social networks. Many of the women

regularly had a “full social calendar”; for Ruby “some weeks, it’s nearly every day”.

However, this busyness was often a deliberate façade to mask acute loneliness:

Researcher: How long have you been a widow?

Ruby: Three years.

Researcher: Are you doing ok?

Ruby: Oh yes, I keep busy.

Ruby broke down in tears later in the interview when asked about the hardest thing to accept over the last few years. Her answer was: “[pause] Oh, it’s sort of being responsible for the whole thing I suppose [crying]”.

While Ruby was able to keep herself socially occupied, Jill and Nell experienced a reverse situation when they first tried to engage with the local community as singles, and inadvertently became trapped between conflicting social norms. On one hand, it was important to initiate social contact; yet on the other, it was not deemed appropriate to be bold or enthusiastic in these pursuits:

It can take time for people to feel accepted at times...It took a while for me to be asked to participate in any duty at my church. I realise, of course, that I needed to let it be known that I would like to join in. We sometimes hold back so that we won’t look too pushy. (Nell)

And although Jill initially found it difficult to go out on her own, she soon established friendships with other widows.

It is interesting to compare Nell and Jill’s approaches to resolving this dilemma. Jill appears to adopt a gradual, passive immersion into the local society: “You’ve just got to keep going and enjoy what comes along and be thankful”; whereas Nell is more

reflectively introspective and proactively pursues a solution: “I haven’t got a lot of confidence in myself, so I go over possible scenarios, in case I’m not ready and I make mistakes”.

5.5.2 Predominant resilience response. This analysis of the pre-selected theory/literature attributes of resilience shows that the overarching categories of resilience (intrapersonal, interpersonal, existential, and social) broadly mesh with the women’s experiences. The women also demonstrated new attributes of resilience, namely, inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection²³. These emerged during the analysis, and after confirmation with a corpus linguistic analysis (Chapter three, Section 3.6.3), they were added to the attributes (Cipriani, 2013, p. 78).

In actuality, all of the attributes were modified into a *yes-but* rationale by external influencers. For instance, Grace’s statement: “I could have done anything I wanted to do when [I was] young” expresses high self-esteem, but she later denies this self-worth by discounting her achievements and attributing her success to her father and husband. A similar pattern emerges for the other attributes of resilience, with personal initiative and agency repeatedly constrained by outside factors, resulting in the passive, reactive response to life crises and challenges typically expressed by these women.

5.5.2.1 Adaptive coping²⁴ resilience response. When this characteristic passive reactive response is offset against the women’s imperative to maximise their family well-being, while coping with long-term hardship and little substantive support, a more apt

²³ Although the attributes, courage and active self-reflection, were recorded by Henning (2011), they have not been included in the original theory/literature based list (Table 5, Appendix C.1.2) because Henning’s review paper focused on resilience in adulthood rather than resilience in later life.

²⁴ This attribute is credited to Hildon et al. (2009).

adaptive coping, representation emerges. This depiction is reinforced by the women's subsequent successful adjustment to living in the town.

Two exceptions counter this trend as previously:

5.5.3 Anomalous resilience responses. With respect to the preceding inductive and deductive analyses (Sections 5.4 and 5.5 respectively), Edna and Jean's assertive intra and interpersonal agency fall outside the usual pattern of resilience for these older old women. By contrast, Nell's reflectively informed action (Section 5.5.1.4) was less apparent. Nonetheless, all three women were proactively engaged in confronting their problems to improve their lives. Their respective resilience responses are as follows:

5.5.3.1 *Forthright resilience response.* Jean observed very strict and conservative religious norms throughout her life, but at the age of 70, she deliberately broke off all connection with the "old religion" to make a fresh start. Most of her life is distinguished by multiple adversity: she was born with a neurological condition; her mother died when she was a "toddler" (an infant), and she was subsequently placed in a foster home until her father remarried and moved interstate with his new, blended family; her upbringing was dominated by a very strictly conservative religious "cult" (without radio, or later, television); on her marriage, she was cut off from her family; her middle years were overshadowed by the accidental death of her adult son, and then the slow death of her husband from Alzheimer's Disease; and finally, she "lost" the family farm and her grandchildren when her ex-daughter-in-law remarried. This cascade of disadvantage makes Jean's intra and interpersonal courage in abandoning her only support system (the church) even more compelling.

Edna too, has a local and national reputation for being a formidable change agent in terms of her personal, community, and societal agendas: “She’s a bit like a wolf in sheep’s clothing...never happier than when she’s on the warpath, campaigning against [injustices]”.

Although their individual circumstances differ, Jean and Edna both display decisive and intentional action (resilience) to overcome personal and social challenges. For Jean, this translates into choosing religious freedom, while Edna’s motivation is gender equality, specifically, women’s rights.

5.5.3.2 Transformative resilience response. Nell’s annus horribilis:

Our oldest son (Dennis) died with cancer at 46 years of age. He also suffered from Schizophrenia. Dan [her husband] found it hard to accept that ‘his’ son could have this disease. It didn’t help our marriage either...Dan eventually through hard work got his own tyre service. I did some of the office work ‘what people owed us’. Our marriage was just limping along...I found indoor bowls, Dan a close friend. We were together for 38 years. I got good at indoor bowls and Dan and his friend became closer. I moved into town and had three moves altogether. I’m still living in a single unit. I’ve been here for nearly 20 years...It’s been hard to accept being overlooked in my ex-husband’s will. I had been left something, but it had to go into his estate (Nell),

triggered another approach. Nell exercised her personal agency in later life to learn how to proactively change her future, for example, to “be in the moment. I would like to be like that”. She then pursued an introspectively reasoned reflect-learn-act approach in dealing with her problems (Mezirow, 1994).

Edna, Jean, and Nell's stories, illustrating the symbiotic interplay of life trajectories (temporal processes) with resilience responses (situational relations), provide a portal into the women's profiles of later life resiliency.

5.6 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

As developed through this study, the passive versus active, and reactive versus proactive dichotomies reflect the difference between external (structural) and personal (agentic) determinants of resilience in later life. Concomitantly, they inform the resiliency profiles of the older old women. Two primary profiles of resilience have emerged: accommodative and proactive. (These were developed thorough an iterative, analytical integration of the temporal processes and situational relations. The matrix framework described in Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.2 and illustrated in Appendix C.2.3, provided a mechanism to cross-check this resiliency information for each participant, thereby contributing to the interpretative reliability and accuracy of the derived profiles.)

5.6.1 Profiles of the older old women's resilience in later life. Before determining the resilience profiles for this cohort of older old, single, women living in rural Australia, three explanatory points should be noted: first, since three of the women led comparatively comfortable lives (Section 5.4.3.1), and as their trajectories do not fall within the definitions of resilience (Chapter two), they have not been assigned resilience profiles; second, the resilience profiles are oriented towards the women's later life; and third, as the constituents of each resilience profile have been well documented throughout the prior analyses, the following sections will target the salient elements only.

The analysis of temporal processes conducted in Section 5.4 shows that the life courses of the individual women are remarkably consistent until later life. As a result,

there is a common trajectory until older age, when the paths diverge into two groups: a more prevalent accommodative profile (10 women), and a minority proactive profile generated by three women.

5.6.2 Predominant accommodative resilience profile. All of the women respond to crises and adversity in accord with the intra and interpersonal, existential, and social attributes of resilience cited in the literature, as well as activating new attributes (inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection). These responses are significantly attenuated by outside influences, resulting in a reactive, passive acceptance of life challenges. Over time, this muting effect tempers the women's characteristic response (bouncing back) to the multiple disadvantages of their middle years. For the majority of the women, this adjustment (accommodation) to external forces is habituated in their older age.

5.6.2.1 Pragmatically realistic profile. After their relocation to the town, the majority of the women were prosaic about their current situation. And although they adapted successfully to their new personal, social, and structural circumstances in later life, not one woman felt hopeful or optimistic for the future—again reinforcing the women's pragmatically realistic perspective about outside influences on their lives.

5.6.3 Anomalous proactive resilience profiles. On the contrary, three of these older old women deliberately intended to change their futures. Even though these women adopted different approaches, with two of them forcefully taking charge, and the other more quietly introspective, all three proactively acted to improve their situations. As such, their proactive profile conforms to the literature on late life resiliency (Chapter two, Section 2.1.3.1). Here, the decisive role of personal agency in overcoming external

impositions and constraints to positively remodel the life course is prioritised. This proactive resiliency is expressed in two ways:

5.6.3.1 *Maverick profile.* According to Kinsel (2005), and evidenced in Sections 5.4.3.2 and 5.5.3.1, the maverick profile is symbolised by assertive and forthright action to rebel against personal and social challenges.

5.6.3.2 *Transformative profile.* This profile is underpinned by perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981, 1994), a reflect-learn-act loop that links a personal shock or crisis, to reflection, insight, learning, reasoned change, further reflection, and so on.

To summarise: While three women experience relatively crises-free lives, the remaining 13 portray a surprisingly uniform hourglass shaped life trajectory until older age: a relatively carefree, idyllic childhood; change (marriage) imposed by World War Two; a volatile middle life, punctuated by individual adversity and crises; change (retirement) due to inheritance norms, followed by successful adjustment to singleness and ageing in a new environment. When confronted with repeated disadvantage during their middle years, the women are persistently determined to reattain and maintain a sense of stability. However, on retirement, they are pragmatic in their adjustment to their new personal, social, and structural circumstances.

The majority of the women respond to crises and adversity according to the attributes of resilience cited in the literature, (plus inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection), but these responses are significantly attenuated by outside influences, resulting in a muted, reactively adaptive type of resiliency. In this predominant, pragmatic, realistic profile of resilience, external forces override personal agency, resulting in an accommodation to life challenges.

By comparison, three of these 13 older old women actively and intentionally act to change their futures. Their (minority) proactive profile conforms to the literature on late life resiliency by emphasising the decisive role of personal agency in overcoming societal impositions and structural constraints to positively remodel the life course. Again, two variations are evident: two women are mavericks and forcefully rebel against their personal and social challenges, while the other takes a more introspective, transformative action approach to improving her situation.

These resilience profiles invite a further analysis of the specific external affordances that either empower or constrain resilience in older women living on their own, in rural Australia, and will involve dissecting the interaction between the women, the historical and cultural context, societal norms, and the community.

Since the next chapter (six) consists of a parallel examination of individual resilience, but in late middle-aged women living in the same community, it offers an excellent opportunity to unpack the nuances of the person related contributors to resilience in greater detail.

Chapter Six

Person Related Contributors to Resilience: The Late Middle-Aged Women

This chapter also relates to research question two—the person related influences on resilience in older women, mediated by situational relations, over time. The focus here is the late middle-aged cohort; 14 single women, aged 55 to 65 years old, who are new residents of the town. In accord with Chapter five, the chapter maps the women’s life trajectories, associated resilience responses to crises and adversity, and identifies predominant and anomalous profiles of resilience in their later life. It concludes with a comparison of the two cohorts.

As discussed in Chapter three (Section 3.2.2), the unexpected presence of this discrete cohort of late middle-aged women provided a natural and unanticipated opportunity to compare the experiences of two cohorts of ageing women living on their own in the same community. To assure optimal analytical reliability and consistency, identical data preparation and management, and analytical procedures were undertaken.

Childhood for these late middle-aged women was marked by personal and social rejection. This disadvantage was curtailed by active rebellion in the mid-late teens and early adulthood, which led to a series of failed relationships and divorce for all but two of the women. As single parents, the women’s adult years were characterised by recurrent crises and prolonged adversity, in particular, severe financial hardship. But in their late middle age, the women suddenly and proactively decided to start a new life in a small rural town. Because of selective discrimination and persistent societal expectations relating to the women’s age, singleness, gender, and newcomer status, their hope for a better future unravelled when they were systematically excluded from community life.

In contrast to this lifetime of accumulated disadvantage, the women's resilience responses displayed an arduous, tenacious, but generally positive, upward trend—in essence, a trajectory of personal growth. This predominant resilience response is distinguished by active agency (actively reactive and proactive action), boosted by new attributes of resilience (inner strength, personal courage and integrity and self-reflection). Ironically, after the women's midlife catharsis and subsequent new beginning in the town, this jagged pattern of developmental coping was methodically undermined by restrictive rural norms and local values. These situational limitations collude in the women's social isolation and ultimately, their suppression of personal agency. The ensuing profile of resilience is one of truncated growth.

Only three women followed different paths. Throughout their lives, these women demonstrated a proactively focused commitment, determination, and drive to overcome crises and adversity to achieve their long-term goals. Therefore, these life trajectories are complemented with proactively focused resilience profiles.

6.1 Demographic Profiles

Even though the volume of literature on all aspects of older age is increasing exponentially with greater awareness of the challenges of population ageing (Kulik, Ryan, Harper & George, 2014), research on the late middle-age cohort is surprisingly patchy (Flood & Moen, 2015). This irregularity mirrors a concomitant gap in the literature about resilience in this age group, with only one definitive paper (Ong et al., 2009) uncovered in an extensive search (Chapter two). In lieu of this deficit, the attributes of resilience in later life (Table 5, Appendix C.1.2) are substituted for the attributes of resilience in late adulthood.

Comparatively little is also written about increasing disadvantage in some late middle-aged women in Australia; McFerran (2010) is a notable exception. These are women who do not qualify for the social benefits associated with later life, and who may be under employed or not working (Chapter two, Section 2.2.1). Their vulnerability is evidenced in the sociodemographic profiles (Chapter three, Section 3.2.2.2; Table 3, Appendix B.2.5).

6.1.1 Sociodemographic profile of the late middle-age cohort. It was noted in Chapter three (Section 3.3.1.2) that Judy completed a diary based on a daily, time-use format, instead of answering the specific research questions. As such, her information is not fully compatible with the other accounts and has been treated as ancillary to this analysis. However, it does provide a valuable insight into her day-to-day activities in the town, and equally, an opportunity to check the everyday reality of the women's lives.

Even though the synopses detailed in Chapter three (Section 3.2.2.2) and Table 3 (Appendix B.2.5) hint at the personal, social, and structural challenges experienced by these women over their life course, it is not yet clear how the women managed and/or mitigated this accumulated hardship. Consequently, a rigorous and methodical approach is required to disentangle the relationship between the women's life trajectories (temporal processes) and their resilience responses (situational relations).

6.2 Analytical Plan: Framework Method

This analytical plan duplicates the one described in chapter three (Section 3.4.2.2), but to reiterate briefly: The Framework method accommodates both inductive and deductive analyses, as well as enabling within and across participant comparisons. An initial inductive analysis of the women's life course, and their response to adversity and

crises is based on data-driven information derived from the women's narratives. A subsequent deductive analysis then cross-references the theory/literature-led situational attributes of resilience with the women's actual resilience responses, in terms of compatibility and relevance. Finally, the two strands of inquiry (temporal processes and situational relations) are integrated through an analysis of accumulated advantage and/or disadvantage and concomitant resilience responses to produce profiles of resilience.

The chapter concludes with a cross-cohort comparison of the women's sociodemographic profiles, life trajectories, associated resilience responses, and resilience profiles.

6.3 Temporal Processes

This section inductively investigates the temporal relationships between the women's life trajectories and their response to crises and adversity. And as in Chapter five (Section 5.4), the findings are depicted as an analytical synthesis.

6.3.1 Life trajectories of the late middle-aged women. The results are presented in detail in Sections 6.3.1.1 to 6.3.1.5, but in essence, they reveal that the life trajectory of most of the women follows a spiralling downward path of multiple disadvantages.

Personal hardship, failed relationships, and accumulated structural deprivation characterise the women's late teen years, early adulthood and midlife. This pessimistic trajectory is suddenly and proactively terminated when the late middle-aged women move to a small rural town to create a new life. Here, their hopes for a better future are crushed by local societal constraints and rural prejudices, for instance, an ingrained distrust of newcomers.

Only two women present alternative trajectories. One is an unmarried Christian missionary who spent her adult life in a very remote South East Asian village; and since the other is both local and a widow, her hourglass shaped trajectory matches that of most of the older old age cohort (Chapter five, Section 5.4.2.1), rather than this late middle-aged group.

These distinctions signal the importance of analysing the women's life course, life challenges and responses, and life review in the context of personal and cohort related influences.

6.3.1.1 *Early years.* Although these women are now living in one location, they come from very diverse demographic backgrounds. Very few of the women were raised locally; many grew up interstate, and two were born overseas. However, they all experienced personal ordeals during their childhoods.

Jane portrayed her origins as “messy: Dad Scots/Irish, Catholic; Mum Welsh/Scots (Gypsy), Methodist; often removed from home; physical abuse from mother; Dad mentally ill from World War Two, often absent or in hospital”. While her extreme situation is an exception, early family relations were often difficult for the majority of the women. Matriarchal mothers and/or grandmothers dominated Alice, Barb, Penny, and Ruth's youth. Labelled as “useless” by her mother, Barb “was browbeaten...you'd walk in the door, she'd come and slap you across the face [just] because she was in a bad mood...you'd never know whether you were going to be beaten...you lived in terror. Terror”. Similarly, Alice grew up believing that she was a “mistake”, and Penny felt she “didn't really belong”. Ruth also felt this disconnect: “My preference was to stay at my

grandmother's house, and I dreaded coming home. Each house was like two separated worlds, one heaven, the other hell".

Ruth's imagery resonates with Jenny, Gert, and Berta's equally dissonant upbringing. Jenny's mother had "breakdowns" due to the successive deaths of a son and husband, and raising another son with Schizophrenia, in addition to wartime stress. Her mental illness often required hospitalisation in a psychiatric institution, which left Jenny in the care of an aunt. German born Gert "never knew her father [as he] was missing in the war", while Berta's German Jewish father was interned, but survived. He was then told that his papers would be accepted in Australia, but on immigrating from Germany, found that they were not recognised: "So he became disillusioned and drank a lot, so we didn't have a very good childhood from the time we came to Australia" (Berta).

Schooling too, was fraught with challenges. Bullying was common (Rae), and being different was a prime cause of exclusion: Berta, who was both "foreign" and dyslexic, was a prime target. Nola's farming family was poor: "At school, I felt that difference because some of the farmers did well [financially] and their kids could always talk about all they had, the holidays they went on", and as Ruth's family was displaced from India after Independence, they were exposed to racial taunts, being called "Indian curries" and "Golliwog [*sic*]". Nonetheless, for Ruth, school was an escape from home, and for Marg, who was "sent away" to board in a convent when her mother died, school became her home.

In the light of these flawed relationships, it is not surprising that many of these young women followed their peer group in fracturing their family ties, and asserting their independence in their teen years.

6.3.1.2 Transition to adulthood. When she was 15 years old, Penny rebelled by dropping out of school and becoming a “hippy”, thus defying her family’s expectations that she would attend University. Marg also contravened her strict religious and family norms by doing the “hippy thing” and bringing up a child on her own “out of wedlock”. And while Gert’s individual circumstances differed, her action was no less symbolic. When her husband compelled her to leave family and friends in Germany and immigrate to Australia, Gert decided to separate from him within a year of their arrival. This dramatic step compounded her personal and social isolation, as she then became a single parent, unable to speak any English, with two small children. Nola also chose a highly unusual life path. On completion of her nurse and midwifery training, she felt “called” to be a Christian missionary to a remote indigenous tribe in South East Asia.

For the other women though, the preferred exit was early marriage (Berta; Jane; Linda) or “living in sin”:

One day, he [her boyfriend] made a suggestion, as soon as I get a job, I should move in with him. I got a job, but then he gave me an ultimatum – move in with him or he would finish the relationship. I wanted to leave home but I didn’t know how to go about it – but now I had a door opening, more of an escape hatch.

(Ruth)

In spite of the greater permissiveness in societal mores in the 1960’s, many of these opt-out strategies left the women anchorless: “From then on, I never felt really connected...I wish someone would have given me good advice when I was younger about how to live a successful life – I’ve made emotional decisions that were probably unwise in retro [retrospect]” (Penny).

6.3.1.3 Adulthood (midlife). In this context, it is perhaps not unexpected that many of these early breakaway relationships were doomed for failure. After “going off with Barry [her boyfriend] and doing just what we wanted to do”, Ruth’s family disowned her. And at the age of 16, Jane became pregnant and was rejected by her family:

[I] had a difficult four day birth of my son on the day I was supposed to be doing my Matric [Matriculation, equivalent to British ‘A’ levels] exam. No help as I was a disgrace to everyone. Mum wouldn’t even speak to me and I was in a mining town in outback Qld [Queensland] far from friends and family. (Jane)

Some first marriages were also relatively short lived. Barb was divorced after four years, and Ruth after two years, but other marriages endured in the face of prohibitive odds—Jane’s (first) marriage lasted 20 years. Wyn’s new husband “dibbled, gambled”, and was duplicitous about having a job, thereby catapulting the family into a life of severe economic vulnerability. He then “stole money from her son and threatened to kill me and all that sort of thing” (Wyn). Even so, their marriage survived for 15 years.

Second marriages tended to be longer lasting, but with the exception of Rae who was widowed, all ultimately ended in divorce. On each occasion, the relationship breakdown was related to the women’s struggle with balancing the complex, and often competing needs of parents, partners, and children. Alice’s divorce from her second husband was partially precipitated by her role as carer for her ageing mother who had Alzheimer’s Disease; whereas Linda attributed her marital difficulties to her own naivety: “My ability to judge a character was fairly minimal, and clearly, what you see is not what you get with people. But my philosophy was, if you work hard at it, your marriage has a

good chance”. Children added further complications. Marg felt “out of my depth” when she married and “took on an instant family”, and Penny also struggled with raising three children “without much support”.

These understated comments belie the considerable personal and financial sacrifices made by all the single parents to optimise their children’s happiness and life chances. For example, Wyn overcame four recurrent surgeries, an infection, and a stroke, to re-learn how to walk for her daughter’s wedding, and Linda and Penny relocated to the city to enable their children with special needs to attend specialist schools. However it is Barb’s impoverished situation that is particularly indicative:

So I had no money for the light and the gas...we had no money to live on...and I can remember I never ever dreamed I would go hungry. I never saw myself going without food, and I tell you, I was that hungry by the time I’d fed Angie [her daughter] and we lived on mashed potatoes, nothing else. We’ve been in a crisis house, we’ve been...we’ve done all that...I hadn’t paid the rent for weeks...and I was just beside myself, where’s this money coming from...anyway I thought if I walk in that house tonight, one of us won’t come out alive tomorrow. And I knew that, I knew that I was going to kill Angie or I was going to kill myself.

While Barb’s sense of desperation is especially acute, Linda’s attempt to provide a stable family environment for her children is equally revealing:

When my son was seven years old, he had a bad accident and he nearly died...and I didn’t want to be in what I considered to be a very emotionally abusive relationship. So I was on my own with two children and a son who needed a lot of plastic surgery and being fairly strapped for cash...I met someone and he was

very keen to marry me and be a stepfather to the children. And it was a big mistake...I was marrying for security.

Even though Linda “worked very hard” at her subsequent marriage, it also disintegrated. She attributed this collapse to a combination of factors: loss of her family network “by moving to the other side of Australia”; pressure to “produce a child” which involved “a lot of surgery”; financial dependency, and no viable means to become self-sufficient: “I had no qualifications and...lacked confidence”. Again, Linda found herself “quite destitute and emotionally, just at the bottom”. Similarly, Barb and Berta’s well-being was significantly impacted when their children and grandchildren became estranged.

Death also permeated these adult years. Cluster deaths were common: Alice experienced five recurrent miscarriages, and Ruth: “five people (and four animals) in a period of six months”. Not discounting the tragedy of these multiple losses, it is Nola’s situation that is particularly heart-rending. Her missionary outpost was so geographically, socially, and technologically isolated that news of the sudden death of her beloved father took over three weeks to reach her. She missed his funeral, and was unable to comfort and/or grieve with her family. In her words: “I was so shocked and pained that I couldn’t mention it for six months, nor speak about it for 12 months”.

Some of the women addressed their socioeconomic insecurity with skills training and education. Linda continued to “believe that her [third] relationship and everything would be alright”, but she also enrolled in a Technical Adult and Further Education (TAFE) course, which in turn led to University, a visual arts degree, and a graduate teaching diploma. Jane also went “back to school” to compensate for three “disastrous” marriages. After qualifying with a diploma in Applied Social Science (Welfare), she then

specialised in the criminal justice system and was able to find steady work through temporary contracts and workplace “privatisations”.

Linda’s employment history was less fortuitous. Her work opportunities turned out to be short-term and personally damaging. She resigned from her first position after a six-month period because of severe stress; the next three-month relief position was wrongfully terminated; and her permanent contract was not renewed after the first year because of a miscarriage of justice. Barb’s work record was equally volatile. Despite suffering major hearing loss and psychological abuse in her earlier factory jobs, Barb was eventually able to find work in a position where her qualifications as a florist were utilised. Her success was short lived however, as she was fired for refusing to cheat the benefits system. Both Linda and Barb risked, and ultimately lost their jobs, because they were unwilling to compromise their principles and/or their personal integrity.

Compared with the other women, Gert’s role as a non-native speaking, solo parent was similarly, or possibly more, precarious. After a relatively inauspicious start in a factory and shop, Gert worked for many years as a conveying assistant in a legal office. She then established her own conveying business on the completion of an Associates Diploma in Business Law. These achievements were attained without close physical access to family and/or long-term friends and social networks

However, the relative closeness of kin did not guarantee or translate into an equivalent degree of support for many of the women. With the exception of Barb, there is a glaring discrepancy between the rich detail in the women’s accounts of their life challenges, and the paucity of information about their family, friends, and support systems. This omission is not wholly unexpected when juxtaposed with the family rifts

noted in Sections 6.3.1.1 and 6.2.1.2. For instance, Penny mentions that she was an “inconvenience” for her mother, and when Linda was asked by the researcher: “Could you name anybody that you could go to and they would actually help you?” her answer was a revealing “No”. By contrast, Barb’s siblings (an older brother and sister) did offer sporadic support, such as buying groceries, and replacing her failing car.

Notwithstanding the generosity of this assistance, it does not counteract the cascading disadvantage experienced by many of these women: “I married too young, and had children too young, and had an abusive husband and ended that relationship, or he ended it. [pause] I’ve re-married and at the moment, I’m separated, so overall, life hasn’t been wonderful or easy” (Berta). But in Ruth’s sagacious words: “Life moves us on subtly and gradually gains speed, but somehow we are able to cope with each challenge that occurs until we reach a point at which a new phase in our life must start”.

6.3.1.4 Transition to older age. For 13 of these late middle-aged women, this fresh beginning involved moving to a small rural community. (Rae was already a long-term resident of the town.) And although all the women gravitated to the same location, their rationale for choosing this particular town varied widely:

Aesthetic. Over time, the area has acquired a reputation for the quality of light, natural landscape, and historical artefacts and buildings, and attracted an active community of artists. Judy moved to the area specifically to paint the landscape, whereas Gert had “really good memories” from an art related trip to the town in the 1980’s, and so returned to live.

Family. Surprisingly, it was only Alice who relocated to live near her children and grandchildren.

Practical. Barb capitalised on an option to purchase an empty shop with attached residence in the town to pump prime her need to be financially self-sufficient, and Linda moved to be close to her new position as teacher in an education centre.

Affordability. The remaining women selected the town primarily for the availability of affordable housing. Many of these houses were neglected and derelict (Ruth), but the chance to be homeowners, for Nola “a miracle in itself”, more than compensated for this “minor inconvenience”. In fact, most of the women welcomed the opportunity to renovate and remodel their houses and gardens to their personal specifications (Gert; Linda; Nola; Ruth).

Home ownership is both an accessible and desirable goal in this community, and only three of the women rented accommodation. Alice and Penny had moved to the town within the past year and had not completely settled, and because Wyn has extensive physical limitations, she required modified housing.

Regardless of this home versus rental split, all of the women acted deliberately and proactively to effect positive change in their lives. They viewed their move to the town as a new start, replete with the possibility to reinvent themselves. In spite of this high motivation and determination, their hopes and visions were not always realised.

6.3.1.5 Older age. A challenging aspect of the women’s new life was the paucity of social opportunities for late middle-aged, single women:

I’ve met some [other people] not very many. I don’t think it’s very easy to move into a small country town. It’s difficult, it’s not easy to make friends. People are superficial where, unless you are born here, [pause], they are nice to you and everything, but you haven’t got [an] ‘in’. (Berta)

As a consequence, the women's socialisation was largely utilitarian in nature, with social activities related to outings to the supermarket (Barb), or the local post office (Linda), and social contacts restricted to volunteering (Penny), or business acquaintances (Barb).

Most of the women combated these limitations by following a regimented schedule "to get through the day" (Berta; Alice), and/or keeping busy in their houses and gardens (Gert; Linda; Ruth), but "nights are terrible, there's just nowhere to go on your own" (Berta). Moreover, invitations to join others for an evening meal or another function were either non-existent or very rare (Linda), further reducing the repertoire of "acceptable" recreation to the community film night, or watching television by themselves (Barb). It is therefore somewhat surprising that these women had not banded together to organise casual or formal group activities and events to collectively mitigate this social isolation. But perhaps even more surprising, was the researcher's observation that in such a small community, the women not only seemed oblivious to their mutual aloneness, they were actually unaware of each other's existence: "There's a lot more people moving in [to the town], but if they're single people, they find the same thing. It's a lot of isolation...especially if they don't know anybody...and don't fit in" (Berta).

While some of the women initially questioned their decision to relocate:

When I got here, it was God! I don't think I've done the right thing. I'm scared, on my own, and new town, don't know anyone and all that...the lack of friends, the lack of company and that, was hard (Alice),

most of them gradually came to terms with their new rural situations. Two women deeply regretted the move, but were trapped into staying by their financial insolvency. Barb felt that the town was like a "black hole [where] you'll never come out", and for Linda: "this

is the only place where I can afford to pay off my house before I am unable to work anymore”.

Clinical depression was also a day-to-day reality for ten women: “My life is a big mess financially, emotionally and physically, and I’m not coping well. I feel isolated, sad, useless and hopeless” (Jane); with only professional counselling (Jenny), and lifelong medication (Alice) keeping “the dark periods” (Berta) at bay. Loneliness, especially at night, was equally pervasive (Linda; Rae).

Despite these long-term vulnerabilities, nearly all of the women were financially secure in terms of an assured and regular income. Linda and Rae were still employed, and Gert and Jenny were independently wealthy and had taken early retirement. The remaining 10 women received government benefits in the form of a Newstart (55+) Allowance (Department of Human Services, 2015). Under this scheme, mature Australian residents, age 55 years and over, are obligated to perform approved and suitable voluntary and/or paid work (including self-employment) for at least 30 hours per fortnight (two week period) to meet job seeker activity requirements. Even though this policy purported to be age friendly, in practice, it did not transpose across to small rural contexts where both work and quality volunteer opportunities were scarce. To qualify for this benefit, some of the women were compelled to volunteer in situations that did not suit their personality (Ruth), or expertise (Berta). Nonetheless, only two of them actively attempted to change this situation: Wyn enrolled in adult education courses to increase her skill set and became a freelance computer expert, while Berta assertively trialled various volunteering options before settling on a charitable setting that “did not cause [her] stress, worry, or problems”.

But even with employment and this social safety net, Barb and Linda were so severely financially impoverished that they dreaded interacting with friends socially in case they were obliged to provide or reciprocate hospitality. As such, they become adept at inventing opt-out excuses (Barb), and creative problem solving for their impecuniosity. For example, Barb managed to source an estate (from a deceased person) hearing aid because she could not afford the fees for hearing services, or the cost of a new, customised one. In these extreme situations, families occasionally stepped in with an ad hoc rescue, as noted in Section 6.3.1.3. Paradoxically, these well-meaning gifts backfired, as the women often did not have enough ancillary money to take advantage of them: Linda could not afford to cover the incidental expenses associated with a funded trip to New York to visit her daughter, and Barb was unable to buy fuel for her new car. This level of family and material support was generally uncommon, with the majority of the women managing on their own by choice (Ruth) and/or necessity (Marg). And if day-to-day help was required, the women tended to rely on a tacit, mutual exchange with neighbours (Gert), instead of their relatives.

Although this informal neighbouring is a very positive aspect of small town living, it became apparent that many of the other desirable qualities associated with rural communities (Chapter two, Section 2.2.1) failed to eventuate for many of the women. When questioned about their life at present, the women's responses fell along a continuum of satisfaction, as documented in Table 7:

Table 7: Late middle-aged women's satisfaction with their current situation

Satisfaction with life at present				
Very happy	Mostly happy	Adequate	Mostly unhappy	Very unhappy
Nola	Rae	Gert Jenny Marg	Alice Berta Ruth	Barb Jane Linda

		Penny Trudy Wyn		

This snapshot suggests that nearly all of the women believe that their current circumstances are adequate at best, with three women expressing significant unhappiness—a troubling impression that warrants further investigation. Accordingly, the within and between similarities and differences in the women’s lives (as in Chapter five, Sections 5.4.2 to 5.4.4) are re/inspected to tease out key patterns and relationships.

6.3.2 Predominant life trajectory.

6.3.2.1 Downward spiral trajectory. The life trajectory of most of these women follows a spiralling downward path of increasing disadvantage. Childhood was uniformly characterised by familial and peer abuse, rejection, and social exclusion. This disadvantaged start was abbreviated by active rebellion in the mid-late teens and early adulthood (the first transition), which led to a series of unsuccessful relationships, and cumulated in divorce for all but two of the women. Consequently, the women’s adult years as single parents were marked by prolonged adversity in the form of financial hardship, sprinkled with intermittent crises such as job loss. A second turning point (transition) occurred when these late middle-aged women proactively chose to make a fresh start in the small rural town. However, their much-coveted happiness proved to be elusive, primarily through the persistence of severe social constraints.

6.3.3 Anomalous life trajectories. On the other hand, two women were satisfied with their later lives. These very happy and mostly happy end-points (Table 7) are reached via different routes:

6.3.3.1 Hourglass shaped trajectory. Rae was born, raised, and has lived all of her life in the town. She attributed her happy, secure childhood and adolescence to a strict but loving family, and close knit neighbourhood. While her marriage displayed “typical ups and downs, [her] world fell apart” with the sudden deaths of her sister, husband, and mother, all within a three month period. Now a widow for over 20 years, Rae has slowly reinvested in herself and the community; her civic engagement was recently recognised by an Order of Australia award. Since the most challenging part of Rae’s life course falls during middle adulthood, and as she is also local and a widow, her hourglass shaped trajectory resembles that of most of the older old age cohort (Chapter five, Section 5.4.2.1).

6.3.3.1 Living by faith trajectory. By contrast, Nola is single (unmarried), who has lived the majority of her life overseas. The extreme poverty of her youth: “we just didn’t have ‘things’ like others”, foreshadowed a life of financial and material deprivation. For instance, there were no government sponsored bursaries or financial assistance for her nursing and midwifery training, and/or an additional three years at a Bible Institute. She was then called to minister to a remote tribe in South East Asia, and remained in the very isolated village for over 20 years. On her (enforced) return to Australia, she retired to the town where her “life is very good”. In spite of a lifetime of structural disadvantage, Nola’s trajectory is ultimately upwardly positive.

6.3.4 Life trajectories and resilience responses. Temporarily putting aside Rae’s hourglass trajectory, the symbiotic relationship between life course (temporal processes) and resilience responses for this late middle-aged cohort is tangled. Even though Nola’s

journey appears relatively straightforward in that she displayed significant personal resilience to overcome adversity:

After about 12 months [at a mission outpost], I was given permission to live in a [tribal] village [on her own] for a trial of three months. If I survived that, I would be allowed to have a house built in the village. No one believed that I would survive there, not even the [villagers] themselves (Nola),

she then attributed her courage and tenacity to a higher (existential) power.

Nola's almost fatalistic perspective signals a persistent and unresolved tension between the relative dominance of personal agency versus outside structural forces manifested by this group of women. Contrary to the resilience literature that casts agency in positive terms (Chapter two), many of the women's personal choices precipitated a reinforcing spiral of crises-driven activity: personal and/or structural problems lead to further reactive decisions and/or actions (agency), which then contributed to additional challenges, and so on. This repetitive cascade was only interrupted, when at late middle age, these women stepped back to actively assess their individual circumstances: "I had to be sure that I was doing what I needed to do for me" (Penny), and then proactively chose to restart their lives. Here, the women's agentic stance to counter accumulated disadvantage and gain a better life was thwarted by structural and local externalities, and eventually, resulted in their disengagement from the community.

Thus, to recapitulate: the women's predominant resilience responses can be outlined as a temporal sequence: an actively reactive cycling between crises through adulthood, followed by a proactive positive change in late middle age, to a subsequent strategic withdrawal from community life. And while it is evident that both personal

agency and structural forces compete to influence this trajectory, the impact of specific situational contexts is not yet clear. These situational relations are now examined with reference to the theory/literature-driven attributes of resilience in later life.

6.4 Situational Relations

In keeping with the preceding chapter, this section consists of an iterative, deductive analysis of the fit between the women's responses to challenging situations and the pre-selected sub/categories and attributes of resilience. At this stage, it is timely to recall that these attributes are derived from the literature relating to older age rather than specific to this late middle-aged cohort (Section 6.1), and they are supplemented and/or amended through the analysis per Chapter five.

6.4.1 Attributes of resilience in the late middle-aged women. The results are presented as a detailed analytical synthesis as previously (Chapter five, Section 5.5), but in brief, they indicate that while the theory/literature-led attributes are present in the women's narratives, the potency of each is highly dependent on each woman's individual life experience. As a result, the resilience responses are impacted by a complicated collision of personal agency and structural forces. They are also augmented and positively reinforced by new, intrapersonal attributes of resilience that underpin the women's resolve: inner strength, courage, personal integrity, and active self-reflection. These qualities provided a strong backdrop of resilience for the women during their early and middle years. However, four additional interpersonal attributes, age, gender, singleness, and newcomer status, worked to undermine this resiliency at the town (social) level in late middle age.

6.4.1.1. Intrapersonal attributes. With respect to their long-term and accumulated disadvantage (Section 6.3), a negative bias in the women's self-concept was anticipated. Although expressions of self-doubt (Alice), Penny's "silly voice in head, 'you can't do it'", and Linda's lack of self-confidence were extensive, some attributes of resilience, such as self-esteem: "I'm a good person on the inside" (Alice), self-acceptance (Barb), and self-worth (Berta) were also evident. Even so, this encouraging and positive turn fails to capture the inner strength demonstrated by all of the women throughout their lives. The following excerpt details how Wyn confronted her son's drug habit:

From 1995 to 1997 my son lived with me, but he was just off the planet and stealing things from me, so in the end, I said to him, 'look, you're on a different road to what I'm on, until you come back to my road, I can't do anything for you.' It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life, but I had to for my own sanity, as well as to help him, so he went off and for three years, I didn't know where he was.

Despite divorce ending most of their relationships, the women gradually adjusted to being single (Alice). This newly independent status was associated with greater self-control of life's challenges: "not reacting to difficult people, letting situations dissolve, eased up on expectations of others" (Penny). As a single woman, Gert attributed her ability to cope to her "strong personality" honed by years of living alone, while Linda's resilience was mediated by critical self-appraisal: "you realize that it's not going to happen, highly unlikely and I've got to, for my own health, I've got to change my thinking around". In fact, active self-reflection is a consistent element in all the women's narratives.

These extracts significantly underplay the personal resolve, and decisive courage required by the women in cutting off all ties with their past, and gambling on a better future: “I let go everything, let go resentments, sentimentality and material goods. From that moment on, I have never looked back, never wanting to return to my life that I had to give up” (Ruth).

This tenacity was also very evident in the women’s self-sacrifice as single parents trying to improve their family life chances, when confronted with oppressive personal and situational circumstances (Section 6.3.1.3). Even during desperate times, the women refused to compromise their core values and principles:

And so now I’m going back to work, getting a job, you know, and so, the rent. I know that the rent was \$110 and anyway I said to the girl [her employer] ‘Look can you give me another day?’ and I said ‘I just haven’t got enough money.’ And one day, she came up to me and said ‘sign this bit of paper’ and I said ‘oh, am I going to get another day?’ and she said ‘well if you sign the paper, you will’ And I said ‘what do you mean?’ and she said ‘well, I’ll get \$3,000 if you sign that paper and I’ll give you another day’s work. And I wouldn’t sign it’ To me, that was theft because I’d earned that job...So anyway, she came back later and said ‘here’s your papers, take them to Centrelink [the unemployment centre].’ (Barb)

Consequently, Barb risked, and ultimately lost her job because she was not willing to “cheat the system”.

6.4.1.2 Interpersonal attributes. The late middle-aged women’s lives were dominated by fluctuating personal and social identities, roles, and relationships. In an attempt to survive, the women constantly juggled and managed different interpersonal

combinations (marriage partners or singleness), contexts (new locations and jobs), and connections (inconsistent social support). Furthermore, their efforts to reinvent themselves in the town abutted ingrained structural restraints and rural societal norms, where being a woman, older, single, and an outsider were undesirable historically (Chapter seven) and at present.

