A better life [style]: British migration to Western Australia made visible through the lens of consumption

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Abstract

This thesis looks at recent British migration to Western Australia arguing that it is largely invisible. While emigrations from the majority world to the minority world are well documented, British migration to Australia is not. This invisibility rests on assumptions of homogeneity within the British population; ethnic similitude with the host nation; relative affluence; and a lingering sense of British imperial legacies that inform views and choices available in the world. A productive way, then, to interpret this migration, is through the theoretical work on consumption and the examination of elements within that analytical frame, including, at a broad level, gender, ethnicity and class.

This recent migration is facilitated by Australian government policy, which seeks to increase the country's skills base. Existing migration literature tends to be reactive to policy and political demands from government. This thesis offers a fresh perspective in a field that retains a bias towards male, labour migration from the majority to the minority world. Recently, the focus of political concern, and of popular imagination and anxiety, which in turn informs the migration literature, has addressed such large population movements. We see this focus, despite efforts by most OECD countries to attract the less numerous, skilled and highly-skilled migrants. The thesis highlights the experience of those who are sometimes described as migrants of prosperity rather than austerity.

Findings are based largely on interviews and participant observation with a sample of female migrants from the UK. The majority of these migrants arrived in Australia as ‘skilled migrants’ between 2000 and 2007, the bulk of the remainder accompanying their skilled migrant husbands. Meeting
Australia’s strict entry requirements means they form part of a fairly exclusive cohort. Despite this I categorise them as ‘middling’ migrants, due to their location between labour migrants moving with more pressing economic reasons or elites such as expatriate businessmen and women moving largely at company expense.

Their stories demonstrate a particular issue with the notion of labour migration in their context, as it appeared that their ‘skills’ were merely a facilitator to entry rather than the main reason behind their migration. The most commonly stated reason for migration was for a ‘better lifestyle’ for themselves and importantly, where relevant, their children. The focus on consumption, as revealed through the migrant narratives, is a central empirical and conceptual focus.

This migration has taken place in a time of changing expectations of the citizen in the world. Whether one subscribes to post-modern theories of the self and the continuous need for choice or not, it is arguable that we do live in an era of increased complexity and are regularly presented with new options for consumption. We have increased opportunities to move outside traditional spaces to ‘be all we can be’ and I will argue in the thesis that making the most of those opportunities is something which informs the migration decision making process in those I studied.

The thesis demonstrates the validity of studying a group of privileged white migrants and further contributes to an emerging body of work on British emigrants, arguably normalised in migration literature through their seeming invisibility to researchers.
Statement of candidate contribution

Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis contains only sole-authored research and analysis.

The thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Gillian Abel

20th October 2014

Discipline of Anthropology & Sociology

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I am hesitant to name individual postgraduate colleagues because so many have contributed to this experience, especially those who enrolled with me in 2006 and who attended the thesis writing group in the following years and more recently. Any list however would be incomplete if it did not include Catie, Claire, Erin, Michaela, Sarah, Taz, & Yukimi, thanks ladies.

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<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>English Speaking Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPPR</td>
<td>Institute for Public Policy Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health Service (UK public health service)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OENM</td>
<td>Overseas Educated Nurses and Midwives</td>
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<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMHN</td>
<td>Registered Mental Health Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>WBDF</td>
<td>Web Based Discussion Forums</td>
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CHAPTER 1 - Inconspicuous consumption: the invisibility of British migration to Australia

Background and main issues

In Australia, as in many other countries, immigration of significant numbers is usually accompanied by popular press concerns, which centre on notions of being ‘overrun’. Verbs such as swamped and its synonyms ‘flooded’ and ‘inundated’ are among those used to characterise population flows such as refugee arrivals in Australia. In contrast, the significant numbers of British arrivals in Australia occurring simultaneously go almost entirely unnoticed. There are exceptions to this such as the popular discourse surrounding the concentration of British migrants in Perth’s northern suburbs. However this discourse tends more to a level of friendly teasing. There is less of a sense of implied threat than there is in discourse surrounding other migrant groups, particularly those who are considered Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD). This thesis asks why the British are largely missing from the Australian immigration story in both the popular press and the academic literature. I propose that viewing this particular migration through the lens of consumption can challenge this invisibility.

The thesis offers a snapshot of around fifty female migrants from the United Kingdom, now located in Perth, Western Australia. The majority of these migrants arrived in Australia as ‘skilled migrants’ between 2000 and 2007, the bulk of the remainder accompanying their skilled migrant husbands. The findings are based largely on interviews and participant observation with these women, augmented by discussion of The Whingeing
a locally produced and distributed magazine aimed at British migrants, and also of various Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs) aimed at the British population in Western Australia and in Australia in general. The specificity of this group will be discussed in detail later in the thesis, but it is important to note that there are no claims to suggest that this is a representative sample (For a similar approach in relation to Irish migrants see Gray 2004). In raising awareness of their migration experience, I hopefully contribute to a broader understanding of the contemporary Australian migration story.

I argue that normalisation of this migration in both the host and sending country, alongside presumptions of ethnic similitude with the host population and their generally middle-class social position combine to impart a ‘middling status’ on these migrants. This, in conjunction with a supposedly easy fit due to common language and historical connections, all serve to hide the nuances of their migration experience. The issue of gender as a contributory factor in the invisibility of these migrant women is also considered. While I argue that the factors listed above contribute to the invisibility of these migrants, I will also show that they are determining factors in their consumption patterns. Analysing the articulation of these two seemingly opposing ideas offers an insight into contemporary migration to Australia and the patterns of inclusion and exclusion, that define it. As white women from the United Kingdom these women have certain consumption patterns, and desires in common with those of the same class and racialised identity. As previous studies have noted (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007; Conradson & Latham 2005a; Conradson & Latham 2005b; Scott 2006), common stereotypes of mobility focus on either disadvantaged labour migrants from the majority world1 (Punch

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1 Terminology such as undeveloped and developed world or Global South and Global North is problematic. Utilising minority and majority world (Punch 2000) is an attempt to address the uneven distribution of resources between the many and the few and avoid the confusion arising when referring to
2000) or, at the other extreme, on highly mobile elites who move with apparent ease through the minority world and beyond. This leaves a significant group of what I shall refer to as ‘middling’ migrants, whose experiences are less well documented. This snapshot of a group of British women in Western Australia offers a contribution to that literature. Utilising a lens of consumption the thesis looks at the details and contradictions around stereotypes of this British migration to Australia.

In April 2008 a Fremantle-based publisher Editor at Large launched a new magazine in Western Australia, controversially titled the *Whingeing Pom WA* (*Whingeing Pom*) and subtitled *The Expat Bites Back*. Its inception, as I wrapped up the fieldwork phase of my research, seemed serendipitous, offering some non-academic justification for my decision to focus on this particular group of migrants, particularly as the magazine highlighted many of the issues raised by my participants. In this respect it seemed to signal some public recognition of contemporary British migration, to Western Australia in particular, but Australia in general, a phenomenon that I believe, as I will argue in this thesis, is largely ignored because it is naturalised and normalised, not just in the popular media but also in the academic literature. I shall discuss the Whingeing Pom magazine in more detail in Chapter Four, but for now turn to some general background information on British migration to Australia and more specifically Western Australia.

**Historical context**

**Settlement to Federation**

Although the period of concern in this study has a much later focus, history...
provides an important context for current issues. Obviously enough, British migration to Australia began with the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney in 1788. However, the place was not, as claimed, “terra nullius” and Australia’s lengthy and important Aboriginal history must be acknowledged. Further, Hollinsworth (1998) claimed that we can take the colonisers treatment of the Aboriginal population as a determining factor in what was to follow in immigration policy. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a discussion of Indigenous Australia; however, it is important to acknowledge the legacy of the colonial adventure, or misadventure. Hollinsworth argues that while:

[T]he development of the White Australia Policy has often been presented without reference to the position of Aborigines in colonial Australia […] these issues were inseparable and intersected with other discourses of masculinity and femininity, physical and cultural heritage, to gradually comprise an assertive and confident nationalism by the beginning of Federation (1998, p.75).

Hollinsworth sees British colonial attitudes to the indigenous population as a precursor to reactions and actions on the arrival of increasing numbers of non-British migrants.

Despite my agreement with Hollinsworth that the history of migration, and particularly migration control, is inextricably linked to an attitude which emerged as a result of colonialism, there remains a division between conceptualisations of indigenous and immigrant Australians. As Jayasuria notes ‘from the earliest days group relations in Australian society have been handled differently with respect to the Indigenous people and ‘new

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2 Although the thesis does not include their stories I do acknowledge the large numbers of British subjects over the years for whom migration was not a choice. They include convicts transported in the colonial era and more recently the child migrants of the 20th Century, many of whom were forcibly removed from the UK.
settlers’ (1997, p.49). There is a gulf between Indigenous Australians and immigrants at a political level that has not been bridged. So although I am asserting that the White Australia Policy (discussed below) was influenced by the British experience of colonizing Australia and the Aboriginal response to that, the issues of indigeneity and immigration, more often than not, occupy separate discursive spaces.

In the period from 1788 until Federation in 1901, the six separate colonies forged their own paths as far as immigration was concerned, but with the primacy of the British as a common ideology. All enacted various plans and policies with the aim of either attracting or discouraging immigration, many of them predicated on racial grounds. In Western Australia itself, examples included attempts to encourage English or Scottish women to migrate at the expense of the Irish who were considered too numerous in the colony at that time (Appleyard 2004). The Irish were one of the ‘earliest “ethnic” groups’ and their treatment demonstrates what was to be an ongoing ““in-group/out-group” attitude” to immigration control (Jayasuriya 1997, p.52). A further Western Australian example involved the passing of a Chinese Immigration Bill in 1886 during the Western Australian gold rush in response to fears of an influx of Chinese miners (Appleyard 2004). These are but two examples of a litany of similar actions occurring throughout pre-Federation Australia.

The White Australia Policy

The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act has particular significance in the Australian migration story. The Act was the legal enshrinement of what is now commonly known as the White Australia Policy. As the banner for

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3 This is not to deny individual stories, for example see Choo and Stasiuk in Wilding, R & Tilbury, F 2004, A changing people: diverse contributions to the state of Western Australia, Department of Premier and Cabinet Office of Multicultural Interests, Perth.

4 New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. For a more detailed description of this period in Western Australian history see Appleyard (2004).
*The Bulletin*, a popular nationalist magazine, proclaimed from 1880 to 1961 this was indicative of a concerted effort to keep ‘Australia for the White Man’. The Act effectively allowed officials involved in migration a power of veto over the prospective immigration of anyone thought to compromise the phenotypical and cultural ideals of the day. This is starkly documented through interviews and archival footage in the 1992 film *Admission Impossible* which critiques the White Australia Policy, and highlights the subjectivity of the decision-making involved in allowing migrants access to Australia.

The effects of such immigration policies should not be underestimated. For Jupp (2002, p.6) 'Australian immigration policy over the past 150 years has rested on three pillars; the maintenance of British hegemony and 'white' domination; the strengthening of Australia economically and militarily by selective mass migration; and state control of these processes.' In setting out his argument Jupp writes:

> I have distinguished between 'British/Irish' and 'Europeans', as did official policy until 1958 and to some extent until 1983. This is how all involved saw things and most still do. Australia was not settled by 'Europeans' but by the 'British', partly to keep the 'Europeans' out! Its subsequent history was determined by that fact,' (2002, p.3).

Jupp goes on to state that 'Australia and New Zealand are the two 'most British' societies in the world outside the United Kingdom' (2002, p.5) And further, of Australia, that '[I]ts social, intellectual, business and political elites are still overwhelmingly of British origin’ (2002, p.6). Any subsequent migration, therefore, must be viewed in the light of this influence. In short, I am asserting in this thesis that current migration policy and rhetoric in Australia, which includes a glaring omission in
regard to the position of British migrants, cannot be understood without reference to the influence of Australia’s colonial past. British migration to Australia in the present day is notable in regards to its invisibility in the national discourse around migration, a discourse in which the migrant is a racialised figure, not a white English-speaking one.

Post World War Two

The White Australia Policy remained in place until the mid 1960s, but the post World War Two period saw a period of significant change in the Australian migration story. It was during this time that the realisation dawned that it would not be possible to populate the country with the favoured British migrants and that a broader net needed be cast to meet the labour demands of the post war boom, although notably this was to be done with caution and with the intention of integration.

[A] degree of cultural pluralism was accepted as an inevitable consequence of the migration programme, but although the road might be more circuitous than had been previously thought, the cultural goal was exactly that of the 1940s (Castles et al. 1988, p.52)

Gradually, in the period from the end of the war to the mid 1960s the White Australia Policy was abandoned as a political platform by both sides of Australian politics. From the early 1970s onwards the official rhetoric around migration changed to one of multiculturalism, supposedly leaving behind the earlier eras of assimilation and integration (There are numerous comprehensive accounts of Australian migration policy from Federation see for example Castles et al. 1988; Hollinsworth 1998). However, as more recent events such as the response to asylum seeker arrivals over the last decade or two have shown there are, for some, limits to the degree to which multiculturalism is seen as acceptable (Moran 2011). Having very briefly
set the historical scene regarding immigration to Australia I now turn to look more closely at British migration in this setting.

**British migration to Australia and the era of mass consumption**

The Post World War II period coincides with the beginning of what has been called the ‘era of mass consumption’ when consumerism became accessible not only to the wealthy of the upper and middle classes but also the working class. This is an important development for this thesis because it sees the start of individuals’ status being assessed by their consumption patterns rather than their affiliation to a particular mode of production. While social status in society was traditionally connected to a person’s occupation, increasingly consumption decisions and patterns confound such straightforward descriptive and analytic categories. What we see with the British migrants from 1945 onwards is a group of ostensibly working class migrants, a definition based on their engagement in paid labour, who increasingly adopt more typically middle class consumption patterns.

Hammerton and Thomson (2005, p.1) talk of British migration to Australia in the 1960s as being 'more likely to be stimulated by a sense of heightened expectations than desperation to escape austerity.' On a similar note, Hollinsworth (1998, p.233) quotes work by both Appleyard and Lack and Templeton when he states that '[m]ost British migrants came for a better life for their children, the climate and housing standards rather than direct economic advancement'. I refer to these older examples to illustrate a continuity present in narratives of British migration to Australia; that the pull factors, if one is to talk in terms commonly used in the migration literature, seem to have consistently been of greater importance than the push factors.

That British migrants had been preferred and assisted since the ‘bounty
settlers’ of the late 1800s were paid as an incentive to migrate (Jayasuriya 1997, p.51) cannot be ignored. One of the later schemes was the post World War Two assisted migration scheme, which gave us the ‘Ten Pound Poms’, a scheme that:

[G]ave Australia a competitive edge over the other destinations for British postwar emigrants. Without the ten pound scheme Australia would have struggled to compete with Canada—which was much closer to home—or indeed the ‘New Towns’ that were being built around the edges of the British metropolitan centres and which also offered a better life for workers and their families (Hammerton & Thomsson 2005, p.33).

While the Ten-Pound scheme gave Australia a competitive edge in the migration market it also clearly advantaged the British over other migrant groups.

Hammerton (2005, p.126) distinguishes between ‘migrations of austerity’ and ‘migrations of prosperity’ and argues that in the Australian situation there has been a shift since the end of the 20th Century from the former to the latter. However, it is clear from the excerpt below that even for the postwar British migrants there were considerable advantages over other migrant groups. As Hammerton goes on to note:

[T]hese migrants – appropriately labelled ‘invisible’ because of their historiographical neglect and relative low profile as migrants in receiving societies – were privileged by the imperial heritage which shaped their mobility. A common language, ‘British subject’ status, the frequent official, and preferential, recognition of their occupational qualifications and the general presumption of a British ‘foundational
culture’ in the new country made for an experience which one would expect to be significantly different, certainly easier, from that of most other postwar migrants carrying burdens like language, deep cultural differences and profound marginalisation (Hammerton 2005, p.127).

As I shall discuss later in the thesis, this privilege ties in with the ideas of Douglas and Isherwood who propose in their discussion of consumption that ‘the rightful measure of poverty is not possessions but social involvement’ (1978, p.xiv). Because of their shared language and heritage British migrants have greater access to social involvement than many of their migrant contemporaries from other source countries.

According to Appleyard (1964), Australia's desire for skilled workers rather than labour emerged at the end of World War Two, and this has been a continual theme since. Increasingly though, securitised borders mean it is much more difficult to gain entry to Australia particularly without trade or professional qualifications in those occupations specified on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s (DIAC) Occupation in Demand List (ODL). It recognised that migrants generally possess higher levels of social, cultural and financial capital than their compatriots in the country of origin (Torresan 2007) and it seems the British migrating to Australia are no different. Sriskandarajah and Drew estimated that 60 percent of Britons living in Australia and the US were in professional or managerial occupations’ (2006, p.23).

Referring to his 1960s study of British migration, Appleyard (1964, p.129) reports that 'The almost complete absence of unemployed persons in the sample at a time when male unemployment in Great Britain was 3.2 per cent of the estimated workforce is one of the most significant findings of the survey.' While, according to Appleyard, it is impossible to give any
definite answers to his question '[w]hence come the assisted British emigrants?' he does note that '[a] rather striking statistic is that 73% of all male respondents had travelled outside the United Kingdom either on military service or private visits'. This statistic, Appleyard concludes, suggests ‘that overseas experience may well be an important characteristic of the emigrant compared with the non-emigrant population' (1964, p.145).

Appleyard (1964, p.163) draws on the work of Eisenstadt whom he states puts the decision to migrate in many cases down to 'feeling some kind of insecurity and inadequacy in their social setting' and arguably the 2000s cohort I worked with could be said to have felt some inadequacy, revealed in their expressed desire for a ‘better-life[style]’, although the details of what exactly this better life comprised remain scant. As stated earlier it can allude to such things as weather, financial security and work/life balance among other less definable factors. I reiterate that central to the way these British migrants imagine their migration trajectories and possibilities is the ability to consume in ways which life and opportunity structures in Britain did not afford them.

Despite the fact that the migrants in my study claim to be searching for a better life[style], it should be understood that this tends to be an aspiration commensurate with their existing life. As (Appleyard 1964, p.213) wrote of those he studied in the 1960s:

> Perhaps the most important finding of the survey was that only 22% of married couples planned to become entrepreneurs in Australia. Emigration, it seemed, afforded the opportunity to better their socio-economic conditions rather than change their socio-economic status. These were not people who planned to build empires in the antipodes; indeed, very few of them planned to change their
Similarly it has been noted of the early postwar migrants from the United Kingdom that ‘Their aspirations were those of the suburban dream’ (Hammerton & Colborne 2001, p.93). Jupp concurs:

A consistent English aspiration has been for a respectable suburban existence, not too far from transport and industry and not too deep into the countryside (Jupp 1998, p.96).

It appears then that while the migration offers those British migrants in my study the chance to consume in ways life and opportunity structures did not previously afford, their expectations are on the whole fairly modest. Arguably, their lives continue in many ways as before albeit in an environment where, to refer back to Oliver’s (2007, p.127) informant, quoted earlier in this chapter, ‘it is sunny and the fruit is nice’.