With respect to gender, the women found that their personal and social interactions were significantly restricted: “you get a reputation if you’re too friendly” (Berta), thus amplifying the assumption that single women are “on the market”:

And it’s the same with people who are offering you help, physical help...if they’re are in a relationship or they’re married, you’ve got to be really careful [pause] because you’ve got to be cautious, it’s almost as if you’ve got to ask permission ‘can you have that help’ because people can perceive that as perhaps exchanging a sexual favour for the help you are getting...but because it’s a small community and people notice things, they think ‘hello’ and it’s also a male attitude within this community, but if you’re friendly and vivacious and whatever, then it’s ‘I really like you’ and ‘hello, hello’. (Linda)

This disturbing situation was magnified if the woman was also single (Jane). The married townswomen in particular, felt threatened by the presence of unattached women in their social circles:

A lot of them [married women] don’t like a single woman coming round all the time with their husband’s and things. You find that a lot when you are first divorced. But they’re nervous about, all of a sudden you’re a single woman and they’re a little bit nervous about having ‘the single woman’ around and they just

think you're looking for things you're not looking for and other things [laughing].

So I think sometimes, that's why sometimes women are quite happy to have the superficial 'hello how you going' but they don't invited you to their homes because they've got a husband...yeah because all of a sudden you're a threat to them, their marriage. (Berta)

Hence, there were no social occasions "where a single person, a woman, a single woman, my age...would go. Like at night time" (Berta). And for Linda: "if you've got a core friendship unit within a community, you can survive". When Linda attempted to join a church community on her arrival in the town, she was "shut out" of social activities, and by extension, potentially supportive relationships.

6.4.1.3 Existential attributes. Contrary to Linda's experience, three of the newcomers did manage to create strong connections within the mainstream Christian churches (Jenny; Marg; Nola), and church related events occupied much of their individual and social time. In addition, Jenny, Rae, and Wyn credited their personal faith and religious family with "getting through" the trauma of their divorce, bereavement, and chronic illness respectively. Barb and Berta were non-practising Christians; and although Penny and Ruth classified themselves as a-religious in a formal sense, they both held new age beliefs related to the meaning of life.

None of these belief systems equated to a positive view of world: "I believe the world we live in is fundamentally flawed and fractured. There are many good people, but greed, corruption and disrespect for their place in the human family have allowed bullies to rip, raze and ruin" (Penny). While this attitude is perhaps justifiable in the context of the women's collectively disadvantaged background, it also reflected their inner angst:

“There’s a religious part of me that feels like I’m being punished, the pain I’ve gone through is punishment for the decisions that I’ve made that have been unwise” (Linda). In spite of the optimism embedded in their new beginning in the town, many of the women had lost hope for their own futures: “I don’t know how I’m still alive” (Barb). And for some, this pessimism had transformed into a fear of the future:

and it’s weighing up what your greatest fear is, and your greatest fear is that you’ll never have a house again, that you’ll be transient, um it’s also weighing up about how you currently feel and [long pause]. Oh you know, to me, it’s like a marriage that’s going wrong, you know, for years and years you kinda think, no, you’ve got to work at it, you’ve got to try harder, um, you’ve got to change yourself, it’ll be alright...and then something happens and you think, no, it’s not going to change.

(Linda)

6.4.1.4 Social attributes. On relocating to the town, the women were soon disabused of the myth of rural hospitality:

All the things you used to see on TV with all the neighbours and everyone knocks on the door and brings you a cake, a casserole and welcomes you to town and all that. Well I say to people ‘now, that’s fairies’ It doesn’t happen. (Berta)

They had also inadvertently become outsiders: “you’re an outsider unless you’ve been married within the community four generations ago, or have been born here. [Otherwise] you’ll always be an outsider” (Linda). Even Nola with her closely-knit, church network observed that “some people here are friendly, some are not, but people here, it seems to me, don’t invite you into their homes” (Nola).

Despite their best intentions to participate and contribute to the community in a meaningful way (Linda), the women were socially excluded (Gert), leading to a retrograde withdrawal and retreat into their own, closed (home) environments (Ruth), and solitary hobbies: “writing, scrap-booking, reading, walking and pleasing myself” (Marg). As non-locals, the women were *in* but not *of* the community, so they tended to lead disconnected and parallel lives, “making do with what you’ve got here and taking the occasional trip away” (Alice).

Overall, these theory/literature-driven attributes of resilience were present in the women’s narratives, but they varied considerably in both degree and extent, within and between the women. For example, the quality and quantity of the women’s self-esteem fluctuated from Jane’s “uselessness”, Alice’s lack of confidence in her employment skills, to Gert’s fearlessness and strength. Similarly, Linda’s conflicted emotions about living in the town exposed her personal insecurity:

I love seeing the stars at night and smelling the fresh air, and I just think ‘oh my God, I’m so lucky, I’m so lucky’, and then the next day, the highlight is going down to the post office and getting your mail, and you think [pause]. (Linda)

Therefore, the efficacy of the resilience response in these late middle-aged women depended on the relative leverage of personal agency, structural externalities, and/or their interaction. Here, Ruth’s isolation, a combination of self-imposition and social exclusion, is indicative: “I volunteer four to eight hours a week to earn my government benefit and the rest of the time I work on landscaping [my] garden and continue the renovations to the house. I have no interest in clubs or socialising” (Ruth).

6.4.2 Predominant resilience response. All of the a priori attributes of resilience are represented in the women's responses. However they are manifested at different times and intensities, within and between the women. These fluctuating responses are influenced, in part, by the push and pull drivers of the women's attempts to reactively and/or proactively change their life path from adversity and crises towards a more advantageous outcome.

As for the older old cohort, these complex agentic and structural interactions are also characterised by additional attributes of resilience. Inner strength, personal integrity, courage and active self-reflection make a strongly positive contribution to the intrapersonal sub-category (Section 6.4.1.1), but four further interpersonal relations, age, gender, singleness, and an outsider status, detract from the women's later resilience responses. (The homogeneity of these new attributes of resilience in both cohorts of older women is discussed in Chapter nine, Section 9.2.1.1.)

6.4.2.1 Developmental coping²⁵ resilience response. The following developmental coping, resilience response sequence is reflected by the majority of the late middle-aged women: the women actively react to accumulated individual and structural disadvantage during their late teen years, early adulthood, and midlife; they then proactively assemble a new identity and future for themselves in their late middle age; but because of rural societal discrimination against the women's age, gender, singleness and outsider status, this vision of a better life ultimately disintegrates into social disengagement from the community. In brief, most of these women construct a

²⁵ This attribute is credited to Hildon et al. (2009).

temporal and situated, sequential actively reactive, proactive action, withdrawal, resilience response pattern.

6.4.3 Anomalous resilience responses. Rae's adaptive coping pattern of resilience matches that of the majority of the older old women (Chapter five, Section 5.5.2.1) rather than this cohort of late middle-age women. Gert, Nola, and Wyn also exhibit atypical resilience responses. From early adulthood, these three women intentionally chose and actively worked and/or studied towards a long-term purpose. Their anomalous responses are:

6.4.3.1 Focused resilience response. Both Nola and Wyn's narratives are singularly focused on achieving their lifelong goals. Nola dedicated her life to religious service as an overseas missionary, and Wyn confronted repeated setbacks and limitations caused by long-standing neurological condition:

My spinal cord needed [surgery]...and it was very painful and in the meantime I had a stroke...so they operated, and they did one operation, and um, within three days I had an infection – golden staph [staphylococcus], they had to take me back and operate on me again, and then I had...bleeding, internal bleeding, they had to take me back and operate. I had four operations within a matter of six weeks...and then, I couldn't walk so I was in a wheelchair. (Wyn)

Through initiative, determination, and endurance, they successfully overcame rudimentary living conditions (Nola), and chronic unremitting pain (Wyn). And in retirement, both were more selectively discerning about their community involvement: “experience wise. I would have more to offer than before, but time wise, I don't want to” (Nola).

6.4.3.2 Diamond shaped resilience response. Gert too, showed initiative and determination in acquiring English language and employment related skills to develop her adult career path. She also exercised significant personal volition in her refusal to be “homesick” for her family and home in Germany: “you have to be able to adapt”. Undeterred by a very underprivileged background, Gert flourished in midlife. But when she retired to the town, she was “a foreigner, a newcomer, and a bit domineering”, and transgressed the conservative ethos of the community:

I started an Arts Society here, nobody wanted to participate really. Now that’s gone too, so I’m not going to do anything anymore you know. People just, they’re strange, they just want to plod along...and because I was a business person...but here they didn’t like those formalities, You know, they just want to ‘oh we want to do this and no obligation and no this and’, it just doesn’t work. But they complain nothing is happening here. (Gert)

Since her resilience response is more favourable in midlife, and more challenging at either end of her life course, it is diamond shaped.

6.5 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

When the temporal processes and situational relations were analysed as for Chapter five, Section 5.6, an unanticipated finding surfaced; the women’s life trajectories and resilience responses trended in opposite directions. The predominant life trajectory (Section 6.3) followed a downward cascade of accumulated disadvantage, while the women’s resilience responses strengthened, albeit in an uneven progression, throughout their life journey.

6.5.1 Profiles of the late middle-aged women's resilience in later life.

According to the previous section, the attributes of resilience derived from the literature were present in the women's narratives, but the quality of their expression depended on the relative strengths of the personal and structural moderators. These a priori determinants of resilience were also augmented by the new attributes (inner strength, courage, personal integrity and active self-reflection) that were amplified in this cohort. Whereas the cumulative effect of these situational relations was an oscillating pattern that varied within and between women, the predominant resilience response was generally upward, driven by active agency. As such, it represents an overarching profile of personal growth (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007, pp. 76, 78). Until the women's new start in late midlife (the second transition point, Section 6.3.1.4), this was achieved via two routes: the more prevalent, active reactive, proactive pathway; and a less common, focused proactive alternative.

Significant changes in these proactive patterns of resilience appeared in the next stage (life at present), when the impact of local social norms was taken into consideration. Again, this led to two main variations: For 11 of the women, age, gender, singleness, and outsider status in the community were detrimental to their ongoing personal development, and resulted in disengagement and social isolation; these barriers did not unduly affect the remaining three women.

The ensuing profiles are described below:

6.5.2 Predominant arrested growth resilience profile.

6.5.2.1 Truncated resilience profile. Against a collective background of personal and structural constraints dominating the women's early and adult years, this resilience

profile is expressed by active agency (actively reactive and proactive action), supported by inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection. A midlife catharsis and new beginning in the town interrupts this tenacious resilience, and the jagged pattern of personal growth is methodically undermined by restrictive rural social norms and values relating to age, gender, singleness, and non-local status. These situational limitations collude in the women's exclusion, and eventual withdrawal, from community life.

6.5.3 Anomalous focused resilience profiles.²⁶ From early childhood to late middle age, three women exhibit proactively focused commitment, determination, and drive (personal agency) in overcoming crises and adversity to achieve their lifelong goals. While all three anticipate and prepare for potential challenges, largely via formal and informal education, their individual circumstances and resilience responses are very different. This differentiation is especially evident after the women retire in the town:

6.5.3.1 Defiant profile. Faced with systematic societal discrimination, Gert refused to adjust her personal behaviour and/or compromise her artistic standards to conform to a more socially acceptable persona. In addition to deliberately defying these local expectations and norms, she persisted in functioning independently in the community, but on her own terms.

6.5.3.2 Adaptive profile. Nola was not significantly affected by town's unfriendliness to newcomers either. She continued to meet her personal agenda, mostly social support and church related activities, but scaled them back according to her own needs and preferences. This successful adaptation to a new context is similar to the older

²⁶ These anomalous profiles are linked to individual women to clearly delineate their differences.

old women's adaptive coping resilience response (Chapter five, Section 5.5.2.1), but it differs in terms of agency. Rather than externally imposed as in the older old women's situation, Nola's adjustment to the town is because of personal choice.

6.5.3.3 *Reflective profile.* The reflective profile embodies Wyn's unceasing efforts to improve her quality of life in the face of significant health challenges. As a result, she constantly evaluated her abilities and limitations, developed additional skills, and proactively sought new opportunities to positively change her future (Schön, 1991).

6.5.3.4 *Pragmatically realistic profile.* (Rae's pragmatically realistic profile does not match this overarching focused classification, but it has been included in the anomalous section for completeness.) Rae's narrative illustrates how her hourglass shaped life trajectory (Section 6.3.3.1) and concomitant resilience response: "I keep busy and that is what keeps you going" has been tempered over time to a pragmatically realistic, readjustment to later life: "now I will soon be 65 and will most probably retire". As expected, her resilience profile aligns with the pragmatically realistic profile (Chapter five, Section 5.6.2.1) demonstrated by the majority of the older old women.

In summary: A spiralling downward cascade of multiple disadvantages symbolises the life trajectory of 11 of the late middle-aged women. The women's late teen years, early adulthood, and midlife are bracketed by failed relationships and accumulated structural hardship. This pessimistic trajectory is matched by actively reactive resilience responses, reinforced by inner strength, personal courage and integrity, and self-reflection. In effect, the symbiotic interaction between the women's negative life experiences and enhanced resilience corresponds to a fluctuating pattern of personal growth across their life journey. However, in late midlife, the women suddenly and

proactively chose to redevelop and restart their lives in the small rural town. Here, their vision of a better future was systematically eroded by the restrictive local societal norms and values associated with age, gender, singleness, and an outsider status. These discriminatory situational relations lead to the women's social exclusion, and eventual withdrawal from the community life.

Three women eluded this discouraging outcome. Throughout their adult lives, they displayed a resolute determination and proactive agency in overcoming personal and structural barriers to accomplish their long-term goals. Their individually focused pathways are reflected in the different resilience profiles that the women adopted in their retired years: the defiant profile, the adaptive profile, and the reflective profile.

Nonetheless, they retain a shared element; each woman dictated her engagement with the community on her own terms.

And as noted, Rae's pragmatically realist resilience profile mirrors that held by most of the older old women. This overlap is an expedient portal into a cross-cohort comparison.

6.6 Older Old and Late Middle-Aged Cohorts

Chapter's five and six, the exploration of resilience in the older old women and late middle-aged women respectively, followed identical analytical processes and an analogous sequence to ensure an optimal baseline for comparison. Temporal processes were cross-referenced with situational relations to assess the effect of accumulated disadvantage on individual resilience in both chapters: at first, to inductively investigate the woman's life trajectory, life challenges, and related resilience responses; next, to deductively examine the fit between the theory/literature-led resilience attributes and the

women's actual experiences; and finally, to synthesise the life trajectories with the resilience responses to derive profiles of resilience. These results are presented in turn, preceded by an initial overview of the sociodemographic profiles of each group.

6.6.1 Sociodemographic profiles. Irrespective of the age and cohort differences, there are some unexpected synergies between the late middle-aged and older old women. Nearly all of the women in each group had relatively secure retirement incomes and were homeowners. Moreover, few women in either group were educated to a tertiary level. While this finding was anticipated in the older old rural women, it was a surprising characteristic of the younger, (mostly) city-born cohort. And, even though women from each cohort experienced physical and mental health problems, the relative proportions varied significantly, with the late middle-aged women recording mental illness, and the older women reporting a greater number of physical limitations. Differences relate to the women's length of residence in the town and area as well. Most of the older old women had resided locally for over 55 years, but only one of the younger group was born and remained in the town. Otherwise, all of the late middle-aged women moved to the town intentionally, most within the last five years. The cohorts also diverged on the origin of their singleness. With the exception of two women in each cohort, the women 80 years and over were widows, and the 55 to 65 year old women were divorcees.

6.6.2 Life trajectories. A broadly comparative synopsis of both cohorts gives a striking impression of life trajectories dominated by accumulated disadvantage. Deprivation permeated all aspects of the women's lives, and its pernicious impact on their life course should not be underestimated. In fact, none of the late middle-aged cohort and only three of the older old women attested to relatively comfortable lives.

Some finer graduations emerged from a deeper examination of the women's trajectories. The women's narratives portray diametrically opposed views of childhood: the older women described an idyllic youth, while the younger group recollected parental and peer rejection, and social exclusion. World War Two marked the junction between young to adult life for the older old cohort, whereas the late middle-aged women's active rebellion signalled their passage into adulthood. This transition also underlines an evolving response to life's problems, with the younger group exerting agentic action against impositions and constraints, and the older women recalibrating their lifestyle to accommodate external forces.

By middle age, this tendency was more pronounced. Midlife for both cohorts was distinguished by turbulence: an underlying background of adversity, sprinkled with intermittent crises. The older old women's lives were overshadowed by structural conditions such as drought, and personal loss, for instance, the death of a child. Concomitantly, life for the younger women was a rollercoaster of recurring personal and structural crises. And apart from the older old women's close partnership with their husbands, these situations were surprisingly solitary challenges for all of the women. The level of support for both cohorts was also variable, resulting in a particularly relentless struggle for the single parents.

These scenarios changed abruptly when the women relocated into the town to retire—a voluntary choice for the late middle-aged women, but an unwelcome, externally enforced move for the older group. Over time though, the older old women successfully adjusted to their new circumstances, but the late middle-aged women's vision for a better

future crumbled against oppressive, local, cultural barriers, and they subsequently disengaged from participating and contributing to the town.

6.6.3 Resilience responses. The women's responses to their life challenges also differed significantly.

Briefly, when confronted with hardship during adulthood, the older old women coped by bouncing back to maintain equilibrium, in effect, cultivating a habitual, passively reactive response to life crises and challenges. This resiliency was diluted further by external structural influences during their life course, and so by retirement, the women had pragmatically adjusted their expectations for older age. The theory/literature-led attributes of resilience also tallied with the women's experiences, but each attribute was diluted by external influencers into a 'yes-but' conditionality. As a result, the women's personal initiative and agency were repeatedly constrained by outside structural factors, and only three of the older old women demonstrated decisive and intentional action to overcome personal and social challenges.

Likewise, the late middle-aged women actively reacted to individual and structural disadvantage during their late teen years, early adulthood, and midlife, but then proactively created a new beginning for themselves in their late middle age. For most of these women, this fresh start was successively undermined by restrictive social norms and values, and resulted in the women's withdrawal from the local community. Consequently, the predominant resilience response consisted of an actively reactive, proactive action, withdrawal sequence. As for the older old cohort, all the a priori attributes of resilience were represented in these younger women's responses to adversity. But unlike the older old women's relatively consistent resilience response, the pattern of resilience oscillated

widely in the late middle-aged group. This erratic response was partly due to the differential leverage of personal and structural forces when the women reactively and/or actively attempted to change their life course to a more favourable outcome. It was also influenced by the oppositional effect of the new attributes of resilience: the intrapersonal boost from inner strength, personal courage and integrity, and active self-reflection was diminished by the women's age, singleness, gender and outsider status in the town. Only two of the late middle-aged women managed to deflect these latter influences by proactively fulfilling their lifelong ambitions through focused personal resolve and initiative (agency).

Although the new intrapersonal attributes of resilience provided a sustained platform of resilience throughout the women's lives, they differed in intensity and magnitude. Inner strength, courage, personal integrity, and active self-reflection were muted in the older old women's resilience responses, but openly portrayed in the younger women's narratives. Similarly, when compared to the late middle-aged women's active, future focused self-reflection, reflection for the older old cohort was passive and retrospective. And while both cohorts of women experienced disequilibrium (Henning, 2011) because of their age, gender, single status and *newness*, this was more apparent in the late middle-aged women's resilience responses. These observations were strengthened by the corpus linguistic analysis (Chapter three, Section 3.6.3). In fact, evidence of the older old women's self-reflection was only fully discerned through this analytical method.

6.6.4 Resilience profiles. With respect to the preceding sections, it follows that the resilience profiles will be different, both within and between the cohorts.

The emergence of a pattern that was common to each cohort was thus unexpected. This *tree-like* structure consists of cohort specific trunks that depict the women's collective resilience profiles in their early and middle years, with branches delineating different profiles of resilience in later life. For example, all of the older old women depicted a passive reactive pattern of resilience until retirement, when their paths divided into a majority accommodative and a minority proactive resilience profile. Similarly, the late middle-aged women's majority active reactive and proactive action trajectory of resilience in their youth and adulthood, split into four anomalous and a primary truncated profile on their relocation to the town. Incidentally, these diverging profiles of resilience give indirect support to the significance of the late midlife turn in all the women's lives (Leonard & Burns, 1999, 2006).

In direct contrast to accumulated disadvantage that distinguished much of their life, and fortified by the additional intrapersonal attributes of resilience, the late middle-aged women's resilience responses evolved positively over time. Driven by active agency, these developmental coping processes proceeded in an upward direction, albeit laboriously and unevenly, and as such, represent an overarching contour of personal growth. However, this pattern of resilience changes dramatically when the impact of rural societal norms on the women's new life in the town is considered. For most of the late middle-aged women, age, gender, singleness and outsider status was detrimental to their ability to engage in local life or to belong to the community. These exclusive practices restricted the women's personal growth, and ultimately lead to the women's social isolation.

Meanwhile, the older old women were generally happy with their current situation. Consistent with their passively reactive response to life's challenges, they successfully adjusted to singleness and ageing in their new environment. Even so, the women's adaptive coping continued to be dictated and tempered by external structural forces such as rural values and expectations, creating to a pragmatically realistic profile of resilience.

It appears that the only group to withstand the dominantly prohibitive local culture consists of women who exercised their personal agency in actively pursuing their individual, social, and/or civic goals. Three older and three younger women manifest this proactive profile of resilience (Sections 5.6.3 and 6.5.3). Accordingly, they present a continuum of interaction with the community that ranges from maverick and defiant, to actively adaptive. All engagement is on the women's own terms rather than externally imposed by the society.

By now, it is evident that temporal processes and situational relations exert an extensive influence on the development of resilience profiles in both cohorts of women. And as observed in Section 6.6.2 above, the life course of all but three women are governed by the effect of multiple disadvantage, resulting in an hourglass shape for the older women, and a downward spiral in the younger group. These early and midlife trajectories correspond to cohort-specific resilience responses: an adaptive coping pattern in the older old women, and developmental coping in the late middle-aged women. The theory/literature-based attributes of resilience are also expressed differently in each group: muted by external forces in the older cohort, and fluctuating in the younger cohort.

These findings suggest that externalities (structure) dominated the older old women's resilience responses, whereas volition (agency) was more pronounced for the late middle-aged women. When the women moved into the town and were exposed to the intransigent norms and values held by the community, these patterns were disrupted. Each cohort experienced prejudice. The older old women managed to accommodate their new circumstances (a pragmatically realistic profile of resilience), but the younger women were socially excluded, and ultimately disengaged from social life, precipitating their truncated profile of resilience. Only three women from each cohort who had actively dedicated their lives to a long-term goal were able to negotiate this dominant local culture, generating proactive resilience profiles. The related implication is that few women were able to circumvent the ingrained prejudice of the community—in essence, the antithesis of their resiliency.

The impact of these rural social forces on the women's resilience is troubling, as the literature on late life resilience signifies that community engagement, and close social networks and support systems, are germane to a strong resilience profile (Chapter two, Section 2.1.3.1). As such, it provides a platform from which to analyse the relationships between resilience, the community, and each cohort of women. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Environment, and Person Related Contributors to Resilience: The Older Women in the Community

Chapters four, five, and six indicated that the older women, resilience, and the community are closely interconnected. In response to research question three (Chapter one, Section 1.2.2), these relationships are interrogated in this chapter through the intersecting elements of time, place, and social relationships, and how they relate to resilience for both groups of women. The chapter achieves this goal through an intersectional analysis of related historical and contemporary documentary sources, participant observation field notes, and interview and journal transcripts.

A combination of social structures, predominantly age, gender, marital and outsider status, intersect to suppress and repress the older old women, and isolate and exclude the late middle-aged women in the town. Here, the community acts as an arbiter of belonging and social worth, assigning differential values according to predetermined social identities and social roles. Even though the older old women were locals, their marginalised social positioning left them with a limited and relational social identity, yet required that they retain their service to the town. Conversely, late middle-aged women were systematically curtailed from fully participating and contributing to the community, because they were designated as unwelcome outsiders. As a result, the older old women were boxed in, and the late middle-aged women boxed out, by this positionality.

Where social position (structure) is a significant shaper of social positioning (agency), it is cogent that these interrelationships are reflected in the women's predominant resilience profiles: the pragmatically realistic profile of the older old women,

and the truncated profile in the case of the late middle-aged women. The older old women minimise and accept their lot in life, and for them, resilience is a reactive response to maintain and regain equilibrium. For the late middle-aged women who are ostracised by the community, resilience equates to “persevere, struggle and unwillingness to admit defeat” (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012, p. 104).

Although this analysis demonstrates that the historical and cultural structures that contribute to older women’s inclusion or exclusion from the town are relatively intransigent, the social relations between the cohorts revealed subtle signs of change in terms of the women’s resilience to these oppressive structures.

7.1 Analytical Plan: Intersectionality

An intersectional analytical approach offers a method of deconstructing the complex interrelationships between the community, resilience, and both cohorts of women (Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.3). The following summary is provided to support its contextual applicability to this chapter:

Intersectionality originated in the black feminist movement in the USA late last century (Crenshaw 1991; hooks, 1982), and traditionally focused on gender (Vespa, 2009, p. 381), illuminating “the contradictions, absences and murkiness” (Nash, 2008, p. 3) of women’s lives. It’s scope and analytical power has broadened significantly in recent years, as in Anthias’ (2013a) “translocation lens [where] a temporal and [spatial] analysis addresses the complexities of hierarchy, but [also] allows the privileging of a particular categorical formation, such as gender” (p. 131).

Other synergies occur between individuals’ intersectional and community experiences, for example, social identities and social structures (Shields, 2008, p. 309).

These interrelationships are also temporally and situationally contingent on specific histories and settings (Yurval-Davis, 2006, p. 203). Here, “the most productive approaches are those that allow the recognition of complex and dynamic positioning as well as historically located power and social relations” (Phoenix, 2006, p. 28). For Davis (2008) intersectionality untangles “the interaction of [these] multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination” (p. 67). Her claim resonates strongly with the narratives of both cohorts of women in Chapters five and six; a mutuality that strengthens the selection of an intersectional analysis to uncover the complex environment related (structure) and person related (agency) dynamics, in relation to resilience in older single women in the community.

With respect to this overarching ethos, it is therefore unexpected that “less attention has been given to exploring and documenting agency, resiliency, and resistance to domination” (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 1717). Equally unanticipated, is the paucity of articles using an intersectional approach in ageing research—in fact, only one intersectional study about older women (Ziegler, 2012) was found by the researcher. This chapter begins to rectify these omissions.

The analysis is also formatted to correspond with Chapter four to enhance horizontal congruence and consistency; for instance, juxtaposing Dempsey’s 1990 and 1992 results with the empirical data collected for this study to increase contextual validity and relevance (Phoenix, 2006, p. 26). This comparative perspective also capitalises on Dempsey’s rigorous analysis, and enhances data trustworthiness through greater analytical depth and breadth.

7.2 Temporal Processes

While there are studies that combine a life course perspective and an intersectional approach, such as Vespa (2009), this section focuses more broadly on the historical and cultural interplay between the women's collective social status in the town, and their resilience to accumulated disadvantage. The findings reveal that over approximately 150 years, the power relations, local societal values, and the undervalued social standing of older women in the community, seems largely unchanged.

As previously, the community is not named in this chapter to minimise site-specific identifiers (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

7.2.1 Status of older women in the community. To articulate with Chapter four, the historical and cultural trajectory of the status of older women is mapped at three significant periods in the growth and development of the community: the historical past (1850-1970), the cusp (turning point) of change (1970-1990), and the present (2012).

7.2.1.1 Historical past (1850-1970). The life stories of individual women are not depicted in the local historical records. However, a review of the extant literature indicates that the years from the mid 1850's to 1880 in particular, were crucial in laying the foundations of the older women's local status.

European settlement of the area dates from the early 1800's, coinciding with the first squatters claiming large land runs. A focal township gradually evolved and expanded from the 1850's, stimulated by the gold rush. It is suggested that the early (male) leaders (miners and squatters) of this arbitrarily self-governing town formed a long-standing influential and dominant power base that set up the future character and traditions of the community.

Further growth in the area continued into the second half of the 18th century, largely due to agricultural settlement and extension of the railway. The land act of 1869 released the vast holdings occupied by the squatter pastoralists for settlement by selectors (small farmers), resulting in dramatic demographic and political changes to the surrounding countryside. In the late 1800's, a flurry of collaborative, community building in the region occurred, resulting in a plethora of new districts and towns.

With the origins of the town grounded in a lack of order and discipline (public whippings and mob violence), it is surprising that women and children comprised approximately one third of the population in 1857. Between 1855 and 1870, living conditions for wives were extremely difficult, but they were almost insurmountable for the majority of older widows. These widows held important occupations as teachers, nurses, dressmakers, and laundresses, but they were at the mercy of an early welfare system for economic survival: "If they were known as 'deserving', there was a public subscription list and a donation from the borough 'poor box' to tide them over while they found some other means to earn their living".²⁷ In spite of the population ratio of men to women equalising in the early 1900's, men continued to control economic and social life in the town, and to dominate community leadership.

Pronounced environmental and physical hardship also compounded the older women's disadvantage, as illustrated by the following excerpt from *The Drover's Wife*²⁸:

She thinks how she fought a flood during her husband's absence. She stood for hours in the drenching downpour, and dug an overflow gutter to save the dam across the creek. But she could not save it. There are things that a bushwoman

²⁷ Although this reference is masked because of anonymity, the reader is directed to Hunter (2001) for confirmatory information about women in farm settings in colonial Australia.

²⁸ "The Drover's Wife" is a short story written by Henry Lawson, a noted early Australian author.

cannot do. Next morning, the dam was broken, and her heart was nearly broken too...She also fought the pleuro-pneumonia – dose and bled the few remaining cattle, and wept again when her two best cows died...Again, she fought a mad bullock that besieged the house for a day. She made bullets and fired at him through cracks in the slabs with an old shot-gun. He was dead in the morning. She skinned him and got seventeen and sixpence for the hide. (Lawson, 1892)

The scourge of calamitous weather, dust storms, and cyclic infestations of invasive species, such as rabbits and foxes were ubiquitous features of rural life in Australia during this period. Other structural factors, for example, the relatively late (1960's) electrification of rural areas, also contributed to the challenging domestic reality of women's lives.

In effect, the town embodied a stand-alone patriarchal and privileged centralised power base, with older, single women relegated to a dependent, subservient, and invisible status (Hunter, 2001, pp. 180-182), despite demonstrating admirable personal resourcefulness and resilience. These historical cleavages paved the way for later sociocultural development.

7.2.1.2 Cusp of change (1970 to 1990). As previously, this section is credited to Dempsey (1990, 1992) who conducted an in-depth comparative sociological study of the community in the 1970's and 1980's. As in Chapter four, Dempsey's study forms a rich evidence base from which to assess change over time.

Contrary to the structural changes affecting all aspects of town during the preceding century (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 20-27), the emergent sociocultural profile of the community as "one big happy family" (Dempsey, 1990, p.3) was cultivated and validated

by the resident's belief in their town's: inherent superiority over adjacent regions (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 30, 39-41); country style friendliness (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 30-31); egalitarianism (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 34-35); and a "real Aussie" population base (Dempsey, 1990, p. 19). Community connectivity was similarly amplified by multi-stranded, close kin networks with overlapping social ties (Dempsey, 1992, p. 9), and widespread role redundancy (Dempsey, 1992, p. 10), attributed to the town's small size, relative isolation, and localness of many groups and organisations. (Refer to Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.2 for a profile of the community during this time.)

Reality though, presented a different picture. This mythical happy family carved out a segregated enclave of cohesion and exclusivity, where "residents define themselves through their shared history, their shared future, and by their hostility to an external threat" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 41). While this backdrop of belonging created a strong sense of community, it also operated as a mechanism of separation:

Negative caricaturing as well as the positive caricaturing helps [the town] establish itself as a community, for it contributes to a solidarity based on propinquity rather than on class, gender, age or religious denomination. This solidarity is further enhanced by the community leaders or 'patrons' engaging in well publicised conflict with the communities enemies, such as government bureaucrats who are reducing local facilities. It is also heightened by 'respectable locals' uniting to marginalise and sometimes exclude new arrivals or long term residents who are perceived to pose a threat to the quality of (town) life, the moral probity of their children, or the entrenched advantages of substantial numbers of their members. (Dempsey, 1990, p. 29)

Here, women (Dempsey, 1992), the elderly (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 2, 64-89), and newcomers to the town (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 2-3, 91-93) were specifically singled out as marginal subordinates (Dempsey, 1990, p. 65). Marginalisation in each group occurred through a structured process of closure (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 20-21) by more powerful individuals and sectors of the community who monopolised social and economic authority, and leadership positions (Dempsey, 1990, p. 65); specifically, wealthy farmers, local businessmen, professionals, and executives of public and private enterprises (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 20-21). Thus, “subordinating, excluding, and exploiting women is facilitated by the [town’s] men successfully stereotyping women and their activities as inferior and having those definitions accepted by the community” (Dempsey, 1992, p. 175). Analogously, the elderly were usually impelled to mix with their aged peers rather than with an intergenerational cross-section of the community (Dempsey, 1990, p. 65), and newcomers typically ignored and/or dismissed as outsiders (Dempsey, 1990, p. 144).

While Dempsey does not selectively dwell on the plight of single, older women in relation to these prejudices, his repeated reference to the acute vulnerability of ageing widows (1990, pp. 61, 63, 73, 85, 117, 307) is indicative of their derivative and relational position in the community (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 307-308). He specifically underscored the vulnerability of (elderly) widows in three key areas: economic precariousness, “Incomes of widowers were on average twice that of widows” (Dempsey, 1992, p. 132); social identity, since a women’s social standing rests on their husband’s status, older widows were especially at risk of social isolation and exclusion (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 307-308, 1992, pp. 21, 32-34); and social role, where “women are primarily judged by their

performances as wives and mothers”, then older women who were single, and/or no longer actively mothering, were candidates for social redundancy (Dempsey, 1992, p. 33).

Dempsey (1990, pp. 316-317) predicted that the domination of these ingrained structural forces, and by extension, the relative weakness of individual agency to effect change, would endure. The next section assesses the perspicacity of his claim.

7.2.1.3 Present (2012). In this section, the post-relocation status of the older women is contextualised to the sociocultural traditions of the town.

The town’s population decreased from the 1950’s, with approximately 2,500 people currently (as of the most recent census in 2011) living in the nearly 40 square mile (100 square kilometre) land area (Table 6, Appendix B.1.1). This slow decline signals the major sociodemographic and structural shifts that have occurred in the town and adjacent locality in the two decades since Dempsey’s study. (Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3 provides a detailed synopsis of the town in 2012.)

As observed previously, even though the town reflected the ageing, ethnically white, profile of rural Australia, it was unusual in attracting two very different types of newcomer. The ferals, stereotypically young and unemployed, were drawn to the town because it fell outside the geographic boundary for government work-to-earn requirements. By contrast, the C-changers, late middle-aged and single women, relocated primarily because of the availability of cheap housing, and the town’s potential for a viable new start in their lives (Chapter six, Section 6.3.1.4). These women were openly committed to actively participating, and engaging in all aspects of the community. But because neither of these in-migrants matched the town’s new resident ideal (couples with

young families), they were both subject to the town's historic marginalisation of outsiders (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 48, 61).

Alternatively, the majority of the older old women in the study qualified as locals, meaning that they were born and had resided in the town and/or adjacent area most of their lives. Being local afforded these women some degree of cultural connectivity, but it was not a guaranteed passport to social inclusion. Many older old women reported limited regular social contact with others, even though localism provided easy access to networks of family and friends for support. In fact, Dempsey (1990, pp. 62-63) proposed that the isolation experienced by elderly farming couples on retiring into the town was akin to the exclusion felt by some newcomers relocating from the city. This initial sense of alienation was most acute for farmers' widows in both the Dempsey and present study (Chapter five, Section 5.4.1.4).

While not as overtly visible as in the past, the town's traditional structural power base of political and socioeconomic wealth, and the dominance of men in most positions of authority and influence, was still evident in all strata of the community. At the time of the study (2012), there was no observable shift in these attitudes, especially with respect to the agency of single women, aged 55 and over, and living on their own. The older old women had adopted an accommodative stance to this sociocultural control, where everyday challenges were accepted with pragmatism and equanimity. For instance, loneliness was only ever inferred instead of being mentioned outright (Chapter five, Section 5.4.1.5), and individual circumstances were largely rationalised in terms of luck, and/or the (assumed) inevitable consequences of life in general. Furthermore, the late middle-aged women who initially reacted to their exclusion by the community with

proactive action were eventually forced to retreat into relative obscurity (Chapter six, Section 6.3.1.5)—again reaffirming the dominance of these local social norms and values. As a result, the younger women were repressed by, and the older old women succumbed to these structural forces, despite both cohorts demonstrating a lifetime’s resilience to crises and adversity.

This systematic discounting of both cohorts of women implies an exponential effect that warrants a deeper investigation into the specific structural and agentic intersections of resilience and ageism, gender, marital status, and localness in the community.

7.3 Situational Relations

Previous research into resilience in older rural women indicates that a triadic combination of age, gender, and rurality operates to undermine the women’s agency (Dorfman et al., 2009, p. 305). In line with Keating et al.’s (2011, p. 334) challenge, this triple jeopardy is supplemented by singleness, and especially in the case of the late middle-aged cohort, outsider status. However, Dorfman et al. (2009, pp. 312-313) also identified community support and solidarity as integral components of resilience in older rural women. This discordance highlights the difficulty encompassed in unravelling the complex social relations between the community and the older women’s resilience (Anthias, 2013a, p. 133).

Anthias (2008, 2013a, 2013b) offers a potential resolution to this challenge—intersectional framing via a translocational lens (Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.3). She also recommends that social categories be specified prior to conducting an intersectional analysis (2013b, p. 13). Consequently, Dempsey’s findings are revisited to evidence the

older women's situational relations according to their social position in the community (Section 7.3.1), and then interwoven with data from the present study to form a dialectical profile of the older women's social positioning (Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.3).

Again, to facilitate methodological consistency across chapters, the outcome of this section is presented as an analytical synthesis.

7.3.1 Social position of older women in the community. The structural categories that operate here are derived from a collection of sources: gender and social class (Dempsey, 1990, 1992), age and rurality (Dorfman et al., 2009), plus singleness and locational status from Chapters five and six.

Of these, gender is the predominant factor, and for Dempsey in 1992, gender permeated all aspects of everyday life in the community. Because of their gender, the community's women were disadvantaged throughout their life course, with patriarchal traditions and norms limiting acceptable female roles to wives and mothers (Dempsey, 1992, p. 149). Gender bias also infiltrated leisure pursuits, with men constraining women's involvement in recreation to "subordinants and supporters rather than equals" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 36), but this drawback was purportedly negated by "the opportunity for an easy-going, friendly lifestyle, and an outstanding physical and social environment in which to raise their children" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 58).

Marriage for women was viewed as a desirable and inevitable condition of belonging to the community: "Women fit in much more easily if they are married" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 172). Long-standing gender role inculturation (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 187-194) proscribed standards of acceptable behaviour, and respectability norms, for both single and married women where "cross-sex friendships were restricted to friends of

one's marriage partner" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 60). Thus, "wives should be accompanied by their husbands if they attend a mixed social function, whereas a husband can attend alone" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 186). And since "any protracted conversation with a man may spark off the rumour that she is chasing him" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 60), with the associated risk of branding as a "deviant" woman (Dempsey, 1990, p. 47-48), single women were especially isolated.

Another group that did not fit the profile of desirability were the "transients" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 48). Pejoratively labelled as "two bob blow-ins", newcomers were often left to "flounder on the margins of [town] life" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 59):

These new arrivals frequently report that their feeling of being on the 'outside looking in' lasted for several months and in some cases, years...Often the circles that the newcomer was finding it impossible to 'break into' were comprised of people who had known each other since childhood. Non-locals report that they have to work very hard – much harder than anyone born locally – to win acceptance in...the community. Some claim that the process of working to ensure continuing acceptability goes on indefinitely. (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 60-61)

Contradicting the notion of the town as friendly, supportive, and inclusive (Dempsey, 1992, p. 27), immersion within the community as a new resident was a solitary and private dilemma rather than a public problem (Dempsey, 1990, p. 64).

Race was equally compartmentalised. As the community is predominantly white with a homogeneous demographic profile (Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3; Dempsey, 1992, p. 16), race relates to the widely accepted discrimination between "old" and "new" Australians (Dempsey, 1990, p. 19). In a post-colonialist context (Connell, 2014), old

Australians would plausibly refer to the indigenous Aboriginal population; in this setting, it refers to Australians of European, mostly British, descent (Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3; Dempsey, 1990, p. 19). Although race is a cornerstone of social structure and intersectionality, it is not a major component in either the Dempsey or this analysis.

On the contrary, class exerted a significant influence on the community in Dempsey's study. In spite of the residents extolling the town's purported egalitarianism (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 34-35, 127-130), Dempsey (1990, pp. 156-172, 1992, pp. 22-23) identified three primary and seven sub-class categories. Even though there was no discernable upper class hierarchy in the town during Dempsey's study, or in 2012, trappings of privilege were evident through the long-standing custom of families sending their children to be educated in exclusive boarding schools (Jill; Dempsey, 1990, p. 185). However, the benefits of a private education did not supersede gender and/or originating class (Dempsey, 1992, p. 138), because women assumed the social status of their husband after marriage, rather than the reverse (Dempsey, 1992, p. 186).

This dominance of gender over class (Dempsey, 1992, p. 138) persisted into older age (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 104-106). And where participation and contribution to the community depended on good health, an adequate income, and a partner (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 64-89), the elderly occupied a position of subordinate marginality (Dempsey, 1990, p. 65). "In [the town], you go to the community; the community does not come to you" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 31)—a practice of social closure that effectively disenfranchised older people. Since older men retained their former occupational identity, they maintained their prominence in civic and community affairs, while the older women's secondary and subservient roles were amplified (Dempsey, 1992, p. 76). The "inferior status of [older]

women is revealed in the common practice of using a female gender label to talk about a member of either sex in a derogatory way... ‘Isn’t he an old woman!’” (Dempsey, 1992, p. 178)

In 1990, Dempsey asserted that: “The town is a hierarchically organised social system in which age intersects with class and gender in the distribution of scarce resources and valued positions and in the patterning of social life” (p. 72). His claim presupposes the tacit, local customs that underpin the present-day reality of town life; for example, the intersection of age, gender, marital, and residential status into a potent cocktail of isolation and exclusion in both cohorts of older women. The effect of these social positions on the women’s resiliency is pursued through an investigation of the social positioning (agency) of each cohort in the next section.

7.3.2 Social positioning of older women in the community. Anthias’ (2008, p. 15) definition of social positioning as an active, agentic process helps to foreground situational change in the older women’s resilience. Here, the older old women tend to fade into the background as a consequence of a lifetime’s relegation to social secondariness, and ironically, because of their successful adjustment and adaptation to retirement into the town. Together with their ability to counter long-term disadvantage, and their adaptive coping resilience response, the older old cohort’s pragmatically realistic profile of resilience can be reinterpreted as older women acquiescing to their lot in life. Similarly, the late middle-aged women’s retreat to their houses and gardens when they intended to participate in, and contribute to, their new community, is not an expected outcome of their developmental coping resilience response and/or trajectory of personal growth. Their stance is one of endurance.

These situations are indicative of the complex interaction of resilience, the women's gender, age, singleness, non/local status, and the community. As such, they invite an intersectional analysis to bring the link between the women's agency and their situational relations in the community into sharper relief. Hence, the older, single women's agency (social positioning) is addressed in terms of their social identity, social role, and social relations, informed by Winker and Degele's (2011) intersectional model. Dempsey's studies are also referenced to assess the change in these situational relations over time.

The evidence from this section show that the community functioned as a screening mechanism, conferring different degrees of localness and belonging to residents according to their social positioning (social identity and role). Designated as outsiders, the late middle-aged women were assigned a not-acceptable social identity, and denied a social role in the town, whereas the local, older old women lacked a social identity, but they were still expected to fulfil a social role of usefulness to the community. In essence, the older old cohort was deemed socially invisible, while the late middle-aged group, without a purpose, were *rudderless*. This relational social positioning was perpetuated by local sociocultural structures, norms, and values, with a knock-on effect on the women's resilience.

7.3.2.1 Social positioning of the older old women in the community. Claims of egalitarian "communal feelings grounded in locality" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 29) overshadow the relative and derivative nature of belonging in the town. In his condemnatory expose of ageism in the community, Dempsey (1990, pp. 71-89) attributed the social marginalisation of older people (in general) to a formidable mix of sociocultural and

power structures and relationships. These exclusionary prejudices persist today. They are evident, for instance, in the normative custom that the elderly stand aside for the young, as in older farmers gifting the farm to their sons and retiring into town (Glad; Mabel). And as described in Sections 5.4.1.4 (Chapter five) and 7.2.1.3 above, leaving the farm often led to profound social dislocation and isolation for older farming couples, especially wives: “Such people may have visited the township regularly during their lives but they conducted much of their socialising in a circle of friends and neighbours located in neighbourhoods [usually comprised of other farmers and their families] situated some distance from the township” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 63).

Likewise, the very few residents who were not born in Australia were also separated from the mainstream of community life. Their presence was rarely registered, except in the context of vandalism and crime, when blame was inevitably attributed to them: “Are they [the perpetrators] Australian?” (Effie, informal interview) The reverse inference, that white, rural, “real Aussies” would be above suspicion, was widely assumed as well.

Moreover, being a local did not automatically confer immunity from marginalisation in the town. A ghetto-like filter operates to segregate residents into those with high social identity and status; those on the periphery of society; and then, marginal groups within the marginalised (Dempsey, 1990, p. 65). Here, the community acts as a gatekeeper, imparting different degrees of localness and belonging to residents according to their social positioning. For instance, the older old women were at risk of isolation and anonymity on becoming widows: “My [elderly] neighbour...said when she lost her husband, not only did she lose him, but she lost most of the friends that they’d had too”

(Berta). Incidentally, this relational dependency of wives on their husbands may also explain the comparatively easy lives of the three exceptional women—Beryl, Jess and Pearl. A subsequent re-examination of their life trajectories revealed a history of high standing in the community, either through their own family connections, and/or favourable marriages. But for the majority of the older old women, age (and by extension, widowhood) is a powerful equaliser that supplants former social divisions (Dempsey, 1990, p. 224), and often acts as a catalyst for new friendship arrangements (Chapter five, Section 5.5.1.4): “A lot of widows...will go out for lunches and things together as a group” (Glenys, informal interview). Although these emergent social networks are positive signs of inclusivity, they are largely age related peer groups, and as such, represent “segregated integration” (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 71-75).

Dempsey’s research into the town’s political and sociocultural structures also provides a deeper insight into some of the social practices of the older old cohort. Where identity and status depend on active involvement in the community (Dempsey, 1990, p. 70), any loss of status and independence has a downward effect on social positioning (Dempsey, 1990, p. 67). Again, it is elderly widows living alone who have the greatest imperative to create and maintain “a public social life” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 73). This mandate translates into the dictum to keep busy (Ruby), and “to appear to be coping at all costs” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 70), with a concomitant need to be functionally self-sufficient (Maud, Nell), and avoid becoming a burden on the family (Jill). These behaviours underscore the irrelevancy of older parents in the busy day-to day lives of their children (Jill; Dempsey, 1990, p. 78), and a greater reliance on elderly neighbours for help (Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1.5).

Any admission of personal fallibility was also proscribed, and negative emotions, such as loneliness were denied (Ruby). Visible threats to individual autonomy, for example, the mobility issues identified by 10 of the 16 women, were vehemently underplayed as well: “I started with a walking stick and I walked down to the supermarket...and then it was getting harder and I thought ‘I’d get a walker’ and pride stopped me” (Jess). Furthermore, Jean, who was physically and socially isolated because of her long-term health limitations, refused to “go into a home”, and demonstrated remarkable agency and resolve when she dissociated herself from her only support system (Chapter five, Section 5.4.3.2). Nell’s transformative resiliency (Chapter five, Section 5.5.3.2) was equally noteworthy under these constraints. The catalyst for her action, seeking professional help for emotional distress, was widely regarded as a sign of psychological weakness, and a personality deficit, by the community. Consequently, both Jean and Nell’s agentic practices (social positioning) and resilience responses were conducted at a personal and private level.

Notwithstanding these exceptions, the majority of the older old women acceded to this repressive culture: “They appear to be generally happy with things and/or believe the prevailing relationships and roles are inevitable, even natural” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 305), and as discussed in Chapter five, their situation seemed to be accepted with stoic reserve. In actuality, this calm acceptance of the status quo was a double-edged sword, as these older old women were also “trapped by the code of respectability they have been socialised to live by and which the community continues to impose on them” (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 51-52). By conforming to this ideology, the older old women had very little societal power and control, and were essentially, invisible. This social invisibility was so

blatant, that when a prominent and progressive (male) official was asked about the status of older women in the town by the researcher, the answer was sustained silence. His lack of response is a particularly telling indictment of the women's inconspicuous social identity, especially since the official was fully cognisant of the critical voluntary service performed by older women in the town.

The community's double standards, where "the labour of [women] it is not viewed as something that should be paid for or reciprocated" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 87), suggests that while the older women were not socially visible, they did fulfil a social role. All of the older old women were extensively involved in welfare and social work in the town in 2012. But as Dempsey determined in the early 1990's, this role subsumed a set of rigid caveats. It was vital for older women to remain useful to the community (Dempsey, 1990, p. 70), either by providing or supplementing many of the town's social services, but it was not acceptable to stand out as "decision makers" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 36). To illustrate from the researcher's fieldwork: Although older women comprised the active membership of a large number of organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch in 2012, the (very few) male members occupied the leadership positions. Similarly, while older women raised most of the charitable funds for the town, they relegated themselves to a behind the scenes role in deference to the men's "more important" responsibilities. Ingrained references to "the men's management committee" (Flo, informal interview) persisted, despite the gender-neutral mandated composition of local administrative boards. Again, these scenarios are typical of the older old women's long-term sociocultural conditioning to accede to male authority in this rural community. They also

reflect the earlier finding (Chapter five, Section 5.5.2) that attested to the muting effect of external social forces on the older old women's attributes of resilience.

In an ironic twist, the sole older woman with an independent social identity (Edna) was only tolerated because of her ceaseless advocacy on behalf of the town; she was almost universally disliked for “not knowing her place” in the local hierarchy. Edna's social ostracism is a graphic indictment of the dominance of local norms over personal agency in this setting, especially as her life trajectory, associated resilience responses, and maverick profile of resilience, all corroborate her tenacity in confronting disadvantage. However, her reputation as a forthright champion of change, particularly for gender equality, was perceived as disrupting the power relations in the community, and her actions were viewed as over-stepping the boundaries of appropriate behaviour for older woman. As a result, Edna's social positioning left her “feeling that she is a misfit”. The extent of her alienation from the community is even more marked when juxtaposed against Edna's listing as a notable person in the “Who's Who in Australia”.

Even though Edna was passionately forthright in her change agenda, it came at great personal cost, and as such, demands a re-evaluation of the acquiescence adopted by most of the older old women in the town. When confronted with a dominant societal attitude that socially constrains their emotional and behavioural choices and boxes them in, these older women minimise and accept their lot in life. Their pragmatic realistic profile of resilience is an outcome of a lifetime dealing with disadvantage (Chapter five, Section 5.4.1). It is also coupled with an impersonal social identity predicated on family status rather than individual merit and achievement, and a social role linked to being supportive, useful, and doing good works in the community. For these older old women,

resilience is a reactive response to regain and maintain equilibrium, for example, on becoming a widow—hence their predominantly equanimous adjustment to new circumstances.

Dempsey takes an opposing stance here. He argues that when local women buy into the status quo, they are reinforcing their enculturation as undervalued secondary members of society. In his opinion, the inferior social status assigned to women in the community stems from their long-term subordination and exploitation by men (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 170-195). While respecting Dempsey's in-depth analysis, and reaffirming the persistence of gender inequality, this study indicates that the older old, single women are exposed to an extensive process of multiple marginalisation, specifically age, gender, marital and residential status, that intersects on different levels, and infiltrates all aspects of their lives.

These exclusionary processes effectively disempower the older women, stripping them of all but a limited and relational social identity, yet requiring they retain their value to society. Under this umbrella of intersecting structural constraints, the older old women's almost fatalistic belief that good (and bad) fortune was due to external factors such as luck (Chapter five, Section 5.4.4) rather than personal agency, is quite plausible.

7.3.2.2 *Social positioning of the late middle-aged women in the community.* The late middle-aged women did not share the older old women's adaptive social positioning. This cohort represents the advantages of growing up in a period (approximately 1946-1961) that is generically associated with greater life chances and choices, and specifically for women, independence, autonomy, and equality. Accordingly, these 55 to 65 year old

women chose to move to the town, with the expectation of fulfilling their dreams, and making a positive and worthwhile contribution to the community.

Many of the late middle-aged women involved in the study attempted to volunteer in the many charitable and service organisations in the town; a process that is generally regarded as a relatively standard entry point into a community, especially where employment opportunities are extremely limited (Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3).

Volunteering for these women proved to be a very complex process, and involved local sociocultural beliefs about the type and degree of community participation that is condoned for older women, as well as tacit knowledge of the town's hierarchy of service organisations. For instance, not one person admitted to the researcher that they attended any activities at the Senior Citizen's Centre, because of its association with the stigma of ageing (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 76-77): "They say 'go to the elderly cits [citizens] and join there', but we're not old enough, we don't fit into that elderly cits bit" (Berta). On the other hand, Probus meetings and events were frequently cited as being socially attractive, albeit expensive and cliquey (Berta).

Traditionally, older women have been active in auxiliaries in the town (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 75-76, 84). Their role was primarily supportive, and revolved around raising money, and providing labour for male oriented clubs such as the RSL: "We raise the money and the men spend it" (Dempsey, 1992, p. 35). This ethos flows into the present, where treading the fine line between being regarded positively for "doing your bit", but not too much (to avoid being perceived as trying to take control), is treacherous for non-locals. The researcher was not resistant to this peril either—her over-zealousness in

engaging with the community transgressed this boundary, and culminated in the directive to “back-off” (Chapter three, Section 3.6.4.2).

Negotiating the organisational hierarchy is equally challenging. It is acceptable for newcomers to volunteer in companionship (visiting) roles in aged care facilities, and to help at charity shops, but involvement in any activity with more responsibility, for example, assisting in a resource centre, is subtly discouraged. Membership of preferred social clubs is also restricted. This discrimination is selective, and usually occurs at two levels: firstly, new places are limited, and joining requires an introduction by a local member; and secondly, ongoing participation demands a significant financial commitment to meet fees and other expected contributions (Wyn; Dempsey, 1992, pp. 38-40).

In the current study, Ruth’s volunteering experience highlights some of the pitfalls encountered by the late middle-aged women in their quest to contribute to the town. With a background in public administration, Ruth was resolute in her goal to volunteer with a prestigious institution. Her access was eventually permitted, but the long-term, local members then effectively blocked her participation by controlling rotas, and refusing to open any volunteer slots. After 18 months, she was still limited to contributing on a casual, emergency and relief basis, and/or scheduled to cover undesirable holiday times such as Christmas and New Year, when none of the regular volunteers chose to be available. Ruth then attempted to improve some long-standing operational procedures within the organisation. In comparison with her previous work environments, she felt that the institution’s systems were antiquated, and technologically underdeveloped. She also denigrated the business sector (controlled by men) as:

Older people stopping progress. Almost as though they want to stay in the 20th century but if they could, they would have the town function as it was in the 19th century. By older I mean ‘oldest’ generation, but the business people, the ones who are in their 40’s to 60’s can be just as anti-progress with technology.

But in sharing her professional acumen, and proactively exercising her personal agency where: “New generations are taking a stand. They know they have a right to express their ideas and speak their opinions and they will”, Ruth defied local tradition, and breached some implicit customs and values:

Firstly, by seeking a position reserved for long-term residents, Ruth “threatened the monopolistic rights of locals” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 49). Newcomers were expected to be very grateful if offered the least desirable voluntary roles. More attractive opportunities, such as volunteering with the Meals on Wheels service and the before-school children’s programme, were blocked by a combination of long-standing and stable community teams, and/or lengthy and complicated formal protocols. These included affiliation with a sponsoring organisation, and obtaining enhanced security clearances.

Secondly, Ruth did not “carry out her duties according to established practices...and assuming a subordinate position” (Dempsey, 1990. p. 49). When Ruth demonstrated self-initiative to improve operational procedures, she violated the condition that newcomers perform subservient roles in an organisation. For this transgression, she was subjected to continual criticism, officially censured, and all of the other volunteers actively agitated to “get rid of her” (Field note, May 12, 2012). However, her reprimand stopped short of removal from the organisation, and/or being “eased out of town” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 49).

Third, even though she was meeting a government benefit requirement to volunteer, Ruth viewed her contribution as “helping keep an important resource functioning in the town”. The community differed: Not only was her activity perceived as aggressive, arrogant, and unwelcome, it was also regarded as work. Here, Ruth contravened the still prevalent, local understanding that women do not work for self-fulfilment and/or self-advancement; women’s work is only condoned if it is to save a family farm or business (Dempsey, 1992, p. 151).

Finally, by volunteering in a desirable institution, Ruth expropriated a valuable work experience opportunity that was tacitly allocated to the town’s young people.

A commensurate situation was described by Dempsey in 1992:

The [newcomer] offended principally by trying to change things in the organisations she joined. The proposed innovations implied criticisms of existing practices, which is never well received in [the town], especially when offered by a ‘newcomer’. Within days of her arrival...she was being ‘bad-mouthed’ in casual conversations. Those who had initial dealings with her were warning others ‘to steer well clear of her.’ Her subsequent attempts to join voluntary organisations eager for new members were rejected. She was chastised by leaders of the organisations she did manage to join for trying to take over, and her offers of assistance with various existing programmes within these organisations were refused. (p. 267)

Although Dempsey was referring to “rebellious young professionals”, his words still ring true for the late middle-aged women, and their equivalent, systematic social exclusion by the town in 2012. For her impropriety, Ruth was sanctioned and isolated by the

community, but in return, she refused to join in any social or leisure pursuits (Chapter six, Section 6.4.1.4). Consequently, she amplified her outsider status as a “recent arrival who is single or widowed [and] uninterested in sport or the other activities that serve as a basis for voluntary organisational activity in this community” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 61).

Furthermore, the majority of the town’s recreational opportunities were segregated and skewed towards men (Dempsey, 1992, p. 54), as evidenced by the exodus of locals travelling en masse to barrack (support) for the town’s (male) footy (Australian football) teams at away matches. Many of the late middle-aged women were alienated by the “physicality” of the town’s culture, where male drinking, sport, and [in 2012] gambling, go hand in hand (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 47-48). For Berta:

A lot of people go and play the pokies²⁹ and spend their money...But see I don’t...and I don’t think there is anywhere in the town where a single person, a woman, a single woman, my age, would go. Like at night-time. During the day it’s fine, but in the evenings, it’s not safe to walk around anymore. It’s, I wouldn’t go to the club, I don’t like the pokies.

Women who “escaped” at weekends (Alice; Berta) to attend *sophisticated* events (cinemas, theatres, concerts), and who did not fit the rural cultural stereotype (Dempsey, 1992, p. 58) such as enjoying country music, were shunned.

To offset this imbalance, Gert, a proficient artist, established a small art gallery, and offered painting lessons to complement the existing art scene. As for Ruth, her proactive agency contravened two of the local prohibitions: city type leisure (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 58-59), and the tall poppy syndrome (Dempsey, 1990, p. 151; Mancini &

²⁹ A colloquial term for poker machines and the prevalence of gambling at Sports Clubs.

Pennington, 2011). Gert was also marginalised in the community for being different: she was a foreigner and spoke with a strong German accent; she produced the wrong sort of artwork (modern art instead of the usual landscape painting); and as an artist, she was assumed to be volatile, unreliable, and eccentric. In addition, Gert broke the *rule* relating to women and work. Her downfall though, was to offend local sensitivities by unilaterally presuming what the community needed in terms of culture, and by implication, intimating that the town suffered from a cultural deficit. Gert's fledgling business was eventually abandoned because of poor community support, but she remained personally resolute (resilient) in the face of this rejection, as evidenced in her defiant resilience profile (Chapter six, Section 6.5.3.1).

These intersecting local sociocultural proscriptions and structural norms were very effective in blocking the late middle-aged women's access to, and engagement with, most voluntary agencies, leisure activities, and from starting entrepreneurial ventures. Despite the women's protracted and proactive efforts to contribute positively to the community, this social positioning meant that they were rudderless—deprived of a social role by the town.

Nevertheless, the cohort was ascribed a social identity. In this context, social identity coalesced around two interacting dyads: newcomer and outsider status, and gender and singleness. Each indicator is examined in turn to tease out the resilience, social positioning, and situational relations of the late middle-aged women.

It has already been shown that older, single women did not represent the type of newcomer preferred by the community (Chapter four, Section 4.4.1.1); they were not young families with the (assumed) potential to make a long-term investment in the town's

future. And since many of the late middle-aged women were benefit recipients, the local residents associated them with the ferals; long-term welfare claimants who moved to the town primarily to circumvent government work requirements. Moreover, by adding to the surfeit of elderly women in the town, the late middle-aged women were viewed as placing a further burden on the town's finite resources and services, without benefiting the community. At this point, it is pertinent to recall that the women's motivations for relocating to the town were based on relatively prosaic reasons: aesthetics, practicality, affordability, and family reunification; plus a desire to make a positive change in their lives and to contribute to the community, rather than a strategic intent to take advantage of it. Again, these differences in perception are notable signifiers of the enduring biases that separate locals and newcomers (Dempsey, 1990, 48, 61).

Long-term friendship cliques (Dempsey, 1990, p. 60), multiple, close, personal and public ties (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 95-97), and tightly-knit, social networks (Dempsey, 1990, p. 307) continued to serve as indicators of social and community cohesion (Dempsey, 1992, p. 27) in 2012. They also acted as decisive arbiters of belonging and insider/outsider status for the community:

Residents...define themselves through their shared history, their shared future and by their hostility to an external threat. [The town] exists as a social entity...and reaffirms its existence through engaging the boundary maintenance activity that distinguishes it from other social worlds, and from the institutions and the people which it perceives as different, and often opposed to it. (Dempsey, 1990, p. 41)

As such, this community closure was an extremely effective gatekeeper in isolating nearly all of the late middle-aged women. Consequently, the women's experience of

interacting with the local townspeople was perfunctory at best. Berta's intimation that: "People are superficial, where unless you are born here...they are nice to you and everything, but you haven't got...an in", echoes Dempsey's 1990 assertion that "Any kind of friendliness extended may be superficial and the amount of care or concern involved...slight" (p. 59). On many occasions, the late middle-aged women were irrelevant to the locals and disregarded:

But for an older person, it's harder to move into a small town...There's no, nothing where you feel, even the CWA, you [um] they're cliques, they've known each other all their lives. They know their family history, they know everything, so you'll always be an outsider. You always feel like you don't really belong.

(Berta)

At other times, they were completely rejected: "I've had a person actually say to me 'unless you're born and bred in [the town], I don't want to know you'" (Berta).

Gender and singleness intersect to further marginalise the late middle-age women. For instance, in Dempsey's study, single women were classified as deviants (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 41-53): "These categories of people serve as foils for the community to delineate its moral as well as social boundaries" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 307). Analogously, in 2012, the late middle-aged women's social motives were often judged with suspicion by locals, and because of their relative newness and limited "community intelligence" (Linda), some of these women violated the unwritten social code governing respectable women's behaviour: "Being female is a bit restricting...because you've got to watch what you do and say, and where you go" (Berta).

A seemingly uncomplicated activity, “going out for a drink”, typifies the social constraints and structural forces that interact to exclude the late middle-aged women: Even though many rural hotels offer meals and family-friendly spaces, drinking was regarded a male prerogative, and pubs were the domain of the town’s men in the 1990’s (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 48-52): “Any woman who drinks to excess will be stigmatised as a drunk and...possibly as a sexually available woman” (Dempsey, 1992, p. 50). This caveat remains valid in 2012: “If you are a single man you can go and have a beer with the guys in the pubs, but for a woman, there’s no way I would go in and just order a glass of wine and sit there” (Berta).

In an environment where a woman’s male contacts are limited to friends of her husband (Dempsey, 1992, p. 60), and any lengthy engagement with a man implies that the woman is “after him” (Berta; Linda; Dempsey, 1992, pp. 33, 60), it was extremely difficult for single, older women to meet and interact with unattached men in the town. The only viable option open to them was to socialise in a group. Single women though, were not usually included in mixed groups (married and singles, male and females) because women compete over men (Dempsey, 1992, p. 176), and wives viewed unmarried women with suspicion (Berta). Furthermore, in same-sex groups, single women were “perceived as threats to cherished friendships or valued positions” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 307).

So there’s really nowhere to go, there’s not...For me, it’s, I don’t consider going out for a meal on my own, whether it’s lunch or tea, so I come home and cook my own. It’s cheaper and what do you do, you go there, and just eat your meal and then you leave if you haven’t got company or anyone to talk to. (Berta)

While Berta's isolation was representative of the other late middle-aged women's experiences (Chapter six, Section 6.3.1.5), it was also a powerful reminder that these women did not appear to know each other, and/or they did not socialise (Chapter six, Section 6.3.1.5). Here, Dempsey provided a precedent for this dilemma (1992, pp. 270-271), by identifying the impediments to women newcomers forming a social group in the town (1992, pp. 250-251). Three of these barriers relate directly to the late middle-aged women's situation, namely: women's subordinate position in the community hierarchy; the demography of close and cross-cutting ties that "feed" the town's gossip chains (Berta); and sociocultural norms that quell any sign of rebellion. And as Ruth and Gert discovered, these processes of exclusion "can be implemented with the precision of a military operation" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 314).

This social stratification (newcomer/outsider status and gender/singleness) was applied to most of the late middle-aged women to separate them from the locals. But in restricting the women's ability to "help the community" (Berta), thereby denying them a purpose, this segregation also potentially impacted the women's mental health. Ten of the 14 late middle-aged women already suffered from clinical depression:

I've had a few dark period times and I've had counselling, professional counselling and that helped me a lot, and it's helped me by going out into the community...so the isolation here, when you are on your own, nights are terrible.
(Berta)

Since mental health problems continue to be hidden in small rural towns in Australia (Judd et al., 2005; McColl, 2007), the late middle-aged women's social exclusion was not overtly associated with the stigma attached to mental health illness (Judd et al., 2006, p.

770). It was however, linked to the women's proscribed social identity as transients and aberrant women (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 47-49): an a priori designation, irrespective of whether these women had breached any critical local values or not (Dempsey 1990, p. 307).

Only three of the women were exempted from this negative social position. Extrapolating from Chapter six, it is almost a *fait accompli* that Rae and Wyn would *qualify* as locals. Both were born, raised, and lived most (Wyn), or all (Rae) of their lives in the town. Nola's inclusion in the insider group is perhaps less expected. Although she possessed characteristics in common with the late middle-aged cohort—single status, and a short-term residency in the town, Nola was also equipped with an inbuilt knowledge of country ways. She was raised in a comparable rural environment, and after a short period in the city, had only lived in very small and remote communities since then. Thus, her background afforded her a natural synergy with the community: “I felt at home the day I moved in. I believe it is the Lord's place for me and I am abundantly happy and satisfied here”. Nola's positive social positioning; her social identity as a missionary, and a social role investing “in church, the youth outreach, community garden...visiting the nursing home”, mediated her approval by the community. In return, she was the recipient of good neighbouring:

When we had...an [electricity] blackout, my young next-door neighbour came over to see if I needed a lamp and something to cook on...These people are not personal friends. We say ‘hello’ and wave, but that's all, yet they are wonderful neighbours. (Nola)

Accordingly, Nola's social standing in the town mirrored that of Rae and Wyn. Rae was highly respected for her active support of local initiatives (community choir, the festival committee) and national charities, where "together with my band of helpers, we have raised nearly...\$50,000" for health research. She was also one of the few female members of the prestigious Rotary club. Similarly, Wyn was valued for her extensive involvement and contribution to the community: "I'm on the hospital consultation committee, I do the cinema, I do some things in De Paul welfare and I'm heavily involved in the church...I visit and stuff like that". Her leadership in different initiatives, such as the debutante ball, was widely admired too. (Incidentally, Wyn was nominated, and accepted for membership of the Rotary club, but she was unable to meet its ongoing financial commitments. She then became an office bearer for Probus.) Both Rae and Wyn attributed their strong community support to close networks of friends and neighbours.

Wyn, Rae, and Nola's social connectivity, and extensive civic service contrasted sharply with the very restricted social roles delegated to the remaining late middle-aged women, who faced an almost impermeable barrier to their efforts to engage with the town. As such, the late middle-aged women faced a classic catch 22 situation: their older, single, female, and newly arrived status was associated with an outsider social identity; a typical way of becoming acceptable, and accepted by the community was through active participation and contributing to the town; but this entry route (social role) was essentially closed to non-locals. As in 1990, Dempsey's words:

[Women who were] denied access to economic opportunities or prestigious positions or in some way excluded, often lack sufficient economic, social and

political power to mount a counter-attack and find themselves in a marginal position or even forced to withdraw from the community (p. 42), reverberated in 2012. After being “cut down to size” and constrained in their attempts to add value to the town (Berta), most of the late middle-aged women retreated into the solitude of their own homes, where they remained in, but not of, the community. Two of the women (Barb; Linda) were trapped economically as well, with few employment prospects and very limited personal savings.

To review: In spite of their actively reactive and proactive resilience responses, a trajectory of personal growth honed by lifetime of adversity and disadvantage, and a commitment to *kick-start* their lives in the town, nearly all of the late middle-aged women were systematically excluded from fully participating and contributing to the community by persistent and restrictive rural social norms and values. The gender/singleness and newcomer/outsider dyads (social positions) facilitate the processes of marginalisation, isolation, and exclusion to repress and oppress the agency (social positioning) and resiliency of the late middle-aged women. For these women, resilience equates to endurance (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012, p. 104). Deprived of a fulfilling social role, and stymied by a negative social identity, the women were socially isolated—in effect, boxed out of the town. The complementary analysis (Chapter five) indicates that these intersecting social forces also affect the older old women by boxing them into a restricted social identity and role (social position), and constraining their resilience responses (social positioning) and profiles.

At this point, the study has investigated the interrelations between the community and the older old, and the late middle-aged women respectively. However, it is not yet

known how the two cohorts of women interact with each other. Their mutual positionality is explored in the next section.

7.4 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

From Chapter three, Section 3.4.2.3, positionality refers to the dynamic interface of structure (social position) and agency (social positioning) (Anthias, 2008, p. 15).

Positionality also enables an insight into iniquitous power relations, and how they intersect to shape the experiences of groups in different ways (Andersen & Hill Collins, 2013, pp. 7-8).

Previous sections also demonstrated that the community functions like a sieve, imparting different degrees of belonging to residents based on their social position and social positioning (social identity and role). In terms of social position, the intersection of age, gender, marital, and outsider status reveals that there has been little substantive alteration in the status of older women in the town since Dempsey's study. The corresponding social positioning of both cohorts of women show that while the late middle-aged women are labelled with a derogatory social identity, they are denied a social role by the community; whereas the local, older old women lack a social identity (they are invisible), but they are still expected to fulfil a useful social role. These oppositional identities and roles are useful points of reference from which to examine the women's cross-cohort positionality. This is then contextualised to the women's resiliency.

7.4.1 Positionality of both cohorts of women in the community. Chapter five posits the positionality of the older old women as successfully adapting to their new circumstances in the town. Although the women are socially invisible with a limited social role, they are insiders and belong in the community by virtue of being locals. As a

result, the older old women have a vested interest in perpetuating the status quo, where: “Fitting in rather than challenging local mores is the price to pay for feeling a part of things” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 314).

But if their positionality in the local hierarchy is compromised, as in the arrival of the late middle-aged women, these older old women spring into action to conserve their social functionality, and by association, their value to the town. For example, some of the older old widows had formed new partnerships with older local men: “They’ve been friends in groups when they were young, and they’ve both lost a partner and they get together later on” (Glenys, informal interview), and even though all of the late middle-aged women (except Alice) disavowed any interest in pursuing further romantic relationships, these younger women were still perceived as a threat (Berta). The older old women were equally protective of their close, and closed, social networks (cliques), and in extreme situations, will mount a vicious and concerted attack on outsiders who are trying to gain acceptance in them (Dempsey, 1990, p. 314).

Unsurprisingly, this defensive stance was viewed by the late middle-aged women as judgemental (Berta), prejudicial (Linda), vindictive: “I couldn’t believe how vindictive country women can be, very, very vindictive...the women, you know, are so nasty and I only ever found that in the country” (Barb), and for Ruth, an impediment to progress:

The oldest ‘locals’ can’t see this because they’re too busy protecting their heritage...It’s the new generations like me who want to see this town prosper. The oldies don’t know one way or the other – they just live here and accept what their ‘local’ [media] tells them.

While the antagonistic relations between the two cohorts of older women in the community are exemplified by Ruth's denunciation of Edna: "[Public opinion] is controlled by a 95 year old woman who inherited the office from her father. Any inappropriate comment is censored", they also exposed an apparent paradox. Rather than lauding Edna for her activism against gender inequality, the late middle-aged women yielded to the widely held opinion that Edna was too powerful, and did not know her place as an older women in the town:

In this town, you'd have to go and see Edna, they all go and see Edna...she's very hard to please...she's a little bit restrictive, if she's in favour of it, you'll get a lot of attention, but if she isn't, she's not interested. So it comes down to personal view. (Berta)

(As indicated in Section 7.3.2.1, Edna was almost unanimously disliked in the town, to the extent that when the researcher encountered the only resident (Grace) who claimed Edna as a friend, Grace's positive comment was initially disregarded as being facetious.) Despite Ruth's criticism of Edna as obstructing progress in the town, they actually shared an identical commitment: "To see this town prosper, not see it die" (Ruth), and "It's my town...and I don't want to see it die" (Edna). Ruth's misperception underscores the extent to which the late middle-aged women had assimilated the community agenda of marginalising the older old women. In actuality, the late middle-aged women were subscribing to local structures that specify older single women as subservient and inferior.

The late middle-aged women also attempted to advance their poor social standing (Section 7.3.2.2) by comparing themselves to a still lower group, the ferals (Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.3):

Wyn: It's the young ones that...pull the wool over your eyes.

Barb: They move to the town and apply for the dole, they know that there's no work here [so] I'm pretty safe aren't I?

while simultaneously claiming parity with the virtues attributed to the older generation:

Wyn: There's not the aged people coming [to the De Paul welfare office] because they're too proud, they don't come and ask, no matter how hard they're battling.

Chapter six documented the financial struggle of some of the late middle-aged women (Barb and Linda in particular), and their refusal to *milk the system*. Not only does this resistance exemplify the women's personal integrity (Chapter six, Section 6.4.1.1), it is an indirect affirmation of their perceived superiority over the other newcomers. (Young welfare recipients were specifically mentioned by six of the 14 late middle-aged women, but only one of the older old women. If the older old cohort referred to the town's youth at all, it was predominantly in relation to the lack of employment opportunities for local young people.)

On the surface, the social relations between the two cohorts of women represent a volatile tension around positionality: The older old women are intent on preserving their "way" (Berta), and hence their social role and their value to town; whereas the younger women are trying to establish a more favourable social identity for themselves in contradistinction to the older old women and younger unemployed people. As such, these intersections are a portal into some subtle changes in the women's resilience.

Resilience in both cohorts of women has been discussed in Chapters five and six, while the historical, cultural, and social impacts of the community on the women's

resiliency are described in the preceding sections of this chapter. These perspectives are now merged to form a composite of this intersectional relationship.

Overall, the historical and cultural interplay of structural (social positions) and agentic (social positioning) factors that contribute to older women's belonging to or exclusion from the community are relatively static. Contrary to the recent demographic, political, and economic changes affecting rural Australia, the town's traditional sociocultural structures, and the dominance of men in most positions of influence and authority, continue to operate in all strata of the community. Dempsey (1992, pp. 170, 175) attributed this patriarchal inequality to a progressive and systematic oppression, subordination, and exploitation of women by men, but in the present study, it is a combination of these ingrained structures, especially martial and outsider status, age, and gender, that intersect to suppress and repress the older old women, and repel and exclude the late middle-aged women.

These sociocultural structures (social positions) act as community gatekeepers to constrain the social positioning (agency) of residents according to a hierarchy of belonging. Even though nearly all of the older old women are local, their marginalised social position effectively disempowers them, and results in a limited and derivative social identity, yet requires that they retain their social and civic function in society. Conversely, since most of the late middle-aged women are regarded as outsiders and undesirables, they are prevented from fully participating and contributing to the community, and consequently withdraw. The older old women are locked in, and the late middle-aged women locked out, by their positionality in the town.

In this milieu, where social position (structure) is a significant shaper of social positioning (agency), it is no surprise that the women's predominant resilience profiles reflect these temporal and situational relations: the pragmatic realistic profile of the older old women, and the arrested growth, truncated, profile in the case of the late middle-aged women. Here, the older old women minimise and accept their lot in life, and for them, resilience is a reactive response to maintain and regain equilibrium; while for the late middle-aged women who are marginalised by the community, resilience equates to the courage to persevere (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012, p. 104).

Nonetheless, small ripples in this landscape are discernable. When the older old women perceived their social role to be under threat from the late middle-aged women, they mounted a concerted campaign to protect their *turf*. This activity in itself was not exceptional (Dempsey, 1992, pp. 175-178), but it differed from previous encounters in that the older old women were standing up for their positionality as older women, rather than co-opting the men's agenda of ensuring that all women's behaviour conformed to proscribed social and community norms (Dempsey, 1992, p. 260). Instead of staying in the background and maintaining the (structural) status quo, these women were maintaining their (agentic) status quo. This personal and purposeful action moved beyond the older old women's characteristically passively reactive response to a crisis (Chapter five, Section 5.4.4), and trends towards the forthright anomalous resilience responses of Jean and Edna (Chapter five, Section 5.5.3.1).

Similarly, the late middle-aged women were motivated to salvage their social identity. Most of these women were perceived as interlopers in the town, and excluded from freely engaging in community life. When faced with this unfamiliar and restrictive

barrier of local sociocultural traditions, customs, and values, the women's lifelong experience of confronting challenges through an actively agentic pattern of resilience (Chapter six, Section 6.4.2) failed. As newcomers who did not know and/or socialise with any of their peers, and where individual activism incurred considerable personal cost (represented by Gerts's blatant defiance in Section 7.3.2.2), these women lacked leverage to challenge the community's strongly ingrained structures. With limited options, they withdrew, and became isolated within their individual environments. By intentionally positioning themselves against the older old women and the ferals, they signalled an emerging awareness of the town's social hierarchy—a critical first step in understanding and relating to the local community and rural environment. It also mapped a potential way to re-engage with the community without compromising their agency, as in Nola's adaptive profile of resilience (Chapter six, Section 6.5.3.2).

To sum up: Two nascent trends relating to the intersection of the women's resilience and positionality in the community are evident. Firstly, the women's anomalous resilience responses and profiles seem to offer a tentative pathway of change for each cohort; and secondly, the predominant patterns of resilience appear to be flipping, with the older old women becoming more proactively agentic, and the late middle-aged women more realistically pragmatic in their respective resilience responses and profiles. As yet, it is too early to predict if these very rudimentary turns will make a significant and/or lasting impact on the town's sociocultural structures and traditions. However, at the very least, these shifts in the women's positionality point to the possibility of change in a community that is “stuck in the past” (Phillip, key informant).

These findings are examined in the context of the related literature in the following chapter.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

The literature review in Chapter two proposed that resilience is a dynamic, relational process involving complex person and environment interactions, over time, in response to crises, adversity and change (Section 2.1.4). This working definition subsequently informed the broad aim of this study: To explore the developmental trajectories of resilience in two cohorts of older, single women, living on their own, in a small community in rural Australia, with respect to the stand alone, and intersecting effects of environment, and person related contributors, temporal processes, and situational relations.

As advocated by Bristow and Healy (2014, pp. 932-933), the previous chapters foreground the contextual components of resilience, namely: the impact of the environment related characteristics of resilience in Chapter four; the person related contributors to resilience in Chapters five and six; and their symbiotic interdependencies in Chapter seven. In response to the challenge of linking resilience to space and time (Pendall et al., 2010, pp. 79-80), this chapter draws out the literature associated with the separate and combined effects of temporal processes, and situational relations, across the person, environment, and resilience nexus. It is structured in a progressive sequence: Section one prioritises temporal processes by examining the historical and cultural development of the community, and the life course trajectories of the older, single women, in terms of how their individual and combined resiliency unfolds; the second section centres on situational relations, and describes the specific and collective, environment (community), person, and person and community, resilience responses to

threats, crises, adversity, and change; section three details the independent, and interdependent impact of temporal processes, and situational relations on the resilience profiles of the community, and both cohorts of older, single women; and an integrative review (Section four) interprets, and cross-references these findings in the form of a general discussion to conclude the chapter.