Historically, Australia has been sold as a lifestyle to the British population (Hammerton & Thomson 2005). The posters used during the assisted migration scheme running from 1947 until 1982 had taglines such as ‘£10 takes you to good jobs in sunny Australia’ and the practice continues to this day. The contemporary desire for skilled migrants is evidenced in campaigns such as that commissioned by the South Australian government in 2008 which used slogans such as ‘Sod London house prices’ and ‘Screw working in Staines, hello Adelaide’ (Figure 1).
Adelaide, South Australia. The world's finest blend.

Figure 1 'Screw working in Staines' South Australian Govt. Advertisement

The Western Australian government has taken a less direct approach but nonetheless seeks to lure nurses from the United Kingdom, among other countries, with images of golden sands and beautiful sunsets featuring heavily in brochures and websites and advertisements such as the one shown below (Figure 2), part of a recruitment drive in 2008. Of course this consumption is not one way; Australia, in offering heavily subsidised fares to willing British migrants was making its own investment in the human capital, which British migrants represented.

![Figure 2 Govt. of Western Australia Dept. of Health Advertisement](image)

As King (2002, p.103 see footnote 6) points out ‘the “shopping market” for migrants functions in two directions…countries shop for migrants…to satisfy…labour supply shortfall…[and] individual migrants shop around
for possibilities and opportunities in different countries’. This selling of
Australia’s merits has not gone unnoticed in the United Kingdom and
concerns have been aired both historically, when Britain was undergoing
its own labour shortages in the post World War Two boom, and more
recently, now expressed as concerns regarding ‘brain drain’. A recent
example of these concerns regards the recruitment of British trained nurses
by institutions and businesses in Australia. In 2002 an article appeared in
*The Scotsman*, an Edinburgh-based broadsheet newspaper, which
expressed specific concern with the efforts of Nursing Agency Australia, a
private company, holding meetings with potential recruits in Edinburgh
(Macdonnell 2002). More recently a spokesman for the Royal College of
Nursing in the United Kingdom expressed concern about the increased
recruitment of British nurses to Australia an increase fuelled by generous
terms and conditions and the promise of what is generally referred to as a
better lifestyle. He was quoted saying of potential Australian employers
that they are:

[M]aking very attractive offers. It's not just the
starting salaries. The packages include air travel -
for nurses' families as well - relocation expenses,
temporary accommodation and the promise that
they'll support an application for permanent
residency.

A couple of employers even offer a 'meet and greet'
service at the airport with chauffeur-driven
limousines, so the nurses are made to feel welcome
as soon as their feet touch the ground (Dreaper
2008).

Australia, of course, is not the only country targeting British trained nurses
and an increase has also been noted in the number of advertisements placed
in the Untied Kingdom for vacancies in other developed countries (Buchan
Of course it should be remembered that for many British migrants, Australia did not live up to their expectations: indeed Appleyard’s (1964) study was commissioned to find out why the numbers of returnees were so high. Hammerton and Thomson (2005) included returnee stories as an important factor in their study. More recent work (Burrows & Holmes 2012) has also focused on those, estimated to be around 25% of British immigrants, who did not find a better life in Australia. As this thesis will show, the pull factors of Australia rather than push factors from the United Kingdom are the significant influences in these migration decisions. This argument is supported in other research (Appleyard 1964; Hammerton & Thomson 2005; Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006).

It is important to recognise the social and cultural aspects of this particular migration. There is a need to contextualise the influence of British migration on Australia and recognise the way this influence and the subsequent privileging of British migrants has created Australia in the British imaginary as ‘a land of opportunity and plenty’. The image is perpetuated in the popular media, and is only loosely based upon the realities of migration: this ‘Australia’ is an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) and one where these white migrants from the United Kingdom are able to imagine an easy fit. They have certain consumption patterns and desires, that emerge from similarities of class and racialised identity and which are viewed as commensurate with life in Australia.

**Naturalising/normalising/rendering Invisible**

For Hammerton and Thomson (2005, p.8) the British in Australia are the ‘invisible migrants’. Similarly, in a report issued by the UK based Institute
for Public Policy Research (IPPR), titled *Brits Abroad: Mapping the scale and nature of British emigration* (referred to from now on as *Brits Abroad*), it is noted that emigration from the United Kingdom is under-researched and largely ignored (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006). This omission occurs despite the scale of the phenomenon. In terms of numbers ‘it is likely that only the Indian and Chinese Diasporas rival Britons living abroad’ (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006, p.viii). There are various possible reasons for the dearth of scholarship on British emigration. In the case of immigration to Australia this is due, not least of all, to the historical ties between the countries, which have arguably naturalised the phenomenon. For Jayasuriya (1997, p.52) the British are the ‘charter group’ of migrants, those against whom all other migrant groups are judged. In further explanation of the naturalising effect of the shared history, Schech and Haggis talk of an ‘imperial imaginary’ (2004, p.184), which they argue continues in a subconscious manner to influence British attitudes towards migration to Australia.

Another factor in the normalisation of British migration to Australia could be the seemingly innocuous reasons behind the movement. As Russell King states:

> Migrations can be spectacular or mundane, or [...] regarded as problematic or non-problematic. By and large the mundane, unproblematic forms of movement are left unrecorded and often unstudied. The spectacular, problematic ones get all the attention, although here it must be stressed that the nature of the 'spectacle' is often exaggerated and distorted by its media portrayal and politicisation (2002, p.102).

Emigration from Britain and British immigration to Australia conforms to King’s description of mundane and unproblematic. In comparison to many
others, these migrants are not seeking refuge from war, famine or natural disasters. In addition, their economic situation in the United Kingdom is in general at least tolerable. Finally, and importantly, their movement within the Western Industrialised core is much less headline-generating than movement from countries considered being on the periphery to the core. Below I set out three main factors I believe contribute to the normalisation of these British migrants, namely: ethnicity, class or status, and gender.

Ethnicity or lack of it

This thesis is a study of mainly female British migrants, predominantly nurses and midwives now living and working in Western Australia. This group, although under-researched to this point, are important in understanding contemporary mobility. For the majority of these women the migration is reported as a positive experience overall. However, despite the relatively straightforward entry into Australia because of labour-market demand for their skills and qualifications, for many interviewed, their employment experience was unsatisfactory. In general, this reflected an anxiety about their sense of under-employment, and de-skilling in the workplace in Australia. I will argue that appropriate recognition of their knowledge and experience is hampered by the continued existence of a core/periphery dynamic in Australia that is based on an ethnic hierarchy of inclusion and exclusion. In this dynamic, Anglo-Celtic migrants face contradictory social realities. On the one hand they are ethnically privileged. As Jayasuriya (1997, p.52) notes the British are:

The charter group of settlers, as the dominant group in the colonies, prescribed the criteria and basis for the 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' of other groups .

They are, as such, at the core of this framework. On the other hand, however, contemporary British migrants also suffer exclusionary
conditions as newcomers. This paradox ironically disadvantages them since their ethnic origin gives them both real and imaginary privilege and thus encourages policy-makers and scholars to presume they experience an unproblematic insertion into Australia despite their experiential, structural, and cultural exclusions. Therefore this dissertation provides significant clarity about a migratory process influenced by popular conceptions of the ethnic similitude of these migrants in the host nation. The multicultural rhetoric in Australia does not attribute ethnicity to the British in the way that it does to those from other source nations.

**Middle class and ‘middling’ migrants**

Issues of class or status compound the invisibility and ethnicity issues mentioned above, being “middling”, like lacking ethnicity, hampers recognition. Alongside the normalisation of their whiteness these migrants are also invisible in the sense that the middle class of suburbia is invisible (Miller 2010). Scott (2006, p.1123), in his study of British expatriates in Paris notes the diversity in his sample and talks about “‘normal” skilled migrants whose move to Paris is also about appropriating social, economic and cultural capital.’ Scott goes on to say that:

> This was not always strategic or conscious and was often expressed particularly by those outside the corporate sphere of influence through the general notion of migration being a good thing to do, challenging, and or a life-affirming experience.

Those in my sample are more closely aligned with Scott’s “normal” skilled migrants rather than corporate elites, something which I will expand upon in Chapter Two as I explain why I have adopted the category of ‘middling’ to describe the women in my study.
Gender

That the majority of respondents in the study are nurses or midwives, educated women with careers of their own, albeit in an undervalued profession, combines with issues of class to make the gender issue more prominent. Increasingly the migration literature engages with gender in the analysis of different mobilities. However, there remain assumptions about migration which downplay or omit the role of women or at most see their experience confined to that of lower paid domestic workers. Kofman (2012a, p.64) is vocal about the lack of attention skilled female migration has received and suggests that there is a bias towards the male dominated ‘science, information technology, financial and managerial sectors which are seen to be the driving forces behind global wealth creation’. For Smith and Macintosh ‘Gender has always played a significant part in reproducing disadvantage among nurses who are generally regarded as underpaid for their work, irrespective of speciality and position’ (2007, p.2214). Again, alongside ethnicity and class or status, this contributes to the invisibility of these migrant women.

Although I have separated the elements of ethnicity, class or status and gender here in order to highlight areas of interest in the thesis it is important to accept their interconnectedness. Their effects do not occur in isolation of each other.

Countering invisibility through a lens of consumption

The particular issues surrounding gender, ethnicity and class, pertinent to this group demand additional theoretical conceptual and analytical analysis to that used for labour and forced migrants, although there are elements of similarity (e.g. push-pull factors, employment factors, etc.). In this thesis I
argue that consumption, revealed in the migrant narratives as a central empirical and conceptual focus, offers such a productive lens through which to examine this group.

Much of migration research is fairly conservative; traditionally it is problem-focused and policy-led; understandable, particularly when large geopolitical struggles necessitate timely policy responses. Migration research then is often directed at forced migration, as a result of conflict or natural disasters, or at labour movements, specifically lower-end labour. It has been suggested that this leads to a polarization where these lower-end workers whose mobility is viewed as problematic are set in contrast to ‘an image of free-moving elites’ leaving under examined the movement of a significant population who fall between these extremes (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007, p.17). The focus in this thesis is on a group who arguably fall into the lacuna that Favell et al. identify. I will argue that ‘middling’ migrants, motivated by lifestyle factors or projects dominate British migration to Australia. It may well be that this consumption-led migration, as articulated by my informants, does reflect an economic anxiety about opportunities for advancement and a ‘better life’ in the UK, but I would argue this is qualitatively different than the vast majority of labour migrants whose economic conditions are relatively more precarious. In light of this observation the thesis will highlight the theme of consumption as it relates to this migration while being mindful of the fact that consumption and production are not mutually exclusive, but in fact, inextricably linked.

I acknowledge that using the term ‘consumption’ is not without its problems. For Graeber (2011, p.502), the term consumption is in general ill defined, and further, has been used rather indiscriminately. As an alternative instead Graeber proposes that:
It might be more enlightening to start looking at what we have been calling the “consumption” sphere rather as the sphere of the production of human beings, not just as labour power but as persons, internalized nexes of meaningful social relations, because after all, this is what social life is actually about, the production of people (of which the production of things is simply a subordinate moment), and it is only the very unusual organization of capitalism that makes it even possible for us to imagine otherwise.

The terms consumption and consumerism will be used throughout this thesis, as Graeber's proposal has not been developed to a point where this is avoidable, however the terms will be utilised in a manner cognisant of his argument. Clearly the structural underpinning of this particular migration is Australia’s thirst for skilled labour in particular sectors, but the emphasis in the thesis will be on the migrants themselves and the world-making, identity-making aspects of this migration. The thesis comes from a position where consumption is about relationships between people, rather than between people and things. Further, the connection between migration and social reproduction (Kofman 2012b) is acknowledged.

I argue that this migration contributes to a ‘material realization or attempted realization of the image of the good life’ (Friedman 1990, p.121). Looking at the migration through the lens of consumption can help us see how these women utilize the opportunities available to them and use migration as a component in a process of identity creation, a process thoroughly embedded in the social. I will unpack these terms throughout the thesis but the departure point is that these migrants are rendered largely invisible in migration research and through a focus on consumption and highlighting their ‘middling’ status I can make some contribution to
making the invisible visible. This thesis is intended to supplement the existing work on migration from The United Kingdom to Australia, sparse as it is, rather than challenge it or dismiss it.

This thesis is less focused on the everyday things British migrants consume in Australia and more on their migration as an act of consumption although the two are closely linked, as the chapter on the *Whingeing Pom* magazine will show. I am also mindful in the thesis of a critical and condemnatory stance regarding consumption, which appears in some of the literature, and hope rather to offer an investigative and explanatory perspective on this particular migration (Campbell 1987, p.8).

The motivations for this mundane movement involves what have variously been described as a ‘dream of self-realisation’ (King 2002, p.95), ‘projects of self-fashioning’ (Conradson & Latham 2005, p.290) and the creation of a ‘potential self’ (Hoey 2005, p.593). These migrants are involved in an identity project, invariably seeking what they call ‘a better life’ or importantly ‘a better life for their children’. Here I suggest that the expression ‘better life[style]’ is more appropriate than ‘better life’ because although the respondents’ often used the truncated form it was clearly a lifestyle change they sought. This will become more apparent through the thesis as we discuss motivations and expectations associated with this particular movement. That the respondents were never particularly specific about what this better life[style] consists of, offers a particular challenge to the researcher. Caroline Oliver (2007, p. 127), writing of aspirational mobility in a group of older migrants in Spain, asks, 'How are we to analyze movement undertaken..."because it's sunny and the fruit is nice"?'

This statement may seem glib but it gets at the heart of what this thesis proposes to do; that is, to look at the relationship between migration and consumption as it presents in a group of contemporary British migrants. Central to the way these migrants imagine their migrant trajectories and
possibilities is the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not allow.

Eisenstadt (1953) proposed that ‘inadequacy and insecurity’ in the home setting are motivators for migration. I believe this proposition ties in well with my aim to look at migration through a lens of consumption, particularly if we view consumption broadly and in the manner proposed by Douglas and Isherwood (1978) and Miller (1995b), who stress the social and cultural aspects of consumption. This further ties in with the idea of middle-class insecurity (Mar 2005) to be addressed in Chapter Two.

In summary the thesis asks why the British are missing from the literature concerning migration to Australia and how this gap can be addressed. I argue that viewing this migration through a lens of consumption is an appropriate avenue to investigate and detail why.

**Contemporary British migration to Australia**

An online survey carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) noted that almost fifteen percent of Britons who live permanently abroad are in Australia; only the United States of America hosted more, at around twenty percent (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006, p.119). The survey also identified Australia as the geographical location of preference for most Britons who are seriously considering moving abroad; around 22% expressed a preference for Australia compared with only 12% for Canada, the next most likely choice (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006, p.121). This was reflected in statements from my participants such as the following:

> We only really considered Canada and Australia, the sun in Australia swung it.

> Australia was the first choice; a lot of it was to do with the temperature, the weather. We looked at
Canada and I felt it was maybe a little bit too cold in the winter [laughs], but a beautiful, beautiful place. I think at the time the winters in the UK weren’t very good and I just thought I don’t know if I can cope.

Spain was also a consideration for some of the women I talked to. However, as I shall discuss further in Chapter Six, participation in paid employment was a requirement for those in my cohort and this rendered Australia more accessible from the point of view of having a shared language.

Australian population statistics tell a similar story about its popularity as a destination for British migrants. The Characteristics of Recent Migrants (CoRMS) (Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS) 2011) report, which considered those who entered between 2001 and 2010, indicated that the majority of recent migrants were born in the United Kingdom5. Further, and important in terms of this thesis, the report notes that most recent migrants from the United Kingdom chose to settle in Western Australia (34%) followed by South Australia (21%). However, despite the statistical significance of this migrant group they remain under represented in the migration literature and in popular media discourse surrounding migration in both Australia and the United Kingdom.

5 Later ABS data from 2010 -2011 showed a significant change, for the first time the United Kingdom was not the largest source of migrants with China topping the list as the source of 14% of the migrant population above both the United Kingdom and India on 10% each.
In relation to international nursing Australia is recognised as both a donor and a recipient; with nursing included in the Migration Occupations in Demand List produced by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. This corresponds with Iredale’s observation that ‘Women predominate or feature in skilled migration streams only when selective administrative policies... are developed to recruit them. Most skilled migration streams are heavily male’ (2001:15). The focus on nurses in the research is largely based upon the gendered aspect of the occupation. In 2001, females comprised 74% of people in health occupations in Australia - much higher than the percentage of females in the employed workforce (45%) (ABS Census of Population & Housing 2001 http://www.aihw.gov.au/labourforce/health.cfm). In addition, nursing has been cited as an ‘example of a profession undergoing internationalization’ (Iredale 2001: 14). Despite the diversity in the nursing population there is a lack of qualitative work on the nursing experience and
particularly work which includes British nurses. Many overseas qualified nurses, most notably from Asia and Africa, have had a ‘disadvantaged’ reception in developed countries (Allan & Aggergaard Larsen 2003; Magnusdottir 2005). Omeri and Atkins (2001) reach similar conclusions in a study of the lived experience of five nurses in New South Wales. This study seeks to investigate how British nurses are received in Western Australia and, further, how they perceive that reception.

Entering Australia as a migrant

Before proceeding it is worth noting a little about the processes that must be navigated in migrating from the United Kingdom to Australia. While the common language and shared history have benefited British migrants there are still formalities to be addressed, the most significant being Australia’s notably ‘exclusive-protectionist’ migration programme (Iredale 2005, p.161). Australia had long sought immigrants as a labour force but since the late 1980s there has been an increased focus on the management of immigration flows. Immigration in Australia is managed in three streams, skilled, family and humanitarian, with an ever-increasing emphasis on the skilled stream (Phillips 2006; Phillips & Spinks 2012). All of the participants in this study entered through the skilled stream in either the general skilled migration or employer nomination categories. Both categories require assessment against the general skilled migration points test which stipulates among others various criteria such as English language competency, age at time of application, and skills or qualifications recognised by an approved body within Australia. Requirements have changed somewhat since the data in this study was collected with a new points test introduced in 2011.\(^6\)

While those in my study had a relatively easy route into Australia due to

their skills and qualifications, there were inevitably hurdles. Getting the paperwork together for a visa application can be an onerous task and is one often handed to a migration agent to expedite the process. Once the application is submitted the potential émigrés are subject to the vagaries of a bureaucratic system which can see visas granted in as little as six months or conversely as long as eighteen months which can make planning activities such as selling and purchasing property somewhat complicated. This will be addressed in more detail later in the thesis.

Methodology

As a means to impose some boundaries on the project rather than begin with the overwhelming field of British migrants in Perth I opted to focus on British women and in particular nurses. At the time of the project proposal, around 2006, there was still limited attention to female migrants such as those in my study who occupy what is increasingly recognised as a ‘middling’ space in the world of international migration (Conradson & Latham 2005b). Though they may share certain experiences, their movement within what has been termed the minority world (Punch 2000) has been less subject to research endeavours than those moving from the majority world.

The approach to the project is phenomenological, insofar as I sought to describe the lived experience of the participants as accurately as possible, while accepting my own influence as the researcher on the process. My own status as a migrant was significant in formulating the project and I recognise that it inevitably constitutes part of the end result (see Groenewald 2004).

I opted to use a traditional snowballing method to recruit participants,
initiated through word of mouth, postings on web based discussion forums used by the British Expat community in Western Australia and posters placed in the major hospitals in the Perth metropolitan region. The first nurse I interviewed was introduced by a friend, herself a British migrant, and I thought that this may prove to be an ‘in’. However, no further interviews came of that and although I had expected to meet this nurse again on a social level this turned out not to be the case as the friendship between this contact and my friend waned. This highlighted the need for a multifaceted approach utilising the alternative channels listed above and discussed further below.