Since the purpose of the study is exploratory rather than confirmatory, this chapter is designed to be intentionally expansive to provide as much referential information as possible; strengthen or refute the results; tease out related issues; and promote further analyses and discourse. Relevant literature is inserted into discussion as applicable and relevant.

8.1 Temporal Processes

For Lyon and Parkins (2013, p. 544): “Time and history are critically important dimensions of resilience”. Accordingly, this section investigates the specific and integrated influence of the historical and cultural development of the community, and the life course trajectories of the older women, in relation to the development of resilience.

8.1.1 Temporal processes, and the environment related contributors to resilience. The environment related contributors to resilience were extensively referenced, and supported by relevant literature and statistical data in Chapter four and Table 6 (Appendix B.1.1). This section then, consists of a brief, contextual synopsis of the findings as a foundation for the subsequent discussions.

European discovery of the area occurred in the early 1800’s, rapidly followed by the first squatters claiming large land runs. A focal township, stimulated by the gold rush, gradually evolved and expanded from the 1850’s. It is suggested that the early (male)

leaders (miners and squatters) of this arbitrarily self-governing town formed a long-standing influential and dominant regional power base that prefaced the future character and traditions of the community and its relations with the neighbouring towns.

Dempsey's (1990, 1992) 17-year long study of the community strengthened this perspective. During this period, residents maintained their belief in the town's superiority and dominance over the neighbouring area, by extolling its strong sense of community, and physical and historical assets (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 40-41). The town also boasted a more diversified economy (agriculture, retail business, and small scale manufacturing); it was the centre of local government, hosted many regional public services, and benefited from a larger population base than the adjacent towns.

From the 1950's, the town's population decreased, with fewer than 2,500 residents in 2012. This slow decline signals the major structural changes (Connell & Dufty-Jones, 2014) that have occurred in the town in the two decades since Dempsey's study, leading to the collapse of many of the town's businesses, closure of public institutions, and the town registering the lowest SEIFA disadvantage index of the surrounding region.

Nevertheless, the town was able to capitalise on its locational advantage, and political and socioeconomic legacy, to survive these changes. This response represents a "withstanding force" (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 8)—in effect, survival by stagnation. While the smaller, neighbouring communities actively engaged with the sociodemographic transitions (Wilson, 2015), structural reforms (Brett, 2007), and environmental change (Shervall & Askew, 2012; Steffen, 2015) impacting rural Australia (Saunders & Wong, 2014, pp. 145, 148), this town attempted to restore its position as the lead economic and service centre in the region. As a result, it cultivated a bouncing back,

reactive type of resilience response to crises and adversity, rather the proactive action promoted in the rural and community resiliency literature.

8.1.2 Temporal processes, and the person related contributors to resilience.

Two groups of single, older women lived in the town in 2012; older old (80 years and over), local widows who had retired into the town from neighbouring farms, and the late middle-aged, divorced C-changers. Despite these sociodemographic differences, both cohorts of women experienced multiple and accumulated adversity across their lives: a layering of hardships, where crises tend to co-occur and successively replace one another (Shrira & Litwin, 2014, p. 953), and/or accrue over time. These life course trajectories conform to the model of cumulative advantage/disadvantage proposed by Dannefer (2003), in that “social processes allow for the accumulation of advantages over the life course for some, but the accretion of disadvantages for others” (Phillipson, 2013, p. 42). When contextualised to older age, the relational effect of these temporal processes is contested: For Shrira and Litwin (2014), “cumulative adversity shapes functioning in old age and may lead to a hastening ageing process” (p. 962), a negative effect; while Burton-Jeangros and Zimmermann-Sloutskis (2014) argue that “women with limited resources are better able to cope with ageing than others” (p. 23) in some circumstances. These perspectives are explored later in this chapter, but at this point, it is important to acknowledge both the depth, and breadth of the women’s disadvantage—none of the late middle-aged women, and only three of the older old women experienced comfortable lives.

As recorded in Chapter five, the life trajectory of the majority of the older old women followed a consistent pattern: a relatively carefree, idyllic childhood; transition to

adulthood (marriage) imposed by World War Two; a turbulent midlife, punctuated by individual adversity and crises; and a second major change consisting of retirement into town. Conversely, the life course of late middle-aged women was more variable. Childhood for this group was marked by personal and social rejection. In their mid to late teens, the women actively rebelled against this disadvantage, which led to a series of failed relationships. The women's adult years were characterised by recurrent personal and social crises, in particular, severe financial distress. However, in their late middle age, they elected to relocate to the town to make a new start in their lives (Boldy, Grenade, Lewin, Karol & Burton, 2011, 2013).

Until this age related retirement, the challenges faced by older old women were largely due to external forces, including war (Sixsmith, Sixsmith, Callender & Corr, 2014), and drought (Alston, 2006), whereas the late middle-aged women were affected by interpersonal and relationship difficulties such as marital breakdown (Gray, de Vaus, Qu & Stanton, 2010). Both cohorts of women experienced a “weathering” effect (Foster, Hagan & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Schafer & Shippee, 2010, p. 246) related to the psychosocial uncertainty of their specific situations; for instance, the effect of environmental change (Albrecht et al., 2007; Alston, 2011; Boetto & McKinnon, 2013, p. 240) on rural lifestyles for the older old women, and the tension associated with the late middle-aged women's single status (Addie & Brownlow, 2014; Portacolone, 2013). “Off-time transitions” (Schafer & Shippee, 2010, p. 259), in this study, the untimely death of a parent or child, also impacted each group.

Moving to the town was a voluntary and agentic choice for the younger cohort, but imposed on the older old women in keeping with local, societal expectations.

Although the older old women initially associated this new environment with a profound sense of personal loss, over time they successfully adjusted to their new circumstances. On the other hand, the late middle-aged women's hope for a better future disintegrated when met with the rural sociocultural barriers imposed by the community. These newcomers subsequently disengaged from participating in, and contributing to, the town's social life.

8.1.3 Temporal processes, and the environment, and person related

contributors to resilience. Even though the town's political and socioeconomic standing was in decline, many of the older old women continued to reaffirm its primacy over the surrounding region. The women's loyalty was buoyed up by the town's age-friendly facilities, and the availability of public, private, and community services (Keating et al., 2013; Menec et al., 2015a, 2015b; Novek & Menec, 2014; Spina & Menec, 2015). Unexpectedly, the late middle-aged women also rated the town's environmental setting and its provision of amenities favourably, both in terms of their immediate requirements, and future needs.

Here, the women's endorsement of the town's infrastructure, services, and physical liveability is perhaps paradoxical, since the literature suggests that older women are increasingly disproportionate users of these material resources (Phillipson, 2013, p. 82). This supposition is reinforced by two broad trends in Australian society: first, the association of later life with institutional care (Nola; Baldwin, Stephens, Sharp & Kelly, 2013); and second, the expanding demographic profile of ageing women in rural areas (Winterton & Warburton, 2011). While women's life expectancy generally exceeds that of men, this "fourth age" (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010) is typically defined by impaired

functionality, declining health, and frailty (Grenier & Phillipson, 2013, pp. 57-58), with a concomitantly higher demand for support services (Russell, 2007, pp. 187-188). For example, Conlon, Timonen, Carney, and Scharf (2014) found that older Irish women with higher incomes are “breaking the chain of obligation” (p. 745) to release close female family members from providing elder kin care. These changing role expectations indicate that care in later life will be met through a combination of state and private services.

In small Australian towns, many older women feel impelled to serve their community (Davis et al., 2012), and effectively work for their age related, means tested entitlements, via extensive, unpaid, volunteer commitments to charitable organisations such as Meals on Wheels. They also organise fund-raising activities to supplement the finances of local hospitals, schools, and similar community-based facilities (Hodgkin, 2012). According to Davis et al. (2012, pp. 343-344), reciprocity, a process of social exchange, is common in rural Australia. This practice is a significant complement to the formal provision of rural social services, but in the study town, the older old women’s contribution was largely taken-for-granted and under-recognised (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2005). Lui, Warburton, Winterton, and Bartlett (2011) posit that this:

Active social and economic engagement...sets a contribution to the economy as a normative ideal to which older people should aspire. This form of age management strategy may unintentionally devalue and stigmatise those seniors who cannot [or choose not to] engage in such activity. (p. 271)

Additional exclusionary practices marginalise the late middle-aged women. Together with the ferals, these C-change women are unwanted and unwelcome in the community: “When newcomers are not integrated into the community, it may lead to

exploitation and exclusion due to stigmatic labels” (Brown, Forsyth & Berthelot, 2014, p. 219). The intentions of these C-changers differ from amenity migrants and/or second (recreational) homeowners in rural areas (McKinlay & McVittie, 2007), but the women were still subject to suspicion and distrust:

There is also a tendency to refer to retirement migrants as a generalised ‘other’...this is problematic, as retirement migrants consistently referred to themselves as rural and/or ‘local’ despite not fitting the dominant ideology of what a local should represent, and these differing viewpoints may potentially cause community conflict and threaten social connectivity. (Winterton & Warburton, 2012a, p. 336)

This (mis)perception belies the complex social dynamics of rural communities and their relationship with newcomers (Pugh & Cheers, 2010). It is also a telling indictment of the stubborn and residual persistence of local, cultural norms and values.

Another widely held misconception in rural Australia concerns the assumption that any access to government and/or charitable handouts is both unearned and undeserved. Again, this attitude is largely unfounded in the case of the late middle-aged women. To receive job-seeker benefits, Australians, aged 55 years and over, are required to complete a minimum of 30 community-based, volunteer hours per fortnight. Fulfilling this obligation is often difficult in small rural towns, where opportunities are limited and/or unavailable to outsiders. In addition, some late middle-aged women do not qualify for this allowance, and as they are also ineligible for the aged pension, they are financially at risk. (Refer to Chapter two, Section 2.2.2 for a review of poverty in older, single, Australian women, and Reig (2001) for a corresponding analysis in the USA.)

The impact of these restrictive attitudes towards both cohorts of women is substantial. However, the most pervasive discriminatory force operating in the town is gender. Risman (2004, p. 431) locates gender on same analytical plane as economics and politics. For her, gender is a socially constructed stratification system, deeply embedded in society (pp. 430, 432), as in Australian rurality (Bennett, 2004, pp. 147-148; Liepins, 2000, pp. 613-615)—ironically termed the “resilience of patriarchal structures” by Bennett (2004, p. 163). Chapter seven shows that the rural women have been subjected to systematic gender marginalisation, throughout historical time, and across all community levels. Thus, in addition to the person and environment related hardship experienced throughout their lives, these women were relegated to a subordinate standing by men, and a secondary social status in the community.

As such, this inequity disabuses the town ideology of “one big happy family” (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 3, 33), where small, closely-knit communities are purported to enhance quality of life (Gattino, De Piccoli, Fassio & Rollero, 2013), health (Jones, Heim, Hunter & Ellaway, 2014, p. 191), well-being (Mair & Thivierge-Rikard, 2010), and ageing (Davis et al., 2012). Moreover, the mutual concerns and shared values inherent in (many) small towns create an attitude of bonding that characterises resilient communities (Mowbray et al., 2007, p. 670; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008, p. 139), as well as supporting the development of adaptive capacities (Cox & Perry, 2011, p. 396; Winterton & Warburton, 2012b, p. 14). Duff (2011) too, envisages these enabling places as “composed of diverse actor-networks, facilitating access to enabling resources and supporting the development of novel agencies or capacities” (p. 149). In this context, the town provides age-enabling resources, but then

selectively partitions their access, and rations their use, according to perceived social value and worth (Healy, Haynes & Hampshire, 2007, p. 112).

Duff (2011) also recognises a corollary to enabling places: “Places may have diverse effects, sometimes enabling, sometimes indifferent and sometimes detrimental or even harmful” (p. 155). If regulative, normative, and institutional factors co-function to inhibit adaptive capacities, and if powerful elites oppose adaptation processes that they perceive as detrimental to their interests (Bristow & Healy 2014, p. 932), then community and individual capability and agency (resiliency) (Berkes & Ross, 2013, p. 16) is severely curtailed. For instance, national government shapes and controls the scope, levels of autonomy, and resources that are integral to resilience at a regional and local scale (Pike, Dawley & Tomaney, 2010, pp. 66-67). The town activates these national, rural, and local, cultural and structural norms (Pakulski & Tranter, 2000, p. 209) to marginalise older women based on gender, age and singleness (collectively), and outsider status for the late middle-aged cohort. These prejudicial attitudes and restrictive practices (Lui, Warburton, Winterton & Bartlett, 2011, p. 269) are employed by the dominant forces in the community, in spite of both groups of women’s resiliency in surmounting a lifetime of disadvantage.

In brief: the developmental trajectories of the town and older women are oppositional. The town has benefited from an historical and cultural position of political, social, and economic prestige and power until recently. It also attracted new in-migration, albeit of a non-preferred type, thereby conferring the town with a significant sociodemographic advantage over the neighbouring rural communities. By contrast, the life course of the late middle-aged and older old women is personified by multiple

disadvantage and significant personal and external hardship. Relocation into the town signalled a further challenge for both cohorts of women, wherein the situational disruption of moving was augmented by iniquitous, rural, and local, assumptions, expectations, and behaviours.

Where favourable biophysical assets, and social, affective, and material resources can enable community and/or individual resilience (Duff, 2011; Mowbray et al., 2007, p. 670), this town offers an age-friendly infrastructure, but then constrains its utility for the older women through discriminatory sociocultural customs. Even though these women demonstrate a lifelong capability to overcome adversity, the community is passively indifferent, or perhaps even actively disabling of the women's capacity to respond to crises and change.

These situational relations are reviewed in the next section.

8.2 Situational Relations

This section discusses the independent, and combined, community (environment related) and individual (person related) resilience responses to threats, crises, adversity, and change.

8.2.1 Situational relations, and the environment related contributors to resilience. Throughout most of its history, the town remained largely sheltered from the large political and economic shifts (Weller & O'Neill, 2014), and the environmental crises that affected the surrounding agricultural region. Over the past 15 years, this steady state was disrupted by a shrinking, and highly competitive, global market; coupled with a relentless drought. To compensate, farms increased in size, and as young people moved to the city for work, and older people relocated into the town to retire, the downward spiral

of rural depopulation accelerated. The town's reaction to these (selected) situational changes is cued by Lazarus (2014): "Strategies adopted by people to build resilience are related to social and economic systems, infrastructure, institutions and organisations that determine how flexible a community is when responding to an event" (p. 645).

8.2.1.1 Response to sociodemographic change. As observed previously, the town discounted the C-change (late middle-aged women) and retirement (older-old women) residents in favour of traditional family in-migration. This strategy was predicated on a bond of reciprocity (Brown et al., 2014, p. 228), whereby a young couple with children were expected to develop closer ties to the town, put down roots, and contribute to local economy. Although this rationale is supported by Coulter (2013, p. 1958) who found that school-age children constitute a life course tie that lessens families' desire move from a location, it also points to a paradox in that divorce and separation are the primary triggers of in-migrant moves to a community in Australia, rather than young families (Clark, 2013, pp. 328, 331-332).

A fortuitous convergence of biophysical and economic assets (Florida, Mellander & Stolarick, 2011) fostered the town's appeal to in-migrants, namely, an attractive natural setting (Matarrita-Cascante, Stedman & Luloff, 2010, pp. 212-213), and a surfeit of cheap housing stock (Stockdale & McLeod, 2013, p. 81). These advantages allowed the town to minimise some of the disadvantages often associated with rural and remote living (Vinson, Rawsthorne & Cooper, 2007), in addition to circumventing the presumption of offering financial incentives to attract and retain residents in regional Australia (Nicholas & Shah, 2014).

8.2.1.2 Response to structural changes. The lasting and exponential impact of the recent catastrophic drought on rural Australia is documented in Chapter four, and the Birchip Cropping Group (2008), Rickards (2012), and Steffen (2015) among others. Notwithstanding the deleterious impact of the “Millennium Drought” (van Dijk et al., 2013), Bryant and Garnham (2013), and Hall (2005) proposed that the dominant image of drought stress, namely “‘rugged’, ‘self-reliant’ rural families (‘men and women of the bush’) now pushed to the brink of hopelessness by an abnormal and overwhelming adversity” (Hall, 2005, p. 13), masks longstanding and deeper problems. Hall delineates these underlying social issues as: the erosion of family and social support in ageing rural communities; recurrent financial disruptions and persistent economic hardship; dissonance caused by repositioning of gender roles, particularly where there are strong traditional family values; and social isolation coupled with structural deficits. In this situation, “a discourse of chronic rural disadvantage is more useful for understanding people’s suffering” (Hall, 2005, p. 3). The town is reluctant to recognise and/or address these social issues, as evidenced in Chapter four.

Because of the “politics of place” (Paniagua, 2014, p. 51), namely, a providential geophysical setting that supported agricultural diversification (Simmie & Martin, 2010, p. 31), and a propitious reserve capacity accrued from its previous privileged position in the region, the town also remained relatively immune to the recent demographic, political, and economic changes in rural Australia. While these advantages did not prevent the town from losing its seat of local government, and the consolidation and/or closure of civic departments and businesses, they translated into more of a political slight and reputational affront, rather than an economic disadvantage. Conversely, the neighbouring smaller

towns were deprived of essential services and/or forced to accept a substandard provision in the aftermath of the drought, and these structural reforms (Gray, Oss-Emer & Sheng, 2014).

As yet, the town has not been unduly challenged by these situations; its tipping point has not been exceeded, and its inherent elasticity to resist change remains patent. According to Simmie and Martin (2010, pp. 31-32), this response models a locked in developmental path. In terms of resilience, there are two types of lock-in: a positive attribute of resilience where a community is able to withstand an external shock and maintain its developmental trajectory; and alternatively, a negative attribute when a path-dependent lock-in retards a region's adaptation to shock and undermines its resiliency. A negative lock-in is an ex-post judgement that is evident after a shock has occurred (p. 32). Here, the town's response to outside influences and structural challenges includes elements from each lock-in trajectory, and by association, its resiliency. With respect to Simmie and Martin's classification, the town's default resilience response, to maintain the status quo, denotes negative resilience; yet by withstanding crises and adversity, the town also depicts positive resilience.

This conceptual fuzziness is possibly due to the multiple ways that resilience is represented in the literature: "Resilience is not only measured by how quickly a social-ecological system recovers [bounces back], but also the system's ability to learn from, cope with and adapt to disturbances, and thus recover to a new, less vulnerable equilibrium condition [transform]" (Schmidt & Garland, 2012, p. 438). Walker, Holling, Carpenter, and Kinzig (2004) attempt to defuse the "tension...between maintaining...a desired current configuration in the face of known (and some unknown) shocks, and

simultaneously building capacity for transformability, should it be needed” (p. 6) by proposing that this dialectic rests on the intersection of four factors: latitude, the maximum amount of change that can be tolerated before recovery is not achievable; resistance, the difficulty (or ease) of implementing change; precariousness, the difference between the current state and the threshold of change; and panarchy, the overarching influence of externalities across time and space, for example, political restructuring, market dynamics and/or global climate change (pp. 2-3). Complementary research by Schmidt and Garland (2012) contributes an additional dimension to this perspective. Building on earlier work by Dovers and Handmer (1992), and Handmer and Dovers (1996), they developed a typology of community-based resilience responses: Reactive communities “aim to strengthen the status quo and resist change...and are likely to deny problems until too late [while] a proactively resilient community...accepts change and adapts to new conditions” (p. 438). A third type, the openly adaptable resilience response or dynamic resiliency (Sánchez-Zamora, Gallardo-Cobos & Ceña-Delgado, 2014, p. 14), occurs when a community demonstrates flexibility, and a willingness to adopt new principles and institutional structures in anticipation of potential threats (Handmer & Dovers, 1996, pp. 501-504).

Based on these designations, the town presents as a reactive community that resists change, and fails to recognise and/or address challenges in a timely manner (Schmidt & Garland, 2012, p. 438).

8.2.2 Situational relations, and the person related contributors to resilience.

Chapter five and Chapter six revealed that both cohorts of older women have been exposed to significant hardship across their life trajectories. In this section, their personal

responses to situational crises and adversity are cross-referenced with the attributes of resilience in later life extracted from the literature, and then channelled into characteristic resilience responses.

8.2.2.1 Older old women. Recent research on the enduring life course advantages of a happy childhood (Machielse & Hortulanus, 2013, p. 128) add credence to the older old women's juxtaposition of idyllic childhoods with the relative absence of hardship until their adult years. But from adulthood, the women's lives were disrupted by repeated crises, to be met by a tenacious determination to restore equilibrium. As such, the women adopted a bouncing back type of response to adversity, thereby cultivating a passively reactive response to life crises and challenges. Over time, these restorative-style responses became habituated, resulting in the older old women's gradual accommodation to their new circumstances on their retirement in the town.

Three women defied this acculturated adaptive response pattern with their proactive action to overcome personal, social, and societal limitations.

All of the attributes of resilience in later life extracted from the literature were present in the accounts of these older old women. They were also supplemented by new attributes—inner strength, personal integrity and courage, and self-reflection. However, the expression of these attributes was diluted, and suppressed, by outside structural factors.

These muting effects promote and/or reinforce the passively reactive type of resiliency response portrayed by most of these women throughout their lives, for example, the situational responses of Australian rural women to drought. Narratives of “Enduring Drought Then Coping With Climate Change” (Anderson, 2009) personified rural women's lived experiences and local resolve (Anderson, 2009, 2008). The women's

reactions were also shaped by the gendered discourses of family farming, and self-reliance (Alston, 2006, p. 159): “the need to constantly reaffirm tradition and change as preconditions for optimism and ‘resiliency’” (Anderson, 2009, p. 15). As a result, the drought experiences of these women are significantly under-recognised, and under-reported (Alston, 2006, pp. 158-159); the women are reluctant to share the physical and emotional costs of being “locked into” these expected, subordinate, and restricted roles (Alston, 2006, pp. 161-167; Logan & Ranzijn, 2009).

This reticence, and an unwillingness to ruminate on traumatic experiences (Chapter four, Section 4.4.1.3; Feldman & Howie, 2009, p. 633; Sartore et al., 2008, p. 10), may partially explain the older old women’s relatively impersonal references to the drought in the study. Drought was represented as an inconvenience rather than devastation and extreme deprivation; for instance, the acute shortage of water was related to public parks and residential gardens, instead of farmer’s crops and stock. Cox and Perry (2011) suggest that this “discursive construction...tends to individualise and privatise the psychological and emotional distress associated with disasters, contributing to a social denial of the depth and duration of survivors distress (sequestering of suffering)” (p. 408). Similarly, “agrarian values” (Judd et al., 2006), a bundle of attributes related to stoicism and self-efficacy—characteristics of resiliency, also limits disclosure and help seeking.

8.2.2.2 Late middle-aged women. In response to the accumulated disadvantage of their early and adult years, the late middle-aged women displayed an actively reactive pattern that was shaped by specific contexts and individual situations. When the women

elected to move to the town, they enacted proactive action to improve their futures, only to have this agentic initiative countermanded by local customs.

These women also embodied the resilience attributes identified in the literature. The salience of each attribute varied according to the interplay of push and pull factors, as the women reactively and proactively attempted to positively influence the direction of their life course. Consequently, their resilience responses were in flux; modified by the relative leverage of personal qualities, structural externalities, and/or their interaction. For example, the late middle-aged women's realisation of a new beginning in the town was hampered by their age, gender, singleness, and newcomer status, in addition to the embedded restrictive, rural, sociocultural norms. Thus, the most prevalent resilience response in this cohort of women was an actively reactive, proactive, withdrawal sequence.

As for the older old women, three of these late middle-aged women exhibited anomalous resilience responses. They deliberately and determinedly pursued a singular goal over their lifetime in defiance of personal and structural barriers, and setbacks.

It is clear that both temporal and situational contexts shape the resilience responses of each cohort of older women. The theory and literature-led attributes of resilience in later life are present in the older old and late middle-aged women's accounts, albeit with different valences depending on the interaction of time, place, and person. In addition, the additional attributes of resilience (inner strength, courage, personal integrity, and self-reflection) uncovered in this study are common to both cohorts, as are the community-based obstacles created by age, gender, singleness, and outsider status.

Paralleling an earlier study of a small Australian town by Warner-Smith and Brown (2002), the women's resiliency is "circumscribed by the 'complex mosaic' of [situational relations] which construct and are constructed by the places [rural] women inhabit" (p. 40). Both cohorts of older women demonstrate resilient responses to crises and adversity that are re/calibrated throughout their lifetimes, while the town's response to situated challenges and structural changes (Simmie & Martin, 2010, p. 42) is largely inert (Winterton & Warburton, 2012b, p. 14). This conflicting situation invites a closer examination of the interplay between the person and the environment in terms of resilience.

8.2.3 Situational relations, and the environment, and person related contributors to resilience. When confronted with crises and change, the town defaults to its traditional practices. These ingrained structures and sociocultural behaviours have a formidable impact on the lives of the older women: for the older old, a muting of their resilience responses; and for the late middle-aged women, an erosion of their fresh start.

The older old women's retirement into the town precipitated a state of "disequilibrium" (Henning, 2011, p. 448) due to converging personal and social changes. In addition to the enforced separation from their farming community (Bennett, 2004, p. 156), these women were subjected to further disruptions associated with their new residential context, ageing, and widowhood. Local social norms also came into play: When a woman's identity and status in the community is inextricably linked to being a functional wife and mother, then elderly widows are at risk of becoming invisible. And where social roles rest on active involvement and contribution to the town, any loss of capacity is associated with a reduction of value to the community. Hence, the older old

women have a strong imperative to create and maintain a “public social life” (Dempsey, 1990, p. 73); they are impelled to cultivate a persona of independence, self-sufficiency, and coping at all costs (Alston, 2006, p. 168).

This situation was reversed for the late middle-aged women. Instead of fulfilling their goal to contribute to the community, these women were confronted with a set of sociocultural proscriptions that dictated the type and degree of participatory involvement available to them. These restrictions blocked the women’s access to, and engagement with most voluntary and recreational organisations in the town, effectively depriving them of a social role. The community though, was unreserved in assigning the late middle-aged women a social identity. Based on a composite of intersecting newcomer-outsider status, and gender-singleness dyads, these women were designated as marginal within the marginalised (Dempsey, 1990, p.2). As unattached women, they were regarded as sexual deviants who threatened the relationship stability of couples (Warner-Smith & Brown, 2002, p. 52); and affiliated with the ferals, they were perceived as undeserving freeloaders, who depended on town’s social services and charities to resource their livelihood.

Therefore, a combination of locally instigated “interlocking and mutually reinforcing relationships among multiple systems of oppression” (Grollman, 2014, p. 4), predominantly age, gender, marital and outsider status, intersect to marginalise both cohorts of older women. The older old women are socialised into accepting a lifetime’s relegation to societal secondariness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 839). This exclusionary social positioning effectively disempowers the older old women, and strips them of all but a limited and relational social identity, yet requiring that they actively

maintain their civic and charitable role in the town. Conversely, the late middle-aged women grew up during a period that is generally associated with gender equality and greater personal life chances for women (Ozanne, 2009). But when they became residents of the town, the late middle-aged women were deprived of a fulfilling social role, and stymied by a negative social identity. Ultimately, they disengaged from the community.

In essence, the older old women's social positioning (agency) is boxed in by the community, whereas the late middle-aged women are boxed out. These restrictive practices are imposed on both cohorts of women, without regard for their lifetime history of resiliency to personal crises and external adversity. The community also fails to appreciate the women's potential to mitigate the town's naivety in countering global challenges and structural change.

Paradoxically, the women's resilience responses attenuate their marginal standing in the community. As the older old women had been inculcated with local attitudes and values from an early age (Son & Wilson, 2012, p. 474), they were familiar with the normative boundaries prescribing older women's behaviour. Together with their experience in bouncing back from trauma and hardship, this tacit knowledge provided the older old women with an advantage in transiting to town life. Even though the women successfully adapted to their new situations, this *blending in* diminished their presence in the community, and inadvertently contributed to their social invisibility. And while the late middle-aged women were used to responding to personal stress and structural crises, they were not accustomed to rural, cultural traditions. On their relocation to the town, these C-changers were doubly disadvantaged: they were immersed in an unknown situation, and their agentic independence and autonomy was not valued. The women's

subsequent “action crisis” (Brandstätter, Herrmann & Schüler, 2013, p. 1668), and retreat from the community, does not express their typical resiliency to adversity, thereby underscoring the harshness of the community’s exclusionary practices. Here, these social forces repress the late middle-aged women, whereas the older old women succumb to them.

Machielse and Hortulanus (2013, p. 124) propose that new social conditions may be experienced as a burden for older people, and can lead to an intentional or unconscious strategy of docility and passive adjustment. This claim broadly reflects the resilience responses of the older women in the study, but noteworthy differences are evident. For Machielse and Hortulanus, feeling uprooted limits an older person’s capacity to actively take full advantage of a new situation, but after an initial settling-in period, the older old women “just got on with it” (Ada, informal interview), and adjusted to their new life circumstances in the town. The authors also posit that a passive response to change is often accompanied by avoidance behaviour, and, facilitated by the “Matthew effect”³⁰ (p. 128), can result in a retreat from social and societal life, as demonstrated by the late middle-aged cohort. They then suggest that this withdrawal is due to an inability to cope with the increased freedom associated with new social circumstances (p. 124). In this study, the late middle-aged women had grown up in a time of greater freedom for women, experienced a life trajectory of situational change, and intentionally sought newness on their move to the town. Their disassociation from the community was not due to their difficulty dealing with unfamiliar social settings, it was a reaction to the impositions of the local culture. In brief, cause and effect are reversed.

³⁰ The “Mathew Effect” occurs when advantage or disadvantage accumulates; colloquially, “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer”.

Although Machielse and Hortulanus' propositions do not completely represent the older women in the town, they do apply to the town itself. As observed earlier, the town is characterised by passive resistance to change and denial of impending situational challenges. Instead of anticipating and proactively planning for the future, it adopts a disengaged, withholding stance, or "static resilience" (Sánchez-Zamora et al., 2014, p. 14).

A study investigating productive ageing in small rural communities in Australia by Davis et al. (2012) has salience for these situational relations too. The authors examined the linkages between older people's community connectedness, their social and civic engagement, and the sustainability of the community. Many of their results correspond to those of this study: the length of residence is positively correlated with a sense of belonging and attachment to the community; outsiders and newcomers are viewed as interlopers and (mostly) not trusted by long-term residents; and local older old women demonstrate the highest levels of informal social and community involvement, partly because of their long-standing membership in organisations such as the CWA and Probus (pp. 341-344). Overall, older people's participation in social activities was associated with greater community connectedness, and a concomitant positive influence on the sustainability of rural communities (p. 345). But where older women's involvement in the community is selectively rationed as in this study, and since community resilience is anchored by a set of networked adaptive capacities, including "community bonds, roots, and commitments" (Norris et al., 2008, pp.139-140), community competence (Norris et al., 2008, pp. 141-142), and community engagement

(Kulig et al., 2013, pp. 761, 770), then the long-term viability of this community is open to question.

Complementary Canadian research (Gordon & Hattie, 2008) concluded that a cadre of seniors (older residents) not only made a significant contribution to their rural community's ability to survive, but to thrive. While this finding broadly reflects the older old women's voluntary service in the town, it does not convey the bracketing of local sociocultural traditions on this role. As such, the older women's contributions to the town's survival are not recognised (Warner-Smith & Brown, 2002, p. 40), and the community does not acknowledge the women's resource of resilience competencies to guide its ability to thrive. In effect, the women's community involvement is discounted as stereotypical and expected behaviour for the older old locals, and rejected for the late middle-aged newcomers. The implications of these situational relations are explored in the next section.

8.3 Temporal Processes and Situational Relations

This section reviews the interactive effect of temporal processes, and situational relations, on the environment and person related development of resilience profiles for the community, and both cohorts of older women.

8.3.1 Temporal processes, situational relations, and the environment related contributors to resilience. The disparity between the historical portrayal of the town as a decisive political, and socioeconomic leader of the region, and its contemporaneous image of a community with a laissez faire response to situational and structural challenges and change, is marked. And in contrast to the neighbouring towns' proactive responses (Chapter four, Section 4.4.1), the town's resiliency profile is also lacking.

Chapter two, Section 2.1.2.1 specifies that a definitive model of community resilience is evolving. To date, the capacity of a community to adjust to problems and/or threats, its resilience, is purported to rest on a combination of social, political, and economic characteristics. Some authors focus on structural contributors such as social vitality, political efficacy, and economic viability (Buikstra et al., 2010, pp. 977-978; Hudson, 2010), but others favour a more social orientation to community resilience, for instance, social inclusivity, political collectivity, and economic innovation (Wilding, 2011; Mayberry, 2009; McManus et al., 2012). The following discussion integrates these approaches.

Instead of providing “an inclusive...culture that generates a positive and welcoming sense of place” (Wilding, 2011, p. 30), the town marginalises and mistrusts the late middle-aged women (Davis et al., 2012), in line with the friction between amenity and in-migrants, and locals, in rural locations (McKinley & McVittie, 2007; Scott, Carrington & McIntosh, 2011). As a result, it misses an opportunity to capitalise on these women’s intention to add-value to their new community (Hodgkin 2012), and indirectly, stimulate the town’s low SEIFA index ranking. In spite of this empirical evidence of the town’s declining standing in relation to the surrounding region, residents remain convinced of its superior status. They also adopt a *them versus us* blame culture in terms of internal issues, for example, antisocial behaviour is credited to outsiders rather than locals, and external political and economic restructuring, where residents *demonise*, and pit the city against the country (Dempsey, 1990, pp. 37-39).

By comparison, the smaller neighbouring towns share a history of working collaboratively to overcome long-term biophysical and socioeconomic disadvantage

(National Rural Health Alliance, 2013). Their response to these challenges is a collective and active engagement to create new opportunities—implementing an intentional strategy of adjustment, adaptation, and transformation (resiliency) to enhance the sustainability and longevity of their community.

These distinctions are attributed to a variety of reasons. They include the differential historical and cultural origins, developmental trajectories, sense of place and place identity, and relational size of the towns, and translate into appreciably different resilience responses. The adjacent communities are factoring in resiliency by proactively imagining and planning for their futures (Mowbray et al., 2007, p. 670), whereas the sample town continues to draw on its legacy of prestige, power, and wealth to cultivate a culture of survival by stagnation.

This conservative, true and tried strategy is tied to the community's belief that its capacity to withstand and absorb environmental, political, and economic disturbances (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 8; Foster, 2007, pp. 8-9) is both intrinsic and infallible. However, as advised by Walker et al. (2004, p. 7), effective strategies for community resiliency must account for both internal and external changes. And even though the town shows past evidence of robustness (Foster, 2007, p. 9), its limited advance resiliency planning suggests that it will be more vulnerable to the “systematic suite of drivers of disadvantage that underlie remote [areas]” (Maru, Smith, Sparrow, Pinho & Dube, 2014, p 340).

Foster's (2007) classification of regional (community) resilience adds an insightful perspective here. For her, community resilience is comprised of two interconnected types: preparation resilience and performance resilience. These are further

compartmentalised into four variants: Communities that are successful in responding to and recovering from adversity without preparatory readiness are ephemerally resilient; intentionally resilient communities (the ideal type) consciously plan for adversity and respond and recover accordingly; ineffectual resilience occurs when communities anticipate and prepare for disturbances, but then demonstrate an inadequate response and recovery; and neglectful resilience is where communities perform poorly in both preparation and performance (pp. 16-17). Because of its structural reserves and biophysical assets, the study community still matches the ephemeral profile of resilience. Nevertheless, this previously successful response to adversity and change is faltering, and the town is veering towards the poor preparation, poor performance profile of neglectful resilience.

Morrow (2008, p. 12) offers a different interpretation of community resilience: a community's resiliency is a function of its social vulnerability. And since social vulnerability is a nexus of intersecting geographical, political, economic, and social forces (pp. 4-7), then "the extent to which social vulnerability exists within a community will affect its level of resilience" (p. 4). Analogously, this resilience is bounded by its most vulnerable residents: those with a high "propensity to suffer loss" (Schmidt & Garland, 2012, p. 438), as in elderly, rural women (Dorfman et al., 2009). This perspective is appraised via the resilience profiles of the older women in the next section.

8.3.2 Temporal processes, situational relations, and the person related contributors to resilience. The resilience profiles of the older women are derived from temporal processes and situational relations, and as such, differ within, and between, the cohorts.

All of the older old women depicted a passive, reactive pattern of resilience until retirement, when they adjusted their expectations for, and of, older age to create a pragmatically realist profile of resilience. This predominant resilience profile aligns with Hall's (2005) rural "culture of persistence [that] can involve accepting existing norms and 'putting up' with everything regardless" (p. 6). It also conforms to the stereotypically stoic, resilient, Australian woman (Harvey, 2007; Rickards, 2012). In the study, only three of the older old women diverged from this majority accommodative profile. These women actively and intentionally acted to change their futures, as per the minority proactive resilience profile. Two variants are represented: the maverick anomalous profile where the women forcefully rebelled against personal and societal challenges; and the reflective profile that encompasses an introspective reflective-learn-act cycle (Mezirow, 1981, 1994), triggered by personal disequilibrium (Henning, 2011), or shock (Mezirow, 1994).

Alternatively, the late middle-aged women presented a common, active reactive and proactive action, trajectory of resilience in their youth and adulthood that is accompanied by personal growth. In spite of the accumulated disadvantage that distinguished much of their life, the late middle-age women's active agency evolved positively over time. This iterative process proceeded in an upward direction, albeit laboriously and unevenly, and as such, it denotes an overarching developmental coping characterisation of resiliency. During the women's new life in the town, this response to crisis and hardship changed dramatically when rural social norms were activated and halted the late middle-aged women's personal growth. For the majority of these women, a truncated profile of resilience reflects this change, but four anomalous profiles are also

evident. From their early years, three of the late middle-aged women displayed overarching proactive, personal agency in overcoming adversity to fulfil their life ambitions. While each of these women anticipated and prepared for potential challenges, their individual resilience profiles vary: the defiant profile is typified by a refusal to compromise personal standards and conform to societal expectations; the adaptive profile is similar to the accommodative profile of the older old women, but engagement with community rests with the individual rather than dictated by social norms; and the transformative profile resembles a personally oriented version of the continuous learning, adaptation, transforming model of social ecological resilience (Adger et al., 2011). The remaining pragmatically realistic profile matches that of the majority of the older old women.

A recent study by Tovel and Carmel (2014) that examined the effect of coping patterns on successful ageing provides a useful reference point here. While respecting the conceptual differences between resilience and coping (Chapter two, Section 2.1.1), “Reactive coping patterns are considered life...or goal management strategies activated mainly after a life event occurs, proactive coping patterns focus on the individual’s ability to imagine future events, to foresee their possible outcomes, and to plan and act accordingly” (p. 265). Since this model is associated with self-efficacy, it implies (some) agentic choice in terms of controlling and directing one’s life course (pp. 265-266, 268). This premise is not supported in this community, where “dominant discourses of rurality reflect and mutually reinforce conventional gender identities and stereotypes” (Leyshon, 2011, p. 304), and curtail the social positioning of most of the older women. Although the older women’s resiliency expertise was honed over a lifetime of disadvantage, and

supplemented with inner strength, courage, personal integrity, and self-reflection, very few of the older old and late middle-aged women were able to counter the dominant local culture.

Consequently, some “people and groups have unequal access to resilience-enhancing resources and assets. They also show that resilience can be about relationships of power” (Ottmann & Maragoudaki, 2014, p. 4). The next section explores resilience in terms of these person and environment interdependencies, mediated through situational relations over time.

8.3.3 Temporal processes, situational relations, and the environment, and person related contributors to resilience. A combination of social structures, including age, gender, marital, and outsider status, intersect to suppress the older old women, and exclude the late middle-aged women from participating fully in the town, thereby blocking in the older-old women, and blocking out the late middle-aged women. The community also functions as a gatekeeper to assign social identities and roles to each cohort, depending on their perceived status and value to the town. Here, the late middle-aged women are ascribed a negative social identity and denied a social role, whereas the older old women are socially invisible, but they retain their functional role.

Chapter seven (Section 7.2.1) traced the status of women in the town over time. It revealed that the social position of older women had not changed significantly, despite a gender “revolution” in Australia (van Egmond, Baxter, Buchler & Western, 2010). In the past five years, this stability was disrupted by a new situation in the town—an influx of C-change in-migrants. The arrival of this group of late middle-aged women who were anxious to contribute to the community was perceived by the older old women as a threat

to their coveted social role in the local hierarchy (Reed, 2013, p. 203; Scharf et al., 2005, p. 77). Place related change, or growth associated with new residents, also posed a risk to older people's identification as a "rural" person (Winterton & Warburton, 2012, p. 329).

Subsequently, the older old women sprang into action to preserve their usefulness to the town, and to protect their social networks from infiltration by the newcomers. Their response was uncharacteristically proactive, and suggestive of a shift in the older old women's calm acceptance of an externally dictated, lot in life. Rather than staying in the background and preserving the status quo, they were sustaining their status quo. As such, the women's personally oriented action moved beyond their typical passively reactive response to a crisis, and trends towards the anomalous forthright resilience responses outlined in Chapter five, Section 5.5.3.1.

The older old women's seemingly unprovoked action was regarded as misguided, judgemental, prejudicial, and vindictive by the late middle-aged women. On moving to the town, these C-change women were immersed in a new and unfamiliar situation, wherein their previous experience in confronting personal hardship and societal challenges was inadequate. They were also socially isolated. Without peer support, they lacked sufficient leverage to cross the "lone wolf threshold" (Dale, 2014, p. 437) to directly challenge the community's ingrained sociocultural traditions. Instead, they adopted a more subtle strategy designed to enhance their social worth to the town by recalibrating their social identity in contradistinction to the older-old women's conservativeness, and the ferals' dole bludging³¹. This active repositioning signalled the late middle-aged women's growing awareness of the town's social hierarchy—a critical

³¹ A derogatory, colloquial expression for welfare recipients in Australia.

first step in adjusting to the rural and local norms, and possibly, a more adaptive resilience response (Chapter six, Section 6.5.3.2).

Even though the older old women have become more proactive, and the late middle-aged women more pragmatic in their respective resilience response patterns, these fledgling trends operate at an individual level of change, rather than affecting the local sociocultural structures (Ottmann & Maragoudaki, 2014, p. 19). And since:

Status is thus a central mechanism behind durable patterns of inequality based on social differences...As a micro motive for behaviour, status is as significant as money and power. At a macro level, status stabilises resource and power inequality by transforming it into cultural status beliefs about group differences regarding who is 'better'... These effects accumulate to direct members of higher status groups towards positions of resources and power while holding back lower status group members. Through these processes, status writes group differences such as gender, race, and class-based lifestyle into organisational structures of resources and power, creating durable inequality (Ridgeway, 2014, p. 1),

it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the older women in the town are complicit in enabling, reinforcing, and reproducing (Dempsey, 1992, p. 63) the “resilience” of these dominant structures (Bennett, 2004, p. 163; Risman, 2004, p. 432).

However, “Resilience can [also] be about empowering people to change power dynamics to obtain access to the resources they require to become actors and to build their own resilience” (Ottmann & Maragoudaki, 2014, p. 4), as in Duff’s (2011) conception of enabling places. Here though, the town’s long-standing laissez faire approach to challenge and change (Winterton & Warburton, 2012b, p. 14), restrictive

rural and local sociocultural norms and values, and a status competition between the older old and late middle-aged women, has formed a relatively impervious sociocultural barrier to block access to these opportunities and resources for both cohorts of older women, effectively disempowering them.

Phillipson (2007, pp. 330-331) posits that older people's ability (empowerment) to shape and control their environment is a relatively new phenomenon for older people. His supposition is based on an emergent social division between older people: those with expanding life opportunities, and those who are marginalised and isolated (p. 336). And since only three women have favourable life trajectories (Chapter five, Section 5.4.3.1), then this potentiality is curbed for the majority of the town's older women.

Where social structure is a significant shaper of social positioning (agency), it is envisaged that the women's predominant resilience profiles mirror these environment and person related constraints, namely, the pragmatic realistic profile of the older old women, and the late middle-aged women's arrested growth profile. Accordingly, the older old women minimise and accept life's circumstances. For them, resilience is a reactive response to reacquire and restore equilibrium. But for the late middle-aged women who are excluded by the community, resilience equates to endurance (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012, p. 104).

To summarise: As "resilience (lies) not only in the individual but also in the systems surrounding the individual" (Hanson & Gottesman, 2012, p. 367), then the women's resilience is influenced by their personal life course and resilience responses; an ephemerally resilient town and its trajectory of imperviousness to challenge and change; community-based sociocultural impositions; and inter cohort status contestations.

8.4 General Discussion

This concluding section revisits the primary research question (Chapter one, Section 1.2.1) in the form of a general discussion.

The previous sections indicate that resilience in the older, single women living in the sample town is influenced by a dynamic mix of personal, community, and structural factors that are enacted across time, and through situations. In this study, the women's resiliency is also impacted by the overarching national culture.

An enduring and dominant sense of Australian identity continues to rest on the "battler" icon (Bryant & Garnham, 2015, p. 76; Tranter & Donoghue, 2014), portraying heroism, determination, courage, and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. This conception of resilience is a universally accepted symbol of Australianism (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014), particularly in the context of men overcoming the harsh outback (rural) environment. Australian rural women are also widely perceived as resilient—stoic, self-reliant, and used to handling adversity, albeit in a supportive, secondary role compared to men (Gibson & Davidson, 2004, p. 396).

A counterpart ethno-nationalistic identity is predicated on collectively sharing a specific culture, traditions, and customs (Fozdar, Spittles & Hartley, 2014, p. 16). These circumscribed "ways of living" are exclusive, in that full membership requires acquisition by birth or long-term assimilation of the core elements of its norms and values (Pakulski & Tranter, 2000, p. 209), and are more prevalent among older, religious, and less educated Australians (Pakulski & Tranter, 2000, p. 213).

These values converge in rurality, where:

Media coverage of drought and financial hardship in rural areas continue to pit farmers (invariably constructed as ‘honest’, ‘decent’ ‘Aussie battlers’) up against uncaring city folk, big business and government—a moral geography in which the ‘family farm’ is seen as a more legitimate domestic and productive unit (in opposition to agribusiness firms), and where the more humble, ‘true Australians’ are generally those that reside in rural areas. (Gibson & Davidson, 2004, p. 390)

Ultimately, “Australian nationalism [is] constructed through rurality” (Gibson & Davidson, 2004, p. 395).

While these imaginaries persist at a national level, gradations in sociocultural norms are more evident locally, and as such, represent the symbiosis between the environment, and the person, in relation to resilience (Steiner & Markantoni, 2014). These interrelationships are now revisited in terms of relevant literature:

In spite of the intervening sociodemographic, political, and economic changes since its foundation, the historical and cultural developmental trajectory of the town, until recently, is one of biophysical and structural advantage. When confronted with shocks, the town continued to draw on this legacy of prestige, power, and wealth to withstand and/or react to these challenges in order to maintain its status in the area. Consequently, the town exhibits a reactive resilience response to reinforce its traditional standing and local social norms and values (Schmidt & Garland, 2012, p. 438), and a concomitant ephemeral profile of rural, community resilience (Foster, 2007, pp. 16-17).

Research into community resilience in regional Australia by Buikstra et al. (2010) uncovered 11 major contributors to resilience: social networks and support; optimistic outlook; experiential learning; historical and cultural belonging; environment and

lifestyle; infrastructure and services; sense of purpose; diverse and innovative economy; cultural diversity; self and spiritual beliefs and leadership (in descending order of importance). As in this study, Buikstra et al. determined that resilience formation in rural Australia is a complex and evolving synthesis between individual, community, historical, cultural, physical, and structural factors (p. 987-989). Their project though, differs from this study in terms of context, primarily: scale (they locate their study in a much larger regional town), culture (their community is ethnically diverse), long-standing economic diversification, and perhaps most significantly, their town's "capacity to respond positively to adversity" (p. 979). Thus, contrary to its highly disadvantaged SEIFA classification, the town selected by Buikstra et al. corresponds to an intentional (ideal) profile of community resilience (Foster, 2007, pp. 16-17). By comparison, the study town connotes complacency, inertia, and stasis.

Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2013, pp. 16-28) also identified an array of overlapping and interrelated personal, local community, and social and physical, contextual elements in their study of neighbourhood (community) resilience in a disadvantaged urban setting. Of particular relevance, is their observation that personal (individual) resilience is enabled through shared notions of belonging and identity, and a strong community of place (p. 27), mediated through older and more stable populations: "the arrival of a new population group in a neighbourhood can be regarded by long-standing residents as a disruption of everyday life and a challenge to established identities and notions of community" (p. 19). These results corroborate the results described in Chapters four and seven, and by Patten, O'Meara, and Dickson-Swift (2015).

Complementary findings (Bashir et al., 2009, pp. 49, 55-58; Bashir & Flint, 2010, pp. 4-5, 14) were revealed in the small, relatively isolated, semi-rural town chosen as a case study in a project examining resilience in disadvantaged communities in the UK (Bashir et al., 2011). Here too, the salience of history, culture, and location on how residents manage, juggle, and/or cope with their individual, and collective, economic, and social circumstances was critical (Batty & Cole, 2010, p. 9; Hickman, Batty, Dayson & Muir, 2014, p. 5). In “difficult times” residents of the deprived towns frequently met new challenges with consolidation or reinforcement, rather than decisively breaking with the past (Batty & Cole, 2010, p. 10)—in other words, they attempted to “get by” and negotiate adversity to survive, rather than abandoning their community (Batty & Cole, 2010, p. 24) and/or making drastic life changes (Athwal, Brill, Chesters & Quiggin, 2011, p. 6). Many people demonstrated heroic levels of sacrifice and creativity to counter their disadvantaged circumstances, but they did not possess an adequate pool of resources to bounce back (Athwal et al., 2011). To this effect, Hickman et al. (2014, pp. 4-5) devised a spectrum of resilience, ranging from flourishing and thriving, to coping and/or not being overcome by adversity. Again, this typology is similar to the representations of resilience presented by the older women in this study (Chapters five and six).

Even though these UK-based projects were situated in deprived neighbourhoods subject to periods of growth and decline, while the study town has been relatively affluent and stable over historical time, the developmental trajectories of resilience trend in similar directions. With “resilience [being] about endurance in the face of adversity rather than a leap forward in their circumstances” (Batty & Cole, 2010, p. 12), both studies are antithetical to the active dynamism underpinning the resilience literature (Lazarus, 2014,

p, 636). The studies also underscore the criticality of place in effecting individual resilience responses, and shaping collective resilience processes (Gerstorf et al., 2010, p. 663; Hickman et al., 2014, pp. 54-55).

Increasingly, the mutuality of people and places (Healy et al., 2007, p. 112; Hickman et al., 2014) is reflected in the literature on individual resilience (Brown & Westaway, 2011) and resilience in older age. Many of the attributes of later life resilience concern “good” social relationships (Hildon et al., 2009; Hildon et al., 2008; Kinsel, 2005; Lamond et al, 2009; Ryff et al, 2012; van Kessel, 2013), and integration in the community (Hildon et al., 2009). These qualities reflect the positive bias that is associated with resilience in much of the literature, including the recent positive psychology movement (Roepke & Seligman, 2015).

On the other hand, Hickman et al. (2014) equate resilience to “getting by”. Resilience is also associated with a less rosy perspective for most of the women in this study. In an extreme interpretation, it signifies *giving in* for the older old women, and *giving up* by the late middle-aged women. This bleak picture underscores the importance of the broader sociocultural and situational dimensions of the rural community.

Analogously, Harrison (2013) claims that: “wider structural considerations...may be very different from those assumed. Such structures and relations may in turn influence the extent to which resilience really is a ‘reason to be cheerful’” (p. 109). A recent article, “Resilience is Futile” (Diprose, 2015), affirms this position. For Diprose, resilience is acquiescence—putting up with precarity, instilling inequality, relocating responsibility, and deferring demands for change (pp. 48-54). Her pronouncement reflects the resiliency

of both cohorts of older women in the study, but it is especially salient for the older old group.

These provocative assertions are an apt entree into the contested interplay of structure, agency, and resilience (Hickman et al., 2014, pp. 5-6, 53-54). Since agency “celebrates [an individual’s] ingenuity and their ability to act as independent agents in the face of adversity” (Hickman et al., 2014, pp. 5-6), it is generally assumed to overcome the deleterious impact of (negative) externalities. Obviously, not all external, structural forces are detrimental; “a social structure both constrains and enables personal and interpersonal activity” (Hatt, 2013, p. 35). However, in this study, earlier chapters have advanced that the physical, historical, cultural, and social structures that typify the local community, override older women’s personal agency. For instance, the attributes of resilience in later life are present in each cohort of older women, but they are not fully realised because of the dominance of rural norms and values. These restrictive practices translate into a selective allocation of resources (Healy et al., 2007, p. 112), identities, and roles for the older women in the town, and a positionality that is co-opted and reinforced by the women themselves. And if “structure (is) constraint and agency (is) choice” (Risman, 2004, p. 431), then the range of agentic choices available to both cohorts of women are limited by the structural impositions of their respective situations.

Further insights into the relationship between place, age related structure, agency, and resilience are provided by Golant (2015) in his theoretical model describing older people’s adaptation to their physical and social living environment. Golant argues that if older people encounter residential arrangements that are not fit for purpose, they will assume assimilative (action) or accommodative (cognitive) strategies to cope with this

dissonance. Assimilative coping rests on secondary appraisal processes, whereby individuals evaluate the availability, efficaciousness, and viability of their choices, and then actively change their residential space. Alternatively, accommodative or adaptive coping strategies involve lowering expectations or aspirations about spatial requirements, and/or rationalising that the incongruent setting is unimportant for their self-identity, or personal happiness (pp. 71-72). Older residents activating assimilative (agentic) coping repertoires will display greater resilience, but if their residential problems are insurmountable, then these older persons resort to accommodative adaptation (pp. 70-72). Although Golant does not clearly differentiate between coping and resiliency, his model resembles the older women's resilience responses on relocating to the town. The older old women were already adept at adjusting their personal residential aspirations, and thereby adopted an accommodative strategy. On the contrary, the late middle-aged women initially demonstrated assimilative (active) coping strategies, but on realising that the external environment appeared intractable to change, they switched to accommodative rationalisations.

Golant (2015, pp. 71-72) also grounds his model in the concepts of age related primary and secondary control (Morling & Evered, 2006), with assimilative forms of coping equated with primary control, and accommodative adaptation defined as a secondary control response. A complementary Australian study (Broadbent, de Quadros-Wander & McGillivray, 2014) amplifies the older age, coping and control, and place and person associations by showing that in situations with limited (low) residential control, acceptance (accommodative coping) is the primary response of older people (among other findings).

At present, a direct relationship between these coping and control mechanisms, and resilience in older people, has not been established. Nevertheless, an emergent literature linking aspects of ageing with primary and secondary control (Bretherton & McLean, 2015; Chipperfield et al., 2012; Chipperfield, Perry, Bailis, Ruthig & Ioring, 2007; de Quadros-Wander, McGillivray & Broadbent, 2014; Swift & Chipperfield, 2013; Slagsvold & Sørensen, 2013) offers a promising avenue of further research. For example, Dockendorff (2014, p. 374) suggested that accommodative responses in older persons are not passive resignation, but the flexibility to adjust to new circumstances, such as age related losses. Non-adaptive ways of coping were identified as isolation, submission, escape, and helplessness (p. 382). Again, with respect to the present study, these coping practices reflect the accommodative and withdrawal resilience responses expressed by the older old and late middle-aged women respectively. Coincidentally, self-reliance, one of the intrapersonal attributes of later life resilience (Table 4), and the only gender-linked response in Dockendorff's research (pp. 374, 379-382), was only partially effective as coping mechanism. Dockendorff hypothesised that since self-reliance is linked to minimising needs that require assistance or support, overly independent older women are at risk of social isolation (pp. 374, 378). Her conclusion has implications for the older old women in the study town who encounter strong social imperatives to be stoically uncomplaining.

As articulated by Hickman et al. (2014, pp. 5-6), this study does not resolve the agency and structure dilemma in relation to resilience (Chapter two, Section 2.1.4). Nevertheless, it does begin to address the influence of other social forces on resilience in the town, for instance, power and culture (Lyon, 2011; Lyon & Parkins, 2013, p. 2). The

most significant finding in this context is the persistence, pervasiveness, and dominance of restrictive local customs and values on the lives of Australian rural women (Kruss & Gridley, 2014). These constraints are amplified in this community by an ethos to maintain the status quo, and reluctance to engage with change. For most of the older women, this “locked-in” community orientation (Simmie & Martin, 2010, p. 30) translates into a limited social identity, social role, and positionality in the town, and concomitantly, shapes their resilience responses and resilience profiles. As such, it reinforces Dannefer and Lin’s (2013, p. 187) challenge: “How much of the ‘freely and rationally chosen lines of action’ are [actually] due to a ‘background of social interaction and social structure’?”

The study demonstrates that the town’s historical and cultural norms curtail the resiliency of both cohorts of older women, and ironically, undermine the nationally revered stereotype of the stoically resilient, Australian woman. It also indicates that the town’s ephemeral profile of community resilience is not resilience enabling (Magis, 2010, p. 401) for the majority of the older women, and thus invites a reconsideration of the incommensurability between the psychological and social ecological conceptions of resilience (Olsson et al., 2015, p. 9). In general, psychological (personal) resilience refers to prevention, protection, and reactive coping (bouncing back) when confronted with any negative eventuality, while the essence of social ecological, and by extension, community resilience, is capacity—a potentiality for growth and transformation through learning and active adaptation (Chapter two). Notwithstanding the bridging framework of social resilience (Chapter two, Section 2.1.2.1), “conceptualising resilience as operating within the setting as well as within the individual pose some dilemmas” (Brodsky et al., 2011, p. 218). Some new models representing multilevel interdependences are emerging,

particularly in the institutional and organisational (Garschagen, 2013), and disaster (Tidball, 2012) domains, but none are directly applicable to the study context as yet.

A potential zone of convergence that is currently under exploited in the literature is transformative learning. The transformation of systems through learning is an integral component of social ecological resilience, wherein “the capacity to adapt and manage resilience requires learning [and] learning is necessary to cope with change and uncertainty” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 8), as determined by Buikstra et al. (2010, pp. 983, 988), and Wilson, Pearson, Kashima, Lusher, and Pearson (2013) in rural Australia. Similarly, learning and adaptation were highlighted as germane to the recovery from acute crises or “focusing events” (Kreibich et al., 2011, p. 60), and slow onset, natural disasters affecting Australian communities in Bohensky and Leitch (2014, pp. 485-486), and Leitch and Bohensky’s (2014, pp. 23-24) investigation of the media’s portrayal of resilience. Community resilience was located in the interstice between learning, adaptation, and self-organisation, whereby:

Self organisation is needed to maintain structure and function and to enable learning and adaptation; learning and adaptation allow structure and function to be adjusted if needed or to abandon it (transform) where adjustment is insufficient.

Thus a community, by self-organising in response to a disaster, is better positioned to learn and adapt. (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014, p. 24)

This conclusion adds weight to the proposition that the neighbouring communities in this study responded to change with transformative learning, with the sample town remaining complacently “happy” with the status quo.

At a personal level, the theory of learning transformation has entered the lexicon of gerontology (Brown & Brown, 2015), and educational psychology (Illeris, 2014a, 2014b), via its connection to active and critical self-reflection. Originally formulated as “perspective transformation” by Mezirow (1981, 1994), transformative learning has since undergone a series of reviews (Kitchenham, 2008; Mälkki, 2010; Nohl, 2015), and critiques (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; Newman, 2012). Nonetheless, it is still based on the assumption that change in a person’s life can be stimulated through active and critical self-reflection, triggered by an epochal (a severely disorienting), or incremental (stepped or staggered) circumstance and/or event. As a result, it is applicable to many different situations (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014), including Moon’s (2011) investigation of transformative learning in later life bereavement, and Mälkki’s (2012) exploration of self-reflection and life crises. Some of these contexts resonate closely with the present study, for example, Nell’s active and informed intention to change her perspective and move forward following her *annus horribilis* (Chapter five, Section 5.5.3.2). Even though Nell is the only participant to exhibit transformative learning, self-reflection is identified as an additional attribute of resilience in both cohorts of older women.

Summing up, this study adds to the literature by situating resilience with specific and intersecting environment and person related factors. Furthermore, by accounting for the historical and cultural development of place, juxtaposed with the life course trajectories of both cohorts of older women, the study strengthens the temporal representation of resilience as a responsive and iterative process. It also demonstrates the effect of different situational relations on this dynamic.

These interrelationships also encompass many unresolved conceptual, methodological, and practical dilemmas, as documented in Chapter two, contextualised above, and expressed (in part) by Hickman et al. (2014, pp. 4-8).

One of these issues revolves around the notion of a limit to resilience. In their research on multiply disadvantaged, urban neighbourhoods, Abramovitz and Albrecht (2013, p. 714) registered a catastrophic, downward spiral of loss and stress, leading to a depletion of resources from which it is difficult for an individual or community to recover. Comparable scenarios in rural Australia played out in the context of prolonged economic decline (Anderson, 2009, pp. 7-8), and recurrent drought (Pearce et al., 2010, p. 367), as discussed previously. In many of these small towns, the social fabric of the farming community was gradually eroded and fractured (Birchip Cropping Group, 2008, pp. 112-117, 128; Caldwell & Boyd, 2009, p. 7) as residents struggled to balance competing individual and collective needs (Birchip Cropping Group, 2008, pp. 168-171; Caldwell & Boyd, 2009, pp. 7-8). This collision of financial, demographic, social, and personal pressures delineated a critical breaking point for individuals and the community (Leitch & Bohensky, 2014, p. 19; Rickards, 2012), with some of the tension surfacing as a resentment of newcomers in the area (Birchip Cropping Group, 2008, pp. 40-41, 172-173). Since most of the late middle-aged women in the study town have experienced similar exclusionary practices, their subsequent withdrawal from active community engagement is possibly a sign that they have exceeded their resiliency threshold.

While these findings are indicative of resilience fatigue to long-term and extreme stress, “a history of some lifetime adversity predicts better outcomes than not only a history of high adversity but also a history of no adversity. This has important

implications for understanding resilience, suggesting that adversity can have benefits” (Seery, 2011, p. 390). Moderate amounts of personal stress are purported to be protective (Hanson & Gottesman, 2012, p. 368), and build resilience (Seery, 2011, p. 390; Seery, Holman & Silver, 2010). But because people and communities operate and interact continually, at different scales and times (Pendall et al., 2010, p. 78), then the amount of adversity and stress is not easily controllable.

Along similar lines, Pendall et al. (2010, pp. 80-82) connect the nature of crises (a sudden acute shock versus chronic “slow burns”) with different types of regional resilience. Although this literature signposts the linkages between type, timing, and degree of crisis or stressor, and resilience response, it also reflects the “thorny challenge” of relating resilience to space and time (Pendall et al., 2010, pp. 79-80), in addition to accounting for both individual and external (environment related) effects. As this study demonstrates that the development of resilience in older old and late middle-aged women, living on their own, in a small town in rural Australia is influenced by a complex interplay of environment and person related contributors, moderated and/or mediated by temporal processes and situational relations, this is perhaps where its greatest contribution lies.

To recapitulate: The older women in this study exhibited stoic resiliency when confronted with challenging personal, social, and environment related contexts. These women also conformed to the Australian ideal in their fortitude and determination (resilience) to rise above these obstacles (Leith & Bohensky, 2014). However, the efficacy of these resilience responses was undermined by the women’s marginalisation and/or exclusion from social relationships, material resources, and locational settings

(Provencher et al., 2012), propelled by restrictive, rural and local, historical and cultural customs. Here, the community itself represents a constraining force, both in terms of its stalled response to crises and change, and its passive indifference to the older women as exemplars of resilience. In effect, these persistent and potent sociocultural norms and structures exert an oppressive, dampening influence on the women's agentic resiliency; thus contradicting the prevailing literature where resilience is widely depicted as a positive and successful agentic process. They also reinforce Dempsey's (1992) pessimistic prediction that "the (only) possibilities of change in the town (will) depend on external change" (p. 251).

The strength of these claims is gauged in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

At first, this chapter synthesises the main findings of the study in relation to its contributions to the literature. These are then critiqued in terms of the characteristics that limit its transferability and generalisability to other contexts. Questions and issues for further research are offered by way of conclusion in Section 9.3.

9.1 Contributions of the Study

The study shows that resilience in older women living on their own, in a small rural community in Australia is shaped by intersecting historical and cultural community processes, local situational relations, rural structural norms, and individual attributes and life course trajectories. Since the study was an exploration of these dimensions of resilience, the results are summarised below to amplify the main contributions.

Australian rural women are typically characterised as being resilient—stoic, self-reliant and used to handling crises. As such, they conform to the national imagery of the “Aussie battler” who personifies heroism, tenacity, courage, and resourcefulness when confronting the harsh (rural) landscape. Similarly, in rural areas, localness is expressed as a culture and customs that are collectively shared by long-term residents of a specific location.

In this study, the town activated these national, rural, and local traditions to retain historical, political power, economic wealth, and social dominance over the surrounding region. Because of this propitious legacy, and a providential geophysical setting, the town remained relatively immune to the recent sociodemographic and structural changes in rural Australia. To date, it has not been unduly challenged by these temporal and

situational shocks, and its habitual response to adversity and change is to maintain the current situation. For instance, the town rejected the single, late middle-aged, C-change women in favour of young families. And, even though the older women resident in the town manifest a lifelong capacity to overcome adversity, the community failed to recognise their resiliency expertise. Here, the town's resilience response reflects survival by stagnation, with a concomitant ephemeral (*laissez-faire*) profile of resilience.

This imperative to continue the status quo also extends to the town's patriarchal social forces. Since its foundation, women have been subjected to systematic gender marginalisation across all strata of this rural society. These exclusionary practices have relegated women to a subordinate standing compared with men, and a secondary social status in the community. As long-term residents, the older old women have been socialised into this ideology, resulting in little societal power and control, a proscribed social role, and social invisibility. Alternatively, the late middle-aged women are associated with an era of greater life choices for women, specifically independence, autonomy and equality. But because of the town's discriminatory practices, they were blocked in their attempts to add value to the community. With a negative social identity and a limited social role, many of these late middle-aged women disengaged from community life.

The older old women portrayed a predominantly passive reaction to crises and adversity throughout their adulthood, focused on bouncing back to regain equilibrium. By contrast, the late middle-aged women's response to personal and social disruptions was actively reactive, until they elected to restart their lives in the town. Relocation to the town triggered a shift in the resilience responses of both groups of women: over time, the

older old women pragmatically adjusted to their changed circumstances, whereas the late middle-aged women were isolated by an unfamiliar and unwelcoming local culture, and ultimately withdrew. And even though, the resilience responses of each cohort were reinforced by additional attributes, inner strength, courage, personal integrity and self-reflection, they were constrained by a intersecting structural factors, including age, gender, and marital and residential status.

In effect, the only group to withstand the dominantly prohibitive rural and local culture consisted of women who exercised their personal agency in actively pursuing individual, social, and/or civic goals. Three older old, and three late middle-aged women matched this proactively focused profile of resilience. Accordingly, they presented a continuum of resiliency that ranged from maverick and defiant, to actively adaptive. Moreover, all engagement with the community was dictated by these women, rather than externally imposed by the society.

However, for the majority of the older old women, the town's sociocultural customs limited their personal and social choices, and boxed them in. For them, resilience in later life is acquiescence. Concomitantly, the late middle-aged women were systematically excluded from fully participating and contributing to the community, and thus boxed out by these constraints. For these women, resilience equates to endurance.

This finding differs qualitatively from the positive underpinnings of resilience, and as such, denotes a platform from which to review the contributions of this study with respect to the literature. Again for consistency, this is broadly structured according to the chapter sequence.

9.1.1 Resilience—temporal processes and situational relations. The temporal influences on the trajectories of resilience in this study are strongly supportive of a process orientation of resilience in the community, and in the older women. Similarly, the importance of situational relations is illustrated through the effect of different contexts on the environment and person related developmental patterns of resilience. Hence, the working definition of resilience proposed in Chapter two (Section 2.1.4): resilience is a dynamic, relational process, with trajectories influenced by a complex range of events, actions and interactions, offset by situational and structural forces and personal issues and experiences, remains valid.

9.1.2 Environment related contributors to resilience—the community. A consensus on rural and community resilience has not yet been reached. In line with the majority of the existing models, this study affirms the interconnectivity of environment related contributors, namely, history, culture, policies, and economics at national, state, regional, and local levels; specific bio-physical and locational settings; and rural and local societal traditions, customs, and values, to the evolution of resilience in Australian communities. It also strengthens the relatively recent inclusion of the social dimension to community and individual resilience, as applied to small, Australian, rural towns.

In this context, the study town is surviving by stagnation. Instead of responding to sociodemographic and structural change with adaptation and transformation advocated in the social ecological literature, and implemented by the neighbouring communities, the town relies on its historical and cultural legacy of political and economic power, and social prestige to retain its leadership position in the area. As a result, the town displays an ephemeral (static) profile of resilience, in spite of evidence indicating that it has

assumed the lowest index of disadvantage ranking of the nearby towns, region, and state. These findings also point to the persistence of rural and local traditions and values in the community's attitude towards women and newcomers, and its strategic preference for young families in-migrants rather than the C-change retirees. The community also disregards the older women's lifetime experience and expertise (resiliency) in dealing with crises, adversity, and change.

On the contrary, the adjacent small towns epitomise the ideal profile of resilience through their anticipatory and proactive responses to sociodemographic and structural change. Here, the study adds to the rural and community resilience literature by foregrounding the town's *laissez faire* approach to situational change, in contradistinction to creative engagement demonstrated by its immediate neighbours.

9.1.3 Person related contributors to resilience—the older women. This study reveals that resilience in the older women is both contextual and relational. For example, different profiles of resilience in the two cohorts of older, single, rural, Australian women are generated by individual life trajectories, and the associated responses to crises and adversity. In addition to expressing the attributes of resilience derived from the literature, the women's resiliency is supplemented by new attributes—inner strength, personal courage and integrity, and self-reflection. The effect of these attributes is diluted by external structures, and restricted by intersecting social forces—gender, age, and marital, and newcomer status. Consequently, the study extends the literature about resilience in later life, supplements the literature on resilience in late middle-aged, and older old women, and introduces the literature on resilience in older, single women in rural Australia.

9.1.4 Environment, and person related contributors to resilience—the older women in the community. The study indicates that the development of resilience in older, single women, living in a small Australian rural town consists of intersecting environment and person related influences, moderated and/or mediated by temporal processes, and situational relations. It also provides substantive evidence of the dominance of rural and local sociocultural structures and attitudes in constraining the women's resiliency (agency), thus contradicting the almost universal conception of resilience as a proactive, agentic, and positive construct in the literature. These findings are perhaps the greatest contribution of this study to the literature.

9.2 Limitations of the Study

The primary limitations of the study relate to the research design, and the research findings:

9.2.1 Research design.

9.2.1.1 Sample. As noted in Chapter three, the sample community was chosen to model a typical small, Australian country town. Together with its neighbours, the town is classed as a rural community by the Australian government. While it is physically and demographically larger than the comparison towns, with a greater provision of goods and services, and more opportunities for social interaction, it is also characterised by a lower index of disadvantage. These sociodemographic and socioeconomic differences could directly influence participant's perceptions of community cohesion, especially in relation to sense of place, and place identity, place belonging, and place attachment.

The town was also selected to provide an adequate sample of older, single, rural women. Different approaches were used to obtain a balanced sampling frame, but some

sociodemographic profiles were potentially under, or not represented, for instance, women who were absent, ill, extremely busy, or socially isolated. These omissions would disproportionately skew the results. And while the study compares two cohorts, it only accesses older women who are single, and/or living alone. As such, it depicts an intentional, but selective, analysis of resilience and ageing in a rural community.

However, the sample does reflect the population ageing demographic of small rural towns. It also captures the relatively homogenous background of these older residents. This sociodemographic profile underscores the degree of hardship and disadvantage experienced by the majority of the women, and conversely, the unanticipated result that only three of the older women had relatively stress-free lives. Without corresponding analyses of equivalent samples, it is not known if the study represents a disproportionate number of significantly disadvantaged older women, or if this is a normative occurrence for these cohorts, and/or this specific location.

A similar issue relates to the new attributes of resilience uncovered in the study. Both cohorts of older women expressed the same attributes, despite significant differences in their life trajectories and resiliency. The researcher did not knowingly reference resilience during her fieldwork, and/or include it in the participant documentation, but the style of question, and/or a slip, could predispose the responses towards the resilient Australian stereotype, and the expression of attributes such as courage.

9.2.1.2 Methodology. The core of ethnography is participant observation in the field. Ethnographers engage a range of data formats to improve the reliability and validity of their observations. Accordingly, participant observation by the researcher was

supplemented by first person accounts in this study to minimise the possibility of flawed perceptions. And while journals and face-to-face interviews were utilised to accommodate different narrative styles, participant self-report is subject to response bias. Older participants may also experience memory and recall difficulties. The researcher managed this risk by confirming or refuting the data with alternative sources in the community.

Verification of the town's temporal processes was also problematic. Although Dempsey's (1990, 1992) earlier in-depth study of the community added a robust temporal perspective, it was secondary, filtered data. These contextual, data, and researcher filters were mitigated as much as possible through personal communication with Dempsey.

Moreover, potentially contentious situations were reviewed with outsiders to counter potential interpretive contamination by the researcher. These perspectives were also substantiated with different analytical methods (community revisit, Framework method, and intersectionality), again to minimise subjectivity and increase trustworthiness. The corpus linguistics analysis provided additional rigour.

Much of the credibility of ethnography as a research methodology depends on the competence and in-field acceptance of the researcher. Here the researcher was fortunate to function in a dual capacity as an insider and outsider in the community. But, in spite of her familiarity with a rural setting, and personal acceptance by both cohorts of women, and the community in general, the researcher still misread some of the intricacies of the local sociocultural landscape on occasion. Contexts and situations were also open to misinterpretation by the researcher.

Perhaps her biggest challenge was the ethical dilemma posed by balancing complete participant confidentiality, and locational anonymity, against a sufficiently detailed, thick description of the specific research context. Participant and location anonymity took precedence for the researcher, but this decision disallowed very informative and insightful data. It also meant that some key sources were unable to be fully referenced.

9.2.2 Research findings. These conclusions reached in the study are highly dependent on the specific sample, setting, and context, and as such, are not directly generalisable or transferable to other situations. For instance, the women's life course trajectories, characteristic response to crises and hardship, and the ensuing profiles of resilience are only relevant within the parameters of this study. Since the study is delimited to specific age, period, and cohorts (late middle-aged and older old, single women living in rural Australia), it is uncertain how the findings relate to other groups based on age, gender, marital status, and/or locations, including urban sites, and rural areas in other countries. As the town's demographic profile is ethnically white, it is equally unclear how the results translate to indigenous and minority populations, as well as in-migrants from other backgrounds. And while the attributes of resilience from the literature are present in both cohorts of older women, they are directly impacted by structural constraints of the community. This caveat also applies to the additional attributes of resilience manifested by both cohorts of women in the study. These local and rural, historical and cultural, community values and norms exert a substantive muting influence on the women's resilience, in essence, prioritising social structure over personal

agency. But, as these effects are highly context dependent, it is not certain to what extent they are applicable to other studies.

The concept of community resilience is problematic as well. Although the smaller towns display proactively adaptive responses to environmental and structural change, this ideal model of community resilience is based on an emergent evidence base. And since the sample town has not yet been unduly impacted by shocks or challenges, the assertion that it has adopted a *laissez faire* change strategy could be incorrect.

9.3 Issues and Questions for Further Research

As the study is an exploration of the developmental contributors of resilience in older, single women, living on their own, in a small rural community in Australia, it provokes some additional under and/or un-researched questions:

To what extent is the development of community resilience an artefact of a location's specific historical and cultural identity?

An informant commented that the town "was just big enough to be divided", which begs the question: Is there an optimal biophysical and/or demographic size for community cohesion and by extension, community resilience? Does this apply to the parallel literature on regional resilience and/or resilience in organisations?

This study also suggests that individual and community resilience have a symbiotic relationship, particularly in a social context. How do these relations vary with different contexts, settings, and participants? Is the dominance of rural structures over individual agency in terms of diluting the attributes of resilience in these older women unique to this setting and/or these age/period/cohorts?

Resilience in an Australian context is enmeshed with the harsh environment and hardship, most recently, a prolonged and devastating drought. Contemporary research indicates that some communities and their residents were stretched to “breaking point” by this crisis. Is there a limit to social ecological and individual resilience? If so, how are these resilience thresholds and/or set points determined? By whom?

Contrary to the majority of the literature, the results from this research demonstrate that resilience for older, single women in rural Australia is not necessarily positive. Does a negative representation still qualify as resilience? Is “getting by” (Hickman et al., 2014) resilience?

These findings signal that resilience in these older women is a dynamic, relational process involving environment and person interactions over time, in response to crises, adversity and situational change. However different interpretations are also likely. For example, where do related concepts, such as flourishing and hardiness, fit?

Lastly, to revisit the aims of the study in terms of their fulfilment: In analysing resilience in different cohorts, situations, and times, at different levels, the study allayed Mohaupt (2008, p. 67), Pendall et al. (2010), and Boschma’s (2015, pp. 742-743) concerns about omissions in resilience research. It also addressed Keating et al.’s (2011, p. 334) question: “is there a triple jeopardy of being old, female, and single?” in regard to rural disadvantage. Lastly, by examining the separate and intersecting effect of the environment (external structures) and person (agentic) related contributors to resilience, the study helped reconcile some aspects of the gulf between the natural (social ecological) and social sciences (Olsson et al., 2015, p. 9), in addition to meeting Dupre and George’s (2011) challenge to bring the concept of resilience into the sociological family.

And by way of conclusion, “Knowledge about a particular configuration can be a valid contribution to sociological knowledge. Knowledge need not be about one universal model for a whole social domain...Knowledge is grounded by making reference to the real world” (Olsen, 2014, p. 102). As such, this study provides a roadmap from which to navigate the complex landscape of environment and person related contributors, temporal processes, and situational relations that constitute resilience in older, single women, living on their own, in rural Australia.

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Appendices

For convenience, the appendices have been bundled together into three categories: Appendix A reflects the research design, Appendix B refers to collections of data, and Appendix C encompasses constituents of the analysis.

University of Oxford

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (CUREC)

CUREC/1A Checklist for the Social Sciences and Humanities

The University of Oxford places a high value on the knowledge, expertise, and integrity of its members and their ability to conduct research to high standards of scholarship and ethics. The research ethics clearance procedures have been established to ensure that the University is meeting its obligations as a responsible institution. They start from the presumption that all members of the University will take their responsibilities and obligations seriously and will ensure that their research on human subjects is conducted according to the established principles and good practice in their fields and in accordance, where appropriate, with legal requirements. Since the requirements of research ethics review will vary from field to field and from project to project, the University accepts that different guidelines and procedures will be appropriate. Please check the CUREC website to ensure that you have the correct form for your project.

This form does not cover research governance, satisfactory methodology, compliance with the requirements of publishers when administering their tests or questionnaires, or the health and safety of employees and students. As principal investigator, it is your responsibility to ensure that requirements in these areas are met. Please carry out a risk assessment of the project, in consultation with all researchers involved, using the checklist and CUREC's other documentation.

The use of an asterisk in this form indicates a phrase defined in the glossary. The glossary and further information on the University's research ethics procedures are available from the CUREC website:

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec

This form is designed largely for research that falls within the Divisions of Social Sciences and Humanities and which does not involve a high-level of risk to the subjects. Elite interviews, field work and oral history are included in the CUREC process. Please take a moment to read through it and if you have any questions or doubts as to whether it is the appropriate form, please review Section A or consult the CUREC website.

Note on anonymised data and audit: you do not need to obtain ethical approval for your study if:

- you are using previously collected **anonymised data** about people which neither you nor anyone else involved in your study can trace back to the individuals who provided them (e.g. census data, administrative data, secondary analysis). Please refer to the definition of *personal data in the glossary and FAQ no. 6 for further guidance; or
- you are conducting research on behalf of or at the request of a service provider that matches the definition of *audit in the glossary.

If your research is audit or uses prior-anonymised data, please check this box: ☐

You do not need to seek ethical approval from CUREC, and you do not need to complete any more of this form. However, please check with your department's requirements, as some departments require you to lodge this form with them.

Office use only: IDREC Ref. No. _____

Date of confirmation that checklist accepted on behalf of IDREC: // //

SECTION A	Yes	No
1) Are you using research methodologies commonly used in biomedical or behavioural laboratory sciences?		✓
2) Is there a significant risk that the research will induce anxiety, stress or other harmful psychological states in participants that might persist beyond the duration of any test or interview in which they are participating?		✓
3) Will the research involve human participants recruited by means of their status as present or past NHS patients or their relatives or carers or present or past NHS staff, or will the research, in whole or in part, be carried out on NHS premises, use NHS facilities or assess NHS facilities or services?		✓
4) Does the research involve *human participants aged 16 and over who do not have *capacity to consent for themselves? See the Mental Capacity Act 2005		✓
5) Is the study to be funded by the US National Institutes of Health or another US federal funding agency?		✓

If you answered 'yes', please stop work on this checklist and

- for questions 1 and 2, complete CUREC/1 instead (available from www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec);
- for questions 3 and 4, submit your proposal to the appropriate NHS ethics committee (see www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk and www.admin.ox.ac.uk/rso/clinical for further information);
- for question 5, or if you answered 'yes' to questions 1, 2 or 4 and your research will take place outside the EU, submit your proposal to OXTREC, which uses separate documentation (www.tropicalmedicine.ox.ac.uk/oxtrec).