I became a member of two Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs) during the course of the research. I approached the moderator of both websites prior to posting to inform them of my project and, in an attempt to be transparent about my motives for participating, gave myself the user name ‘Gathering Info’ and offered access to my information sheet in any postings I made. One post introduced me to a participant who also hung out with the ‘ladies who lunch’, a group I will address in more detail in Chapter Three, therefore the benefits have been significant.

The most successful strand of my call for participants was an advert I placed in ‘On Board’, a six monthly newsletter issued by the Nurses Board of WA. I believe the significance of this was mainly that the women had the publication and hence my contact details in their hands rather than just glancing at it in poster form as they either went about their daily work or seeing it fleetingly as they entered and exited the workplace. That it was featured in an official publication no doubt conferred some status on the request, which apparently elevated it above simple posters placed upon already crowded notice boards.

In the end, between December 2006 and May 2008, I carried out forty-
seven semi-structured interviews in Western Australia. Interviews were mainly in the Perth Metropolitan, region but included two participants who lived near Bunbury in regional Western Australia. I also interviewed two non-migrant midwives in Scotland, both close friends of a midwife who I had interviewed in Western Australia, with the intention of further understanding the impact of the migration on those left behind and of making some comparisons with the perceptions of nursing/midwifery in the two locations. Of the forty-seven women interviewed in Western Australia, thirty-three were nurses, eight were working as midwives, and one was a recruitment agent for an agency specialising in the placement of nurses in Western Australia. Five of those interviewed were women whom I met at a weekly lunchtime gathering of British women, which I attended during the period specified above and which I shall describe in greater detail in Chapter Three. The interviews were mainly carried out in the women’s homes but some took place in coffee shops at the participant’s request. Pseudonyms have been used and certain characteristics, for example, occupations and place names, have been changed in order to protect participants’ confidentiality.

The ethnographic interview, as described by Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding (2006), takes into consideration geographical distance between participants but also allows for a degree of participation in their day to day, for example, through visiting their homes and attending social functions with them. This recognises that what is traditionally known as participant observation is difficult in the particular research situation.

During the same period as the interviews took place I was also actively researching two Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs) focusing on

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7 Of the migrant women interviewed the ratio of English (39), Scottish (5), Northern Irish (1), and Welsh (1) was not dissimilar to the make up of the United Kingdom with a slight bias towards the Scots probably reflecting my own roots and a slightly lower than expected Welsh and Northern Irish contingent reflecting their smaller populations.
migration. Through these I found some of my participants and was also able to gain greater insight into the lives of others whom I also met at the lunchtime meetings through their participation in the forums.

It is worth noting, having mentioned the negative rhetoric, surrounding the discussion of migration in the United Kingdom, that on the whole I was not confronted with the levels of racism among participants that a colleague from UWA described during her fieldwork among British migrants here. There were occasions where sentiments expressed were challenging, but the purpose here is to analyse rather than judge and to increase our understanding of the migrant experience. I refer to this in greater detail in Chapter Eight, The Irony of Immigration.

Voloder’s (2008) fieldwork 'at home' and as an 'insider' among Bosnian's in Melbourne, presented in her paper Autoethnographic challenges: confronting self, field and home, highlights 'the difficulty of using the researcher's own personal experiences to understand the experiences of participants’ (Voloder 2008, p.28). This is something which has occurred to me at many times during the course of both interviews and participant observation; while I have much in common with the women I have encountered during the study, our experiences are at the same time vastly different. Indeed my knowledge of the United Kingdom, outside a small corner of the North East of Scotland, is limited to childhood holidays and long weekends. This offered challenges throughout the fieldwork period and beyond but was particularly brought home to me when one of the participants said to me:

I walked out of Boots in High Wycombe, looked around and everyone was black and [I] thought where the hell am I?

This statement immediately challenged my own sensibilities. It appeared
outwardly racist but at the same time I, as researcher, was made acutely aware of the limitations of my 'insider' status. I come from a small village in the North East of Scotland 20 miles from Aberdeen, a historically wealthy city thanks to farming, fishing, and more recently the oil industry. Despite the city’s claim to cosmopolitanism, due to the large numbers of incoming workers attracted by employment in the oil industry, it remains a fairly homogenous population, and my experience in that respect is vastly different, not only from this particular participant but most likely the majority.

Voloder (2008, p.30) writes that:

[T]he proximity or distance between the researcher's and participant's experiences impact on the type of anthropological knowledge produced, as certain kinds of intersections and divergences allow for particular kinds of insights and oversights in the analysis of the ethnographic material. It is the type of insider status that the anthropologist claims that determines the manner in which they draw on their own experiences to glean insights into the lives of others.

Ganga and Scott (2006) also discuss the complexities of ‘insider’ status noting the way in which it can at the same time offer a shared point of reference such as nationality, or gender and simultaneously make differences such as socio-economic status, as in Scott’s case, or generation, in Ganga’s, significantly more obvious than they might have been where no assumptions of similitude existed.

Alongside being mindful of differences in background as noted above I hope that my shared experience as a migrant allowed me to show empathy particularly when discussing problems, which in the grand scheme of
global mobility could easily be dismissed as trivial. At the same time I was acutely aware that my arrival in 1998 when the pound sterling was worth three Australian dollars and house prices were considerably lower, meant that my experience was significantly different from many of the respondents. I am mindful of these observations as I wrestle with interpreting the experiences described to me by the women who participated in the study.

**Geographical context: Perth Western Australia**

Perth, within Australia as a whole, is an eminently suitable location for an investigation of British migrants. Western Australia is recognised as the state with the most United Kingdom born residents in Australia, the figure standing at 11% of the Western Australian population in the 2001 ABS Census of Population and Housing. In an article in *The Australian* newspaper demographer Bernard Salt (2012) noted, based on the 2011 census data, that ‘the five most "British" suburbs in Australia are located in Perth: Jindalee (43 per cent), Mindarie (34 per cent), Connolly (33 per cent), Burns Beach (32 per cent) and Carramar (32 per cent).’ An expression I have heard is that ‘Perth is full of Brits who tried to emigrate to Australia and failed’, this arising from their concentration in the country’s most highly populated westernmost city. Historically many migrants, not just the British, arriving by boat were unprepared to resume the journey to the Eastern States after disembarking in Western Australia the first Australian port of call. This has a compounding effect over time as newer migrants chose Perth in order to be close to family and friends, something that I shall discuss in more depth later in the thesis. Despite the suitability in this respect there are other challenges to the field site. Anthropology in an urban setting often causes difficulties for researchers in both defining their field site and in selecting places to ‘hang-out’ with their
participants. In many ways the challenges I experienced in this regard mirrored those of the people I studied in that they were forced into social situations which they would not normally have considered in their attempts to settle into their new lives and recreate something of the familiar life-worlds they were used to.

In researching life in the English village of Wanet (a pseudonym), anthropologist Nigel Rapport (1993) spent a considerable amount of time in the local pub. For me there was no such option; there were a few bars that some of the women occasionally went to but nowhere I could turn up on a regular basis and expect to see familiar faces. This was something often lamented among the women I talked to. One noted how, prior to migration, they had lived on an English village green and on a Sunday, with no prior planning necessary, it was common for the neighbours to gather at the pub on the green for lunch. You would always see someone you knew but there was a level of informality about the arrangement that suited their busy lives. There is a level of planning involved in life in a modern urban setting that precludes chance encounters particularly for those in the process of establishing themselves in an area. As more than one respondent noted, at 9am the automatic garage doors go up and people drive off to work as the doors close behind them; at 5pm the reverse happens, and that is all you might see of your neighbours. Lyn Richards (1990) reported similar findings in her classic study of Australian suburbia Nobody’s Home: Dreams and realities in a new suburb. One attempt to overcome the sense of dislocation many of the migrants expressed feeling was a weekly lunchtime meet. I will discuss this informal or quasi network structure (Baldassar 1999) further, in Chapter Three, as I introduce those who participated in the research and offer some thoughts on the methodology associated with the study.

Moving on from how to study such a group, a further question that may
reasonably be asked is not how, but why? Here at the beginning of this thesis I wish to state what I see as the importance/significance of studying a group, which it can and will be argued, all other migrants to Australia are judged against. As Jayasuriya has stated, British migrants are the ‘charter group’ (1997, p.51). They are, as I shall expand upon, historically privileged in the story of Australian migration, but this should not exclude them from academic attention. Rather I argue, in agreement with others (Hammerton & Thomson 2005), that it is important for the sake of wholeness to include their experiences.

So this thesis focuses on a group of arguably privileged, white, English speaking women who have in general come to Australia for a ‘better life[style]’. Capitalising on their skills these women, in most cases with their families, moved approximately 12 000 miles with expectations of a British summer-holiday-style destination which importantly offered things including sun, and for some, safety, and, or, a slower pace of life. I will argue that one way of looking at their migration is as their consumption of a product in the form of a dream called Australia which is sold by various vendors including tourist boards, television companies, employers both in the public and private sector, and importantly by other migrants, among them family, friends and acquaintances. The migration decision is made not in isolation by the individual or family concerned but rather in response to a whole gamut of factors including those listed above. In Chapter Two I will turn to Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of habitus in order to expand this discussion of consumer choice.

In the main these women arrived in Western Australia around the years 2000 to 2005, notably just prior to the global financial crisis, which reached its peak around 2007/2008 during the time I was carrying out the study. Assessing earlier waves of British migration to Australia it is possible to see, with the benefit of hindsight, the consumerism apparent in them.
Viewing migration as consumption with similarities to shopping or ‘provisioning’ (Miller 1998), a term I will expand upon later, is then possible across different eras of migration and across different migrant groups. The growing emphasis on consumption and its increasing connection to self-definition makes it particularly appropriate in this recent migration.

The launch of the Whingeing Pom magazine (see Chapter Four) mentioned at the start of this introduction shows that a market was identified for this new publication. The publisher’s website noted that:

*Whingeing Pom WA* is a 112-page glossy lifestyle magazine aimed at the huge British ex-pat population residing in Western Australia. The bi-monthly title platforms a team of well-seasoned comedy writers and highly talented photographers, who collaborate each issue to bring readers up to date with the latest in travel, food, fashion, business and news both here and back in the UK.

The magazine had a successful start; in 2008 it won an industry award, the Bell Awards, for magazine launch of the year and around a year after its launch in Western Australia went national. The publisher's website also notes a recent deal struck to market and sell the magazine in 20 selected IGA supermarkets in Western Australia ‘situated in areas with a high density of resident ex-pats’ As I have pointed out, the magazine addresses many of the issues discussed by those I interviewed and which I identified on the Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs) focused on migration to Australia. While I shall address these issues in more detail in subsequent chapters, for now I want to introduce the themes of lifestyle and consumption as central to the discussion of this particular movement of

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‘middling migrants’ that will follow in this thesis.

As noted, in the publisher’s comments quoted above, the *Whingeing Pom* is a ‘glossy lifestyle magazine’ that focuses among other things on ‘travel, food, fashion, business and news.’ The expression ‘lifestyle’ is bandied around frequently in contemporary Australia and the United Kingdom. We hear of lifestyle magazines, as acknowledged above, and lifestyle television programs, and talk of lifestyle choices is not uncommon. Indeed it was very common among those I interviewed and on the WBDFs to hear and to read that people had moved to Australia for a ‘better life[style]’. This thesis looks at the concept of lifestyle and asks whether it is useful in analysing the data collected from these British migrants. It also asks whether the focus on lifestyle unnecessarily constrains the analysis and whether looking at the migrations through a lens of consumption and more particularly as an act of shopping or ‘provisioning’ would be more beneficial.

**British migration and the hypocrisy of its normalisation**

Regardless of the demographic reality, it has been observed that ‘when Australians talk and think about migrants, for the most part they mean migrants from non-English-speaking countries’ (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.10). This is inextricably linked to the idea that British migrants do not have ‘ethnicity’ one of the things that contributes to their invisibility. This selectiveness is not only confined to the Australian setting; as evidenced when Sriskandarajah and Drew writing of the current situation in the United Kingdom express hope that their work will serve:

> [A]s an important reminder that migration is indeed a two-way street and there is something slightly contradictory about a situation in which hysteria
about immigration sits alongside the belief that emigration is a natural normal phenomenon (2006, p.3).

It is also a relatively common assumption that the British make an effort to integrate compared with migrants entering the United Kingdom. I thought this ironic when it was pointed out to me, in one instance, by an English shop owner in Australia who had a Union Jack incorporated in his signage and also, in a second instance, when I chatted to some English heritage migrants, clothed in English football and cricket shirts, in an English themed pub in Perth Western Australia on St George's Day.

The points above show that Australia has historically been available to British migrants. In other words Australia is an important part of the British imaginary and something the British in general feel readily able to consume. But this is concomitant with a significant and lasting influence over the accessibility of a satisfactory immigration experience in Australia for other groups of migrants.

Migration scholars Portes and Borocz (1989, p.611) write that 'while in appearance migration arises out of a series of "rational" economic decisions by individuals to escape their immediate situation, in reality its fundamental origin lies in the history of past economic and political contact and power asymmetries between sending and receiving nations.' The power asymmetry between Britain and its formal colonies was traditionally the reverse of that in the majority of sending and receiving nations, Britain for a long time being the 'mother country'. I think that this attitude remains to an extent and is connected to the idea that Australia has always been available to the British for consumption. It is in this context that I now turn to a short synopsis of the thesis chapters to conclude this introduction.

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9 St George is the patron saint of England.
Outline of thesis chapters

In Chapter Two I discuss my proposal that this particular migration from Britain to Australia can be described as a consumption good, something that can be purchased on the market with the correct amount of capital. The chapter offers an overview of the literature supporting my claim, a theoretical backdrop to the main themes that the thesis deals with namely, invisibility, ethnicity, class and consumption. It also details how the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1977) is used in connecting the main themes identified here arguing that it informs the participant’s migration choices. As white, English speaking, middling migrants they have certain consumption patterns and expectations in common with those of the same class and racialised identity.

In Chapter Three I introduce the women who generated the bulk of the data for this project and simultaneously address the methodological considerations of the project. I report on the difficulties of studying a largely invisible group and consider the fact that many of the methodological challenges of the project were reflected in the early settlement issues of those I studied. In discussing the context of their social networks I am able to situate them in the broader study and also expand upon the connections, which led me to this particular group.

Chapter Four is an ethnographic chapter in which I take a more detailed look at the Whingeing Pom, introduced above, a visual and popular culture expression of the expectations and aspirations of British migrants in Australia. I ask what this publication says about migration and consumption and outline how it demonstrates what I see as the strong connections between the two areas particularly in relation to my research participants. The chapter draws on the theoretical notions of middling, consumption, and lifestyle provided in Chapter Two and uses the magazine
as a case study to illustrate the same. Chapter Four concludes with a broader discussion of the role of the media in the increasingly interconnected world we live in as it pertains to consumption and migration and the ‘middling’, aspirational lifestyle.

**Chapter Five** is an ethnographic chapter titled, ‘An Englishman’s Home’; expanding upon the themes introduced by way of the *Whingeing Pom* in Chapter Four and relating those to the experiences of my participants and information gained from the Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs). This chapter begins by discussing the home. I also pay particular attention to the ways in which they succeed or fail to establish themselves socially in Australia and how this fits in with the expectations they had of life post migration and the notion of a ‘better life[style]’ which was so important in their migration decision making. It also considers what they left behind in terms of family and friends. I explain the move in the context of a consumption-led migration referring back again to the assertion discussed earlier in the thesis that families are faced with choice as both an opportunity and a necessity.

**Chapter Six** ‘Labour: A Means to an end’, is an ethnographic chapter, which explores labour as it pertains to those I interviewed. As this chapter will show, labour features prominently in the migration narratives of those I interviewed but, importantly, not as the main reason behind the decision to migrate. In this instance labour facilitates the migration rather than driving it, opening up the frequently used label ‘labour migrant’ to question in this particular context. I pay detailed attention to what the nurses say about their working lives and propose that if we think of this migration in terms of consumption and of the purchase of the ‘better life[style]’, which my respondents sought, that work is the hidden cost. These women had the social and cultural capital necessary to gain entry to Australia but that came with high expectations of what to expect upon arrival and work was
certainly identified as the area, which caused the greatest consternation among the women. There are obviously factors of class, connected to the notion of middling, and gender at play here, which the data on work experience and labour migration can help us understand.

In **Chapter Seven** I expand upon the narratives of those nurses and midwives I interviewed by discussing a broader range of experiences which includes the nurses’ husbands and those I met at the lunch time meets and their husbands. I have also addressed in this chapter the experiences of some in my own social circle, which seemed particularly relevant to the issues at hand. This chapter concludes with a discussion on return migration recognising a degree of what I suggest is post-purchase dissonance among the British migrant population.

In **Chapter Eight** ‘The Irony of Immigration’ I explore the fact that immigration to Great Britain and Australia garners much more attention that emigration from either of these countries. That there is a significant British Diaspora adds to the irony of this situation. While concerns are raised in the British tabloid press around the notion of ‘white flight’ there is little attention given to the existence of ‘white privilege’. For this particular chapter the idea of inequality of access is the important factor, British migrants to Australia have, as previously noted, the social and cultural capital required to ‘purchase’ entry but that does not guarantee a seamless fit.

In **Chapter Nine** I conclude that these women are, among other British migrants, not just ‘whingeing Poms’ but migrants undergoing a significant transformation in their lives as other migrants do. The problems they describe are, I argue, exacerbated by the historical and social context, which simultaneously privileges them and raises expectations both on the part of the migrant and the host. Looking at this migration as consumption-
led, I further argue that by dismissing their legitimate concerns we diminish our overall understanding of migration. At the same time they are arguably privileged and their access to goods and services is much greater than many migrant groups. Utilising the lens of consumption can help illuminate this migration experience and see more clearly the combination of economic, cultural and social capital, influenced by the historical and social context, which makes this particular migration experience what it is. Viewing migration decision making as a component or act of provisioning is also a way of augmenting work on distinctions, such as class and ethnicity, which dominate migration research. By expanding beyond these dominant discourses it is possible to view migration at a more holistic level.

So he did. Home and Away, eat your heart out. The Burnses think they’re in heaven…Mandurah, about 70km south of Perth, is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia, with plenty of work for a British carpenter who has moved to the opposite end of the earth with his wife and two kids. Forget work though –there’s the Indian Ocean, gorgeous weather, fishing, a crab festival, and a lifestyle fit for the rich and famous. Or, in this case, a family of Poms fresh out of green and pleasant, but wet and cold, Kent

The excerpt above is from an article in The Weekend Australian Magazine dated February 4-5 2006 titled ‘Union Jack Attack’, a piece indicative of the popular conceptions of contemporary British migration to Australia. I utilise the extract as an introductory device to convey the kinds of people and their experiences that this thesis seeks to understand and to indicate why they are worthy of study. In two short paragraphs, and with a smattering of strine, Australian slang, thrown in for good measure, the author successfully conveys the positive attributes of life in Australia as regularly sold to ‘wet and cold’ Poms. The mention of Home and Away, the
popular Australian soap opera, which has enjoyed great success in the United Kingdom, introduces popular culture as one of the sales mediums. Reference to house, cars (plural) and a boat appositely highlight why consumption is the overarching theme in my study of British migration to Western Australia. The author, in his statement ‘forget work’, further points to my reasons for placing an emphasis on consumption in this analysis of British migration to Australia. What can be seen is a situation where central to the way these British migrants imagine their migration trajectories and possibilities is the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not allow. Lastly, but certainly not least, the author raises the concept of lifestyle, another important theme in the thesis. By suggesting that the lifestyle is one ‘fit for the rich and famous’, it alludes to another of the key points this thesis will discuss, which is that the British migrants in my study are not from the upper echelons of society but rather, and despite the material conditions mentioned above, are more aptly described as ‘middling’ in status.