If you have answered 'no' to all questions in Section A, please complete Sections B-E. This form and any supporting materials should be typewritten.

SECTION B

*Principal investigator/ supervisor/student researcher (title and name):	Ms. PAMELA IRWIN
Name of supervisor (STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS ONLY):	DR. GEORGE LEESON
Degree programme, e.g. DPhil, MPhil, MSc (STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS ONLY):	D.PHIL
Department or institute:	SOCIOLOGY, OXFORD INSTITUTE OF AGEING
Address for correspondence (if different):	66 BANBURY ROAD, OXFORD OX2 6PR
Email and phone contact:	pamela.irwin@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Title of research project:	A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL RESILIENCE, WITH REFERENCE TO SINGLE OLDER WOMEN LIVING IN RURAL AUSTRALIA.

Brief description of research methods and goals plus description of the nature of participants (including the criteria for inclusion/exclusion, method of recruitment), explanation of how professional guidelines and/or CUREC protocol(s) will be applied (if relevant) and expected use to which the results/data will be put. Please describe how you will obtain informed consent. Approx 400 words.

The proposed study will consist of two related sequences – firstly a theory based conceptual analysis of social resilience, followed by fieldwork investigating how the contributors of social resilience play out in the lives of older, single women living in rural Australia? The conceptual implications of social resilience in the context of older single rural women will be explored through a multi-method comparative case study. Two small rural communities in Victoria, Australia have been chosen to draw out critical sociological influences on the experiences of single older women living there.

Overarching demographic and political community based data will be obtained from census and government documents, supplemented by local records and media resources if indicated. Information about social processes will be collected through personal face to face interviews with key informants in each community. Community directives will inform a purposive sample, with eight to ten key informant participants selected from office holders representing a range of church, sporting and community groups matched in each community. The following questions will be asked: “Tell me about your organization” “What does your organization do in Boort/Charlton?” “Tell me about a challenging situation for your community” “Was your organization involved?” “What is Boort/Charlton like as a community?” “How do you see Boort/Charlton in the future?”

At an individual level, personal face to face interviews with single older rural women will be conducted according to the following qualitative stratified purposive sampling frame, categorized according to age ranges and marital status.

Women who are 65 years of age and older, single (widowed, separated, divorced and/or never married), and living in the towns or within the shire boundaries of Boort or Charlton will be eligible to participate. Potential participants will initially be identified through advertisements in local papers, organizational newsletters, notices at relevant locations (shops, banks, post-office, churches, sporting venues, community resource centres); and secondly, through personal contact with key representatives such as clergy, and other participants. Here a snowball (chain) sampling approach will be used to increase the sample size (if needed) and to reach ‘outlier’s, for example, women who are ethnic minorities. The following questions will be asked: “Please tell me a little about yourself” “Can you talk about a challenge that occurred in your life and how you dealt with it? Did you turn to anyone for help? If so, whom?” “Now, thinking about the present, how do you feel about your life at the moment?” “How do you keep busy?” “If you are in difficulty, how do you get help?” “Tell me about a challenging situation for your community” “How did it affect you?” “What is Boort/Charlton like as a community?” “How do you see Boort/Charlton in the future?”

Prior to all interviews, participants will be provided with an information sheet, and assured of confidentiality, anonymity and their choice to withdraw from the study at any time. Written informed consent will also be obtained from all participants prior to their interviews (see attached informed consent form). If participants agree, all interviews will be audio taped to improve qualitative reliability and validity.

Information about the study, including details from the interview, will be shared with my DPhil supervisor (at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom) and other researchers as necessary. As the University of Oxford is committed to sharing research to benefit society and the economy, the written thesis will be deposited as print and on-line in the University archives. The thesis will be published with open full access for future researchers. If appropriate, anonymised direct quotes from my interview may be used in the researcher’s thesis, and any additional publications and presentations arising from this study.

List actual or probable location(s) where project will be conducted, if known:	BOORT AND CHARLTON, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA
Anticipated duration of project:	SIX months
Anticipated start date:	01 / 01 / 2012
Anticipated end date:	30 / 06 / 2012
Name and status (e.g. 3rd year undergraduate; post-doctoral research assistant) of others taking part in the project:	2 nd YEAR DOCTORAL
Please indicate what training on research ethics the researchers involved with this study have received, e.g. the title of the online or in-person course, and date completed (online training available at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/integrity/):	ETHICS AND HEALTH CARE – PhD. Course at the Medical College of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA. USA

SECTION C

Methods to be used in the study (**tick** as many as apply: this information will help the committee understand the nature of your research and may be used for audit).

	Please tick
Interview	√
Questionnaire	
Analysis of existing records	√
Participant performs verbal/paper and pencil/computer based task	
Measurement/recording of motor behaviour	
Audio recording of participant	√
Video recording or photography of participant	
Physiological recording from participant	
Participant observation	
Covert observation	
Systematic observation	
Observation of specific organisational practices	
Other (please specify)	

SECTION D

Have you read one or more of the following professional guidelines and do you undertake to use the principles listed there as a guide for your own work? Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Links to the guidelines listed below are included on the CUREC website.

	Please tick
British Society of Criminology: Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology [www.britisoccrim.org/codeofethics.htm]	
British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research [www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/]	
Academy of Management's Code of Ethics [www.aomonline.org]	
Association of American Geographers Statement on Professional Ethics [http://www.aag.org/cs/about_aag/resolutions/statement_on_professional_ethics_]	
Oral History Society of the UK Ethical Guidelines [www.oralhistory.org.uk/ethics/index.php]	
American Political Science Association (APSA) Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science (Section H) [www.apsanet.org/content_9350.cfm]	
British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct [www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct_home.cfm]	
Ethics Guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth [www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml]	
Social Research Association: Ethical Guidelines [www.the-sra.org.uk/guidelines.htm]	
Statement of Principles of Ethical Research Practice from the Socio-Legal Studies Association [http://www.slsa.ac.uk/content/view/247/270/]	
Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association [www.britisoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm]	√
Other professional guidelines (please specify):	

SECTION E

Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response.

1) Will you obtain informed consent according to good practice in your discipline before participation?	Yes	No
	√	
2) Will you ensure that *personal data collected directly from participants or via a *third party is held and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act?	Yes	No
	√	
3) Does the research involve as participants *people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question? (This includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults.)	Yes	No
		√
4) As a consequence of taking part in the research, will participants be at serious risk of rendering themselves liable to criminal prosecution (e.g. by providing information on drug abuse or child abuse)?	Yes	No
		√

5) Does the research involve the *deception of participants, as part of the investigation/experiment?	Yes	No
		√
If any of your answers above are in a shaded box, please indicate whether those aspects of your project are fully covered by the following.		
6) Research protocol(s) which has/ve received IDREC/CUREC approval?	Yes	No
<i>If yes, please give protocol number(s):</i>		
7) Professional guidelines that you will be following, as noted under Section D?	Yes	No
	√	

If any of your answers in Section E are in a shaded box and are not covered by a protocol or by professional guidelines, please complete CUREC/2, available to download from the CUREC website. Then submit both this form (you need not complete section F) and the CUREC/2 to the Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC.

If all your answers in Section E are in the unshaded boxes or your answers in shaded boxes are covered by a protocol or professional guidelines, complete Section F and submit this form and any accompanying documents to the Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC or to the relevant officer/committee at departmental level (see notes and address below).

FINAL CHECK

Please check each of the following before submitting the checklist. Failure to provide this information could delay the start of your research.

Have you completed Sections A-E? ☐✓

Have you defined all technical terms and abbreviations used? ☐✓

Have you included **all** supporting documentation that you will be using, including – as appropriate – questionnaires and participant information, consent forms/form or note of procedure for recording oral consent, advertisements and surveys to be used? ☐✓

Are all pages (including appendices and attachments) numbered? ☐✓

SECTION F

You can submit this checklist by email and/or as a signed hard copy; if it is being sent by email only, the checklist, and any email from the head of department or nominee separately endorsing its submission, must be sent from a University of Oxford email address (i.e. as a minimum, the checklist and supporting documents must be submitted by the head of department or nominee indicating his/her approval from a University of Oxford email account).

Complete this section only if you do not need to submit form CUREC/2.

I understand my responsibilities as principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher as outlined in the CUREC glossary and guidance on the CUREC website.

I declare that the answers above accurately describe my research as presently designed and that I will submit a new checklist should the design of my research change in a way which would alter any of the above responses so as to require completion of CUREC/2 (involving full scrutiny by an IDREC). I will inform the relevant IDREC if I cease to be the principal researcher on this project and supply the name and contact details of my successor if appropriate.

Signed by principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher:.....

Date:.....

Print name (block capitals)...PAMELA M. IRWIN

Signed by supervisor:.....(for student projects)

Date:.....

Print name (block capitals).....

I understand the questions and answers that have been entered above describing the research, and I will ensure that my practice in this research complies with these answers, subject to any modifications made by the principal researcher properly authorised by the CUREC system.

Signed by associate/other researcher:

Print name (block capitals).....

Date

I have read the research project application named above. On the basis of the information available to me, I:

- (i) consider the principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher to be aware of her/his ethical responsibilities in regard to this research;
- (ii) consider that any ethical issues raised have been satisfactorily resolved or are covered by relevant professional guidelines and/or CUREC approved protocols, and that it is appropriate for the research to proceed without further formal ethical scrutiny at this stage (noting the principal researcher's obligation to report should the design of the research change in a way which would alter any of the above responses so as to require completion of a CUREC/2 full application);
- (iii) am satisfied that the proposed project has been/will be subject to appropriate *peer review and is likely to contribute something useful to existing knowledge and/or to the education and training of the researcher(s) and that it is in the *public interest.
- (iv) [FOR DEPARTMENTS/FACULTIES WITH A DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (DREC) OR EQUIVALENT BODY - PLEASE DELETE IF NOT APPLICABLE] confirm that this checklist (and associated research outline) has been reviewed by the Department's Research Ethics Committee (DREC)/equivalent body, and attach the associated report from that body.

Signed:.....

(Head of department or nominee e.g Chair of DREC, Director of Graduate Studies for postgraduate student projects)

Print name (block capitals).....

Date:.....

Please check with your department about its procedures for the approval of CUREC forms. If your department indicates that the checklist should be submitted directly to the IDREC, please send it, together with any supporting documentation, to the following address(es), keeping a copy for yourself:

Secretary of the Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk
 University of Oxford Social Sciences Division
 Hayes House, George Street
 Oxford, OX1 2BQ

IDRECs and/or CUREC will review a sample of completed checklists and may ask for further details of any project.

Appendix A.1.2 Ethics: Approval

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTER-DIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford. OX1 2BQ
Tel: +44(0)1865 614871 Fax: +44(0)1865 614855
ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk www.socsci.ox.ac.uk

Co-ordinator of the IDREC
Social Sciences Divisional Office



Friday, 6 May 2011

Pamela Irwin
Department of Sociology

Dear Pamela,

Research Ethics Approval

Ref No.: SSD/CUREC1A/11-114

Title: A conceptual analysis of social resilience, with reference to single older women living in rural Australia

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project, which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application, you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Ballinger'.

Dr Chris. Ballinger

cc: Dr George Leeson, Institute of Ageing
Anne Millard, Department of Sociology

CAJB/EB

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

Interview Guide for Officers of Community Organisations

Hello (name of participant) and welcome. Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research study. I look forward to hearing about your experience of being involved in ____ organisation in ____ (town).

Before we begin, I would like to confirm your name, contact details and position in ____ (organisation) and re-check that you are comfortable with recording our conversation. Thank you.

Question One: “Tell me about your organization”

- Interviewer probes - organisational structure and social networks
- Interviewer prompts - membership and participation

Question Two: “What does your organization do in ____ (town)?”

- Interviewer probes - civic participation and social capital
- Interviewer prompts - role and function

Question Three: “Tell me about a challenging situation for your community” “Was your organization involved?”

- Interviewer probes - neighbouring and community cohesion, community resilience
- Interviewer prompts - response to crises and adversity, type of resilience

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

Question Four: “What is ____ (town) like as a community?”

- Interviewer probes - value consensus, community culture, community resilience
- Interviewer prompts – strengths and assets, deficits and disadvantages

Question Five: “How do you see ____ (town) in the future?”

- Interviewer probes - value consensus, community culture, community resilience
- Interviewer prompts – aspirations, hopes and concerns

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you again for your time and helping me understand your experience of being involved in ____ (organisation) in ____ (town). I will follow up as soon as I have transcribed our conversation. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at ____ (contact details) if you have any questions or concerns about the interview or study in general.

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

Interview Guide for Single Older Women

Hello (name of participant) and welcome. Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research project – I look forward to hearing about your experience of living in ____ (town).

To begin I would like to confirm your name, address, age and marital status, and re-check that you are comfortable with recording our conversation. Thank you.

Question One: “Please tell me a little about yourself”

- Interview probes - personal context, self image and self identity, family composition, intergenerational solidarity

Question Two: “Can you talk about a challenge that occurred in your life and how you dealt with it? Did you turn to anyone for help? If so, whom?”

- Interviewer probes - individual mastery and control, personal resilience, support systems

Question Three: “Now, thinking about the present, how do you feel about your life at the moment?” “How do you keep busy?” “If you are in difficulty, how do you get help?”

- Interviewer probes - cumulated life experiences, ageing, social engagement and networks, social resilience

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

Question Four: “Tell me about a challenging situation for your community” “How did it affect you?”

- Interviewer probes - neighbouring and community cohesion, community resilience

Question Five: “What is ___(town) like as a community?”

- Interviewer probes - value consensus, community culture, community resilience
- Interviewer prompts – strengths and assets, deficits and disadvantages

Question Six: “How do you see ___(town) in the future?”

- Interviewer probes - value consensus, community culture, community resilience
- Interviewer prompts – aspirations, hopes and concerns

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you again for your time and helping me understand your experience of living in ___(town). I will follow up as soon as I have transcribed our conversation. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at ___(contact details) if you have any questions or concerns about the interview or study in general.

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

Protocol for Pilot Study

Participant Selection

- present background of research to women's discussion group (by invitation)
- solicit volunteers for pilot phases one, two and three to comprise a small comparable representative sample of the study participants
- use a snowball (chain) method to increase participant numbers if necessary

Method

Phase one - focus group

- conduct a focus group of six women to obtain constructive feedback on participant information, informed consent forms (Forms one and two above)
- modify the forms according to the focus group feedback

Phase two - trial interviews with rural organisational representatives

- conduct pilot interviews with an office holder from three rural organisations representing a women's association (for example, the Women's Institute), a church related group, and a fundraising charity (such as a hospital or sports auxiliary)
- modify the questions and interview guide according to the interviewee feedback

Phase three - trial interviews with six older single rural women

Appendix A.2.1 Questionnaire: Pilot

- conduct pilot interviews with six older single women from rural areas, each representing a 'cell' in the sampling frame
- modify the questions and interview guide according to the interviewee feedback

Appendix A.2.2 Questionnaire: Modified



Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my research project about the experiences of single women living in ____ (town).

Please use the following questions as a guide, and expand on your answers as fully as you feel comfortable. Your journal entries are of course, private, confidential and anonymous.

QUESTIONS

Please tell me about yourself – your childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle and older age...

How do you feel about your life at present?

When you think back over your life, would you change anything? If so, what?

Would you please share a highlight of your life?

And an experience that was more challenging - how did you deal with it? Did you turn to anyone for support? If so, whom?

Compared to the past, do you feel you now have more or less to offer people and/or your community?

How do you spend your time now?

What has been the hardest thing to accept in recent years?

If you are in difficulty, how do you get help?

In your opinion, what sort of world do we live in now? How does Australia compare?

What are the positive and not so positive things about living in ____ town? Would you consider moving from the area? Why or why not?

Tell me about a difficult situation for your community – How did it affect you? Others?

How do you see ____ (town) in the future?

I will follow-up and collect the journals as soon as possible on my return to Australia in September 2012.

Thank you once again for your time and support,

Pam Irwin

Appendix A.3.1 Participant: Information

**Information for Participants****What is the purpose of the research?**

The study aims to explore the experiences of older single women living in rural ____ (state), Australia. While there is research on ageing, single women and rural communities, there is not much information about the experiences of older, single women living in rural communities. It is hoped that the findings from this research study will positively influence public perceptions and government policy.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a woman aged 55 years or older, separated, divorced, widowed or never married, and living in ____ and/or the ____ shire.

Do I have to take part?

No - your participation in the study is voluntary. Choosing to take part (and to what extent) is entirely up to you. For instance, if you do not wish to answer a particular question, there will be no repercussions or consequences. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time, and all your information will be immediately destroyed.

What do I have to do?

If you would like to take part in the study, I will ask you to provide me with your contact details so I can arrange a briefing and journal 'hand-over' at a time and place that suits you. I will also provide you with my contact information so you can follow-up with any questions or concerns about the study. At our first meeting, you will also have an opportunity to ask questions and/or sort out any issues before signing the 'Consent to Participate' form.

What happens to my journal?

Your information will be treated with respect and in confidence, and will be securely stored and backed-up electronically. All personal details, such as real names, exact addresses and birth dates will be removed, and replaced with pseudonyms so no one will be able to connect you directly with any of the information.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Information about the study, including anonymised extracts from journals, will be shared with my supervisor (at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom UK) and other researchers as necessary. As the University of Oxford is committed to sharing research to benefit society and the economy, the written thesis will be deposited on-line and in print in the University archives. The thesis will also be published with open full access for

Appendix A.3.1 Participant: Information

future researchers. If appropriate, anonymised quotes from journals may be used in the thesis, and any additional publications and presentations arising from this study.

Who has approved of this study?

The Central University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford has approved this study.

Contacts for further information and/or complaints.

If you have any more questions, concerns and/or would like further information about the study, please contact Pam Irwin at 0448897856 until May 31, 2012.

Please note: from June 01 until September 01, 2012, I will be contactable at:

Email: pamela.irwin@sociology.ox.ac.uk

or

Post: c/o Oxford Institute of Population Ageing,
University of Oxford,
66 Banbury Road,
Oxford. OX2 6PR
United Kingdom.

You may also follow-up with my supervisor Dr. George Leeson at the Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford, 66 Banbury Road, Oxford. OX4 6PR. UK.

If you wish to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact Pam Irwin initially (as above), and I will do my best to sort out the issue. If this is not resolved to your satisfaction and you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0)1865 614871), or the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2BQ, UK.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in my study.

Kind regards,

Pam Irwin

Appendix A.3.2 Participant: Consent

**Consent to Participate Form**

University of Oxford
Department of Sociology
Manor Road Building
Manor Road
Oxford OX1 3UQ
United Kingdom
May 2012

Informed Consent for Doctorate Research

Research study: The experience of older single women living in rural ____ (state), Australia.

Dear

I am a Doctoral student in the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom (UK). My research study will explore single older women's experiences of living in a small rural community, and has been approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford. I would like to invite you to contribute to my research.

Eligible women will be invited to record their experiences of living in ____ (town) in private journals. This information will be treated with respect and in confidence, and will be securely stored and backed-up electronically. All personal details, such as real names, exact addresses and birth dates will be removed, and replaced with pseudonyms so no one will be able to connect you directly with any of the information.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Choosing to take part (and to what extent) is entirely up to you. For instance, if you do not wish to answer a particular question, there will be no repercussions or consequences. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time, and all your information will be immediately destroyed.

Information about the study, including anonymised extracts from the journals will be shared with my supervisor (at the University of Oxford) and other researchers as necessary. As the University of Oxford is committed to sharing research to benefit society and the economy, the written thesis will be deposited on-line and in print in the University archives. The thesis will also be published with open full access for future researchers. If appropriate, anonymised quotes from journals may be used in the thesis, and any additional publications and presentations arising from this study.

Appendix A.3.2 Participant: Consent

I appreciate that you are giving your time and expertise to participate in this study, and if you have any questions or concerns and/or would like further information about the study, please call me at 0448897856 until May 31, 2012. You can also contact my dissertation supervisor Dr. George Leeson at the Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford, 66 Banbury Road, Oxford. OX4 6PR. UK.

Please note: from June 01 until September 01, 2012, I will be contactable at:

Email: pamela.irwin@sociology.ox.ac.uk

or

Post: c/o Oxford Institute of Population Ageing,
University of Oxford,
66 Banbury Road,
Oxford. OX2 6PR
United Kingdom.

Finally, if you wish to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact Pam Irwin initially (as above), and I will do my best to sort out the issue. If this is not resolved to your satisfaction and you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0)1865 614871), or the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2BQ, UK.

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in my study,

I look forward to learning about your experiences about living in ____ (town),

Pam Irwin

Appendix A.3.2 Participant: Consent

If you are willing to participate in the Doctoral study outlined above, please tick and initial the appropriate boxes, and sign below:

Please tick and
initial the box

1. I confirm that I have read, considered and understood the participant information sheet for this doctoral research study 'The experience of older single women living in rural ____ (state), Australia', on
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and received satisfactory answers to my questions and/or any additional details that I have requested
3. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time from writing a journal and/or the study without giving any reason, and without any consequences for me. All I have to do it to inform the researcher Pam Irwin of my decision, and all my information will be immediately removed and destroyed.
4. I understand that this study has been reviewed by the University of Oxford Central Research Ethics Committee, and received ethics clearance
5. I understand that only the researcher Pam Irwin will have access to my personal information, and that all information about me will be treated confidentially, anonymised, electronically stored and backed up securely, for ten years. At the end of ten years, all records will be permanently deleted.
6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes from my journal in the researcher's thesis, and any additional publications and presentations arising from this study
7. I understand that the written thesis will be deposited on-line and in print in the University archives, and that the thesis will be published with open full access for future researchers
8. I understand how to raise a concern, and where and how to make a complaint
9. I agree to take part in this study

Name of participant (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Name of researcher (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

Table 6: Comparative sociodemographic profiles of the town, neighbouring towns, rural region, and the state.

		AREA								
		Town			Adjacent town X Y Z			Rural region		State region
YEAR		2011	2006	2001	2011	2011	2011	2011	2001	2011
Census Data										
Population	Total	2, 370	2, 364	2,509	1,355	968	680	1,580	1,860	
	Females	1,202	1,201	1,246	682	493	347	740	866	
Age (age ranges in years)										
Babies, Pre- schoolers (0-4)	Total	111 4.7%	115 4.9%	163 6.5%	74 5.5%	39 4.0%	26 3.8%	72 4.6%	136 7.3%	6.3%
	Females	54 4.5%	60 5.0%	80 6.4%	32 4.7%	26 5.3%	12 3.5%	36 4.9%	55 6.4%	6.0%
Schooler (5-14)	Total	289 12.2%	319 13.5%	337 13.4%	171 12.6%	90 9.3%	86 12.6%	207 13.1%	311 16.7%	
	Females	141 11.7%	166 13.8%	158 12.7%	32 4.7%	45 9.1%	49 14.1%	93 12.7%	151 17.4%	
Late schooler (15-19)	Total	151 6.4%	144 6.1%	159 6.3%	85 6.3%	64 6.6%	39 5.7%	127 8.0%	99 5.3%	6.8%
	Females	90 7.5%	65 5.4%	76 6.1%	34 5.0%	31 6.3%	20 5.8%	62 8.4%	42 4.8%	6.5%
Tertiary education, Independence (20-24)	Total	114 4.8%	85 3.6%	98 3.9%	43 3.8%	38 3.9%	6 0.9%	44 2.8%	46 2.5%	5.5%
	Females	62 5.1%	38 3.2%	49 3.9%	18 2.6%	21 4.3%	3 0.9%	23 3.1%	21 2.4%	5.3%
Young workforce (25-34)	Total	201 8.5%	204 8.6%	285 11.4%	107 7.9%	52 5.4%	28 4.1%	80 5.0%	149 8.0%	
	Female	95 7.9%	98 8.2%	126 10.1%	57 8.4%	29 5.9%	13 3.7%	39 5.3%	74 8.5%	
Parents, Home builder (35-44)	Total	291 12.3%	301 12.7%	300 12.0%	127 9.4%	100 10.3%	73 10.8%	181 11.5%	297 16.0%	
	Females	135 11.2%	136 11.3%	155 12.4%	60 8.8%	50 10.1%	36 10.4%	110 14.9%	155 17.9%	
Older workers Pre-retirees (45-54)	Total	276 11.6%	313 13.2%	332 13.2%	177 13.1%	150 15.5%	98 14.4%	286 18.0%	332 17.8%	
	Females	129 10.7%	165 13.8%	163 13.8%	99 15.0%	71 14.4%	53 15.3%	141 19.1%	156 18.0%	
Late middle age (55-64)	Total	379 16.0%	344 14.6%	316 12.6%	204 15.1%	168 17.4%	116 17.1%	310 19.6%	285 15.3%	
	Females	184 15.3%	165 13.8%	150 12.0%	99 15.0%	79 16.0%	56 16.1%	133 18.0%	131 15.1%	

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

Empty nesters Retirees (65-74)	Total	285 12.0%	265 11.2%	249 9.9%	163 12.0%	130 13.4%	117 17.2%	171 10.8%	140 7.5%	
	Females	138 14.5%	132 11.0%	123	82 12.0%	73 14.8%	53 15.3%	64 8.6%	55 6.4%	
Seniors (75-84)	Total	180 7.6%	193 8.2%	188 7.5%	135 10.0%	102 10.5%	66 9.7%	85 5.4%	54 2.9%	
	Females	111 9.2%	121 10.1%	104 8.3%	80 11.3%	50 10.1%	40 11.5%	38 5.1%	27 3.1%	
Elderly (85 and over)	Total	93 3.9%	81 3.4%	83 3.3%	68 5.0%	35 3.6%	26 3.8%	18 1.2%	11 0.6%	2.3%
	Females	64 5.3%	58 4.8%	61 4.9%	47 6.9%	19 3.9%	13 3.7%	0 0.0%	3 0.4%	3.0%
Ethnicity										
	Australia born	2,153 90.7%	2, 145 84.3%	2, 525 89.1%	1,225 90.4%	876 90.5%	567 83.4%	1,383 87.3%	1,661 92.0%	84.3%
	Overseas born	115 4.9%	107 4.5%	131 5.2%	74 5.5%	52 5.4%	58 8.2%	118 7.5%	82 4.6%	10.6%
Education										
University qualifications	Total	127 6.5%	118 6.1%	112 5.6%	72 6.5%	65 7.7%	33 5.8%	93 7.2%	108 7.6%	12.5%
	Females	99 9.9%	80 8.2%	72 7.1%	38 6.6%	47 11.1%	21 7.3%	68 11.3%	78 11.9%	14.8%
No qualifications	Total	1,152 58.5%	1,200 62.2%	1,314 65.4%				681 52.7%	872 61.7%	48.4%
	Females	595 59.4%	609 62.5%	672 66.7%				311 51.5%	418 63.3%	51.3%
Employment										
Labour force participation	Total	1,008 51.4%	1,011 52.3%	1,068 52.4%	49.2%	48.0%	34.2%	55.6%	56.0%	58.2%
	Females	466 47.0%	456 46.3%	439 42.4%	42.2%	41.2%	30.0%	50.0%	46.9%	43.0%
Employed	Total	980 97.3%	963 95.2	978 91.6%	529 96.9%	377 93.5%	181 93.3%	95.3%	94.0%	94.8%
	Females	453 97.2%	433 94.9%	409 93.2%	237 97.5%	167 94.9%	83 95.4%	95.3%	94.3%	94.9%
Work										
Paid										
Managers	Total	158 16.1%	156 16.1%		85 7.7%	69 8.2%	28 4.9%	341 44.6%		15.2%
	Females	47 10.6%	39 9.2%		25 4.3%	15 3.6%	4 1.4%	96 28.0%		10.8%
Professionals	Total	119 12.2%	131 13.5%		73 6.6%	47 5.6%	19 3.3%	72 9.4%		16.7%
	Females	79 17.8%	100 23.4%		47 8.2%	30 7.1%	9 3.1%	56 16.3%		21.6%

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

Technicians Trades	Total	141 14.4%	131 13.5%		80 7.2%	61 7.3%	19 3.3%	57 7.5%		15.4%
	Females	26 5.9%	23 5.4%		16 2.8%	15 3.6%	0 0%	11 3.1%		5.1%
Community Services	Total	81 8.2%	96 9.9%		53 4.8%	42 5.0%	20 3.5%	66 8.6%		10.3%
	Females	68 15.3%	84 19.7%		38 6.6%	28 6.6%	20 7.0%	50 14.6%		16.2%
Clerical Administrator	Total	90 9.2%	103 10.6%		47 4.2%	30 3.6%	20 3.5%	60 7.0%		11.7%
	Females	74 16.6%	77 18.2%		35 6.1%	27 6.4%	17 5.9%	58 16.8%		20.1%
Sales	Total	97 9.9%	76 7.9%		42 3.8%	39 4.6%	17 3.0%	41 5.4%		9.7%
	Females	71 16.0%	47 11.0%		24 4.2%	30 7.1%	11 3.8%	33 9.5%		13.6%
Machinery drivers	Total	66 6.7%	72 7.5%		46 4.1%	31 3.7%	26 4.6%	26 3.4%		6.9%
	Females	9 2.0%	3 0.7%		6 1.0%	3 0.7%	3 1.0%	2 0.6		1.3%
Labourers	Total	207 21.2%	182 18.8%		85 7.7%	55 6.6%	23 4.0%	88 11.5%		12.3%
	Females	64 14.4%	52 12.3%		37 6.4%	17 4.0%	9 3.1%	32 9.3%		9.6%
Unpaid										
Volunteering	Total	575 29.2%			411 37.0%	352 42.0%	157 27.6%	514 39.7%		23.4%
	Women	316 31.7%			211 36.7%	184 43.6%	87 30.4%	254 42.0%		25.2%
Household										
Composition										
Lone person households	Total	344 34.1%	351 35.0%	303 30.1%	199 34.6%	150 35.9%	145 45.1%	143 23.5%	138 19.9%	26.8%
	Total (45-64)	106 10.5%	98 9.8	82 8.0%	48 8.4%	57 13.7%	51 15.9%	70 11.5%	51 7.3%	9.5%
	Women (55-64)				17 14.3%	12 16.7%	14 20%			
	Total (≥65)	184 18.2%	183 18.3%	157 15.3%	117 20.5%	76 18.2%	82 25.5%	56 9.3%	57 8.2%	11.3%
	Women (≥65)				83 70%	48 66.7%	44 62.9%			
Ownership										
	Total dwelling	1,013	1,009	1,023	573	419	322	516	581	
	Owned	761	754	769	435	340	231			

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

	Repay (/month)				\$867	\$758	\$542			
	Rented	205 20.2%	199 19.7%	222 21.7%	110 19.2%	61 14.6%	62 19.3%	56 9.1%	73 10.6%	24.1%
	Rent (/week)	\$140			\$120	\$120	\$110			
Income (age ranges)										
Individual										
Nil income (/week)	Total	89 4.5%			66 6.0%	67 8.0%	33 5.8%	84 6.5%		6.6%
	Women	57 5.7%			36 6.3%	41 9.6%	20 6.9%	39 6.5%		7.4%
	Total (55-64)				6	16	9			
	Women (55-64)				3	12	6			
	Total (≥65)				3	8	6			
	Women (≥65)				0	8	3			
\$1-199 (/week)	Total	154 7.8%			64 5.8%	81 9.7%	38 6.7%	131 10.1%		8.0%
	Women	100 10.1%			41 7.1%	48 11.3%	21 7.3%	73 12.1		10.0%
	Total (55-64)				12	16	8			
	Women (55-64)				9	11	5			
	Total (≥65)				13	15	9			
	Women (≥65)				10	6	3			
\$200-299 (/week)	Total	336 17.1%			184 16.6%	127 15.2%	116 20.4%	211 16.3%		12.5%
	Women	172 17.3%			102 17.3%	67 15.8%	60 20.8%	103 17.2%		13.9%
	Total (55-64)				40	26	32			
	Women (55-64)				23	14	15			
	Total (≥65)				107	70	50			
	Women (≥65)				57	35	23			

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

\$300-399 (/week)	Total	333 17.0%			197 17.8%	116 13.8%	136 23.9%	180 13.9%		12.5%
	Women	201 20.2%			118 20.5%	67 15.8%	71 24.7%	96 16.0%		15.1%
	Total (55-64)				35	20	19			
	Women (55-64)				20	9	11			
	Total (≥65)				98	68	79			
	Women (≥65)				62	46	43			
\$400-599 (/week)	Total	324 16.5%			184 16.6%	123 14.7%	83 14.6%	190 14.7%		14.1%
	Women	198 20.0%			127 22.1%	72 16.9%	49 17.0%	97 16.1%		16.6%
	Total (55-64)				33	23	18			
	Women (55-64)				22	11	9			
	Total (≥65)				64	48	23			
	Women (≥65)				43	27	12			
\$600-799 (/week)	Total	262 13.3%			130 11.7%	100 11.9%	45 7.9%	145 11.2%		11.5%
	Women	105 10.6%			54 9.4%	44 10.4%	19 6.6%	65 10.8%		11.2%
	Total (55-64)				29	17	14			
	Women (55-64)				10	10	9			
	Total (≥65)				22	16	8			
	Women (≥65)				13	4	3			
\$800-999 (/week)	Total	137 7.0%			62 5.6%	55 6.6%	28 4.9%	97 7.5%		8.1%
	Women	41 4.1%			20 3.5%	24 5.6%	9 3.1%	40 6.7%		6.5%
	Total (55-64)				14	13	5			
	Women (55-64)				6	3	0			
	Total				9	0	3			

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

	(≥65)									
	Women (≥65)				6	0	3			
\$1,000-1249 (/week)	Total	96 4.9%			72 6.5%	48 5.7%	18 3.2%	74 5.7%		7.1%
	Women	30 3.0%			20 3.5%	19 4.5%	6 2.1%	20 3.4%		5.2%
	Total (55-64)				16	6	3			
	Women (55-64)				0	0	0			
	Total (≥65)				3	4	0			
	Women (≥65)				0	4	0			
\$1250-1499 (/week)	Total	47 2.4%			29 2.6%	23 2.7%	4 0.7%	50 3.9%		4.3%
	Women	15 1.5%			8 1.4%	8 1.9%	0 0%	27 4.5%		2.9%
	Total (55-64)				3	8	4			
	Women (55-64)				0	0	0			
	Total (≥65)				3	4	0			
	Women				0	0	0			
\$1500-1999 (/week)	Total	29 1.5%			24 2.2%	22 2.6%	15 2.6%	23 1.8%		4.4%
	Women	6 0.6%			8 1.4%	5 1.2%	7 2.4%	5 0.8%		2.5%
	Total (55-64)				10	6	0			
	Women (55-64)				5	0	0			
	Total (≥65)				0	0	4			
	Women (≥65)				0	0	4			
Household (equivalised)										
Lowest (quartile)	Total	377 42.5%	344 39.9%	341 38.9%				35.8%	35.1%	31.0%
	Range /week State	\$0-430	\$0-352	\$0-288						

Appendix B.1.1 Sociodemographic profile: Town/s

Medium lowest	Total	280 31.7%	299 34.7%	274 31.3%				36.1%	30.8%	29.2%
	Range /week State	\$431-751	\$353-601	\$289-492						
Medium highest	Total	159 18.0%	153 17.8%	179 20.4%				21.0%	21.6%	23.7%
	Range /week State	\$752-1,203	\$602-969	\$493-782						
Highest	Total	69 7.8%	66 7.7%	83 9.5%				11.6%	12.5%	15.8%
	Range /week State	≥\$1,204	≥\$970	≥\$783						
SEIFA ¹ (disadvantage index)										
Australia	1,002.0									
State	1,010.0									
		910.0			974.0	960.0	922.0	1,000		978.0

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 2006, 2011; .id, 2001, 2006, 2011).

¹ The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) was developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to rank areas in Australia according to relative socioeconomic dis/advantage. A lower score indicates a higher level of disadvantage, with the average population weighted SEIFA score for Australia set at 1,000.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

Monthly review

December 2011

My focus since arriving has been to get the fieldwork logistics organised:

Accommodation

I have spent very frustrating hours scanning real estate websites, advertisements for ‘for rent’ signs—with no luck. Rental accommodation is not ‘the norm’ in small country towns—most people buy rather than rent. The little rental stock that did exist was still occupied by people displaced from the neighbouring town’s disaster. Alternatively I had hoped to rent a farmhouse, but again, none were available.

The only option was to live in a caravan in the local caravan park. Again, I ran into problems. The manager would not rent an on-site van to me for such an extended period. Luckily, my brother sourced a second-hand caravan, and from the beginning of 2012, I will take up residence in my ‘new’ home.

Transport

Transport was also an issue. While the town had a reasonably good bus service to regional centres, there was no way to visit farming areas and small neighbouring towns. In rural Australia, a car is pretty well essential. Again, my family stepped in to help, and my parents (no longer driving) offered me the loan of their car.

Income

In addition to no places to rent, there were no jobs—but this was expected. I decided to wait until I got settled (and hopefully ‘known’) in the town before trying to find work.

(When I told people that I was moving to the town, their immediate reaction was negative, which was a bit worrying. When asked why they disliked the town so much, most people’s reasons had something to do with the “ nastiness ” of the residents. I guess I will find out....)

Daily jottings

January 01, 2012

- Moved into ‘my new home’ (the caravan) in the afternoon of New Years Day.
- Caravan park manager sited it in a shadeless patch of dirt. No tree cover and temperatures of 40C+
- Electric hook up a problem—required a very long industrial length power cord to connect to the outlet, and of course, everything is closed because it is Sunday. Luckily my next-door neighbour (one of the other permanent residents) lent me a cord so I have electricity. However, no light! (for some reason?? the caravan lights are all battery operated, and of course, they are dead) and the fridge is a bit suspect as well. I’m hoping that it will sort itself out with time.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

- I spent the afternoon cleaning, and then trying to sort out the best way to use the space. I have a table, bed frame (but no mattress). Luckily, there is a built in ‘bench’, and a small space for storing clothes. I will pick up the car, a chair, and some basics (supplies and utensils) from my parents this evening, and buy some other essentials when the shops open in two days.

January 02, 2012

- More cleaning and trying to figure out a system. However, I think the fridge is (sort-of) working—it’s very small, and not very cold, but I hope that it will do the job.
- Still very hot and stifling in the caravan – it’s metal, so heats up very quickly. (The neighbour complained to the caravan park manager about my ‘spot’ on my behalf (unsolicited), especially when there are a lot of grassy, treed spaces.
- Even though his ‘tenure’ precedes the manager (he is ‘grandfathered’ into some long-standing perks), the deal does not apply to me. However, I appreciate his gesture.
- No interior lights as yet, so its just as well that it’s summertime and daylight saving.
- I also checked out the local ‘supermarket’ (fortunately open for a few hours) to stock up on food basics. It’s a reasonable size and seems to offer a good selection of most things. Not sure how being vegetarian will go down though—meat is such a huge part of most meals in the country.

January 03, 2012

- Offices and shops are open again after the Christmas/New Year holidays. So, tried to hit the key places—the town offices to check out volunteering opportunities, the library (yeah!!), and the main street shops.
- I’d forgotten how bureaucratic volunteering is here, and my request for info was not received very enthusiastically. So I guess, it will be leg-work, and trying to get known...
- I lucked in though at the Information Centre—the manager (based in a companion office in another town) was there and seemed ok when I asked her about volunteering. At least she gave me an application form to fill out, and an ‘interview’ appointment (tomorrow). It would be a really good chance to get to know the town (from the ‘inside’) and also meet passers-through. I’m hoping that it will work out.
- Main street is small, but probably covers the essentials, with some choice of banks, and specialty shops (women’s clothing!) and definitely more substantive than the neighbouring towns.
- Also some manufacturing—agricultural equipment, an animal feed processing mill, but no longer rail services. A busy bypass road for large trucks carrying livestock and turkeys.

January 04, 2012

- Another consolidation day.
- My interview at the Information Centre seemed to go well. I’m now waiting on a police check. The Centre has lots of local history info, as does the library, so I’ve registered at the library and borrowed a couple of books.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

- Checked out the swimming pool – relatively close and free! If I pick my times, I'm hoping that it won't be very crowded and I can get in some exercise. It's still really hot during the day, and the van's AC is barely keeping up.

January 05, 2012

- Finally got some propane gas, so now able to use the stove top burners.
- Invited to shadow an experienced volunteer at the Information Centre to see what the 'position' entails...also suspect that it's a sort-of assessment of me too. Will organise it asap.
- Visiting 'tourist' attractions– there are some old 'colonial' buildings still around, and lots of evidence of the gold days (mullock heaps all through the bush).
- Interesting mixture of houses–some very big (and expensive) new ones, old 'foundation era' ones, and miners cottages, all mixed up, so no really obvious 'better or worse' part of the town. Some 'units', but not many, and definitely no vacancies.

January 06, 2012

- Registered at the Employment Centre for work opportunities–advised to go with the Newstart 55+ scheme because there are no work opportunities. They suggested I try volunteering at the local Hostel. I have an 'interview' appointment on Monday.

Weekly summary

January 01-07, 2012

Early impressions: there seems to be a lot of civic pride in the town–particularly the history, buildings, and gardens.

I've also noticed that there are more young people 'around', compared with some of the neighbouring smaller towns, where young adults are not usually visible in the streets etc. The officer at the Employment Centre let slip that the town attracts young unemployed young people because it falls outside the 100km distance to travel to work (and there are very limited work opportunities locally). I'm hoping that there are enough older, single women for my study here.

Even though the Employment and Information Centre staff seemed to accept me ok, I'm not sure what the 'local's think–word has already got around about 'the new resident of the caravan park'–a 'status' that is associated with 'no hoppers'. And although I'm very grateful to my family for helping with the caravan and car, neither of them engender a sense of success (both are old, the caravan is dented and needs repairing, and the car is like a tank–however, the upside is that it should give me some protection if I hit a kangaroo).

It will be interesting to see how the locals react to my 'volunteering' at the Information Centre as it is tacitly only 'available' to people who have lived in the area long-term...not so much at the Hostel, as it is not viewed as a 'desirable job'.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

Weekly summary

January 15-21, 2012

A busy week in terms of ‘community engagement’—shadowed four volunteers at the Information Centre. Shifts are either morning or afternoon, for 4 hours each. The other volunteers are all older locals. One has been very positive and welcoming—supportive of new blood in the town, two other were ‘indifferent’ (I suspect only tolerating me because of the ok from the Centre manager), and the fourth was critical and not very friendly. She made it very clear that anyone volunteering at the Centre should have lived all of their life in the town, and thus know the community inside out. However, as it gives me a good chance to meet people, and provides a wonderful resource to research the community (local historical records, as well up-to-date information about current and future events in the town), I will persevere. I’m expected to shadow for at least 6 sessions, covering all morning/afternoon and weekend shifts. Then, I should be ‘eligible’ for a slot on the roster.

However, the Hostel volunteering is not going so well. The initial meeting did not get off to a good start (for me) when it was held outside in the smoking area (after I told the activities manager that I did not smoke, only to be told that “I will shortly after I start there.” I also felt slightly coerced into volunteering—probably understandable because they need volunteers. I’m not feeling very comfortable with the type of activity they would like me to fulfil either—leading crafts and bingo. I’m also struggling with some of the care (probably a hang-up from my health background).

Fortunately, I came across (by chance) another opportunity to be a volunteer driver at the hospital, taking who do not have transport to specialist appointments in the city or regional towns. Here, I think I was lucky—to hear about it (it is not advertised) at a time when they needed drivers who were prepared to drive in the city. Although city driving is not my favourite driving experience, I’m ok with it. And very luckily (for me), the Hostel mislaid my paperwork, so I was ‘freed’ up to be available to drive. The car bookings are managed by the hospital staff, and they rotate through the list of drivers in order, rather than by patient request and/or preference.

Otherwise, I’m settling into caravan life—even getting used to the millipedes. It’s interesting to ‘encounter’ the ‘grey nomads’ (older retirees who travel around Australia) in the park—mostly, we (permanents) are ignored, but some of them seem overly ‘curious’ and look in windows...rather disconcerting.

Daily jottings

February 14, 2012

- Helped behind the scenes at the Library Lovers Tea for Valentines Day this afternoon. About midway through, some Red Hatters from a neighbouring town dropped in—their group started as a response to the devastation that almost destroyed their town just

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

over a year ago. As far as I know, it is the only Red Hat group in the area. Even though I'm sure (hope) that the locals appreciate the reason behind the group, I'm not sure if they approved of some of the Red Hatters flamboyant outfits.

February 17, 2012

- My first funeral with the Church catering team. It was 'allowed' butter bread under supervision—I think as an 'in', since I then spent the remainder of the time washing dishes. It was extremely hot in the Church hall, and some of the catering team quietly extricated themselves to an inner, dark, cooler room and 'hid out'—very amusing. Although I didn't have a chance to meet any of the funeral goers, the dish washing helped my local credibility, as everyone realised that it wasn't the best job to do in the heat.

February 21, 2012

- Helped with delivering Shrove Tuesday pancakes to offices and businesses in the town. It was a neat way to 'introduce' myself to offices/businesses that I might not have encountered otherwise.

February 24, 2012

- I've been included in the Women's World Day of Prayer service—we had a practice today. Apart from not messing up, I met another late middle-aged single woman who moved to the town a few years ago. There seems to be a bunch of them—definitely more than a coincidence, and everyone I've spoken with moved to make a new start. My 'encounter's seem to be random and serendipitous. I have not seen any of them at any organised event or groups. I am not sure why...

February 25, 2012

- Met with ____ in a neighbouring town. A very dynamic and inspiring young woman who is spearheading some leadership programmes aimed at 'empowering' young, rural women. Unfortunately the town has not expressed interest, so the programme is not available to local women.

Weekly summary

March 11-17, 2012

This is so incredibly exciting!!

I've decided that there are enough late middle-aged, single women in the town to warrant a comparison group for the older old women. I had no idea that this group existed when I chose to do my fieldwork here, and even after I had moved. They seem quite elusive, but I've been lucky to be in the 'right place at the right time' to run into them.

I'll rethink my questions to cover the late middle-aged women's context, but after spending some time in the town, I'd already decided that they needed to be changed.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

It also changes my status as a researcher here. While I've been a nominal 'local' because I grew up in a neighbouring town and have rural 'roots', I share the C changers age, and 'outside' experiences. Hopefully, I'll be able to engage both groups. It's a long weekend, so I hope that my hospital driving is not in demand this week, so I can spend time with my research question/s etc...

I've also been worried that the local women might not think much of my research 'role'. However, I'm sensing that it's probably not a big deal, as 'research' seems to be an irrelevancy to them. Ditto for the 'Oxford' thing...the only comment (from a potential participant) was "Oh, Couldn't you get into Melbourne? (ie. The University of Melbourne). I guess my local living arrangements (battered caravan and 'tank-like' car) do not convey a very academic 'persona' either.

Monthly review

April 2012

Some of the things I'm grappling with:

1. About the town:

Sense of 'place'

(Most) of the locals are very proud of their town, and staunchly protective of it.

Community cohesion

However, this 'civic' pride does not always translate into action—at one of the community (free) events, the organiser mentioned that people do not get out and 'do the work'.

Another prominent resident claimed that "community 'spirit' is 'lacking'". As yet, I only know of one occasion where the two main service organisations in the town collaborated.

Community insularity

'Outsiders' are not particularly welcomed or valued.

The locals seem to try to 'block' full access to community engagement, under many different guises: Based on my experience, this includes: failing to open up rotas (Information Centre where I 'shadowed' for 12 occasions before the locals released a slot on the roster); restricting information, and/or not providing it in a timely fashion, limiting contact details (no 'public' notification of regular meeting-in effect, disbarring new people from attending); no effort to reach out to newcomers (even the supposedly welcoming the after-church 'cuppa' were very awkward for me, as everybody collected in small groups, and nobody was particularly interested in conversing with me)

I don't get the same impressions from the neighbouring smaller towns, and I'm wondering if these differences are related to the difference in history (mining versus farming), size (the town is larger in terms of population and resource base), location, 'culture' and/or ??

2. About older women in the town

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

Older old women (80+ years)

The older women in the town seem focused on preserving the status quo. At a charity meeting, one of the members was severely reprimanded for ‘breaking away’ and organising a group to run an event because the local branch “could not get their act together.” ‘Rocking the boat’ is viewed as disruptive and deliberately making trouble. They are also suspicious of newcomer’s competence. My volunteer role with the Church catering team was doing the dishes—I am not sure when (or if) I will graduate to making sandwiches, and actually ‘serving’, maybe never. (I did let the team organiser know that I had catered for Shearers lunches in the past, but this did not make any difference).

Late middle-aged women (~ 55 to 65 years old)

The group of late middle-aged women in the town seem caught in “no mans land.” Although there are leadership opportunities (in a neighbouring town) for younger women, and the older locals have their ‘cliques’, the single women of my age do not seem to be engaged in any community activity or group, and they don’t get together. (I’m not even sure if they know of each other’s existence.) They also fall though the cracks in the social safety net—too young for a state pension, but subject to ageism in the workplace. I suspect that most of them are receiving support from the Newstart 55+ scheme too.

At this stage, I suspect that neither group is really “empowered”—the older old women because of long-term “rural” conditioning, and the late middle-aged women because of financial constraints...

Weekly summary

May 20-26, 2012

A hugely busy week:

- Two ‘attend to help’ functions—a funeral and a library play
- Two ‘attend for pleasure’ functions—Cancer morning tea and a library reading
- Two gatekeeper meetings
- One volunteer shift at the Information Centre
- One journal handover

Some circumstantial (the funeral, library week and the cancer fundraiser all falling in the same week) and some due to my unexpected return to the UK at the end of the month. Not exactly planned, but needs must...The gatekeeper meetings were to set up and ensure that things tick along during my 3 month absence.

I guess it’s not surprising that I was told to back off, that I was doing too much/overdoing my involvement in the community...and by two different people at different times in different contexts.... It wasn’t a fun message to receive. Obviously I need to ‘hear’ what they said and cut back...I’ll ease off in anticipation of my UK trip, and the trip itself will provide a natural break. As I’ll be doing all my interviews on my return, I won’t have as much time to be ‘out and about’ either, so hopefully, I’ll be able to extract myself ‘gracefully’.

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

So, just when I felt that everything was falling into place nicely—two solid and useful volunteering commitments, and other ad-hoc opportunities (the funeral catering and special events at the church and library), a strong participant sample, and feeling accepted by the community—“disaster”. Obviously I had become too complacent, and misread the community. I’m hoping that both situations (the UK trip and my over-commitment) will be salvageable on my return.

Monthly review

October 2012

In retrospect, I needn’t have worried about reducing my ‘presence’ in the community gracefully. I had to relinquish my site at the caravan park when I left and the manager refused to let me return and/or rent an onsite van. I was back to square one with no accommodation, and even though I now had contacts and connections in the community, nobody was prepared to rent a place for 3 months. So again, family to the rescue. As dad had been placed in care, mum stepped in and asked me to stay with her. It wasn’t an ideal situation, as they lived 100 km away, but it offered accommodation, and a great reason to withdraw from some activities. However, I decided to maintain my voluntary commitments at the Information Centre and hospital driver programme, but reduced my involvement in ad hoc events.

It also means that I have an unexpected chance to spend more time in the neighbouring towns as they located en route, and to tap into outsider’s perspectives as well as formulating my own.

I was also very concerned that I would lose momentum over the break, even though I tried hard to keep in touch. But out of sight, out of mind... However again, I needn’t have worried, as the gatekeepers did a brilliant job of sussing out potential participants, and being a general contact point.

Since then, I’ve been flat out checking on the status of the journals, and organising interviews. I’m really pleased with everyone’s willingness to participate, and very, very humbled by their stories.

On first impressions, both groups of women are incredibly resilient, but on different paths. I’m looking forward to immersing myself in their journey asap, but at the moment, my focus is on making sure I get to everyone.

So I’m still very busy, but now, in a good way.

It’s an interesting experience living at home after being away for so long. Mum is being incredibly understanding of my priorities, and cleared out a small room on the veranda for my ‘office’. Even with her patience and understanding, I’m feeling split between being a ‘daughter’ and keeping the research pace up. I’ve been trying to manage my time by

Appendix B.2.1 Sample: Researcher fieldnotes

making sure I pack as much in as possible when I go to ____, and keeping some days free for 'at home' reviewing and reflecting (and visiting dad and spending/helping mum). So far, so good, but I'm finding the juggling tiring.

Weekly summary

November 18-24, 2012

My split weeks are working out well. This week, I've been in ____ Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and in town Y on Tuesday and town X on Saturday morning, and at home on Friday and Sunday. Long days and lots of travel time. I'm trying to review the tapes and journals as they come in, so there's time for clarification etc. if needed, but transcribing is falling way behind. I think I'll have to leave it until I get back to the UK.

When I listen to the women's stories, I'm struck with how very hard their lives have been. Hardly any of them seem to have had a 'normal' life ie. with usual the ups and downs, but nothing too catastrophic happening. At this stage, I'm not quite sure why this is—their choices (or not)? the town? Is this the same in the neighbouring towns? (at the moment, I don't think so!) Other small rural towns? I'm hopefully the analysis will bring out some answers.

I'm also beginning to wonder about choice and how much influence the context (ie the town) has. At the moment, I'm doubting if either group of women has much real choice at all. (the C changers choice restricted through material constraints, and the locals from a lifetime of rural cultural expectations).

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

Beryl: Interview

#00:00:19-5# interviewer: the first question is very easy and you can start wherever you like, so please tell me something about yourself, something about your childhood, your adolescence, your young adulthood, middle and present age, and how much and where you start is entirely up to you.

#00:02:15-6# respondent: All right, well I was born in [the town] on 20th February ____, so I'm 81. I was born in a private hospital called ____ in ____ Street, which is a private home now.

#00:01:07-2# interviewer: did you have a private hospital in ____?

#00:01:09-3# respondent: we had two, believe it or not. One was in charge of Matron ____ which was down in ____ Street, actually, had a morgue, had everything down there, but I don't know much about that, that was very early days, but I know I was born in ____ which has since reverted to a private home. They cut half it off, it was much much bigger in the olden days than it was now. And my father was in the post office, stayed here all his life, came here as a 15 year old messenger boy I think, and loved it and got very involved in the community and hum took his promotions and retired here at 65. Mum came from a pretty poor family, had a sick mother and she was half reared by a family out at ____, then she went away nursing, she actually went to [city] and didn't like it at all and came back, married dad and they eventually had five children, four of us fairly close together and then one years and years later. Two boys, three girls. We all went to (catholic) school, we lived in ____ Street, and we ran around the corner to school... One of my brothers became a truck driver, the other was an invalid most of his life, he had a heart condition and he lives now, he is nearly 80 and he lives in the ____ hostel. I see him, when I'm well, I see him nearly every day. My other brother lives down at ____ on a little farm. My sisters were both hairdressers in _____. The young one was the older one's apprentice and they both live in [city]. They have done for 40 years or more. I became a teacher, taught up here, in my day, training you did a year or two as a student teacher at the school and then you went to college rather than the other way round. I was too young to go to college, so I put two years up here as a student teacher, then I went to ____ Teachers College in 1949, then I went to [city] to teach and that's where I met my husband, and he was a teacher too, and we lived in ____, we married you know after a year or 18 months or whatever we were engaged for, then we went to hum, we were living in ____ but I had a very difficult birth with my first child and after he was born, he was a perm baby and clearly delicate and needing a lot of care, and we decided to come to, there was a position out a ____ in a rural school. It has about 27 pupils, totally different from what it is these days, so he taught out there, and we lived on ____ farm in a really nice little cottage. We lived there with our, we had two boys eventually, and there we lived for four years, and then [husband] got a promotion in here to ____, so we moved into town and just at that time, the kindergarten was desperately short of a teacher, so my kids were both, the younger one was about to start school, so I took what I thought was going to be a temporary job at the ____ kindergarten (laughing) and it lasted for 28 years.

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

#00:04:56-9# respondent: In the meantime then, through Uni, I did a kindergarten diploma, and hum, then came time for the boys to go to secondary school, and that was the time things weren't great, that they couldn't have attended the convent, because there were only girls there and fairly soft subjects and hum, the high school was not terribly good at the time, so we sent our kids to ____ in ____, a boarding school for the next five years, and hum they, of course, didn't come back, they went to uni in [city], well one went to Uni, the other went straight into work and there they are still.

#00:05:39-1# respondent: so at the moment, I've been, we stayed on here, [husband] retired first, and went into woodwork, built up quite a business with woodwork, he was a very good woodworker, but unfortunately, he died about eight years ago, and I had retired by that time of course too. The boys had married and we have two grandchildren. One has just gone as an exchange student to France, she's, that's her there.

#00:06:14-6# interviewer: oh she's beautiful

#00:06:14-6# respondent: she is beautiful and a lovely girl too, so she's off, she only went last week, she arrived in Bordeaux.

#00:06:22-4# interviewer: oh, my son went to University in Bordeaux.

#00:06:27-9# respondent: did he (laughing) small world

#00:06:27-9# interviewer: yes, he did

#00:06:27-9# respondent: well she's with a host family in Bordeaux until 16th January.

#00:06:32-2# interviewer: oh fantastic

#00:06:34-3# respondent: and we also have a grandson and he hum they both attended [private] College, they're both good at school, but she will be attending school in France now for a little while. Then when she comes back, she does year 12 at [private school] and [grandson] is at ____ school. That's [grandson] up there. And hum what else.

#00:07:01-5# respondent: And here we are now, I'm here all alone. But the house in ____ Street, I felt the garden was far too big so about three years ago, I decided to build this house, which I have done, and I'm living quite happily here, and the only problem has been a few operations and but they're all right. Nothing serious, so ah...

#00:07:21-8# interviewer: you just had surgery

#00:07:31-0# respondent: three weeks ago, on the fifth. and I had, five years ago I had the other hip done, so, I'm

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

#00:07:38-4# interviewer: you're doing so well

#00:07:40-0# respondent: (laughing) thanks to my, well, one of my sons took me down, I stayed at ___ House the night before it was done and had the operation on the fifth, and my other son brought me home and sort-of saw that I was right for the night and I felt that I was able to cope. There's a tremendous lot of help around here, so that's where we're up to. My history.

#00:08:04-4# interviewer: with your house - I love it. Did you design it?

#00:08:13-3# respondent: yes. ___ from town X built it. I actually saw a house very similar to this in town X and I said and I knew someone who worked for the building firm, and my son rang him, he was a friend of this boy, and he said 'could you get mum the plans for that house?' and he said 'yes I could, I'll fax them off to you or something or rather' and he rang later in the night and he said would ___ talk to the builder, and I said yes, I would, so ___ came down, to ___ Street to see me and said we can put any facade on any design you like, so I had already, I'd been looking at hundreds of display homes and I hadn't just found what I wanted, but I saw, I had a design of something very similar to this. Do you think you could put the front on, that would do me beautifully. I wanted big room, I wanted lots of space, I thought it would be great, which it turns out to be, so it's the way it worked out. I went ___ to the draftsman down there, and he said 'to every design, I can add this and that, you can take off what you want, now I can put it up on the screen, you can say delete this, delete that, add this, add that, put a door here, put something there, and within the day, we had what I thought was right, and I just want, I want it rendered, I want it tiled roof with wide eaves and I want tinted windows. That was about it, you know, and I wanted it to be nice and airy and cool and open and everything.

#00:09:53-2# interviewer: It's..

#00:09:58-0# respondent: that's my story.

#00:09:58-0# interviewer: so my next question is, how do you feel about your life at present

#00:10:04-7# respondent: good (laughing)

#00:10:06-5# respondent: better than it was a month ago. I was in a bit of pain. You do get a bit apprehensive when you are old about facing surgery, so I'm fine now, I know I'm in the home stretch and provided I stay scared for the next few weeks and don't fall over, then I'm alright. () coming to the door all the time to see if I'm ok () and because I have to lie on my back for six weeks, I find that extremely hard, so my heels have been getting very sore, it's been worse than the wound, you know. So this friend ___, says to me I'll bring you a lambswool to put under your feet at night, so took it out of the grandchild's cot, and washed it up and dropped it this morning. And while she's here of course, she's gone to get the mail. So good.

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

#00:10:58-7# interviewer: so if you look back over your life, is there anything you would change, and if so, what would that be

#00:11:03-9# respondent: I'd like my family to be here, but they're not, but I can't change that. And I had the choice of where I was going to build and what I was going to do, whether I could go to the city, but () and my friends, lifelong friends here, and I probably wouldn't see as much of them in city (), so for the next few years anyway.

#00:11:28-9# interviewer: so both your sons are in [city]

#00:11:34-1# respondent: one's in ____ [city] and one's in ____ [city]

#00:11:36-8# interviewer: so they're a fair way away too

#00:11:39-0# respondent: they are, but they come home pretty frequently. I go down a lot, I was driving until about two years ago, I drive to [city], but not anymore. Frightening now

#00:11:55-3# interviewer: I volunteer drive for the hospital, and I'm one of the ones who said, you know, I'm ok driving in [city] which I am, but every time I drive I think, oh my gosh, it's so busy. It takes so long to get anywhere.

#00:12:08-2# respondent: it's different now, you know, I was driving after Len died, I drove down quite a bit usually to stay in [city] with [son] because that's where the grandchildren are, and hum, I was fine as long as I knew exactly where I was going, but then, you know, they change routes and also, I had to leave the car outside, well one of us had too. If his car was in, my car was out, and he used to offer always for mine to go in, but I don't want that. He's has had a car stolen from outside the house, so didn't want that to happen again, so hum, I'd prefer to go on the bus, it's very convenient and much cheaper, much cheaper.

#00:12:48-7# interviewer: one thing I've figured out about [the town] is it's so well situated for getting anywhere

#00:12:54-6# respondent: yeah, go to [regional centre], go to [regional centre]. I do drive to [regional centre], you know, quite () without any problems. Don't go to very much, I don't like [regional centre] all that well.

#00:13:09-4# interviewer: () for some reason. I grew up in ____

#00:13:09-4# respondent: oh did you

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

#00:13:09-4# interviewer: yes, it was easy to go to [regional town] on the [highway], but since I've been here, I've had to go to [regional town] a couple of times and I'd rather [regional town]. I don't know why but I do.

#00:13:26-2# respondent: I prefer [regional town], probably because you know, I knew [regional town] when I was in college there and all that

#00:13:31-3# interviewer: so did you have your surgery done in [regional town]

#00:13:36-0# respondent: yes, at ____ [hospital], with ____, the man who did the first one, you know, everything was just the same as the previous time.

#00:13:45-3# interviewer: () for getting therapy or anything

#00:13:47-5# respondent: well the two didn't need it actually. I do my exercises three time as day, they offered me physio but it was going to be awkward to get there. You know I would have to ask someone to take me, you know and I would have done the same routine as I can do here. I've done them this morning, and I'll do them shortly after lunch and I'll do them before I go to bed. I know what they are now, and I'm quite happy to do them myself. I had the district nurse to take the staples out last Monday and I could have a follow up from her but the wound was fine, so but I would know if it wasn't and she had left me her number and I will ring her if anything happens and I've have always had home help once a fortnight so they have doubled the home help with the proviso if I want anything shop or anything like that I can just ring here, so it's organised from [regional town], so that's good.

#00:14:45-7# interviewer: oh, you're a physiotherapist's dream

#00:14:48-4# respondent: (laughing) I don't know about that

#00:14:52-9# interviewer: there are many people who have exercises and don't do them.

#00:15:03-7# respondent: no it is hard, you've got to discipline yourself, but I figure for a few weeks you can put up with that and then you're all the better later on.

#00:15:09-5# interviewer: and that will give you the push and then it's just plain sailing

#00:15:15-8# respondent: well I hope when I go back on the 19th to [the surgeon] that hum that everything will develop at the end of it. That's what happened last time.

#00:15:32-9# interviewer: what is a highlight in your life, it seems as if you have had lots

#00:15:34-5# respondent: well I did (laughing) I suppose. Getting married, birth of the kids, their achievements, you know, they've done, one of my sons is the ____ and today he's in [city] working today, I'll tell you this, he put his daughter on the plane on Friday

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night, he went to [city] Sunday to work for the day, Monday, Monday night he came back, Tuesday he worked in his own office in [city] Wednesday, he went to [city] again, tonight he comes home, he goes straight from the airport to out to ____ to his son's, not graduation because Jack is only in year seven, but the end of year function. He didn't have time to go home in between times, he had to go straight to that, and he's home Friday in his own office, Saturday, Sunday he goes back to Canberra for the day, I think it's forever like that, but anyway, they've all coped with it really well. And my other son's in real estate and hum, he and his wife live in ____ and yeah, and they're pretty, they're, I think family's probably the highlight.

#00:17:04-2# interviewer: I understand why

#00:17:04-2# respondent: although where ____ [son] is in ____ at the moment, it was a lovely quiet street, not quiet street but double highway, but mainly single homes you know, and two old homes were demolished recently and they put, I think it's a four story development, there's something like 48 units in the () and the traffic, it's hard to get a park out in front of your own home. And it's just altered things so much, but they couldn't do anything about it, they all sort-of applied to VCAT for a smaller development, but they couldn't get it, and just a bit further up there's a similar one, so that's added so many cars to the street.

#00:17:55-2# interviewer: and pressure of people and noise

#00:17:55-2# respondent: it's altered the hum internet, it interferes, they need a tower and all that. ____ [son] is at the stage where he often has to go outside and take his phone calls and all the people in the street are complaining, but Telstra are not doing much about it, you know, so they () to them, you know (laughing). The cheaper phones work there but the iPhones and things just don't work. My phone works because it's a cheaper one.

#00:18:25-7# interviewer: mine died the other day and I've got mum's cheap one, and I'm sure it would, but I'm even finding that it's more complicated than mine which is older.

#00:18:37-1# respondent: it's ridiculous isn't it. Well ____ [son] got in touch with Telstra, Telecom or whoever he had to get in touch with anyway, and their solutions were buy a cheaper phone, take your calls in the car or erect a tower, and all the residents in the street are trying to get Telstra to put a proper tower in. It's up to them you would think, but anyway, not very satisfactory

#00:19:05-2# interviewer: no not very satisfactory at all. If you think back to an experience that was more challenging for you, and who did you turn to for help and how did you deal with it

#00:19:15-9# respondent: well right up to my kids went to school, my mother was here and she was a pretty strong sort of woman, you know (laughing). She died when she was 97 and she still had all her faculties and everything. She was in the hostel for the last four

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years of her life, but until then, she was in her own home with an invalid son, you know, she did extremely well. So I suppose she was my support, and when I was working, when the boys were little, and all that, there was always someone there you know. I was the eldest girl in my family, so they had aunties that helped out and I was, you never had to go outside the family for anything much, you know they were pretty supportive. And ____ [husband] was a great standby too, so you know, I think you know

#00:20:13-4# interviewer: what, was he well up to his

#00:20:15-7# respondent: oh yes, perfectly well. He was 82 when he died rather suddenly, but he died from kidney failure that was due to diabetes but he didn't know he had diabetes, so, and he'd only had it for about three months. But he was fit right up 'til I suppose the day before he died. It was a great shock, but you know, they said well, had he lived he may have been blind, he could have been in care. He would have hated that because he was a very active man. Very thin, tall thin man, didn't look the most robust but oh, he was tough. I think if he was just a little older than I am now, no comparison with what he could do and what I could do. He'd get out into that shed after he finished work, he's get out, he built this great big shed in ____ Street and he did actually beautiful wood turning. He was so interested in all that, so that sort-of kept him going. He couldn't get out into the shed quickly enough (laughing). And he actually started, he and ____ started the woodworkers club here, which was different from the men's shed, but they started that and they used to run functions and they'd go to meetings all over the place. Yeah, they were very involved in that. So we've all got lots of souvenirs, I haven't got any in the kitchen here, but there are things around that [husband] made, you know. He did a lot of the boys houses, not the building of the house, but the things that got them all, tables and ornaments and all that sort of thing. He was talented in that regard.

#00:22:07-7# interviewer: compared with the past, do you feel you've got more to offer people now or less

#00:22:10-5# respondent: more to offer people

#00:22:15-8# interviewer: yes and the community

#00:22:15-8# respondent: I did a lot more for the community when I was young (laughing) but I don't do much now other than attend church and I used to be a volunteer at St. Vinnies for about 12 years and hum and I was the Diocesan group leader for the Catholic Women's League, played tennis and I played a bit of golf, and was over the years, secretary of this, that and the other, mainly in the church, but I don't do anything like that now at all, but I figure when you get to 81 you can just sit back (laughing), all done now. We just said when we left for dinner the other night, my friend across the road and me, you know, the younger generation, or the middle aged, not the young, you don't seem to get the young to do too much these days, but the next generation or two down from us were there cleaning up and we sort-of drove up and said 'oh well' we just picked ourselves up and went home (laughing) you know (laughing) ().

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#00:23:22-4# interviewer: well it's really good that you've got a younger generation coming up because, where my mum and dad are living in ____, it's quite interesting, there've got a very active group of older women say in their 80's, my mum's 86, and they've got young ones with pre-school children and they don't seem to have anyone in the middle.

#00:23:42-1# respondent: we haven't got too many I'd have to say, but we have enough to run those sort-of functions and all that, but they're not, they're not young, Young people don't go to church now. My own kid's don't and they were reared very much as church goers, but they're good kids, good men you know, and I think a lot of people are, but they just don't attend church or anything, which is a shame, but anyway. Nothing much we can do about it.

#00:24:14-9# interviewer: they've got their own lives. I've got two sons as well and neither of them go to church either.

#00:24:17-6# respondent: and I bet they were reared. Yet they'll do anything for you and all that sort of thing. And they do lead busy lives of course. We do too of course, but we fitted it in, you know

#00:24:39-2# interviewer: mum says that all the time, but I remind her, but you were as well. How do you spend your time now then

#00:24:51-5# respondent: I read a lot. I used to sew a lot, I don't do a lot of that now, but you're slower at this age too, you know, but normally I'm still driving and I do go to the hostel every day and I go the shops every day. I mean I could do a shop once a week and not worry about it, but I get out. I go to all the social things, like the fairs and I am very involved with the church very much as I said before, and anything that's on there, I'm part of. I don't play bowls and I don't play golf anymore, and I naturally don't play tennis anymore, any of those things, but and since I came here, I go to bed fairly early at night. I don't go out at night that much and I've got television on the wall in the room and for look for winter I just go to bed very comfortably. I just do my own thing now, but I was going to [city] fairly frequently when the grandchildren were young, you know, you know, I do what I want to do.

#00:26:01-3# interviewer: and enjoying your house

#00:26:03-3# respondent: yes, well that's occupied me for the last two years at least, you know. Shopping for, looking and comparing and deciding what you want, and you know, finding the right pictures and the right everything else, that all takes time, and then seeing it through. And the garden was the big thing. There was absolutely nothing here and hum, [charity] mowed it, I wouldn't call it lawn, but it's grass, weeds. But they keep that done, they come every three weeks, and I've got this, oh he's a god send, an older man who's retired, and he's not actually a gardner he's more a labourer, he'll just do the weeding and

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he put all the boards around and you know, he plants the plants. It's done now, but now I'm out of action, he's coming every third day, but he's not, he doesn't want too much work. It was fortunate that I got him. The woman that he lives with had a cafe, you may know, ___ is her name, well she had a cafe for a little while in the ___ Hotel, and I was down there one day with a friend having coffee and we remarked about the beautiful garden that they've got. They bought an old home and they've been renovating it up () Road, and I said '___ your garden is lovely' and she said 'oh yes, he's a pretty good gardener my ___' and I said, just joking 'You wouldn't hire him out would you?' and she said 'look I'll ask him' so she went home and she asked him and the next day, she said come back tomorrow, and I'll tell you. And she said ___ would like to meet you. I thought all right, so I must have passed muster and he decided yes, he would, and so I've had him now, ever since, you know, probably 18 months or so. And he pops in here, like a cuppa tea and he's a great reader, that's another thing, and he brings me all books and all sorts of things and he loves to talk about them afterwards. We've got different tastes, he belongs to the book club.

#00:28:18-0# interviewer: oh I think I know him

#00:28:18-0# respondant: ___

#00:28:21-4# interviewer: I do know him. He will be there this morning

#00:28:21-4# respondant: he will be, that's right, and he will be here with me tomorrow. But his is a very interesting story, has he ever told you his life story? He's Polish and his mother spoke seven languages and she and her two little boys were in a concentration camp apparently. It was only the ability to interpret that kept her alive. I think his father died of TB in the camp. He wasn't burnt or anything. But they came, they had a choice of going to Canada or Australia and they came to Australia. She actually died in her bed at the age of 84 in ___, like after all that early life. He didn't have much of a schooling but he's sort-of self educated and his knowledge is fantastic. He's very interesting to talk to. He worked on the railways, he's never had a gardening background but ___ comes from a gardening family and what he wants to know, he asks her. And she pops down occasionally to say what to do with different plants or what to put in or whatever, and I want just easy care, something that will sort-of look after itself. And hum it all got rotary hoed up and different things put in and oh I got a bricklayer to do all that retaining wall at the front, so it's all fort-of, it's contained and it's alright. When it blooms, when it all grows, it'll be, it's all very easy, wants cutting back now, it needs to be cut probably next week, you know a bit of that cut back and all that. But I just leave that to him now. I'm saving myself any worry (laughing). I've worked hard enough to sit back now (laughing)

#00:30:24-8# interviewer: the hardest thing to accept in recent years

#00:30:27-6# respondant: well I can't move as fast, even without this [cane], I mean, I'm a lot slower than I used to be, but I don't think I've got any big worries about accepting anything. I would like, I mean I don't know how this, it can never work because much as

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all I would like to be closer to the family, I do worry a bit about being entirely on your own, but I think in ____, you know, unless you drop dead or something like that (laughing), you know you've got time to call somebody, you know.

#00:31:07-8# interviewer: but of course, that's a very genuine concern, when you are on your own, and actually, probably no matter what age

#00:31:14-4# respondent: and I know that if my blinds weren't up in the morning or if I didn't appear, they're used to seeing me going in and out, and the same as I would with them. If you didn't see anyone for a few days, you would wonder. And my boys, I speak to one of them probably only once a week, it's not that we don't get on, that's just the way it is. But the other one, there's always something to tell about the kids or there's something. We probably speak every couple of nights or if there is any news we tell each other, anything like that. And my sister's are the same. Someone would miss me if I wasn't around very soon. If [son] rang and he got no answer, he's quite friendly with a neighbour, our son's are quite friendly, he would probably ring that woman and say 'have you seen mum?' or 'I can't get mum' or, but he might wait two days or something before he did it. But if there were consecutive calls that weren't answered and also I've got a brother down at ____ who rings me nearly every day, so someone would miss me, so I'm not really worried about it. But that's probably the nearest thing to worry that I've got. I mean the house is mine, I've got no bills or no debts and I can still manage my own affairs. So I manage my brother's as well (laughing)

#00:32:47-3# interviewer: in your opinion, what sort of world do we live in now

#00:32:47-3# respondent: I'm a bit worried about the world. I don't think it's as good a place as when we were growing up, when I was growing up, you know, I don't think we realised how lucky we were then. It's all doom and gloom and there are shocking natural tragedies like fire and floods. They just didn't, fires probably happened but not on the scale they are now, and it's world wide isn't it. Dreadful

#00:33:26-0# interviewer: and we just have to look back a couple of years when we had floods and fires here

#00:33:26-0# respondent: we had everything didn't we, a couple of years ago. And in places you would never really expect it. I mean look at _____. I mean they, some of those people will never recover. I was over in _____ just a few months ago and I thought well, you know there's still all that those white goods there as you go in, and the cars that all had to be abandoned, and I don't think I could cope with that. If you were flooded here and you lost your car, particularly if your insurance company did not pay up, you'd have nothing and you can't start again, not at this age.

#00:34:13-2# interviewer: what would you do?

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#00:34:13-2# respondent: I've no idea. That's why I think the insurance companies have really () if you've been paying you premiums then they're entitled to see that you something else for that.

#00:34:24-2# interviewer: and it appears, unfortunately that some of them didn't play ball very well

#00:34:24-2# respondent: no they didn't. If you're young you can probably pick up a good () be hard probably start again but you can't start when you're no longer working or anything like that and no pension or super or anything else is going to make up for that. I mean you've lost everything.

#00:34:55-3# interviewer: and it's always seems to be very hard starting again. In your case here

#00:34:55-3# respondent: it was a joy. I was a matter of choice. Actually in between times, when I was at ___ Street, it was a good house, you probably know it, it's the first house in ___ Street around the corner. You know, go over the railway line, before the hospital, ___ Street, and ours was the brown house, second from the corner. It was a big house, a lovely home actually and it had all these beautiful sheds and things in the back yard. But because it was a fairly expensive house, it took quite a bit of time, it took about two years, two and a half years, to sell. But I was very fortunate, I did sell and I got the price I wanted and in the meantime, I was offered a lovely unit down in ___ Avenue. The woman that owned it was in the hostel and would never go back, but the family didn't want to sell it and still don't. They want to keep it, but I lived there in a three bedroom unit in a group of four for 18 months while this house was being built. And I did offer to buy it and forget this house and wanted that, but they didn't want to sell it, so I went ahead with the building here. And I'm quite happy now that I did.

#00:36:26-5# interviewer: it's no small deal building a house

#00:36:26-5# respondent: no, my brother-in-law said to me, he's a plumber and his wife's 14 years younger than me and they come up occasionally, and when it was being built, he said, he couldn't believe that, I don't know how to say this, it sounds like bragging, but it's not. He just didn't think I had it in me, I think to build a house and he said he couldn't find anything that he would have, and he's a very clever sort-of fellow too, he wouldn't have done anything differently. And I build it to my needs, you know, to what I wanted and totally different to what I had before, which was what I wanted too, you know. And I was fortunate that I was able to buy what I wanted, I haven't got a fortune left but I hope I've got enough to see me out. I've got what I want, I don't need. I've been here now for a month, someone said to me the other day 'do you want some money' or do you want me to get you some money, and I thought well, I'm not, before I went in I knew when I was going to have the operation, so when I cooked a meal I put a little bit aside in the freezer. I didn't have to get Meals on Wheels, I've been eating my own food, the girls have all been bringing me stuff anyway (laughing). I've got a fortnight's food in the freezer still

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

without going out even, but you do have to get the perishables, but the girls will do that for me.

#00:37:50-2# interviewer: so in terms of the positive and not so positive things about living in ____

Beryl continued

interviewer: so in terms of positive and not so positive things about living in ____ [the town]

#00:37:55-2# respondent: I reckon ____ great. Oh look, I could have gone closer, I thought about that, I thought about perhaps going to a retirement village or something like that but I didn't reckon I was ready for that yet, another five years and I might. But I always have loved ____ and I've been involved because I saw two generations of parents when I had the kinder, and then I've had the children of children I had, and hum, I've followed them a bit, and I like _____. I just wish we had a bit more industry or something to make it a bit bigger and () for the next generations sake. They all have to go, don't they, there's nothing between school and, they come back sometimes when they're married or when they're older, but you lose them and you generally lose them forever. My kids will never come back, they wouldn't even think about coming back now. The grandchildren are Melbourne kids today but they like to come for a day or two, but they're all anxious to get back to what they..

#00:39:00-5# interviewer: I've got a son who lives in [city] now and he hardly ever comes up because

#00:39:07-7# respondent: //there's nothing here for him, no

#00:39:11-2# interviewer: he doesn't relate

#00:39:11-2# respondent: //my kids are the same. Well they went to boarding school for five years and they don't know anyone anymore. They're more friendly with the kids they were in boarding school with, you know. And I think we're well off, like I have the home help and I've got type two diabetes, it's well under control and hum and ____, a lot of the people haven't got anything like, I think we've got good facilities there. We probably could do with another doctor or two, but it's really hard to get into the doctor. ____ is my doctor and I find her excellent and I hope she stays.

#00:39:52-9# interviewer: well I hope they both stay

#00:39:52-9# respondent: yeah, I don't know ____ that well, but I'm very happy with _____. And, like you said, you drive the community car, well I've been able to drive myself, but before I had the operation, I had to go and have a few medicals, and I got the community

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

car and that was absolutely wonderful. First time I've used it. My sisters can't believe the facilities that we've got that they just haven't got in the [city].

#00:40:26-8# interviewer: and that's one advantage about being in a small community

#00:40:28-2# respondent: and we know if we're really sick we can go to [regional centre] or [regional centre] or wherever.

#00:40:38-4# interviewer: and it doesn't take that long

#00:40:38-4# respondent: no. I take my brother from the hostel to [specialist] in [regional town] sometimes, you know, but I've always, up till now, I've always been able to drive myself, but I, and after this I'll be able to drive after this. I've just had my licence renewed, so I hope I'll be able to do that. But it was tremendously handy that day, because I thought I was going to three places, but it had to be five, and I wouldn't know where, and I had to have a few X-rays and blood tests and you know, various things beforehand, and these days, you pay in advance for a lot of these things, so [friend] actually drove me and she said to me I'm at your disposal. Tell me where do you want to go and we went. I thought it was it was very good.