Undoubtedly the British in Australia are a privileged group of migrants; a shared language, as well as historic, cultural, social and institutional ties all contributing to this privilege. They have benefited from nearly a century’s worth of favourable immigration policies that have seen them positioned at the top of a migration hierarchy (Jupp 2002). While the skew, created by past immigration policies, officially ended with the adoption of multicultural policies from the 1970s on, the legacy of those policies remains significant today. The British are still largely absorbed into the mainstream and not singled out as other migrant groups continue to be despite, and because of, government policies of multiculturalism.

I will argue that analysis of this labour migration must be augmented by attention to consumption and lifestyle factors in order to obtain a fuller understanding of this particular mobility. My findings suggest that the lens
of consumption is an appropriate tool in this endeavour, that is, for understanding how these migrants perceive their migration decisions and choices or for how these migrants understand their migration trajectories. This thesis is about how British middling migrants imagine what they are doing rather than the structural underpinning of it: Australia's thirst for skilled labour in specific sectors (which is in turn Australia’s consumption pattern). This chapter aims to set the scene theoretically, before introducing my findings in the chapters to follow. I provide an overview of the relevant literatures to explain why the concepts of gender, consumption, class and ethnicity, are central to my analysis of this particular migrant group.

Gender

As noted in the introduction, this thesis is concerned with a group of almost fifty British migrant women who arrived, in the main, between 2000 and 2005, under the auspices of Australia’s skilled migration program either as the primary visa holder, as was the case for most of the nurses I interviewed, or as the spouse of a skilled migrant. Gender then, by default, becomes an issue of primacy not least of all because it is often missing from the skilled migration story in particular (Boucher 2007; 2009; DeLaet 1999; Kofman 2004; 2012). Only since the feminist turn of the 1970s has there been significant recognition of women in migration research beyond the context of the domestic and therefore private sphere. With migration occupying a location in the public and economic spheres the contribution of women had been previously overlooked (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). Scholarship in the intervening period has been much more gender aware and the feminisation of gender flows is recognised but it has still tended to focus on the domestic sphere which obscures the experiences of both skilled female migrants and female migrants who are skilled but who are not the primary visa applicant (Boucher 2007; Kofman 2004).
As I shall discuss further in Chapter Six, the nurses and midwives I interviewed who were the primary visa applicants were aware of the opportunities their qualifications had provided. They appeared to value the contribution this had made to their own migration stories, and where applicable to those who accompanied them. As an aside it was interesting that two of the three nurses I spoke to who had arrived in the late 1980s expressed a particular pride that it was their name rather than their husband’s on the letter that confirmed their successful visa application, Frances who arrived with her husband and family in 1989 brought the original letter with her to the interview. None of younger nurses and more recent arrivals expressed quite the same sense of satisfaction, demonstrating that while there is still some way to go, attitudes to gender and migration have undergone changes in the decade or so between their arrivals.

Despite apparently progressive attitudes evidenced in the women’s position as primary visa applicant the study suggests that traditional gender roles were still a significant feature of these women’s experiences. Only two women out of the sample had never been married or in a de facto relationship. Of the three who were separated from their husbands two had come to Australia as single women. Aileen arrived with two of her children leaving her eldest daughter and grandchildren in the UK but had entered into a new relationship since. Patricia left her children in the UK with their father but, as I will discuss later in the thesis, explained her migration as an opportunity not only for herself but importantly for the children to gain residency and subsequently citizenship in Australia should they wish to. Megan was only 25 years old at the time of interview and had arrived in Australia with her husband but subsequently separated and he returned to the UK. The majority of the women were living with their husbands or partners and had dependant children. Of further interest is the fact that six
of the women specifically mentioned establishing prior to migration that the husband would take on the role of house-husband upon arrival as the women became the main breadwinner. I discuss this further in later chapters but it does highlight the significance of traditional gender roles and social reproduction in this migration story and the concern that the women had for making sure that this temporary inversion of such roles was recognised.

The thesis then offers a glimpse at the intersections between the domestic and the public in looking at women who are the primary visa holders. That consumption is an important consideration in this intersection stems from the gendered nature of consumption or at least how consumption is often perceived. For Slater (1997, p.56):

> [M]ost consumption decisions, purchases and labour in consumption - is carried out by women. This arises from a gender division of labour which divides public and private, production and reproduction, and assigns women, ever more intensively over the course of modernity, to domestic reproduction. More specifically, as consumer culture and commodification gather pace and structures in the twentieth century, the women's responsibility for domestic reproduction is increasingly defined, through advertising, home economics and other educational discourses, state policy and media portrayals, as a responsibility to manage consumption. As domestic reproduction increasingly comes to mean building a home by buying commodities, women are increasingly defined as 'experts in consumption'. The man brings home the pay packet that the woman spends (either in good domestic management or, in a popular image, impulsively and irrationally).
As we move on to the section on consumption below it is worth considering the quote from Slater above in relation to that which opened this chapter, where talking of her husband’s longed-for boat as part of the migration package the wife states ‘So I said, “Go on then”.’ This implies a grant of permission on her part and aligns with the assertion that women often have the final say in household provisioning decisions.

**Consumption**

The subject of this thesis is both ostensibly, and in the formal sense of migration types, definitions, and programs or streams, a labour migration. In this instance that of skilled British migrants to Western Australia. Nonetheless, the participant’s narratives suggest otherwise. Those narratives point, in the substantive sense, to consumption as the motivating factor in this particular migration. Although it may not be explicitly stated, this is implied in the respondents’ comments on their reasons for migrating which give primacy to the attraction of a particular lifestyle, one that they associate with Australia. It is argued that ‘Consumption enables individuals to sustain a coherent lifestyle reflecting their self-identity’ (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p.616). The concept of lifestyle then becomes an important component in the analysis of consumption as it pertains to this migrant group and one on which I shall expand upon further below.

Analyses regarding the usefulness of consumption as a field for analysis in the social sciences generally, but anthropology more specifically, are mixed. Contributions to the field by (McCracken 1990) and Miller (1995b), among others, lament the inattention to the field of consumption. Both McCracken and Miller challenge approaches that see all consumption in a negative light and as one of the evils of capitalism, and thus render the subject easy to dismiss. McCracken (1990, p.xii) has suggested that there is an ‘elitist, anti-consumptionist stance’ in the discipline of anthropology,
and Miller (1995b, p.278) is also vocal about the apparent lack of attention consumption receives stating that 'almost irrespective of the specific domain of enquiry, consumption is increasingly the world of practice with which the anthropologist must engage'. More recently, however, Graeber (2011) has been critical of the focus on consumption, arguing that despite the term being ill defined it has come to represent everything we do as human beings when we are not actively engaged in production. In the absence of a more suitable alternative I continue to use the terms consumption and consumerism believing that they are useful in describing this migration. However, I use the terms in awareness of Graber’s (2011) arguments detailed above. I have also acknowledged Graeber’s (2011) argument that it is unhelpful to separate consumption and production into different spheres and endeavour to apply his proposal that instead, consumption is to be thought about as a component in the production of human beings, that is of social reproduction.

Viewing consumption as a component in the production of human beings ties in with a recent article on the analysis of care giving in the context of migration. Here, Kofman places importance on ‘engaging with the concept of social reproduction’ (2012b, p.144). That it is important in this example of skilled, middling migration from the United Kingdom is evidenced at least in one instance in the oft-repeated reason for the migration that is seeking a ‘better life[style]’ for their children. Furthermore, and this they may not be entirely cognisant of at such an early stage in their migration trajectory, those in my study are, almost inevitably, now part of transnational households, where consumption, production and social reproduction happen across transnational social fields that include both home and host societies. Some already have children who have remained in the UK. Others have children who will return for work, to attend university or even to settle there. Many will have family members from the United
Kingdom visiting to provide care such as in the case of a grandmother arriving at the birth of a grandchild, or indeed will themselves make care provisions for family in the UK, either at a distance or in person. There are multiple variations on this theme, which highlight the integral nature of consumption in the production of human beings.

This can further be seen in the seminal work of Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1978) *The World of Goods: towards an anthropology of consumption*, in which they stress the importance of consumption as a field of enquiry, stating that:

> Consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape. The housewife with her shopping basket arrives home: some things in it she reserves for her household, some for father, some for the children; others are destined for the special delectation of guests. Whom she invites into her house, what parts of the house she makes available to outsiders, how often, what she offers them for, music, food, drink, and conversation, these choices express and generate culture in its general sense (Douglas & Isherwood 1978, p.57).

It is reasonable to ask what relevance this work published over thirty-five years ago can have to a study of contemporary migration. The approach advocated by Douglas and Isherwood detailed above urges us to see consumption as inextricably linked with everything we do as it simultaneously produces and is a product of culture, and is therefore implicit in the production of human beings, that is in social reproduction. Further, I argue that Douglas and Isherwood’s assertion above in relation to forces of inclusion and exclusion can be extrapolated beyond the household level. Similar forces can be seen in play in relation to national borders.
Utilising consumption as a lens through which to view this particular migration allows us to look into the details and contradictions of the stereotypes, that are applied to this group of migrants. How these white British women consume is tied up in classed and racialised consumption patterns and desires that they have in common with those of the same class and racialised identity. While as I have noted there are important ethnic differences among the group, albeit differences which are often ignored, there is arguably a common class culture among the respondents which informs their desires and aspirations and is implicated in the decision to migrate.

In respect of these observations I argue that it is imperative for scholars of migration not to dismiss the choices made by these women and their families as merely conspicuous consumption by privileged middle class actors and therefore unworthy of study but rather to look beyond to the culture which influences those choices and which is in turn influenced by them. As Douglas and Isherwood (1978, p.75) further note, '[g]oods are endowed with value by the agreement of fellow consumers'. What this thesis seeks to demonstrate is the importance of consumption in exploring the identity projects of these migrants. I am interested in how something casually referred to as ‘lifestyle’ is, in fact, a complicated ‘amalgam of consumption, taste and individual identity’\(^{10}\). I want to demonstrate that the lifestyle choices made by these migrants are cultural and the challenge in this dissertation is to explore the cultural practices and principals that constitute migration in the context of this migration cohort.

Accepting the premise that consumption is about both access to goods and to social involvement then it becomes easier to bypass popular stances that

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10 I have borrowed this descriptor from a University of Melbourne Course outline [https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/view/2013/CULS20014?output=PDF](https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/view/2013/CULS20014?output=PDF) [viewed 13 June 2014] because it offers a neat summation of the concept and is a very suitable introduction to the more in-depth discussion to follow.
see consumption placed at either extreme on a spectrum ranging from good and bad. For example, it has been tendered that:

The popular literature on consumption is surprisingly supercilious about attempts to be equipped at the same level [...] and an aura of disapproval over keeping up with the Joneses puts the writers on the side of the excluders, against those who are trying not to be excluded (Douglas & Isherwood 1978, p.125).

It is worth bearing this in mind during discussion, in the chapters to follow, on the desire for ‘McMansions’ and swimming pools. Rather than dismissing such consumption, I suggest following Douglas and Isherwood’s argument for (1978, p.76) ‘shifting the view of consumption from goods to culture and for insisting that any choice between goods is the result of, and contributes to, culture.’ It is through the lens of consumption then that I argue these migrants can be made more visible.

A significant consideration throughout the thesis is demonstrating how the existing labour migration literature can be augmented utilising the information gathered from this particular group of migrants. That is, migrants who emphasise consumption, rather than production, in their migration narratives. The following distinction between production and consumption motivated migration by Bell and Ward is useful for current purposes:

[P]roduction-related moves, [...] occur for the purpose of making some form of economic contribution at the destination, and consumption-related moves [...] are triggered by the need to access some form of amenity, good or service. (Bell & Ward 2000, p.100)

Bell and Ward recognise the inevitable crossover between the two categories but assert that one or the other usually influences migrants. As the thesis will show, for those I interviewed, access to amenities, goods and services was most commonly the determining factor. More often than not these closely resemble the attributes of Australia described in the extract with which I opened this chapter and emphasise the sun, beachside living, and a slower pace of life, all representative of the lifestyle the migrants wish to attain. Labour is present in this story, but what distinguishes these migrants from others is their ability to utilise the opportunities presented in their specific context, enabling them to construct themselves in a particular fashion. Herein lies the conceptual link between consumption and identity. The thesis then brings out the gap between the state category of skilled migrant, into which these migrants must fit, and the subjective reasons for migration. It looks beyond the bureaucratic classification of skilled migrant to the lived experience of these migrants thus contributing to a fuller understanding of the contemporary migration situation in Australia.

**Consumption and identity**

For Miller, ‘[c]onsumption has become the main arena in which and through which people have to struggle towards control over the definition of themselves and their values’ (Miller 1995b, p.277). This idea of identity construction through consumption is explored in the work of several scholars. McCracken, for instance, sees the ‘consumer as someone involved in a “cultural project” the purpose of which is to complete the self’. McCracken goes on to say that:

> The consumer system supplies individuals with the cultural materials to realize their various and changing ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman, middle-aged or elderly, a parent, a citizen, or a
professional. All of these notions are concretized in goods, and it is through their possession and use that the individual realizes the notions of his own life.

(McCracken 1987, p.88)

In the same vein, Hoey (2005, p.593) talks of the individual being on a quest to fulfil their ‘potential self’. While Friedman (1990, p.121) asserts that '[a]cts of consumption represent ways of fulfilling desires that are identified with highly valued life styles. Consumption is a material realization, or attempted realization, of the image of the good life’. So, through consumption, but within cultural and societal constraints, which vary in their degree of influence, the individual is able to work towards constructing their image of the ‘good life’. Bearing in mind, as Friedman (1991) later pointed out, that even an anti-consumptionist stance is a form of consumption, consumption can be viewed as a necessity of lifestyle attainment. Individuals shop for goods, services, and in this particular instance on British migration to Australia, a destination, all of which contribute to their image of the good life.

Not all are in agreement with this view of consumption as creative and emancipatory. It is worth noting here that in his examination of the use of the term consumption, Graeber (2011, p.502) argues that ‘[i]nsofar as social life is and always has been mainly about the mutual creation of human beings, the ideology of consumption has been endlessly effective in helping us forget this’. He goes on to say of the ideology of consumption that it suggests ‘our primary relation with other individuals is an endless struggle to establish our sovereignty, or autonomy’ and that consequently ‘any genuine relation with other people is problematic (the problem of “the other”)’. Dimitra Doukas commenting on Graeber offers another explanation arguing that ‘human beings are in no way autonomous […] To the contrary, we are as the late Walter Goldschmidt (2006) put it, innately
“affect hungry’,” Doukas (see Graeber 2011, p.504) goes on to suggest that “[c]onsumption in everyday practice is a way to satisfy our affect hunger’. Where this is problematic Doukas argues is that not everyone gets to play the game and as examples she cites the ‘unemployed and the so-called underclass’. This of course is pertinent to the ideas of consumption being about inclusion and exclusion as introduced above and also connects with calls to study across the spectrum of migration rather than just at the extremes (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007).

The idea of migration as shopping is proposed by King (2002, p.95) who suggests viewing migration as ‘a consumption good rather than a strategy which satisfies the production needs of another country’s economy or the private survival needs of an individual migrant’. As will become more apparent throughout the thesis, this approach is very much in keeping with the way in which the respondents in this study expressed their migration decision-making. King writes of migrants who are:

> [A]ble quite explicitly to ‘shop’ for opportunities and destinations, measuring the costs and benefits of risk, insecurity, quality of life, anticipated income, cultural (un)familiarity, and existence of social kin and contacts. (King 2002, p.95)

And again, this is commensurate with the narratives of the migrants I encountered in this research. King further suggests that consumption-led migration which he calls a ‘desirable act’ enables ‘the projection of an individual’s identificatory experience beyond what are perceived as the restricting confines of his or her own country.’ As I suggested earlier, the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not allow is central to how the migrants in this study imagine their migrant trajectories. Migration, as King suggests, is then part of ‘a dream of self realisation’.

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Thus, I argue that these migrants consume ‘Australia’ or an idea of what Australia is, as of course Australia, in its quest for skilled labour, consumes the migrants. I am not proposing that viewing migration as shopping or consumption should conjure an impression of the migrant as completely free to choose. Rather the view of consumption and consumers is one in which they are wholly embedded in their culture(s), responding to and shaping cultural notions and understanding about lifestyle. Discussion of consumption must be mindful not to either over or understate a consumer’s contribution to the decision-making. While consumption does not happen in a cultural void neither are consumers unable to assert their own agency, as Douglas and Isherwood explain:

Theories of consumption, which assume a puppet consumer, prey to the advertiser's wiles, or consumers jealously competing for no sane motive, or lemming consumers rushing to disaster, are frivolous, even dangerous. Such irrational explanations of consumer behaviour get currency only because economists believe that they should have a theory that is morally neutral and empty of judgment, whereas no serious consumption theory can avoid the responsibility of social criticism. (1978, p.89)

As the following chapters in the thesis will demonstrate, power and privilege in relation to these British migrants and their consumption patterns are indeed exercised in complex ways.

The thesis looks at what the expectations of this particular cohort of migrants are and how they emerge in culture; it asks how lifestyle, class, and consumption are interconnected in both the theory supporting this thesis and the lived experience of the migrants it concerns.
Consumption is often argued to be about choice, and in particular free choice among endless opportunities of difference. In practice, however, the largest measure of our consumption is not derived from a desire for more things or for more choice. It comes from the gradual expansion of a sense of what ordinary people may ordinarily expect as their standard of living combined with the growth in their incomes. Whether it is the speed with which a medical operation should be carried out, or the number of toilets in a family house, modern consumption has certainly demonstrated how hard it is to overestimate our capacity to need as opposed to merely want. Shoppers have not the slightest problem in constantly bemoaning what they perceive as a lack of choice for a particular commodity while standing in the middle of a shopping mall. (Miller 1998, p.138)

In relation to this it could be argued that there are constraints that emerge from the class and gender position of the women I interviewed. Being nurses, as the majority were, means that they have certain expectations of how their life should be. Likewise, the wives of skilled migrant men who made up the remainder of the participants also have particular expectations of their lives in Australia post migration due, at least in part, to the demand for those skills. Miller’s idea of an expansion of expectations outlined above leads us to the next section of this chapter, focusing on class and lifestyle. I have argued for a focus on consumption; however, that cannot be seen to preclude the inclusion of class in the discussion. As I shall discuss below with particular reference to Bourdieu, consumption decisions are undoubtedly influenced by and ultimately influence social status.
Habitus and the production of lifestyle and identity

This chapter began by stating my reasons for utilising consumption as a lens to view this particular migration from the United Kingdom to Australia. I argued that it is important not to be dismissive of consumption as an area of study. I also emphasised the relationship between consumption and identity, linking the two to the concept of lifestyle. Here I will expand further upon the concept of lifestyle as it pertains to this thesis introducing Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus as an important factor in the production of lifestyles. This section will focus on theoretical considerations regarding lifestyle, informed by the fact that for those I interviewed the lifestyle narrative takes primacy over one of career advancement or simple economic/financial gain.