#00:41:25-8# interviewer: it's a really good service I think, and it's really enjoyable. I met great people while I've been doing that.

#00:41:31-5# respondent: I'll sing it's praises forever. I don't go to elderly citizens or anything like that, but I could.

#00:41:44-5# interviewer: do you go to Probus

#00:41:44-5# respondent: yes, it's very good. And it's very good for widows, and there's lots of trips, and I don't go away on the trips, I'm a home body, I like my own bed. Look if I had a husband, we'd probably do those trips, you know if [husband] was around. I don't like sharing, I must admit, I like my own bedroom and I like to read at night or watch tele or do whatever I want to do, so I don't go on those cruises or anything like that, but I go on all the day trips and love them. And we do have good guest speakers, I'm going, they're having their Christmas outing, their Christmas function at the club next Wednesday, I've booked in for that, [friend] take me to that.

#00:42:28-9# interviewer: and the fact that you've got two groups

#00:42:28-9# respondent: yes, it's amazing isn't it

#00:42:28-9# interviewer: how do you see [the twon] in the future

#00:42:34-7# respondent: worried about it a bit. I think it's (pause) Well as I say, we haven't got many industries or anything like that, and we've got a few empty shops, but

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

we've got plenty of food outlets and all that, tons of them, probably too many. And the pubs don't worry me, I suppose there's enough of them. But I remember when there were eight functioning hotels here, you know. And they all had clientele and things were different. I don't know if we need pubs, but I'm not a woser, but I don't drink but hum, I don't know, I think now, I shop away a bit but not for food or anything. It's just that while I'm away, I (pause). But we've now got a few frock shops and all that. A bit of variety. But it just doesn't seem to me to be going ahead, you know like it was, and I think a lot of, like my kids will have trouble getting money back on this house and there are dearer houses. There are a lot of lovely homes that have been built in [here], but they'll never see, they'll never get their money if they had to sell, whereas if it was in [city] or anywhere, you know. ___ said to me when I was selling ___ Street, he said if it was in [city], it would be worth a million bucks, but here, it's worth about 200, which is heart breaking isn't it. It was a big four bedroom house with absolutely everything. It was probably before its time. Like we built probably the first house with an ensuite in [the town]. We built it in 1975, it was a very modern lovely home but we built it exactly, it was an hum a what was (pause), I can't think of the name of the firm that built it, but we had to pay for the copyright and everything. It was a very modern home at the time, and they allowed us to build here, whereas they had display homes all over [city] and everything, but we decided we'd pay for the copyright and get our own builder, which we did, and it had about five big sheds all electrified in the yard and it was a really nice home. But it was just too big for me. I didn't want four bedrooms and a big yard and sheds and all the rest. So

#00:45:08-2# interviewer: so following on from that, in terms of difficult situations for the community. What happened? I think it was the flood in [town]

#00:45:19-9# respondent: //oh no, what happened to close these places down, people left (pause) when the mill, we had a very flourishing flour mill and employed half the town (laughing) but it closed and that, and in the RSL hall we used to have a factory, a garment factory and that employed a lot of married women, a lot, so they were sort-of two big industries that closed. And probably when, not thought about it much, but I suppose the people left, but they aren't () you know. (pause) But I think education wise and I mean we have got doctors, a lot of people haven't, and we're better off than a lot of country towns.

#00:46:15-6# interviewer: yes, that's true. It's a little bigger, so because it's a little bigger, there's more demands. I think there's more services to meet that demand. I've really enjoyed living here.

#00:46:45-4# respondent: have you been here long

#00:46:45-4# interviewer: I moved here on New Year's Day. I had been living in England so when I decided to move back, I sort of thought, right, ___ [town] where my parents are now was very small, and I thought the two biggest towns that are still close enough that I can still visit my parents if and as needed, was [the town] and ___. I didn't know ___ at

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

all, but I did know [the town] from school and I loved it, and I thought right, I'll move here.

#00:47:12-1# respondent: I think it's a wise move. I intend to, if I keep well, and everything goes as it's going now, I intend to stay here for another five or six years or something like that, and then maybe either into a retirement village or something. My sister-in-law has just gone into a retirement village, she's not very well, she's in [city], and it's a little different because her family are all in the vicinity and everything, but she didn't want to live with them and she gets on extremely well, and one of them is there every other day, you know, she's got five kids, but she's very happy at a place in [city], and hum, hum, I was speaking with her just last night, and she said I consider I've made the best move I possibly could, you know. But I'm not thinking of that yet, but you know, no one knows what's in the future. It mightn't get to that, you know, but when you're really old (laughing) (laughing) you can't then look after yourself, so you've gotta sort-of you know, go somewhere. But I'm not thinking about that yet at all.

#00:48:18-8# interviewer: you have

#00:48:33-0# respondent: I think I've been lucky

#00:48:33-0# interviewer: I think we also create our luck, and a lot of older people or younger would not dream of building a house

#00:48:47-9# respondent: no people around, a lot of people said to me 'what on earth are you, do you know what you are doing' I remember one fellow I was standing beside at an auction one day and he said to me 'I heard you you're going to build a house' You know I bought this block, it all happened rather suddenly. I was, ___ who lived, ___ and ___ who live next door, and ___ family owned all this land all around here. He actually built, when he and ___ got married, he built the house opposite, where ___ live now and his father and mother were here, and his uncle was down there, they all died and ___ finished up with all the land. He had all these blocks, he had a house to sell there and this house where he was born, hum, was on this property, was moved, a very nice home, just out in the country a bit now. This was a vacant block and he also owned a few farms. I met him in the street one day and had taught all his kids at kinder, so I knew them very well, and we just got talking casually in the street one morning and he said 'oh we're getting old now, we want to divest ourselves of some of our property, you know, I think he said they had something like 26 titles or something. Very wealthy man. Anyway, he said they owned a shop, they had the [farming machinery] shop and everything else, and I was thinking about all that you know, and I happened to come home, which I often did, I was going home to ___ Street, I drove along you know, the street there and this block was sitting there, looked really lovely and I thought 'oh he wanted to sell that', I wonder, I was in a position to buy it or do nothing with it if I wanted to, so I thought terrifically handy to the street when I can no longer drive or anything like that. So I didn't like to ring him and say would you sell it to me, I suppose that would have been the thing to do, but I thought, I'll do the right thing and I'll ask the estate agent, because he had said that he had a lot of

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

property on the market you know. So I rang [real estate agent] and he said that we haven't got it, but I do know if he wanted to sell it before, but he didn't, how shall I put this, not that he didn't like the people he was selling to, but he, he knew the woman would put a business on the place and he wouldn't want that. So that, he pulled the plug on that. They wanted the block but he wouldn't sell it to them. So [real estate agent] said 'well let me ring him and see what he has to say'. So he rang Bruce and he rang me back and said '____ wants you to come down and have a coffee with him this afternoon', so it was like the interrogation to see if I passed, anyway, so I did (laughing), I passed evidently, so that afternoon I bought it. And I rang my kids then and I said to them 'guess what, I've bought a block of land' and one of them said, they're chalk and cheese, my children, and one said, and I got it at a good price too, and one of them said 'good on you mum, you know' that was [son], the young one and said 'what's the catch' (laughing). It's funny, he sounded like, he does, he looks into everything, but I know he's only got my interest at heart. And he asked me, [other son] asked me all the pointed questions about the place, you know, you know, was that really what I wanted, and you know, all the rest of it and do you think I could do it, and etc. etc. and you know, I wouldn't think of coming a bit closer. So anyway, they both had to come up pretty quickly and sort-of see what I had done you see. Well then it took a long time then, not my fault, but the builders, like they couldn't get to it, you know for quite a while, took a long time to build, and but different people used to say 'I can't believe you're building a house' you know because a few people knew the other house, which was a very nice home with an established garden. Mind you, it cost a lot more to build this than I'd thought it was going to, you wouldn't believe but there's about 22 thousand in the garden alone, like with the brickwork. That brick, I paid labour only for the brick layer, for the retaining walls and things out there, and that was over 10 thousand just for the labour on the brickwork. So that was, I was thinking well, about five thousand I'd spend on the garden, and it turned out to be much much much more (laughing), but it's permanent, you know. And the kids said, both the boys, they're better off than I am anyway, both of them (laughing) so they just said 'your money mum, do what you like with it' you know, so, you know. And they know when I die that's theirs, so, whatever they get, it's profit anyway (laughing). Can't be too worried, but it did turn, labour is expensive here, like you know, I had a little job done, a little bit of path there out the front, and my niece had a patio, my niece in [regional town] had a patio done at the same time, and much bigger, much much bigger and better and everything else, and cost about a third of the price that I paid for that. So labour here is dear, very dear. But anyway. You can't chop and change either, you know, I mean they all charge much the same thing.

#00:54:07-9# respondent: I figured out what we needed, we need a handy man more than, more than anything, you know to change a light globes and that sort of thing. But then I heard recently we have got one. So I heard, yes, he's attached to the town hall, but they don't advertise that. Our home help is very good, but no-one ever says you can get a hangman to do this that and the other.

#00:54:35-8# interviewer: anything high is really difficult

Appendix B.2.2 Sample: Participant interview-older old women

#00:54:35-8# respondent: you can't do it. And globes do blow and that sort of thing, you know. Well I have to get ___ in every time and he charges very much. If another globe blows I'll be ringing the town hall and saying I hear you've got a handyman. But it's not well publicised that.

#00:56:26-5# respondent: There are lots of little jobs that a handyman could do, like with the air conditioning and everything, to clean the filters. Like if your kids aren't here, my kids would do it if they were here, and if I think of it when they are here and all that sort of thing, but pretty soon, my grandson, he's only 13, 13 next week, but he'd be able to do that sort of thing., but he's not here and you can't wait sometimes.

#00:57:05-3# interviewer: is there anything else you want to tell me about living in [the town], about

#00:57:07-7# respondent: //I'm very happy, like, I love [the town], always have. And a bit like my father, he passed up many promotions and he reckoned it was a good healthy place to rear his kids. We have all the sporting facilities we need for children and everything you know, and I really think we're lucky we've got the primary, we've got the kindergarten, the child care place for a start, the kindergarten, the primary school, the secondary school which fluctuates a bit, you know, sometimes it's excellent like ___ [town Y] has got tremendous results in, you know, and town X too, you know, good teachers and everything, this fluctuates, you know, very confidentially (laughing). But you know, it's got all those facilities for kids and hum, the kids can go to Uni now in [regional town] or [regional town] without having to go to [city]. They can come home at weekends or whatever. I think it's got, and then for the older people, there's bowls, and there's golf and you know, there's tennis for the younger ones. And they're all, all the facilities are there (pause) I'm staying here (laughing). It's like my brother down in ___ he says 'I'm not leaving ___' I say 'you'll have to move into [regional town]' he's older than I am, you know he's got four kids in [regional town], they all want him in there, in a unit, not with them, they want him closer, he lives out there on his own and he says 'they'll be carrying him out of here. I'm staying out here' because he can have his dogs and his horses. He's got four acres or something down there and he says 'there's no place like ___' (laughing). It's where you are born, where you want to be.

#00:59:05-6# interviewer: you've thought about your choices

#00:59:06-8# respondent: //look and that comes down to luck too because if you've still got your facilities to make your choices, you know. I mean a lot of people can't, and I know that.

Appendix B.2.3 Sample: Participant journal-late middle-aged women

Marg: Journal

My childhood consisted of being brought up in a strict Catholic family. Attending both primary and secondary schools that were taught by nuns.

My position in the family was the youngest, with three elder brothers. The youngest of these was eight years older than me.

My mother lost a baby two years before I was born. Unfortunately my Mum died when I was 13½ years old from bowel cancer. My Dad remarried not less than 12 months after. Because my father worked night shift, I was put into the convent as a boarder and came home at the weekend.

Later on in my teens, I left home and lived with a girlfriend with whom I worked in an office in a Government department.

I became a hippy and did the 'hippy' thing. I had a child when I was 24 years old and bought her up on my own until I married in 1974. I took on an instant family which I found I was out of my depths.

My ex-husband and I had two children and I stayed married 28 years. I had () my father! I'm much happier now that I live alone, and have done so for nearly nine years. I don't have the stress that I had when I was married.

I have three grandchildren and one great grandchild which makes me feel joy.

I'm able to pursue the hobbies I enjoy – writing, scrapbooking, reading, walking and pleasing myself.

Change?

I suppose if I look back over my life, the one thing that I'd change would be the time I spent as a hippy. It was self-indulgent and because life is so precious, probably a waste of time.

Highlight

A highlight of my life are my children and grandchildren and beyond that the studies I've done and my writing achievements.

Difficulties

When I was first married and all the difficulties I encountered, I had no one to talk to.

Family lived on the other side of the city, so there wasn't any support there.

Prayers, church and a doctor to talk too.

Of course, as one gets older the knowledge they accrue can be passed on to others and not just for the value of a dollar.

Support

If I'm in a bother, I ring Lifeline or talk with a family member who I think can cope with the particular problem.

Challenge for the town

Appendix B.2.3 Sample: Participant journal-late middle-aged women

A couple of years ago when [the town] was one of the towns, not the worst, that experienced floods. How it affected me was I lost all my freezer contents because we didn't have electricity for two days.

As I stated, [the town] wasn't the worst town affected, but 40kms away in a couple of directions those towns were badly affected and it was a case of devastation.

[The town]

Positives

Living in [the town] is a more economical option than a lot of the other parts of [state].

One gets used to living in the country. I've been around the district for over 30 years and am quite content.

Negatives

There are cultural things one misses out on, like Art Galleries, exhibitions and a variety of films to be seen with one making a choice as to what one.

For the elderly, we do have many resources, hospital, taxi service, meals on wheels, district nurses, nursing home and hostel to mention a few.

And of course, we don't have the industrial areas that they have in the city and metropolitan areas, so we could be saved from experiencing a lot of the pollution the city folks experience.

Move?

The only place I would consider moving to is [city] and that's because I have two adult children living there and grandchildren. Also because it's a beautiful city and I love Fremantle.

On the other hand, I've family in [the town, town X, city and next state], so it's a bit like 'divided loyalties'.

World live in now

Far more materialistic, way more pressure put on young people to perform to societies standards. The house with the picket fence plus 2.5 children.

On the other hand, we also live in a world that's more diverse in culture, have more opportunities to taste different foods of overseas countries. And I think, don't know for sure, but probably people travel more.

Of course, the work situation has changed enormously. 'In my day' if you didn't like a job, one could leave and just walk into another one. Now (there's) more people working two or three part time jobs to survive.

A lot of our factories and companies are shifting to Asia because of cheap labour and nearly every piece of clothing has "made in Taiwan" or "China" on it.

I think 'trust' has gone out the window. At my childhood home in [city] we never locked doors, we knew our neighbours and as kids, we used to play with other families children. Probably running in and out of their homes. Now everyone sticks to themselves, locks their cars and doors of their homes, puts labels on their electrical equipment. Generally more security conscious.

Appendix B.2.3 Sample: Participant journal-late middle-aged women

Australia

Australia survived the financial global crisis compared to other European nations. Or that's what they tell us!

It seems that we have a pretty good country to live in as lots of migrants have come here over the years.

I just wish we didn't follow America and their standards so much. Especially in the area of our Armed Forces. Surely we still don't have to pay the debt of their saving us in the Second World War.

How does Australia compare

I've never lived anywhere else so I wouldn't know. Only what I read and hear from other people!

Appendix B.2.4 Sociodemographic profiles of the older old women

Table 2: Sociodemographic status of the older old cohort

Name	Age	Marital status	Occupational status	Economic status	Health status	Residential Status
Beryl	81	Widow for 8 years	Retired; Professional (teacher)	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Recent surgery	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; ¹ Living in own home in town
Cora	98	Widow for 25 years estimate	Farmer (current)	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Frail	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living on farm
Edna	96	Widow for 31 years	Currently working; Professional (media executive)	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Recent surgery	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Glad	90	Widow for 21 years	Retired; Farmer	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Limited mobility	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Grace	89	Widow for 20 years	Retired; Farmer	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Recent illness	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Jean	82	Widow for 15 years	Retired; Farmer	Disability pension	Physical health needs; Multiple chronic conditions	Born inter-state; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Jess	84	Never married	Retired; Service (shop assistant)	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Limited mobility	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in

¹ Long-term residency of the town and area is defined as living locally for more than 55 years.

Appendix B.2.4 Sociodemographic profiles of the older old women

Jill ²	89	Widow for 5 years	Retired; Farmer	War pension	Physical health needs; Recent stroke [<i>sic</i>]	town Born in city; Resident of town 7 years, Living in own home in town
June	88	Widow (twice), 8 years	Farmer (current)	War pension	No health needs; Active	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home on farm
Lydia	81	Widow for 41 years	Retired; Service (school canteen)	Aged pension	No health needs; Very active	Born in region; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Mabel	94	Widow for 6 years	Retired; Farmer	War pension	Physical health needs; Frail	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Maud	81	Widow for 31 years	Retired (at age 75); Service (receptionist)	Aged pension	No health needs; Active	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Nell	83	Divorcee for 20 years	Retired; Service (office assistant)	Aged pension	No health needs; Active	Born in city; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Pearl	82	Widow for 9 years	Now retired; Farmer	Independently wealthy	Physical health needs; Limited mobility	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Ruby	84	Widow for 3 years	Now retired; Service (telephonist)	War pension	No health needs; Active	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in own home in town
Willa ³	72	Widow for 10 years	Now retired; Service (shop assistant)	Aged pension	No health needs; Active	Born locally; Resident of town/area long term; Living in

² Although Jill moved to the town only seven years ago, she lived in a comparable region for over 65 years. As such, her life story matches the long-term *localness* of this cohort.

Appendix B.2.4 Sociodemographic profiles of the older old women

						own home in town

³ A sociodemographic adjustment has also been made for Willa who is aged 72 years, since her profile more closely resembles this older old cohort group rather than the late middle-aged cohort.

Appendix B.2.5 Sociodemographic profiles of the late middle-aged women

Table 3: Sociodemographic status of the late middle-aged cohort

Name	Age	Marital status	Occupational status	Economic status	Health status	Residential Status
Alice	60	Divorcee (twice), most recently for 1 year	Volunteer ¹	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born inter-state; Resident 1 year; Living in own caravan in caravan park
Barb	62	Divorcee for 30 years	Employed; Business (shop-owner/self-employed)	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born in region; Resident 5 years; Living in own shop premises in town
Berta	61	Divorcee (once), now separated for 3 years	Volunteer	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born in Germany; Resident 4 years; Living in own home in town
Gert	61	Divorcee for 35 years	Retired; Professional (para-legal)	Independently wealthy	No health needs	Born in Germany; Resident 2 years; Living in own home in town
Jane	60	Divorcee (four times), most recently for 2 years	Unemployed	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born in region; Resident less than 1 year; Living in rented home on farm
Jenny ²	70	Divorcee for 22 years	Retired	Independently wealthy	Mental health needs (post divorce)	Born in the city; Resident 10 years; Living in own home on hobby farm
Judy		Divorcee				
Linda	60	Divorcee (twice), most recently for 15 years	Employed; Professional (teacher)	Employed	Mental health needs	Born in city; Resident 5 years; Living in own home in town
Marg	60	Divorcee for 9 years	Retired	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born in city; Resident/returnee for 30

¹ 30 hours of volunteering per fortnight (two week period) is mandated under the terms of the Newstart 55+ allowance.

² Although Jenny is aged 70 years, her sociodemographic profile is a closer fit to this late middle-aged group rather than the older old cohort.

Appendix B.2.5 Sociodemographic profiles of the late middle-aged women

						years; Living in own home in town
Nola	63	Never married	Retired; Professional (missionary)	Benefits	No health needs	Born in region; Resident 3 years; Living in own home in town
Penny	55	Divorcee for 10 years	Volunteer	Benefits	Mental health needs	Born in city; Resident /returnee for 11 years, most recently less than 1 year; Living in rental flat in town
Rae	63	Widow for 11 years	Employed; Service (shop manager)	Employed	No health needs	Born locally; Resident of town long term; Living in own home in town
Ruth	61	Divorcee (twice), most recently for 12 years	Volunteer	Benefits	No health needs	Born in city; Resident 4 years; Living in own home in town
Trudy	59	Divorcee for 14 years	Volunteer	Benefits	Physical health needs (mobility)	Born in region; Resident 5 years; Living in own home in town
Wyn	60	Divorcee for 17 years	Volunteer	Disability pension	Physical and mental health needs; Multiple chronic conditions	Born locally; Resident 15 years; Living in rented adapted flat (apartment) in town

Appendix C.1.1 Data-driven codes and sub/categories

Table 4: Data-driven codes and sub/categories

Interview/journal questions	Emergent sub-categories	Overarching categories
Please tell me about yourself – your childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle and older age...	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Early life	Life course ¹
How do you feel about your life at present?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Midlife	
When you think back over your life, would you change anything?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Later life	
Please share a highlight of your life?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Later life	
And an experience that was more challenging.	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Crisis and/or Adversity	Life events/challenges
How did you deal with it?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Crisis and/or Adversity	
Did you turn to anyone for support/ If so, whom?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Resolution and /or solutions to adversity/crisis	
How do you spend your time now?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Resolution and /or solutions to adversity/crisis	
What has been the hardest thing to accept in recent years?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Highlights of life	Life review
If you are in difficulty, how do you get help?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Regrets and/or changes to life	
What sort of world do we live in now?	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Regrets and/or changes to life	
	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Life at present	
	Codes derived from the interview/journal information that coalesce around: Values	Life in the future

¹ The early, mid and later life sub-categories were aligned with how the participants differentiated the phases of their life stories.

Appendix C.1.2 Theory and literature-driven codes and sub/categories

Table 5: Theory and literature-driven codes and sub/categories

Resilience attributes	Emergent sub-categories	Overarching categories
- feeling connected, feeling independent, creating meaning (Al��x, 2010); - tenacious goal pursuit, flexible goal adjustment (Bailly, Joulain, Herv�� & Alaphilippe, 2011); - larger network size (Fuller-Iglesias, Sellars & Antonucci, 2008); - emotional regulation, problem solving (Gooding, Hurst, Johnson & Tarrier, 2012); - good quality relationships, integration in the community, developmental coping, adaptive coping styles (Hildon et al., 2009); - reinterpreting past adversity, maintaining pleasurable and rewarding social roles, successful coping strategies, supportive relationships (Hildon et al., 2008); - social connectedness, facing challenge, spiritual grounding, curiosity, extending self to others, moving forward, and ‘maverick’ behaviour (Kinsel, 2005); - emotional well-being, optimism, self-rated successful ageing, social engagement (Lamond et al., 2009); - spirituality (Manning, 2013); - hope (Ong, Edwards & Bergeman, 2006); - purpose in life, social relationships, mastery, pro-social behaviours (Ryff et al., 2012); - personal resources, manage emotions,	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Self-esteem Self-acceptance Self-worth	Intrapersonal
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Mastery Self-control	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Self-reliance Self-efficacy Independence	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Problem solving Adaptive coping Resourcefulness Tenacity	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Interpersonal control	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Social roles Social identity Social connections	Interpersonal
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Supportive relationships	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Meaning of life Sense of coherence Sense of purpose	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Spirituality Faith Religion	Existential

Appendix C.1.2 Theory and literature-driven codes and sub/categories

solve problems, spirituality, future facing, care for others (van Kessel, 2013); - equanimity, self-reliance, existential aloneness, perseverance, meaningfulness (Wagnild & Young, 1990); - positive attitude, counting blessings, purposefulness (Wiles et al., 2012); - self-esteem, interpersonal control, competence (Windle et al., 2008).	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Optimism Hope	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Social support – formal Social support – informal	Social
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Community integration	
	Codes derived from the theory and literature review that coalesce around: Social networks	

Appendix C.2.1 Data: Temporal matrix

Beryl:

Appendix C Analysis											
Appendix C.2.1 Data: Temporal matrix											
	Trajectories										
	Life course			Life challenges		Life review			Life in the future		
	early life	mid age	older age	crisis, advers	solutions	highlights	changes	present	the future - world	the future - Australia	the future - town
Beryl older-old - interview	born in (town); father employed in post-office until retirement, mother local, five children, two boys three girls (four close in age, one much later); catholic school (Beryl #00:01:09-3#)	teacher (local 'apprenticeship', then teacher's college; husband also a teacher; two sons Beryl #00:01:09-3#); 28 years kindergarten teacher in town Beryl #00:01:09-3#); children educated at boarding school, then Melbourne University Beryl #00:04:56-9#)	husband retirement hobby (woodwork), died eight years ago Beryl #00:05:39-1#); two sons married, living in Melbourne; two grandchildren; happy with current life "so someone would miss me, so I'm not really worried about it. But that's probably the nearest thing to worry that I've got. I mean the house is mine, I've got no bills or no debts and I can still manage my own affairs. So I manage my brother's as well (laughing)" Beryl #00:31:14-4#)	difficult birth with first child (delicate, needed lots of care) Beryl #00:01:09-3#); recent surgery Beryl #00:07:31-0#)	moved back to the town, jobs at local rural school for four years; family (mother, aunts) nearby Beryl #00:19:15-9#)	"But that's probably the nearest thing to worry that I've got. I mean the house is mine, I've got no bills or no debts and I can still manage my own affairs. So I manage my brother's as well (laughing)" (Beryl #00:31:14-4#); "And I build it to my needs, you know, to what I wanted and totally different to what I had before, which was what I wanted too, you know. And I was fortunate that I was able to buy what I wanted, I haven't got a fortune left but I hope I've got enough to see me out. I've got what I want, I don't need." Beryl #00:36:26-5#)			younger generation (including sons) non church attendees, but still good people Beryl #00:23:42-1#); worried about the current state of the world "I don't think it's as good a place as when we were growing up, when I was growing up, you know, I don't think we realised how lucky we were then." Beryl #00:32:47-3#)	recent natural disasters (fires, floods) "you know there's still all that those white goods there as you go in, and the cars that all had to be abandoned, and I don't think I could cope with that. If you were flooded here and you lost your car, particularly if your insurance company did not pay up, you'd have nothing and you can't start again, not at this age." Beryl #00:33:26-0#) and Beryl #00:34:24-2#)	concern about lack of industry, 'stagnation' "we haven't got many industries or anything like that, and we've got a few empty shops" Beryl 2 #00:42:34-7#) and relatively recent closure of mill and garment factory which provided employment for married women Beryl 2 #00:45:19-9#); "But it just doesn't seem to me to be going ahead, you know like it was, and I think a lot of, like my kids will have trouble getting money back on this house and there are dearer houses. There are a lot of lovely homes that have been built in the town, but they'll never see, they'll never get their money if they had to sell." Beryl 2 #00:42:34-7#)

Appendix C.2.1 Data: Temporal matrix

Marg:

Appendix C Analysis											
Appendix C.2.1 Data: Temporal matrix											
	Trajectories										
	Life course			Life challenges		Life review		Life in the future			
	early life	mid age	older age	crisis, advers	solutions	highlights	changes	present	the future - world	the future - Australia	the future - town
Marg late-middle age - journal	"My childhood consisted of being brought up in a strict Catholic family. Attending both primary and secondary schools that were taught by nuns. My position in the family was the youngest, with three elder brothers. The youngest of these was eight years older than me. My mother lost a baby two years before I was born. Unfortunately my Mum died when I was 13½ years old from bowel cancer. My Dad remarried not less than 12 months after. Because my father worked night shift, I was put into the convent as a boarder and came home at the weekend.Later on in my teens, I left home and lived with a girlfriend with whom I worked in an office in a Government department." (Marg)	"I became a hippy and did the 'hippy' thing. I had a child when I was 24 years old and bought her up on my own until I married in 1974. I took on an instant family which I found I was out of my depths. My ex-husband and I had two children and I stayed married 28 years. I had () my father!" (Marg)	"I'm much happier now that I live alone, and have done so for nearly nine years. I don't have the stress that I had when I was married. I have three grandchildren and one great grandchild which makes me feel joy." (Marg)	"When I was first married and all the difficulties I encountered , I had no one to talk to. Family lived on the other side of the city, so there wasn't any support there." (Marg)		"A highlight of my life are my children and grandchildren and beyond that the studies I've done and my writing achievements." (Marg)	"I suppose if I look back over my life, the one thing that I'd change would be the time I spent as a hippy. It was self-indulgent and because life is so precious, probably a waste of time." (Marg)		"Far more materialistic, way more pressure put on young people to perform to societies standards. The house with the picket fence plus 2.5 children. On the other hand, we also live in a world that's more diverse in culture, have more opportunities to taste different foods of overseas countries. And I think, don't know for sure, but probably people travel more. Of course, the work situation has changed enormously. 'In my day' if you didn't like a job, one could leave and just walk into another one. Now (there's) more people working two or three part time jobs to survive. A lot of our factories and companies are shifting to Asia because of cheap labour and nearly every piece of clothing has 'made in Taiwan' or 'China' on it." (Marg)	"Australia survived the financial global crisis compared to other European nations. Or that's what they tell us! It seems that we have a pretty good country to live in as lots of migrants have come here over the years. I just wish we didn't follow America and their standards so much. Especially in the area of our Armed Forces. Surely we still don't have to pay the debt of their saving us in the Second World War." (Marg)	"I think 'trust' has gone out the window. At my childhood home in Balwyn, Melbournem we never locked doors, we knew our neighbours and as kids, we used to play with other families children. Probably running in and out of their homes. Now everyone sticks to themselves, locks their cars and doors of their homes, puts labels on their electrical equipment. Generally more security conscious." (Marg)

Appendix C.2.2 Data: Situational matrix

Beryl:

Appendix C Analysis																			
Appendix C.2.2 Data: Situational matrix																			
		Resilience Attributes																	
		Intrapersonal			Interpersonal			Existential			Social				New attributes				
	self esteem, self	mastery, self control	self reliance, self efficacy,	problem solving,	inter personal control	social roles, identity, connections	supportive relationships	meaning of live, sense of coherence, sense of purpose	faith, spirituality, religion	optimis m, hope	social support (informal/formal)	community integration	social networks		inner strength	courage	personal integrity	self reflection	
Beryl older-old - interview	"I do what I want to do" Beryl #00:24:51-5#); now relaxed/content to sit back and let others get on with things, such as Steve the gardener Beryl #00:28:21-4#); accepting about being slower (Betty #00:30:27-6#); modestly proud of house/building "I don't know how to say this, it sounds like bragging, but it's not. He just didn't think I had it in me, I think to build a house" Beryl #00:36:26-5#)	post-surgery limitations Beryl #00:10:06-5#); post-surgery physiotherapy 'hard' but necessary Beryl #00:13:47-5#); no debts and manages own and brother's affairs Beryl #00:31:14-4#); scepticism from other about building house "a lot of people said to me 'what on earth are you, do you know what you are doing?'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#) and "so it was like the interrogation to see if I passed, anyway, so I did (laughing), I passed evidently, so that afternoon I bought it. And I rang my kids then and I said to them 'guess what, I've bought a block of land'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	surgery three weeks prior to interview, son stayed one night, then on own Beryl #00:07:40-0#); post-surgery physiotherapy follow-up rejected as practices exercises per previous operation (five years ago) Beryl #00:13:47-5#); courage of convictions to build house as older woman - son's reactions "one said, and I got it at a good price too, and one of them said 'good on you mum'" and the other "asked me all the pointed questions about the place, you know, you know, was that really what I wanted, and you know, all the rest of it and do you think I could do it, and etc. etc. and you know, I wouldn't think of coming a bit closer. So anyway, they both had to come up pretty quickly and sort-of see what I had done you see." Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	family home/garden too big, designed and 'built' new home three years ago Beryl #00:08:13-3#); anticipated and prepared for post-surgery needs Beryl #00:36:26-5#); future plans "I intend to, if I keep well, and everything goes as it's going now, I intend to stay here for another five or six years or something like that, and then maybe either into a retirement village or something." Beryl 2 #00:47:12-1#)	would like sons closer Beryl #00:11:03-9#); visits sons regularly, driving to Melbourne until two years ago Beryl #00:11:39-0#); still actively engaged in community Beryl #00:23:42-1#) driving, visiting brother in hostel and shopping every day Beryl #00:24:51-5#)	active decision to stay close to friends Beryl #00:11:03-9#); visits sons regularly, driving to Melbourne until two years ago Beryl #00:19:15-9#); visits brother in hostel every day Beryl #00:24:51-5#); 'girls' help with perishable needs while convalescing from surgery Beryl #00:36:26-5#)	highlights - marriage, children/achievemnts, family Beryl #00:15:34-5#); mother lived until 97 years old, very supportive until children were school age Beryl #00:19:15-9#); visits brother in hostel every day Beryl #00:24:51-5#); commitment 'master-minding' house construction for past two years Beryl #00:26:03-3#)	still actively involved in church Beryl #00:23:42-1#)	younger people not attending church but still good people (Beryl #00:23:42-1#)	family (mother, aunts) nearby Beryl #00:19:15-9#); husband Beryl #00:19:15-9#); strong community support Beryl #00:30:27-6#); Beryl #00:31:14-4#) "I do worry a bit about being entirely on your own, but I think in (the town), you know, unless you drop dead or something like that (laughing), you know you've got time to call somebody." Beryl #00:30:27-6#) and "I know that if my blinds weren't up in the morning or if I didn't appear, they're used to seeing me going in and out, and the same as I would with them. If you didn't see anyone for a few days, you would wonder" Beryl #00:31:14-4#)	My kids will never come back, they wouldn't even think about coming back now. The grandchildren are Melbourne kids today but they like to come for a day or two, but they're all anxious to get back to what they (know)" Beryl 2 #00:37:55-2#)	friend helping post surgery Beryl #00:10:06-5#); gardener - book discussions Beryl #00:26:03-3#)	Beryl older-old - interview	scepticism from other about building house "a lot of people said to me 'what on earth are you, do you know what you are doing?'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	courage of convictions to build house as older woman - son's reactions "one said, and I got it at a good price too, and one of them said 'good on you mum'" and the other "asked me all the pointed questions about the place, you know, you know, was that really what I wanted, and you know, all the rest of it and do you think I could do it, and etc. etc. and you know, I wouldn't think of coming a bit closer. So anyway, they both had to come up pretty quickly and sort-of see what I had done you see." Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)				

Appendix C.2.2 Data: Situational matrix

Marg:

Appendix C Analysis																		
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Marg late-middle age - journal	"I'm able to pursue the hobbies I enjoy – writing, scrapbooking, reading, walking and pleasing myself." (Marg)							"Of course, as one gets older the knowledge they accrue can be passed on to others an not just for the value of a dollar." (Marg)	"Prayers, church [for support]." (Marg)		"Prayers, church and a doctor to talk to." (Marg); "If I'm in a bother, I ring Lifeline or talk with a family member who I think can cope with the particular problem." (Marg)			Marg late-middle age - journal	"When I was first married and all the difficulties I encountered, I had no one to talk to." (Marg)	"I had a child when I was 24 years old and bought her up on my own until I married in 1974. I took on an instant family which I found I was out of my depths." (Marg)	"I'm much happier now that I live alone, and have done so for nearly nine years. I don't have the stress that I had when I was married." (Marg)	"I suppose if look back over my life, the one thing that I'd change would be the time I spent as a hippy. It was self-indulgent and because life is so precious, probably a waste of time." (Marg)

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Intrapersonal				Interpersonal				Existential				Social				New attributes			
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Beryl older-old - interview	"I do what I want to do" Beryl #00:24:51-5#); now relaxed/content to sit back and let others get on with things, such as Steve the gardener Beryl #00:28:21-4#); accepting about being slower (Betty #00:30:27-6#); modestly proud of house/building "I don't know how to say this, it sounds like bragging, but it's not. He just didn't think I had it in me, I think to build a house" Beryl #00:36:26-5#)	post-surgery limitations Beryl #00:10:06-5#); post-surgery physiotherapy 'hard' but necessary Beryl #00:13:47-5#); no debts and manages own and brother's affairs Beryl #00:31:14-4#); scepticism from other about building house "a lot of people said to me 'what on earth are you, do you know what you are doing?'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#) and "so it was like the interrogation to see if I passed, anyway, so I did (laughing), I passed evidently, so that afternoon I bought it. And I rang my kids then and I said to them 'guess what, I've bought a block of land'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	surgery three weeks prior to interview, son stayed one night, then on own Beryl #00:07:40-0#); post-surgery physiotherapy follow-up rejected as practices exercises per previous operation (five years ago) Beryl #00:13:47-5#); courage of convictions to build house as older woman - son's reactions "one said, and I got it at a good price too, and one of them said 'good on you mum'" and the other "asked me all the pointed questions about the place, you know, you know, was that really what I wanted, and you know, all the rest of it and do you think I could do it, and etc. etc. and you know, I wouldn't think of coming a bit closer. So anyway, they both had to come up pretty quickly and sort-of see what I had done you see." Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	family home/garden too big, designed and 'built' new home three years ago Beryl #00:08:13-3#); anticipated and prepared for post-surgery needs Beryl #00:36:26-5#); future plans "I intend to, if I keep well, and everything goes as it's going now, I intend to stay here for another five or six years or something like that, and then maybe either into a retirement village or something." Beryl 2 #00:47:12-1#)	would like sons closer Beryl #00:11:03-9#)	active decision to stay close to friends Beryl #00:11:03-9#); visits sons regularly, driving to Melbourne until two years ago Beryl #00:11:39-0#); still actively engaged in community Beryl #00:23:42-1#) driving, visiting brother in hostel and shopping every day Beryl #00:24:51-5#)	post-surgery recovery friend help Beryl #00:10:06-5#); mother lived until 97 years old, very supportive until children were school age Beryl #00:19:15-9#); visits brother in hostel every day Beryl #00:24:51-5#); 'girls' help with perishable needs while convalescing from surgery Beryl #00:36:26-5#)	highlights - marriage, children/achievemnts, family Beryl #00:15:34-5#); commitment /master-minding' house construction for past two years Beryl #00:26:03-3#)	still actively involved in church Beryl #00:23:42-1#)	younger people not attending church but still good people (Beryl #00:23:42-1#)	family (mother, aunts) nearby Beryl #00:19:15-9#); husband Beryl #00:19:15-9#); strong community support Beryl #00:31:14-4#) "I do worry a bit about being entirely on your own, but I think in (the town), you know, unless you drop dead or something like that (laughing), you know you've got time to call somebody." Beryl #00:30:27-6#) and "I know that if my blinds weren't up in the morning or if I didn't appear, they're used to seeing me going in and out, and the same as I would with them. If you didn't see anyone for a few days, you would wonder" Beryl #00:31:14-4#)	My kids will never come back, they wouldn't even think about coming back now. The grandchildren are Melbourne kids today but they like to come for a day or two, but they're all anxious to get back to what they (know)" Beryl 2 #00:37:55-2#)	friend helping post surgery Beryl #00:10:06-5#); gardener - book discussions Beryl #00:26:03-3#)	Beryl older-old - interview	scepticism from other about building house "a lot of people said to me 'what on earth are you, do you know what you are doing?'" Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)	courage of convictions to build house as older woman - son's reactions "one said, and I got it at a good price too, and one of them said 'good on you mum'" and the other "asked me all the pointed questions about the place, you know, you know, was that really what I wanted, and you know, all the rest of it and do you think I could do it, and etc. etc. and you know, I wouldn't think of coming a bit closer. So anyway, they both had to come up pretty quickly and sort-of see what I had done you see." Beryl 2 #00:48:47-9#)			

Appendix C.2.2 Data: Situational matrix

Marg:

Appendix C Analysis																		
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Resilience Attributes																		
	Intrapersonal				Interpersonal			Existential			Social			New attributes				
	self esteem, self	mastery, self control	self reliance, self efficacy,	problem solving,	inter personal control	social roles, identity, connections	supportive relationships	meaning of live, sense of coherence, sense of purpose	faith, spirituality, religion	optimis m, hope	social support (informal/formal)	community integration	social networks		inner strength	courage	personal integrity	self reflection
Marg late-middle age - journal	"I'm able to pursue the hobbies I enjoy – writing, scrapbooking, reading, walking and pleasing myself." (Marg)							"Of course, as one gets older the knowledge they accrue can be passed on to others an not just for the value of a dollar." (Marg)	"Prayers, church [for support]." (Marg)		"Prayers, church and a doctor to talk to." (Marg); "If I'm in a bother, I ring Lifeline or talk with a family member who I think can cope with the particular problem." (Marg)			Marg late-middle age - journal	"When I was first married and all the difficulties I encountered, I had no one to talk to." (Marg)	"I had a child when I was 24 years old and bought her up on my own until I married in 1974. I took on an instant family which I found I was out of my depths." (Marg)	"I'm much happier now that I live alone, and have done so for nearly nine years. I don't have the stress that I had when I was married." (Marg)	"I suppose if look back over my life, the one thing that I'd change would be the time I spent as a hippy. It was self-indulgent and because life is so precious, probably a waste of time." (Marg)