The shift of focus from production to consumption is more considerate of the migrant subjectivity, a crucial aspect of migration decision-making. As Hammerton and Thomson write:

> [T]hough tangible economic factors are significant within most stories of migration and return…these economic forces and their impact upon migrant decision-making can only be understood in relation to migrant subjectivity. By ‘subjectivity’ we mean the aspirations and emotions, which are underpinned by a person’s sense of identity: who she is, what she comes from, and what she wants to become. (2005, p.275)

These aspirations are often discussed together, bundled-up as lifestyle, which has led lifestyle to become a catch-all phrase, seemingly saying everything and nothing at the same time. For Bourdieu (1984, p.172)
lifestyles are the ‘systematic products of habitus’, essentially they are the
everyday practices that come about through a combination of an
individual’s habitus, capital, and the field in which they are operating.

For Bourdieu (1977, p.72) habitus relates to ‘systems of durable
transposable dispositions’. Bourdieu says of habitus that it comprises:

[T]he hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as "stand up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand" (Bourdieu 1977, p.94).

This implicit taken for grantedness about habitus is argued to be its fundamentals:

As consumers act to maximize material, symbolic and social capital within various types of fields, they may experience themselves as under no particular constraint from rules or obligations. But this is exactly the point of the concept of habitus; that the social actor possesses an embodied, pre-reflective competence, having internalized the rewards and sanctions that stem from surrounding social structures, which are thus not the object of direct reflection. (Askegaard & Linnet 2011, p.388)

What Askegaard and Linnet are describing here is having what has been called a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu 1990, p.61). That is, an innate sense of what is appropriate in a given social situation.

The pursuit of lifestyle identities in a migration context can then be seen to offer particular challenges as the migrant is forced to operate in new fields. It has been suggested that ‘a lack of fit between habitus and field can bring
habitus to the fore’ (Sweetman 2009, p.9). This occurs as the familiar is left behind in the country of origin. As I have noted, a large part of habitus centres on its taken for grantedness, for the new migrant, however, a new social milieu challenges that ‘feel for the game’. For those in my study it seems that adjusting to some fields for example, social and occupational fields, particularly the latter, appear to cause more angst than others, not least of all because their habitus would suggest that the rules of the game in Australia would be similar to those they were familiar with.

The concept of lifestyle is about making choices. As David Chaney explains in his monograph *Lifestyles*, the term relates to the way we see ourselves and others in the world noting that lifestyles ‘are patterns of action that differentiate people’ (Chaney 1996, p.4). He argues that these actions take place in a context where societal distinctions are associated more readily with how one uses rather than produces resources, distinctions that are about status rather than class. Chaney draws on the work of George Simmel noting:

\[
\text{Simmel says that while we live within a single style of life, or a single language, local social order appears inevitable. It is only with a plurality of options that we are forced into a reflexive stance towards all our options. The accelerated pace of change in a mass economy breeds its own necessity for further and more complex differentiation. (Chaney 1996, p.52)}
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For Chaney then, the increased attention to lifestyles is a necessity exacerbated with the emergence of mass consumption from the 1950s. The increasingly reflexive stance we are forced to take, surely contributes to the notions of inadequacy and insecurity proposed by Eisenstadt (1953) as motivators for migration and introduced in Chapter One. Lifestyle emerges
as a way of being in the world, a prescription for identity.

There is a paradox identified in the necessity for further and more complex differentiation because as options increase this also leads to the creation of fashions. 'Lifestyle entails, on the one hand, a loss of uniformity and increased space for individual style but, on the other hand, individual lifestyles draw on deliberately designed and globally distributed semiotic resources that are definitely not individual' (Machin & van Leeuwen 2005, p.588). Here the different opinions on what a lifestyle constitutes emerge and also the connection to consumption. As Featherstone points out:

The modern individual within consumer culture is made conscious that he speaks not only with his clothes, but with his home, furnishings, decoration, car and other activities which are to be read and classified in terms of the presence and absence of taste. The preoccupation with customizing a lifestyle and a stylistic self consciousness are not just to be found among the young and the affluent; consumer culture publicity suggests that we all have room for self-improvements and self-expression whatever our age or class origins. (Featherstone 1991, p.86)

My argument is that the migration I am discussing can usefully be viewed as a consumption good or purchase, that contributes to the identity of the purchaser or migrant, an identity, which, in the case of these migrants, is influenced by societal notions of what constitutes the good life.

Benson’s (2012) paper highlights the role of the imagination in migrant decision making, noting that:

[T]he desire for a particular migration destination reflects collective imaginings, while the act of migration requires that individuals have the capital –
Both those I interviewed and those I have talked to more generally about migration claim that the ‘lifestyle’ in Australia is better. In the article quoted at the beginning of this chapter the author suggests that the Burns family he refers to are living a ‘lifestyle of the rich and famous’ here in Australia, based on the observation of their canal side home and their motorboat. Others I have talked to say that they have less money and that possessions are less important and claim it is ‘the lifestyle’ that counts. As in the quote below:

I don’t know we were never, I mean we didn’t want the big 4 by 2 and the 4WD but we weren’t in the UK. You know we had what we needed and that was it, and I am not interested in working to pay a mortgage […] Certainly, the people we connected with when we first came were very into the prestige of the big block and the new house, it was all about material gain. But for us honestly it was about lifestyle.

This quote from one of the interviewees in this study makes clear two quite opposing views both of which are labelled as ‘lifestyle’ and it is in this contradiction that we can see the value of a closer analysis of the phenomenon of lifestyle.

Both of these descriptions apply to those included my study, as will hopefully become apparent as they are introduced and discussed in the chapters to follow. I am suggesting then, that it is the habitus of these middling migrants to use their relative wealth, or, more specifically in the Bourdieusian context, their various capitals, namely economic, social, cultural and symbolic, to pursue lifestyle identities through the
consumption of migration.

**Lifestyle migration literature**

I have already stated my view that the existing migration literature has limitations when dealing with this particular consumption led migration, I argue that this is based upon various pre-occupations with gender, ethnicity and class which obscure those in the cohort I describe. That said, there are emerging bodies of literature that speak to some of the elements of the migration I describe, one of those is the Lifestyle Migration literature. According to the Lifestyle Migration hub, an internet-based resource connecting researchers in the field, lifestyle migration and tourism related mobilities are ‘[n]ew, flexible forms of mobility that connect and blur the distinction between tourism and migration’.

For Benson and O’Reilly (2007) lifestyle migration can take many different forms and the literature includes many disparate groups of migrants for example Benson’s (2011) middle-class British migrants in France, O’Reilly’s (2000) more working class oriented sample in Spain and Hoey’s (2005) American ‘tree-changers’ seeking rural amenities, to name but a few. In this literature the term 'lifestyle migration' broadly means 'the relocation of people within the developed world searching for a better way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p.608). More recently it has been posited that ‘lifestyle migration appears to be driven by consumption and is optional and voluntary’ (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p.3). In this definition there are clear parallels with those in this study, they were as King (2002, p.92) suggests, migrants of ‘free will’. Their migration was a choice, an opportunity that they had the luxury of being able to assess and

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11 [http://www.uta.fi/yky/lifestylemigration/index.html](http://www.uta.fi/yky/lifestylemigration/index.html) viewed 15/06/2012.)
act upon if desired. In other words, and to continue the connection between migration and consumption I have tried to establish, migration is a consumption good these migrants have the capital to purchase. In this regard, class can be seen playing out as a significant factor in whether choice is available or not. As noted previously, access to goods is an important factor in any discussion about consumption.

Whilst the lifestyle migration literature does not speak directly to the migration of those in my cohort, the approach must be commended for its focus on migrants who 'have in common a relative affluence' (Benson and O’Reilly 2009, p.609). As I have argued the categorization of the migrants I discuss as affluent has contributed to their longstanding neglect in the migration literature. There are significant descriptive or empirical benefits to the lifestyle migration literature in its focus on less documented mobilities and particularly in relation to arriving at a fuller understanding of what a ‘better life’ actually means to migrants. Migration has always been an avenue for those seeking a ‘better life’ or ‘better lifestyle’, what the lifestyle migration highlights are the variations in how this is imagined and executed and how habitus has an influence before and after migration (Benson & O'Reilly 2009). The imagined life and the reality are significantly different for example in O’Reilly’s cohort of British migrants on the Costa Del Sol (2000) whom she identifies as working and lower-middle-class, and Benson’s (2011) middle-class migrants in rural France.

So far this chapter has discussed the concept of consumption as one of the overarching themes of this thesis and has suggested that utilising it as a tool to investigate this particular migration of British migrants to Australia can shed new light on the motivations and actions of the migrants. The discussion has used the consumption angle to demonstrate how notions of lifestyle contribute to identity construction at both a societal and individual level and also inform the decision making process for these particular
migrants. To conclude this chapter the discussion now turns to one concerned with class and status where drawing upon the threads identified above such as habitus and identity I will argue that the migrants in this study can be usefully defined as ‘middling’ and that this definition is significant in their positioning in the broader migration literature, most notably in respect to their absence.

**Middling migrants**

As stated in the introduction, despite the apparent material wealth of many of these migrants I believe ‘middling’ is an appropriate expression for their status both prior to leaving the United Kingdom and upon settlement here in Australia. There are a variety of backgrounds among those included in the study that cover the full gamut of traditional British class distinctions. What the respondents do have in common, however, is a combination of capitals, in the Bourdieusian sense, which have allowed them to choose migration for themselves, and in most cases their immediate families, as part of what they describe as a quest for a better life. Describing these migrants as middling is not to suggest that class is not an important factor in these migration stories, which, as I will go on to discuss, are undoubtedly influenced by their class position. What ‘middling’ does in this case, that middle class does not, is allow for the range of class positions that are represented in the sample.

Recent scholarship highlights the need for a more nuanced assessment of class position, that goes beyond occupationally derived categories (eg. Savage 2000; Skeggs 2004). Drawing heavily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu this shift or ‘cultural turn’ in the theorisation of class promotes attention to, and the importance of ‘the interplay between economic, social
and cultural capital’ (Savage et al. 2013, p.220). Utilising this multi-faceted approach to social class, Savage et al arrive at what they term a new model of social class, which includes seven categories: Elite; Middle Class; Technical Experts; New Affluent Workers; Ageing Traditional Working Class; Emergent Service Workers and finally the Precariat. Importantly however they note that:

Leaving aside the particular case of chief executive officers who are predominantly located in our ‘elite’, we have found no clear affiliation between specific occupations and our latent classes. Perhaps, rather than seeking to locate class fundamentally in occupational ‘blocks’, the time is now ripe for a different, multi-dimensional perspective, in which occupational membership is spread (though unevenly) between different classes.(Savage et al. 2013, p.244-245).

Recognition of the heterogeneity of class positioning apparent within this research cohort contributed to the decision to categorise the migrants in this study as ‘middling’. Something that was further informed by other recent scholarship that has adopted this stance in recognition of a neglected area of research as I discuss further below.

The expression ‘middling’ I derive from Conradson and Latham (Conradson & Latham 2005), whom in their focus on transnational urbanism argue that research on transnationalism had tended to omit those in the middle. Attending to those they call ‘middling’ migrants was an attempt to rectify this and they propose that we ‘understand middling in terms of socio-economic and class position in a country of origin’ (2005, p.290). In Sheba George’s (2005) discussion of Keralite nurses in the US, class is very prominently displayed. This is due to the entrenched hierarchies existing in Kerala, that have deemed nursing a lower class, even
dirty profession and have been transmitted to the United States along with the migrants themselves and arguably maintained due to habitus and to the continued transnational contact between the two places. This prominence of class contrasts markedly with what I encountered among the women I interviewed. I did not ask specific questions about class or social status and no one discussed this openly, however, the way in which the nurses and midwives discussed their occupation showed that they had left the United Kingdom at least with a strong sense of professional standing. My argument here is that it is their middling status that makes their class somewhat invisible. The Keralite women’s class is visible because they are not considered middling in the traditional hierarchy, they are firmly established at its lower end and those judging them at the opposite. I shall discuss this further in Chapter Six but suffice to say for now that the women were very comfortable talking of their professional autonomy as it existed in the United Kingdom and certainly took some pride in the status that their profession gave them.

Portes and Borocz (1989, p.615) argue, that diversity in international migrants can be illustrated by 'conditions of exit, the class origin of immigrants and the contexts of reception.' They also describe three contexts of reception 'handicapped' 'neutral' and 'advantaged' and of the neutral context they note that:

Perfectly impartial contexts seldom exist in reality,
but they are approximated in the United States by
white immigrants with some occupational skills who
settle away from areas of ethnic concentration.
(Portes & Borocz 1989, p.615)

The migrants in my study could arguably be said to fit into this category however for the purposes of this study I think the expression ‘middling’ is more appropriate than neutral which I would argue hides the nuances of
particular migrant situations and seems to detract from one of the purposes of this thesis which is to make these particular British migrants more visible. ‘Middling’ implies incompleteness or a less bounded category, which seems infinitely more appropriate. Those that are included in this study come from a range of backgrounds and financial situations all of which could best be described as middling.

The majority of British migrants I encountered were skilled migrants, a situation brought about by the Australian government’s rigid immigration policy, one that severely limits entry on any other basis. Instantly then these migrants can be seen to have value in the market due to their skills; Australia’s immigration policy is an exclusivist one and the entry requirements are strict. At the same time however, despite their qualifications rendering them members of a fairly exclusive cohort, I argue that it would be erroneous to call them elites. Privileged as they are in comparison to many migrants they are not comparable for instance to the managerial elites described by Beaverstock (2005) who enjoy their migrant experience largely at their companies expense and are engaged in transnational business practices on a daily basis. Those I talked to are self funded and many have experienced significant financial stress as part of the move. These factors lead me to believe that the expression ‘middling’ is appropriate to describe their class and socio-economic status. At this juncture I wish to note that the diversity inherent in British emigration must be acknowledged. Were my sample to have been centred around a group of young IT or financial professionals in central Sydney, for example, the data gathered would most likely have been significantly different but they could well still be considered middling.

Others have previously sought to define middling, for example, Mar (2005), in the same volume as Conradson and Latham, also refers to ‘middling migrants’, in his article stating that they were 'mostly
professionals and para-professionals such as nurses, engineers and social workers [...] [T]hey were not 'high flying' business migrants' (Mar 2005, p.367). Kofman offers a similar observation when she talks about differing attitudes to the “highly skilled” in contrast to those deemed ‘ordinarily skilled’ (Kofman 2012a, p.64). In another instance, Wiles (2008) refers to middling migrants as ‘not motivated to move by narrowly economic or political reasons [...] rather,] motivations for moving tend to be social and cultural, for opportunities for travel and pleasure' (Wiles 2008, p.117). This ties in with my observation that the migrant’s aspirations were commensurate with their socio-economic status and their habitus. Linking the idea of contemporary British migrants being of ‘middling’ status back to the more historical work on the Ten Pound Poms it is worth recalling the introductory chapter where I noted in keeping with Appleyard’s work that the expectations of the British migrants were on the whole fairly modest.

In the chapter *Site Effects* Bourdieu (1983, p.128) writes that:

> At the risk of feeling themselves out of place, individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that that space tacitly requires of its occupants...One has the Paris that goes with ones economic capital and also with one's cultural and social capital.

Similarly, Bourdieu also proposes that ‘the subjective hope of profit tends to be adjusted to the objective probability of profit’ (2000, p.216). These observations of Bourdieu’s suggest that an individual’s expectations, or degree of aspiration are inextricably linked to their habitus so while, as I discuss in detail in the ethnographic chapters to follow, the migrants I describe had aspirations to what I earlier referred to as the ‘good life’ or to an ongoing project of the self, this occurs, according to Bourdieu, in accordance with their previous experience. Australia offers these migrants
not so much a new way of life, as they largely continue in on similar career trajectories, as they would have in the United Kingdom, but rather to live their life with the ability to consume in ways that Britain did not allow them.

I noted earlier Daniel Miller’s observation of increased expectations, and below I give an example from the work of Scott as to how the expectation of mobility has changed. For Scott (2006, p.1123):

Mobility – whether migration, a temporary sojourn, travel and tourism, second-home ownership, or simply experienced through the transnational media – is now a dominant feature of middle-class reproduction. It is arguably one of the key defining processes in social distinction; where we go to outside the UK and what we do there are now key elements in middle-class ‘talk’, and help to differentiate the various consumer/lifestyle sub-strata of the middle classes.

Although those I am describing are migrants’ who have an elevated social/cultural standing due to their migration decision it is also important to recognise Scott’s point that mobility is increasingly becoming a norm in UK society. For Torresan (2007, p.105) ‘Images promoted by international media industries play a crucial role in structuring people's expectations of their welfare and of what they perceive as a privileged position that they should strive to achieve.’ As with other consumer decision-making the boundaries are constantly shifting, tending towards heightened expectations.

At the same time expectations should not be seen as untempered; ‘the gradual expansion of a sense of what ordinary people may ordinarily expect’ (Miller 1998, p.138) happens, as Bourdieu would argue, in relation
to their habitus. Bourdieu’s idea of habitus ties in with the consumption patterns as expressed in the *Whingeing Pom* and by those I interviewed. Despite assertions that there is a tendency to individualization in the modern consumer society (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) this view is challenged by an apparent uniformity to consumption patterns as expressed below:

A popular misrepresentation takes us to be individuals desperately trying to create our individuality in the teeth of sanctioned norms and constraints. This is hard to square with the overwhelming evidence that shoppers ignore most of the diversity of goods that already exist and emphasize the standard purchases such as yet more pasta dishes, little black dresses, or seaside holidays (Miller 2001, p.55).

My own research concurs with Miller’s observations in the oft-repeated desire for a four-bedroom, two-bathroom home, with a swimming pool and an outdoor area, among other things. There is a standardisation to the aspirations expressed that belies any tendency to individualisation. This argument against rampant individualisation in consumer behaviour is taken further in the following quotation:

> [T]he ideal of pure individual fulfillment is not only futile but is based on a fantasy. A pure individual outside of society would have only the most basic and restricted needs or desires. Most of the desires we wish to cultivate and then fulfill are a product of our being socialized in the first place...we cannot even think of needs except through the filter of a whole gamut of highly normative discourses (Miller 2001, p.195).
It is these normative discourses Miller discusses that are the focus of this thesis, highlighting the taken for granted movement of ‘middling’ migrants.

**Aspirations**

In the quotes below from two of my participants the reader can get the sense that the women have an idea of what their social position should be. In the first there is frustration expressed at the level of material comfort they had attained in England despite simultaneously acknowledging that the family lived in a good area with good schools. Even when discussing their house in Perth, arguably held in higher regard than the property they occupied in England, there is still a qualification that it is ‘not like one of these enormous great houses in Perth but for us it is very sizable’.

We left England saying good riddance...we felt like England was letting us down because we were both professionals both working very hard and both at the same time struggling to get to the next step. We had a three-bedroom one-bathroom house and we were living in a good area with good schools and working hard and finding to get to the next level was almost insurmountable. It was such a big leap and we just felt that we could maybe get a better quality of life and certainly now we have we have a nice house with a pool, and it is not like one of these enormous great houses in Perth but for us it is very sizable. We’ve got four cars you know and we are comfortable, you know we are okay, I mean we owe lots of stuff like we’ve always done but that is the way we live, we are a bit live now pay later. But certainly I can say categorically every time I drive home and I drive up the road and I see the blue skies and the palm trees or I drive up the West Coast Highway I think I am living in a brochure. (Hazel,
The statement above while suggesting an improvement in material standing as a result of the move from the United Kingdom also reveals that the family do not see themselves as having reached the top as it were, ‘it is not like one of those enormous great houses in Perth but for us it is very sizeable’. Debt is acknowledged and she describes them as being ‘comfortable’. Another respondent who had purchased her own home appeared more satisfied with her change in situation noting:

A nurse doesn’t have a house like what I’ve got, come on, we lived in a block of four [In England] and the four houses takes up about half my plot (Joyce, Midwife).

Despite again the reference to material possessions my experience was that the aspirations of the women were on the whole fairly modest. This must be read in light of the fact that a four bedroom two bathroom house and two cars in the drive are not uncommon in Australia, they are almost taken for granted. So it is not only this but other things such as the statements below which leads me to suggest that their aspirations were fairly common among their peers at least, rather than exaggerated. For example Laura (RN) stated during interview that ‘I am not looking for anything in the higher realms, I am looking to come out to be a nurse and care for patients, it is about quality of life and work life balance’. Another, Veronica, had ended up in nursing management as she was forced to become the main breadwinner when her husband struggled to find work in his chosen field but stated ‘I would give it all up tomorrow to go and have a little nursing job somewhere for him to have a job that he wanted.’ Heather (Midwife) whose husband had been a business owner in the United Kingdom noted that the fact her husband was now an employee rather than an employer and subsequently working significantly less hours was one of the main
benefits for their family in coming to Australia, although she did note that their financial position had changed for the worse because of this, she saw it as a positive outcome. It is worth noting here that my sample is selective, not representative and there is, with my focus on women, a clear gender bias, the findings must be read with these things in mind.

I have attempted above to make clear why I believe that ‘middling’ is an appropriate expression to describe those in my study and how Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field can be useful in this analysis. To conclude this literature review chapter I now turn to another significant theme in the overall thesis, that concerning invisibility, something I will argue is bound up with notions of privilege and whiteness, concepts that have had a significant role in Australian migration history and that are inseparable from those of consumption, lifestyle, and identity, which have already been discussed.

**Whiteness, privilege and invisibility**

The final section in this chapter, concerns notions of whiteness, privilege and invisibility, three interconnected concepts all of which have a significant impact on the story of migration in Australia. Whiteness studies emerged in the United States as a challenge to the subordination of other racialised identities (seminal works in the field include Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993; hooks 1992; Morrison 1992). It has been argued that ‘the most commonly mentioned feature of “whiteness” seems to be its pervasive nonpresence, its invisibility […] by erasing its presence “whiteness” operates as the unacknowledged standard or norm against which all so-called “minorities” are measured’ (Keating 1995, pp.904-905). Hage (1998) argues of the Australian context that despite the promotion of a multicultural society, that white dominance remains the norm. It must be noted that it is important ‘not to blur the boundaries’ between “whiteness”
as a concept and white skin, this is not about demonising white people but rather about recognising privilege and invisibility where they exist (Keating 1995). Inevitably though such attitudes confer privilege or advantage on the British in the Australian migration context.

This study is about an arguably privileged group of migrants in a situation arising due to their access to migration as a consumption good. That access is enabled by an advantageous combination of the various forms of capital, namely social, economic, cultural and symbolic, that emerges from the fact that they are in the main white, English speaking migrants with desirable skills and qualifications. However, being a British migrant in Australia is a curious mix of privilege and presumption. Undoubtedly the historical context, which I noted in the introductory chapter, affords these migrants a position of advantage over many others. Simultaneously, however, that same historical context leads to an invisibility, as documented by Lunt and others (Hammerton & Thomson 2005; Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006), that extends beyond academia and into day-to-day life. As British, these migrants are not seen to have ethnicity. Further, the movement of these migrants within the core does not follow the more common path of larger scale migration from the periphery to the core countries, which, as I have pointed out, renders them largely invisible in migration studies. This is also perpetuated in part by what Amit (2007a, p.66) argues is an:

“[E]thnic” template that has tended to dominate anthropological investigation of transnational mobility and connection.

This is understandable, given anthropology’s disciplinary tendency to focus on the underdog, but it does also compromise the holistic view anthropologists strive for.

The invisibility is also problematic for the migrants. As Lunt, drawing on
the work of Kivisto, states:

British nations populations, whether as English, Welsh, Scottish, (Northern) Irish or ‘British’, are seemingly immobilized, frozen in an image of docile assimilation. They are denied traits, habits, and practices, and as a result they appear a dull and dour bunch with no culture to speak of, and little emotion. Here the reluctance to ascribe cultural practice is synonymous with the prevalent understandings of how whiteness is normalised and reproduced. Despite the differences across home countries, it is the shared experience of whiteness that results in their being rendered invisible by accounts. For migrant stories and transnational communities to be worthy of attention it would appear they have to stand out in terms of language, habits, tradition, socio-economic status, and the result is that culture is exoticised and becomes something ‘other’ groups have (Lunt 2008, p.156).

As stated in Chapter One exposing this situation is an important justification for studying a privileged group of migrants, not least of all if it assists in challenging the normalisation I have just mentioned.

I argue that emigration from Britain is an under acknowledged phenomenon, in the realms of academia, policy making, and in popular culture. So their privilege exists through their British nationality, their favourable class/status location and the ‘taken for grantedness’ of travel abroad from the United Kingdom. At the same time these things have rendered them less interesting to researchers and arguably more likely to be labelled ‘Whingeing Poms’ when they do encounter hardship or frustrations, as many migrants do, in their mobility. Even where hardship or frustration do not exist this thesis aims to show that the migration story
is incomplete unless it considers those who may have also have power and privilege in a migrant setting.

Privilege is important here not least of all in its relationship to consumption particularly when wealth and capital, in their different forms, are viewed as giving access to both goods and social involvement. As Douglas and Isherwood (1978) argue, poverty is about both lack of access to goods and lack of social involvement. And it must be remembered how exclusivist migration policy is in Australia; it is not an easy country to enter.

Lunt (2008, p.152) argues that, 'British nations populations are seen as irrelevant to transnational investigation irrespective of whether the focus is on communities, families, or relationships.' He concludes that one of the most significant factors in this omission is the 'uncritical acceptance of stereotypes of British nations migration [...] the assumption of settler-host homogeneity and complete assimilation into a host culture'. These are assumptions which Lunt argues can easily be contested but which persist. These assumptions persist at least in part because of a conflation of ethnicity with minority status (Jayasuriya 1997), that suppresses the idea of ethnicity in white migrants from the charter group. They do of course have ethnicity but it is naturalized or normalized to a point where it is unspoken. These factors contribute to these British migrants invisibility in the study of Australian Immigration at the same time as it further perpetuates the failure to adequately recognise the fact of emigration from the United Kingdom.

Invisibility becomes an important concept in the context of this research due to a number of assumptions, which became apparent in the early stages of my work. These include, among others, the assumption that men migrate and women follow (Brettell & Simon 1986; DeLaet 1999), the assumption that British migrants settle into Australia more easily (Hammerton & Thomson 2005), and the assumption that British migrants do not have
‘ethnicity’ (Lunt 2008). It can be argued that in studies of migrant groups in Australia, ethnicity takes precedence as an identity marker over class and gender. Walter notes a similar situation in Britain where she argues there is a ‘conflation of migrancy and blackness on the one hand, and national belonging and whiteness on the other’ (2011, p.1297). This assumed absence of ethnicity in particular leaves little avenues for the inclusion of British migrants in the broader conversation about migration in Australia. It further masks another underlying assumption that British migrants are not ‘visibly different’ obviously denying Britain’s own multi-ethnic make-up. That being said, the women who responded to my adverts and who attended the lunchtime gathering were phenotypically white.

Findlay (1995, p.515), argues that ‘there is a significant level of international migration which goes unnoticed...because it poses no threat in terms of perceived social and economic burdens for the sender or host societies, as well as often being invisible in terms of ethnicity'. For Findlay, those who make up this migration cohort are 'skilled transients' or more specifically 'highly skilled persons moving internationally on relatively short-term assignments. In this last respect Findlay differentiates them from those he calls ‘settler migrants’, an expression which may have lost some currency in the time since publication due to the fact that migrant trajectories are now more readily recongnised as often ongoing or transnational rather than having an end point on arrival in the host country. This aside I propose that the invisibility Findlay ascribes to these skilled transients is equally applicable to the British women I interviewed in the course of my study. Like those Findlay researched, the women I spoke to were 'invisible in terms of ethnicity' and further, despite some rhetoric about Whingeing Poms, largely invisible as a migrant group. Concerns over immigration then are reserved for those deemed Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) rather than the British who as early
colonists continue to enjoy a fairly privileged entry into Australia both in terms of meeting visa requirements and integrating into broader Australian society.

This chapter has aimed to demonstrate that utilizing consumption as a lens to view this particular migration can offer a significant contribution to a literature, which, in its more common attention to ethnicity and status extremes overlooks the experience of those of the middle. The ethnographic chapters to follow will expand upon these themes by departing from a theoretical focus and bringing the migrant experience to the fore.
CHAPTER THREE - My informants and social networks

Personal interest

I am a British migrant who came to Western Australia with my partner in April 1998. We have lived in Perth, for the most part, ever since. I arrived at this research topic through a constant nagging awareness, building since my arrival in Australia in 1998 and through the term of my undergraduate degree in Social Sciences, that despite the visa attached to my passport, and latterly my citizenship certificate, in many senses I was not seen as either a migrant in Australia or an emigrant from the United Kingdom. I had listened to many lectures and read many papers on migration focusing among others on refugees, Lebanese, Italians and Greeks but seldom, with exception to the occasional reference to Ten Pound Poms and despite the demographic realities, were those from the United Kingdom mentioned along with other ‘migrant’ groups. Simultaneously I had listened to migrant friends and acquaintances from the United Kingdom, and those still in the United Kingdom, commenting on migration as if it was something I had not done. Indeed such was the case with which my partner and I made our decision to migrate it sometimes felt to us like we had not moved around 12000 miles from our roots, family and friends. Importantly, for the arguments I will develop in this thesis, we knew that if it didn’t work out we could return to the United Kingdom and into work with little difficulty; there was an easy escape route as it were, something not on offer to many migrants particularly those who have left conflict, natural disaster, and or dire economic circumstances. This acceptance of my own experience and that of other British migrants to Australia as normalised, in comparison to that of other groups, is for me problematic and in this I concur with the argument that in the Australian case 'the history of post war immigration makes better sense if the British are included in a story which records the
There is a dilemma at the heart of this thesis in referring to British migrants. Our passports mark us as coming from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, although we may variously and simultaneously identify as British, English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish or combinations of such. As someone who identifies primarily as Scottish but is happy to be part of the United Kingdom I recognise that often when people refer to British they mean English and vice versa; the terms are often used synonymously and understandably so. The population of the United Kingdom stood at around 62 million in total in 2010 with 52 million in England alone\(^\text{12}\). While recognising the passionate feelings that notions of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish identities arouse, it is hard to deny the influence of our much larger neighbour. Despite recent changes, including devolving certain powers to the Scottish and the Welsh, political power has largely been centralised in London, the monarchy reside there and a significant sector of the media is also based there. So when I refer, as I will in this thesis, to Kate Fox’s (2004) book *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* I believe there is license to extrapolate certain points beyond the English to the British, although Fox herself makes no claim to speak for the British as a whole.

As Scottish I would, in some regards, reject the title Pom, however, I also see the homogeneity implied in the nickname as a crucial part of this thesis. I agree with Lunt (2008) in his assertion that assuming homogeneity among the British population contributes to their invisibility. This happens through

\(^{12}\) From the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2012 Total United Kingdom population rounded to nearest million 62 million, broken down as follows again to nearest million England 52 million, Scotland, 5 million, Wales 3 million, Northern Ireland 2 million.
the denial of the constituent ethnic identities, English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, problematic as these identities may be. Paradoxically rendering the British without ethnicity creates an opportunity for them to be more easily accepted as part of the dominant group at the expense of migrant groups who are seen to have ethnicity. This situation is also problematic in its presumption of the British as a white Christian group, that reflects an outdated version of British identity. Although it is important to acknowledge that according to the 2011 Census only 14% of the population of England and Wales responded that they belonged to an ethnic minority. In Scotland only approximately 4% belonged to an ethnic minority and in Northern Ireland only 1.8%. The expression British migrant is then used in recognition of these complexities and later in the thesis I will discuss the fact that I believe this assumption of homogeneity among British migrants is a contributing factor in their invisibility.

My arrival in the field

Once a week for approximately a year during 2007 and 2008 I would head to Perth’s Northern suburbs for lunch. If I left home with time to spare I would turn off the Mitchell Freeway at Karrinyup Road and head for West Coast Drive. This detour gave me a little longer to take in the magnificent view of the WA shoreline lapped by the turquoise blue Indian Ocean, and beyond to Rottnest Island. It is a view I never tire of. The location has undoubtedly, to the British

13 http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf [accessed 26/05/2014]
14 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig [accessed 26/05/2014]
mind, a holiday feel; I have taken many visitors from the United Kingdom to the same place over my fourteen years in Australia and the reactions are the same. I do not think it is an overstatement to say that a large percentage of the British population has a considerable pre-occupation with their two weeks in the sun each year. ‘Have you got any holidays booked?’ is an almost failsafe conversation stimulator in the United Kingdom, at least among the middling classes. The women I went to meet had taken the quest for sun, sea and sand beyond the almost obligatory two weeks in July and had moved to the other side of the world, a journey I was familiar with as a migrant myself.

The weekly lunches I attended were a focal point in my research on British migrants in Western Australia. They were occasions where the conversation could range from lows such as illness or death among family members back in the United Kingdom to highs such as the purchase of a new home in Australia or the granting of citizenship. Trivialities, such as the necessity to be armed with a can of insect spray at all times, and the lack of the Tesco supermarket chain, or more importantly Mark’s and Spencer’s underwear, formed the padding around the more significant life events. However, in many ways these quotidian concerns are no less crucial in describing the migrant condition for these women and the others I met in the
What follows in this chapter is an introduction to those who inform the writing, some I knew before the research began, some I met during the research and some I met or observed only virtually on the Web Based Discussion Forums (WBDFs) that provided a significant insight into this under researched migration. This section sets out the context of the thesis including its temporal and spatial locations. In introducing the participants in my study I also discuss the methodology used in the research. Interestingly many of the challenges I encountered during the research mirrored those expressed by the participants in terms of establishing new networks in an urban setting.

As stated, it was in early 2007 that I started attending a weekly lunchtime meeting of British migrant women in Perth’s Northern Suburbs as part of my PhD research. From the outset I wish to stress the importance of these
lunches to the women who attended. It was not uncommon for them to describe the weekly meeting as a ‘lifesaver’ as they negotiated their way in a new country and a new social setting. These informal or quasi-network type structures are important; not least of all, for the flexibility they offer participants. The women I talked to noted the fact that you could ‘just turn up’ was crucial, no forward planning was required rather in a time of uncertainty it was a given and gave some sense of the networks they had left behind in its casual unforced nature. Hillary’s Boat Harbour, a marina and shopping complex, where the lunches took place has the benefit of being a busy public place where potential attendees could wander freely increasing the casual nature of the meeting. If I arrived at the designated café and did not recognise anyone I could browse through the various shops, among them surf and beachwear shops, souvenir shops, and a British sweet shop, before returning to the café. This was a tactic employed by several of the women I talked to as they plucked up the courage to go to the lunch.

While the focus of the research was skilled migrant women my initial area of interest was less the nurses occupation and more their migration and settlement experience, as I will discuss in Chapter Six the two were far more closely linked than I had anticipated. I was introduced to the lunchtime meetings by Brenda a nurse in response to a post I placed on a WBDF frequented by British migrants. We arranged a meeting just prior to the lunch one day and I conducted a short interview before Brenda introduced me to the group. On this particular occasion there were over twenty people in attendance probably the largest gathering I witnessed and it posed some problems for the café staff in terms of our rearranging of the furniture in order to sit as closely together as possible and in regard to the

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16 Baldassar has written of similar arrangements among second generation Italian youth in Perth in the 1980s, whereby the Hay Street Mall on a Thursday evening and Kings Park on a Sunday afternoon were known meeting spots, no formal arrangements were required.
sheer number of simultaneous food orders placed. If nothing else it demonstrated the want, among the women in attendance, for such a social function.

Only three of the nurses I interviewed attended these lunchtime meetings with any regularity. Many were aware that they took place and while some did not feel it was ‘their kind of thing’ others expressed disappointment that they were unable to attend due to work commitments. Shift work was regularly mentioned as a barrier to meeting new friends and in this respect their difficulties in establishing new social contacts were reflected in the difficulties I had finding nurses who socialised together. I believe that the urban sprawl, that constitutes the Perth metropolitan region, exacerbated this problem, as it was not uncommon for the nurses to have a thirty to forty-five minute commute to their place of work.

The women who regularly attend the lunch are almost all the wives of tradesmen with children of school age some of whom are in part-time paid employment. It has been interesting to note others who have come and gone over the time I have been attending and these include those with pre-school children in tow who generally find it difficult to relax and enjoy lunch while also looking after their children. Similarly there have been one or two professional women such as an accountant and a pharmacist who have come along but have not attended regularly and who in my opinion did not seem to fit as easily with the group as many others who have joined since I started attending. This is most likely related to O’Connor’s observation that:

[T]he social identity of those who are chosen as friends reflects assumptions about status [...] amongst women, they tend to be between those who are similar in social class, race, marital status, maternal status and participation in paid employment.
employment. In this sense they can be seen as relationships, which reflect and maintain structural realities (1998, p.127).

Class and education level then appeared to play a significant part in the composition of the group.

I attended the lunches on a fairly regular basis for just over a year. The lunch time meetings began around 3-4 years ago starting with a single post on a WBDF; it is extremely common for people, often but not always new arrivals, to post a message asking for new friends or suggesting a ‘meet-up’. In reference to the lunchtime meet the original poster, or OP in discussion forum jargon, suggested that a weekly lunch would be a good idea. There had previously been a similar lunch group in operation apparently but they had stopped inviting newcomers. The OP said that she would be at the Dome Café in Hillarys Boat Harbour, a popular ocean side resort in Perth’s northern suburbs from 12noon on Thursdays if anyone would care to join her. She told me later that while she sat there on her own with her coffee and sandwich for the first week she persevered and the meetings have been ongoing since, their initial success demonstrated in this post on the discussion forum:

Hi Just to let everyone know that the coffee meets are still going on. In fact we have been going now for over a year! We were in the paper last week as we celebrated our 1st birthday! The group has grown from 4 regulars round a table to over 30 members! They are still open to everyone, no matter what nationality, no matter how long you've been here, all you need is a desire to meet new people and make good friends and a positive attitude!

In the time I have been attending, despite encountering what is arguably a core group of attendees, I have also witnessed many others come and go. The composition of the group is fluid and while many group members see each other outside the group many of the relationships are fairly superficial. I confess to initially feeling that attending the lunch was a poor substitute to finding an existing network of nurses that more readily fitted the group I had imagined in my research proposal. However, I realised through interviewing the nurses and listening to their concerns that my methodological challenges were reflective of some of the challenges they faced as new migrants and I saw new value in my attendance. Added to this was the richness of the migration stories that I heard weekly at the lunches. It seemed that there was much to be gained from ‘hanging out’ with this group. That over time I was able to combine the experiences of the ladies who lunch and what they told me about their husband’s experiences as skilled migrants undoubtedly enhanced the data collected from the nurses themselves.

Migration and community

This chapter offers some observations on the group and discusses, in relation to some of the literature on migration and relationships, what this group offers the women who attend and its limitations in regard to support for new arrivals. By limitations I do not mean to suggest that the group is failing in some way but rather that there appear to be obstacles for particular women in extending themselves to become part of the group.

Despite going with a particular purpose, I also found it a huge challenge to return to the meetings of my own volition after the initial one where I was introduced. That the composition of the group changes from week to week compounds the feelings of discomfort, there may be no one there that you have previously met therefore you are forced to start from scratch again.
Further I had a huge sense of being an imposter, not uncommon among neophyte ethnographers but disconcerting all the same. In his work on British Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) in Australia Clarke (2005, p.309) writes that he 'spent nine months in Sydney and some secondary sites as participant, observer, interviewer, and general pest to British WHMs and some secondary groups (Irish and Dutch).’ Clarke's description of himself as general pest resonated with me. Kate Fox (2004, p.336) offers some explanation for this discomfort when she talks about ‘negative politeness’, an English trait, described as ‘politeness that addresses other people’s need not to be intruded or imposed upon, as opposed to ‘positive politeness’, which is concerned with their need for inclusion and approval.’

I was not alone in feeling uncomfortable at the initial gatherings I attended. Both the difficulties and the benefits are alluded to in the excerpt below from a WBDF post relating to the meetings. It states:

Everyone is welcome, I know it's hard at first, but remember we have all been in the same boat, not knowing anyone. It may take a few weeks before you feel comfortable (I know it took me a while) but you just might meet someone you 'click' with or failing that just have a good laugh. There are some I haven't managed to talk to yet and others that I've become good friends with and meet up with at other times.

The above sentiments were confirmed in an interview I carried out, as evidenced in the following exchange:

**Brenda** - I must admit the first couple of times I came here I thought, what am I doing here, because they all seemed to know each other. Well, not all of them but quite a few seemed to know each other and I was just sat there, I was sat with a load of new girls
as well and they didn’t know what to talk about and I didn’t. I came twice and I thought oh I’m not putting myself through that anymore and then a friend that I met, she’d been a few times, and she said come on lets go and then it just seemed to all em

Gillian - Improve?

Brenda - Yeah, I think we had a lot of new girls all of a sudden and we were like the oldies and it just felt better then, it just clicked then and it was really good.

The woman who placed the above post is a regular at the lunch, on the discussion forums and at the other ‘meet-ups’, which are sometimes organised; this happens mainly through the WBDFs but there is a crossover between those and the lunchtime meets. While she has found the group helpful in her settlement she has also offered a lot of help to newcomers and is not alone in inviting people she has only met online round to her house for coffee or a barbeque in an attempt to ease their transition. Her statement, within the above quotation, ‘I thought I am not putting myself through this anymore’ gives some indication of her initial discomfort and most likely the source of her empathy and subsequent efforts to help new comers to find their place.

One woman I interviewed is a regular on the discussion forums answering questions and offering advice but did not attend the lunches; she noted that while she could see the benefits it was not really her ‘thing’. Others have noted their reluctance to joining a group of strangers, Angela (RN) was particularly homesick and mentioned the possibility of attending but said that despite the fact she wanted to make friends she could not see herself taking that step and turning up to something with a group of strangers. I did offer to introduce her and contacted her by e-mail afterwards to restate the
offer but she has never attended to my knowledge.

Others have fewer problems establishing themselves in the group. In conversation, Danielle explained that she found out about the group while in Perth on what is commonly referred to among the group and on the discussion forums as a ‘recce’ or reconnaissance trip, something I shall discuss further later in the chapter, stating that she ‘sidled up’ to a couple of women with British accents sitting on the beach at Hillarys one day and, after establishing that they were migrants rather than holidaymakers, started asking them questions about life in Western Australia. Danielle was subsequently invited to join them at the lunch meeting, and did so for the remaining two weeks of her holiday. This was a fairly forward move but maybe not so surprising for someone who works in a service industry and could quite aptly be described as gregarious. Danielle’s ‘recce’ confirmed to herself and her husband that they wanted to live in Perth and upon their arrival she resumed contact with the ladies she had met on the beach and has arguably become one of the lynchpins of the group.

As stated earlier the first meeting I attended had probably one of the biggest crowds I have encountered at the lunch, although in hindsight it may only have felt like that because, as noted, it was quite an intimidating experience for me. The discomfort I felt, and that was noted by others, at the idea of joining a group of strangers for lunch is not surprising if you consider it in light of Fox’s (2004) observations in Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour. This is a book that Fox states ‘is not written for other social scientists, but rather for that elusive creature publishers used to call the “intelligent layman”’ (2004, p.9). Despite this disclaimer Fox’s observations are based on participant observation and offer important insights that I shall refer to throughout the thesis. Fox, English herself, talks regularly about the ‘social dis-ease’ which she identifies as being at the core of Englishness and that she sees as being
embodied in:

[O]ur lack of ease, discomfort and incompetence in the field (minefield) of social interaction; our embarrassment, insularity, awkwardness, perverse obliqueness, emotional constipation, fear of intimacy and general inability to engage in a normal and straightforward fashion with other human beings. (Fox 2004, p.401)

As I stated in the introductory chapter Fox makes no claim to be writing about the British in general, her work focusing purely on the English, however, I certainly felt that despite being Scottish many of her observations were similarly applicable to me. That the majority of British migrants, and certainly those whom I encountered, are English reinforces the relevance of her work to this thesis.

So despite the ‘social dis-ease’ with which the English, and arguably to at least a degree, the British in general, may be afflicted the women who attend the lunch are able to overcome this, some more easily than others. For Brenda ‘sheer desperation’ brought her to the lunch, Sophie likewise noted that for her it was a ‘lifesaver’; such comments were repeated often among the attendees. The real strength of the lunch appeared to lie in its informality; there was always someone there so you did not have to plan ahead. A spontaneity, often absent in an urban setting, was created through this casual arrangement. There was a feeling of effortlessness attributed to attending the lunch which counteracted the feelings expressed that at the time of migration nothing seems natural, something I recognise myself. You can feel that you are forcing yourself on people as you endeavour to make new connections and replace some of the relationships you relied upon in the home setting. As many of the women pointed out to me you are out of your comfort zone, however the lunch provided an opportunity just
to ‘drop-in’ without obligation.

The title, ‘ladies who lunch’ probably conjures the image of a prim and staid group. However, that is not the case, predominantly in their thirties and early forties these women enjoy a good night out, evidenced on more than one occasion at lunch where the chat has turned to talk of the previous weekends escapades and subsequent hangovers. One of the attendees arranges adult themed parties and while sex is certainly not a dominant theme in the conversations it is certainly not something shied away from. That the chat is not entirely centred on migration is an important aspect of the lunch, as it is a casual chat with friends that the women attending seem to be craving most and the thing that keeps them coming back. Many of the posts on the discussion forum are from women missing their established relationships with female friends, and the importance of these social networks is something attracting more attention in the migration literature of late, as in Ryan’s (2007; 2008) work on Irish migrants in Britain. I recognise this from my own experience and from discussions with other female migrants in my own social circle. Despite the fact we may have established good relationships here in Australia there often remains a missing element, something that can be difficult to recapture.

Anne whom I introduced earlier and who was instrumental in establishing the group as it exists today still attends, although in one discussion she did confess that sometimes it is difficult to summon up the enthusiasm to be welcoming each week when you may just want to talk to those you have come to know. This is something I have heard on more than one occasion and know from personal experience how draining it can be to talk to people all the time with whom you have no shared history; the act of explaining yourself constantly can become tiresome. So there is a contradiction here in that at same time as embracing the commonality of being a migrant, and a British one at that, and taking comfort from the sense that the others know
where you are coming from, the group’s purpose is to facilitate the settlement of newcomers meaning that its composition is ever changing. This results in exposing the women who are already there to exactly the sort of situation they were in some ways hoping to avoid, that is, having to explain themselves, and constantly position themselves in their new surroundings.

Welsh women at The Boat

The following are field notes from another regular lunchtime meet which took place on a Tuesday in the same period of time as the Hillarys Boat Harbour meets but at the time I was attending did not reach the same levels of popularity. This could well have changed as the population in the Mindarie area has grown in the intervening years and as I mentioned in Chapter One statistics show the surrounding suburbs are comprised of large numbers of British migrants (Salt 2012)\(^{17}\).

Tuesday 13\(^{th}\) November 2007

Today I went to The Boat at Mindarie for the first time to join a regular Tuesday lunchtime meeting of British migrants. I was struck as I walked round the front of the marina complex past the Dome café that as is often the case at Hillary’s the accents I was hearing were British rather than Australian. The pub was very quiet on arrival apart from a crowd of fairly jovial sounding women sitting in the shade of the large umbrellas in The Boat’s alfresco area. The

\(^{17}\)The five most “British” suburbs in Australia are located in Perth: Jindalee, Mindarie (34 per cent), Connolly (33 per cent), Burns Beach (32 per cent) and Carramar (32 per cent).
women’s accents, unmistakably Welsh! I went to the bar and ordered myself a drink at the same time asking the barmaid if she knew where the group of British migrants usually sat? The bar at this point was empty, and she stated that she wasn’t sure but noted to me that “if you are looking for British migrants you have come to the right place” another staff member standing nearby wholeheartedly agreed. They both then said that they were born in England but neither had spent much time there or identified as English.

The girl behind the bar then pointed out the group of Welsh women and I ventured out to see if they were who I was looking for. They were not, but thankfully one of them was a regular on the British Expats website and knew what I was talking about. They offered to let me join them and I did for a short while in which I established that they had all lived within 15 miles of each other in Wales and although they did not know each other at that time they had, through the move to Australia, discovered mutual connections. The conversation was replete with comments such as “I used to teach her daughter”, “Our kids went to the same school although we didn’t know each other then”, “She used to be my beautician at home and she’s only been here for a few months”, “our husbands have set up in business together here”. One woman in the midst of this conversation realized that another, who was on holiday in Perth and had joined her
daughter for the lunch, actually knew her parents-in-law. Although two of the women had been here for a while, namely 4 and 6 years, the rest were relatively recent migrants and were still discussing the connections with wonderment. Two of the women had met by chance on the beach and discovered that they had been fairly near neighbours in Wales.

As an aside it is worth noting that it is quite common for the women to bring visiting friends and relatives to the lunches, one reason for this is to introduce them to their new friends and acquaintances’ and another is that when people visit Australia from the United Kingdom they often stay for a considerable length of time and the migrants want to maintain the continuity of attending the lunch. It has to be remembered that these were not long established friendships that may withstand absences but were relatively new and therefore still required nurturing.

After about 15 minutes of chatting to these women, Wendy, someone whom I had already interviewed, turned up for the British Expats meet and we decided to go inside and wait the arrival of the others...Although the Welsh women were very friendly their connections made me feel like more of an outsider than I do at the Hillary’s lunch which is made up of a fairly disparate group of individuals who have all been in the position of not knowing anyone else and having little or no shared personal history. The Welsh contingent on the other hand had a lot to talk about, most of which
was based upon their previous geographical proximity, that is, they were of the same hometown area and shared the same ethno-national identity.

There ended up being only three of us in attendance that day aside from the Welsh women but at one point the woman from the Welsh group whom I had identified earlier as a website regular introduced herself to Margaret and they swapped WBDF user names establishing that they knew each other in the virtual world and that they were both planning to attend a forthcoming meet up in Kings park.

Although village-out chain migration per se is not a feature of British migration to Western Australia there is, it appears through talking to the British women, evidence that social networks have an important role in the migration decision. While the majority of women I have talked to do not have contacts in Australia who influence the decision to migrate once that decision is made they appear open to the establishment of such. Many of those both male and female posting on the web based discussion forums have established contacts who are also progressing through the visa application while still in the United Kingdom and plan to meet these people after arrival in Australia.

I have noted, from both interviews and the lunchtime discussions, that contact between migrants from the same geographical area is often initiated through mutual friends. In one example one of my respondents has had a woman from the same estate she lived on in the United Kingdom move to Perth recently and has subsequently, through this new arrival, been
introduced to an old school acquaintance that it turns out is also living in Perth. These people are now in contact and the woman I interviewed cited the fact that she now has people with a shared history to converse with as one of the key elements in making her feel more settled here in Western Australia. Some of the nurses have also reported having staff from their old hospitals in the United Kingdom join them here in Perth but that has usually been merely coincidental rather than as the result of a conscious decision making process to follow.

I have presented these observations from the field in the hope of giving personality to the women who contributed to the study and of better contextualizing it. I want to emphasise my belief that theirs is an important story and that deserves to be told.

WBDFs

It is worth at this point saying a little more about the Web Based Discussion Forums, which, as should be clear from above, are an important site in this study of British migrants; they may indeed be the virtual equivalent of the village square in more traditional ethnographies. Importantly, I do not want to set them apart from the physical sites I visited. As Wilson and Peterson note ‘the distinction of real and imagined or virtual community is not a useful one’ rather, it is more helpful to consider a ‘continuum of communities, identities and networks’ (2002, p.456). There was considerable overlap between activity on the WBDFs and in the networks of the women I interviewed, which confirms Wilson and Peterson’s argument. That I found these internet sites a useful source of research data is a further example of the ways my research methodologies mirrored the women’s social activities.

There are two WBDFs that seemed to enjoy prominence among the
migrants I spoke to in Perth although many more exist. British Expats http://BritishExpats.com/forum/ is one of the more popular forums currently (Aug 2012) advertising nearly 170,000 members. There is no obligation to join to read the posts but one must be a member to comment and use the search facilities. I joined this and Poms in Perth (PiP), another very popular forum, under the user name ‘Gathering Info’ having approached the moderators of both prior to joining providing information about my project and setting out my intentions as far as using the forum for research were concerned. I was also clear when I posted that I was conducting research and offered to provide my information sheet for anyone who wanted further information, I received no requests for the information sheet, although I did have responses to posts I made.

The WBDFs tend to follow the same format with some form of categorization of the discussion. The British Expats site, for British expats worldwide, has sub-forums for different countries including Australia, New Zealand and Canada among others. Those country-based sub-forums host another level of sub-forum where things are further categorised with references to a physical location in the titles. One example is ‘The Welcome Inn’, which is subtitled ‘Introduction Forum’ and asks the reader ‘Are you new to the British Expats community? Not sure where to start? Come in, pull up a seat, and introduce yourself.’ Another is titled ‘The Locker Room’ and subtitled ‘A forum dedicated to the discussion of sporting issues’. Similarly one of the sub-forums within the Australian section is called ‘The Barbie’ ‘A place for general chat’ and another ‘The Rovers Return’ named after the fictional pub in long running British soap opera Coronation Street, is a forum for those who are unhappy in Australia and planning to return or who have already made the return journey. I shall look more closely at the sentiments expressed in this latter forum later in the thesis, but for now it is sufficient to point out the way in which the
imagery of a physical space is used to describe the various areas of the forum, and again in agreement with Wilson and Peterson quoted above to emphasise the continuum between physical and virtual worlds.

Elizabeth is a registered mental health nurse, forum regular and, work permitting, an attendee at the lunchtime meetings. She said of the WBDFs:

> Probably about 2-3 months after we started thinking about migrating we started using the website [...] it started really as an information base to start off with to find out, sort of, all the things that we needed to, and then it became more of a social contact way forward really.

This appeared to be the most common usage of the sites, first as a source of information and often reassurance while the parties were located in the United Kingdom and subsequently building into friendships, which often continued in person upon arrival in Australia. Many also said that they read the forums but chose not to contribute; some expressed very negative views about them. The criticisms were in a similar vein to those who complained in general about migrants feeling the need to meet other Brits when they moved here or criticized people for moving 12000 miles and then heading to the British shop for things they missed from home.

**Controversial post on PiP**

In my own experience the meets, both face-to-face and virtual, have been friendly and people seem to get a lot out of them although I know tensions do exist, occasionally there will be word of a misunderstanding or disagreement between different attendees and in the past the group has been subject to accusations that it is less than welcoming. One particular post on the discussion forum has acquired a degree of infamy, it was placed
in response to an initial post that sought to remind people of the lunchtime meet and inform new arrivals of it’s existence. The controversial post read:

Yeah its good if you wanna speek about whos got the biggest house or biggest boat„„they are a very competitive lot„„but its up to you!!

This generated a great deal of discussion in defence of the group and the poster was denounced as ‘mean-spirited’. As this thesis contends, for many of the recent British migrants, lifestyle factors are hugely important in their decision to come to Australia and therefore in this context it does not seem unusual that people should talk about the things that for many make the move worthwhile. These include swimming pools, boats, jet skis, and theatre rooms, among other things, as I shall discuss further in Chapters Four and Five. As noted in a post quoted earlier in the chapter it really is just a case that you ‘might meet someone that you click with’ and it does seem that while many could indeed find that the group is not for them it certainly serves a purpose. Of course as the thesis discusses this is a consumption led migration and the potential for disappointment and disillusionment is high. Many find it difficult to attain the sort of lifestyle they had envisaged, a problem exacerbated during the period I investigated by the strengthening of the Australian dollar and the weakening of the British pound, something that I will return to later in the thesis.

The reconnaissance trip or ‘recce’

The reconnaissance trip or ‘recce’ as it is commonly referred to among those I lunched with and similarly on the WBDFs is a trip taken prior to migration with the intention of assessing the location and finding out about
employment prospects, schools and housing among other things. This phenomenon highlights the links identified between migration and tourism (Williams & Hall 2000). Not all respondents carried out a ‘recce’; some just arrived after their visas were granted, the cost of flying a large family over for what some saw as a holiday proving too much.

The following excerpts are taken from a thread titled ‘Is it worth visiting first or should we just "do it"!!’ on one of the popular WBDFs. It introduces the idea of a reconnaissance trip, commonly referred to as a ‘recce’ among posters on the WBDF, and those I met in the course of my research.

Original Post

Hi

We are a family of 4. We have two young girls 4 and 6. Wife is a registered nurse and I'm [in sales].

We have just put the house on the market and are in the early stages of applying for a 175 Visa.

The question is should we book a couple of flights to come over and check it out or do we just emigrate when ready. I like the idea of having a look round, as we were thinking of going for a couple of weeks without the girls so we could check housing, schools etc. My fear is that a short trip won't do the country justice and we end up changing our minds.

Has anyone else had similar experiences? I know there is no correct answer but there's nowt like experience. [posters intended location in Australia removed]

Any help would be greatly appreciated.
The question generated the following responses:

Response 1

Would you buy a new car without test driving it?

Would you buy a house without visiting it first?

Would you completely change your life without testing/seeing the country?.....

I would go for a holiday to get a feel for the place. Ideally go to more than one city/area to be able to compare. This assumes that you can afford to though!

Best of luck in whatever you decide.

Hi. Thanks for the reply.

Would I test drive a car before I bought it? Not if they charged me a fortune to do so :D I'd research it and gauge public opinion.

I was just wondering if anyone felt that spending £5k+ to take a test drive in OZ was money well spent.

Response 2

£5k is a lot of dosh, especially if it reinforces your ideas on wanting to go down under, but cheap if it stops you making a big mistake, which will cost even more to correct.

Each to their own, but I would check it out personally rather than rely on others views, but that is just me I s'pose.
Response 3

Hi there, We currently have our 175 visa in (31/12/09) and we've never been! We have two kids aged 3 and 1. We have friends who moved to Brisbane 26 years ago without visiting and they said it’s the best thing that they have ever done.

The exchanges go on and more discussants add their opinions but I use this excerpt as an example, firstly of the ways posters use the forums to validate their thoughts on the migration process, and also to express joy, frustration and sadness among other things. They are home to questions, covering a range from those such as where to get haggis in Perth and more serious matters including questions about professional qualifications, sponsorship and even issues with divorce and child custody in relation to intended migrations.

The forums had allowed one midwife and her partner, whom I met at both the lunches and the Kings Park meet, to find out about these gatherings while still in the United Kingdom and come along when they came to Perth on their ‘recce’. Her visa had been granted and she was due to arrive permanently a few months later but the purpose of the trip was to meet some people, check out her new workplace and the areas she wanted to live in and the schools for her children. Realising how awkward it is to get around Perth without a car she actually purchased one while here on the initial trip and asked the garage to store it for her so it was ready for her to pick up when she returned three months later, as she wanted ‘one less thing to do’ upon arrival.

A ‘recce’ was also sometimes combined with a trip to validate visas. None of the women I interviewed mentioned doing this but there were certainly many posts on the WBDF regarding this subject. Once granted, all visas must be validated through entry to Australia within a certain time frame.
This posed particular problems for families with children as the housing market in the United Kingdom began to slow down and people were waiting for their houses to sell to realise economic capital for their migration. One particular poster had three children and was extremely worried about the financial pressure of having to fly all five of the family to Australia for a ‘holiday’ at a time they could ill afford it, there is no dispensation where a parent can have the visa validated, all family members must travel to Australia for this to occur.

**Meet ups**

The Kings Park Meet up mentioned above was advertised as a family ‘meet-up’ on the WBDFs. These take place sporadically and are held at the weekend with the objective of including husbands and children in the socializing, recognizing that it is the women who are usually free to catch-up at other times such as the weekly lunches. I attended one in late 2007 organized by a regular poster on one of the most popular WBDFs, although it should be noted that there are considerable overlaps in membership between these forums. The organizer attended along with her husband and two children and also brought another forum member, whom I knew from the lunches. This member would have been unable to attend otherwise as her husband was using the car to attend another social function. The offer of transport was made on the WBDF as soon as the organizer realized that transport was a problem for her fellow poster. Although a particular thread on the forum was started to announce the intention of the meeting I did also notice that it would be mentioned frequently in other threads, particularly in response to posts expressing homesickness and general settlement difficulties, the invitation was quickly extended through these routes.

The gathering was timed for 12 noon and leaving at 5pm I made a note
in my field notes about how much more pleasant the temperature was than it had been when we arrived. It was a very hot day and the line about ‘mad-dogs and Englishmen’ being out in the midday sun, sprung to mind\textsuperscript{18}. Posts which appeared on the WBDFs after the event, mainly thanking the organizer for her efforts, did record a few incidences of sunburn and I was interested to note that in some photos posted online I was one of the few wearing long sleeves and a hat. My tenure in Australia was notable in my attitude to sun protection that differed significantly from the new arrivals in my company.

The Sunday meeting took a similar format to the weekly lunches with many introductions and the usual exchange of information regarding things such as work, property and schooling. One attendee whom I had a reasonably long chat with was very frustrated with his work situation noting that his hours were long and the conditions significantly worse than he had expected. His settlement experience here in Australia was further clouded by the fact that his children remained in the United Kingdom with his former wife, a situation he did not expand upon other than to note that it had been problematic.

\textsuperscript{18} Mad Dogs and Englishmen is a song by Noel Coward written about the English in the British Colonies who were prone according to the lyrics, to the amusement of the locals, to going out in the midday sun.
while he was in the United Kingdom.

It appeared later that the day had brought this particular attendee some peace of mind. A post thanking the organizer placed on the WBDF after the event noted that he had enjoyed the day and felt much better for attending, and further added that he was determined to look at his situation more positively. This speaks to the importance that connections with those in a similar situation have even for English speaking migrants in Australia whom as I have stated are in an arguably privileged position.

Just before I left the meet I met one of the midwives I had previously interviewed, she was attending another meeting in the park organized by supporters of a Scottish Premier League football team. I initially thought this was fairly coincidental until reading through the posts on the WBDF later the same week I found one which stated that a couple had tried to find the gathering but had encountered so many groups in the park with English or Scottish accents that they could not pin us down.

The ‘Meet Up’ then can be seen as an adjunct to the day-to-day contact maintained through the WBDFs and the regular weekly lunch. For many it offered a chance to introduce partners and children particularly as most husbands were out working when the lunchtime meets took place but also because it tended to be one or other either husband or wife in a couple who was the most frequent user of the WBDFs. This ties in with an observation I mention elsewhere by a recruitment agent who initially felt it strange that a husband would approach them looking for work for his wife. She explained that what she came to realize was that there is usually a division
of labour within a couple in this regard and that one or other partner would take responsibility for such tasks. As Kate’s (RN) husband noted to me, if things had been left to him ‘the visa applications would still be sitting on the dining room table’.

**The interviews**

Placing the interviews last in this section should not indicate that I viewed them as less important, as Hockey (2002, p.210) states they often come last in a ‘methodological hierarchy which urgently requires reconsideration’. Rather, the fact that they come last is reflective of the migrant experience of resorting to more formalised means of establishing connections. As I have noted there were limited opportunities for just ‘hanging out’ for both those I interviewed and for myself as far as working in the traditional ethnographic sense was concerned. Hockey at least is prescient of this as demonstrated when she notes that ‘interviewing might be particularly suited to a Western setting’ especially if we consider that ‘[e]veryday social interaction in the West is often spatially dislocated, time-bounded and characterized by intimacy at a distance’ (Hockey 2002, p.210-211). The methodology then reflects the reality of many migrants who note that they are often pushed into more formal avenues for establishing new social relationships than they might otherwise choose.

So the bulk of data collection took place in the form of interviews, usually at the home of the interviewee. The women I interviewed are connected through gender, British nationality and their migrant status but they do not form a group as such. For the most part they do not congregate together at any given location, although the regular weekly lunch I have mentioned in opening this chapter was a notable exception. Even those who work in the same hospitals may be unknown to one another. Given the disparity in this group both social and geographical it can be argued that I had many
arrivals, in a sense one each time I arrived at the home of another woman armed with my notebook and my voice recorder. At the same time there is a generality about that oft-repeated act that indeed tells us something about the women I talked to and their migration to Perth.

Regularly I arrived at the door of a house in Perth’s Northern suburbs built within the last twenty years or so, but many, particularly in the newer suburbs like Clarkson, Butler and Tapping built much more recently. The floor plans have similar features including a front door coming into an often more formal sitting area opening onto a larger kitchen and dining space. It is not uncommon for this to have a more casual family area attached leading out through glass French doors or sliding patio doors to the outdoor areas, most of which had a swimming pool, as noted earlier almost a necessity. Many advertisements for building companies in the Whingeing Pom feature floor plans of the style of home I am referring to as shown in the example below (Figure 4). Similarly a glance at the new homes section of The West Australian, the local newspaper, on any given Saturday would give a clear idea of the type of home I am describing, the ubiquitous four by two, clearly recognised as part of the ‘Australian dream’ but similarly a dream that those British migrants I talked to were eager to partake in. I will go into more detail regarding the dream home in Chapter Five but it is suffice to say just now that to establish a home was an important physical and mental process for the women concerned and something heavily implicated in their narratives as crucial in the settlement process and equally significant in a more negative sense when feeling unsettled persisted.
Figure 5 Example of house plan from prominent local building company
Critical reflection

In this chapter I have introduced the informants and social networks that inform this research. Clearly, the sample is not representative of British migrants on the whole. The specificity of the group of interviewees, based around my original research focus on skilled British migrant women, but which evolved to include some of their broader social networks, must be noted. At the time the research proposal was formulated the literature pertaining to skilled migrant women, in Australia in particular, was limited. Recent contributions in the interim period addressing gender and skilled migration in Australia (for example Boucher 2007; Hawthorne 2005; Hawthorne 2006; Hawthorne 2012; Iredale 2005; Short et al. 2012) have gone some way to address this omission, however, there is still a lack of qualitative data on the subject. The work cited above has a focus on policy and process, which, while important, does not give much insight to the individual migrant experience. The data I consider and report in this thesis is significant in its qualitative nature, its attention to the social or private aspects of the lives of these skilled migrants sets it apart from that commonly reported in the discussion of skilled migration. The connection here with the established dichotomies of male and female and public and private spheres respectively is acknowledged. As Boyd and Thomas note, ‘the intended results of immigration policies such as a skilled migration programme do not always match with the outcomes for individual migrants’ (2001, p.129). The tension between the lifestyle choices these women and their partners have made and the labour issues, that have subsequently, arisen will be the subject of more attention in Chapter 6, and is a significant component of their stories.

Conclusion

Nigel Rapport writes of his field work in the fictional English village of
Wanet that:

What is to be recognised in individuals' social engagement is not any grandiose plan but a casual disorder: social life is ever a muddling through (Rapport 1994, p.63).

As this chapter has shown the ‘muddling through’ I experienced in my connection with those in the study reflected that which they dealt with as recent migrants establishing new lives here in Western Australia. Those I encountered were, on the whole, making the most of opportunities to establish new social connections attending the lunch and following up connections no matter how tenuous as they attempted to recapture a sense of belonging, something that migration actively challenges. Of course, for some this was not the case, they declared the lunchtime meets as not ‘their thing’ or too forced or unnatural ways to meet friends and acquaintances. Of course those who responded in such a way were in the minority, most likely due to the fact I did not meet them by chance and that they were least likely to respond to my calls for interviewees.

Having introduced the participants and the main sites of the research I now turn to a discussion of the Whingeing Pom.
CHAPTER FOUR - Contemporary British migration in the media: the Whingeing Pom

As noted in Chapter One, the Whingeing Pom is a recently launched magazine aimed at the British migrant community. Its publishers promote it as a lifestyle magazine and indeed there is little doubt that it is both influenced by, and also perpetuates, the commonplace notions of what constitutes the ‘lifestyle’ of the British in Australia. In the previous three chapters I have introduced a particular group of British migrants and set out my reasons for studying them. I have also proposed in Chapter Two that this particular migration act can be described as an act of shopping or provisioning, as part of the ‘cultural project of the self’ and have hopefully justified this choice through the discussion of consumption and lifestyle migration. In this chapter I turn to both a textual analysis of the magazine and my ethnographic findings to further clarify the central argument of this thesis that British migration to Australia remains underexplored and that this can in part be addressed by analysing the movement through the lens of consumption. In short this chapter asks what the Whingeing Pom can tell us about contemporary British migration to Western Australia.

As noted of these migrants their middling status, and their ethnicity, or maybe more importantly their perceived lack of ethnicity, makes them in many ways invisible. This chapter examines notions of invisibility, already introduced and also discussed elsewhere in the thesis, and focuses in particular on the Whingeing Pom, a very visual and visible assertion of the British in Australia. The magazine is in many ways a picture book of contemporary British migration to Australia, and analysing its contents in conjunction with the other sources utilised in this research can, I argue, make a considerable contribution to making the invisible visible. Its editorial identification as a lifestyle magazine further confirms my thesis
that British migration can be productively examined through the lens of consumption, an argument that is further explored in this chapter.

My engagement with the magazine centred around the themes established in analysis of the interviews. I focused mainly on the first six editions of the magazine published between April 2008 and March 2009. I also had access to a further four editions published between June 2009 and April 2010 by which time the magazine had launched an East Coast version and celebrated its second year of publication. Unfortunately the magazine appears to have met its demise, I have not seen a copy in any newsagent of late and there appears to be no online evidence that the magazine is still in publication nor indeed that the publisher, Editor at Large, is still in business.

**Lifestyle Magazines: A users guide to life**

Hollow (2012), comparing two editions of popular British male and female lifestyle magazines writes that 'a 'lifestyle magazine' is understood to be one that seeks to provide its readers with features on the whole range of products and activities that are perceived to be important to the way that they (aspire to) live and identify themselves' (2012, p.18). Arguably the *Whingeing Pom* adheres to this purpose. However, it is slightly different in aiming at a mixed audience rather than being specifically for males or females, although as I shall discuss later, there is certainly a male orientation to its narrative and imagery.

The *Whingeing Pom* also differs from other lifestyle magazines in its tendency to present things in column or article format. Magazines such as *Red* and *FHM*, that Hollow (2012) compared, and the likes of *Cosmopolitan* tend to intersperse articles with pages detailing options on the latest lipstick or in FHM’s case, the latest gadgets. The *Whingeing Pom*
differs in adopting a more advertorial style, that is, often formats the information about a product or service in the manner of an article or editorial rather than just a straight out advertisement. Each edition does have a fashion section, with the requisite glamorous photo shoot and ‘where to purchase’ information, but aside from that and the obvious advertisements, the sales pitch, or lifestyle advice, is often written into the article, as is the case in relation to holiday destinations or the dream home, which I shall discuss further in the following chapter. When I say sales pitch, I am suggesting this in the way Hollow (2012) describes the magazines as a guide to attaining a specific lifestyle.

Hollow’s article proposes that the lifestyle magazine ‘functions as a present day utopian medium’ (Hollow 2012, p.20) and ‘that like the utopian text the lifestyle magazine must project a vision of a fabulous ‘other’ place that must nonetheless remain firmly grounded in the reader’s present; offering them a conceivable vision of the inconceivable’ (Hollow 2012, p.22). There are, it seems, similarities between this notion of utopia and McCracken’s suggestion of ‘displaced meaning’, which I address further later in this chapter. That is an aspirational place/space/time which drives the consumer but which remains elusive, the act of consumption is then self-perpetuating, always resulting in further consumption. This ties in with my assertion that central to the way these British migrants imagine their migrant trajectories and possibilities is the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not afford them.

**British sense of self**

The epithet ‘whingeing pom’, that the Macquarie dictionary defines as ‘(derogatory) a British immigrant, thought to be always criticising and complaining about life in Australia’ provides a good starting point for a discussion about the British sense of self in Australia. There are various
origins posited for the expression ‘pom’ or ‘pommie’ including it being an abbreviation of Prisoner of Her Majesty and also referring to pomegranate the fruit, either as rhyming slang for immigrant, or because the English migrants were said to go the colour of pomegranates when exposed to the sun. None of the explanations have been substantiated and remain urban myths, however, the term remains in common usage particularly when prefaced with ‘whingeing’.

Hassam (2005) reports that the written use of the term ‘whingeing pom’ began in the early 1960s and connects this to an emerging attitude to British migrants that was less sympathetic than previously and that marked the beginnings of a more independent Australian national identity, separate from its history of British colonialism.

In 2007 there was an unsuccessful attempt by a group calling themselves British People Against Racial Discrimination to have the word ‘Pom’ banned by submission of a petition to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as reported in The Sunday Times, a Perth based newspaper (Lampathakis 2007). Undoubtedly the term has for some caused frustrations and distress over the years (Hammerton & Thomson 2005) and in some cases continues to do so; but on the whole it is rather more often taken as a joke.

Patricia, a 45 year old nurse noted the following:

I’ve been called a Pom so many times [said in an exasperated tone] even by clients. They don’t see anything wrong in that and I don’t take offence. But I just find it amazing that they come out with it because I am not sure you’d be, if you were working in the UK, you certainly wouldn’t use that kind of thing even if it was allowed. You just wouldn’t use that with a migrant group. But I don’t know if it is
that they feel an affinity with us, or what it is, or just they think they can rile us or use it anyway, but I just find that quite funny.

Patricia was bemused by the use of the word Pom rather than amused by it, and her question at the end regarding whether the Australians feel an affinity with the British and therefore at liberty to make such jokes or whether it is done to irritate or annoy, says something about the ambiguous position British migrants occupy in Australia. Various British migrants in Australia have occasion to feel aloof and expecting of respect as members of the charter group, simultaneously they may feel victimised as the submission to the UN High Commission mentioned above demonstrates, further, and due to their positioning at the core in contrast to many other migrant groups, they are very much included as a taken for granted aspect of the Australian nation and therefore open to some friendly banter. I will discuss this ambiguity further later in the thesis.

The aforementioned petition, and upset caused, aside, I believe the title of the magazine exudes a confidence that other migrant groups may not have about their position in Australia; the fact that they are able to make a joke about the whingeing suggests a level of comfort with it that may not emerge if they were less sure of their position. Harney (2011), in a conference paper discussing a magazine called ‘The Eyetalian’, published by an Italian community in Canada, noted that the second generation were much more comfortable with it than the first who found it problematic. Their reluctance to accept the moniker was largely due to the hardships they had endured, including racism, as they established themselves in Canada. Arguably, due to the colonial history, the British in Australia have never had the same level of discomfort.

Despite an easier transition overall, however, many of the assisted migrants did have cause for complaint and whingeing because their expectations had
been raised through the advertising and rhetoric regarding life in Australia. As has already been noted, the reality was often somewhat different. This combined with a common migrant tendency to compare the new with the old was probably quite wearing for many in the host country and it has been suggested that ‘Australians were hypersensitive to British migrant complaints and to the slightest hint that British standards and ways might be superior’ (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.146).

Fox (2004, p.405) sees English moaning as, in the main, ‘socially therapeutic—highly effective as a facilitator of social interaction and bonding.’ Hassam (2005, p.85), in his discussion of the expression whingeing pom, provides an interesting excerpt from a newspaper letters page in 1967 that champions the use of grumbling as an important contributor to British identity and notes that ‘[t]o the British, grumbling included an ability to distance oneself through humour from the cause of the complaint’ again elevating the practice beyond mere moaning. I posit that as migrants this moaning may be seen as an important part of the process of establishing oneself in the host country given that social interaction and bonding are two of the things which feature highly in the lists of concerns of those I interviewed. The whingeing or moaning can then be viewed as a component of identity formation through boundary forming (Barth 1969).

The following quote from Elizabeth highlights the situation whereby the aforementioned hypersensitivity in the hosts and the moaning of the new arrivals come together. I had asked this participant, who was very positive about her family’s settlement experience, whether she felt some migrants had unrealistic expectations and she replied as follows:

Definitely, definitely [said with exasperation], I mean I think we were fully prepared for it not to be
England with sunshine and I think [some] people aren’t as clued up. Not maybe clued up but aren’t as accepting of the differences of Australia. They think it is going to be the same sort of culture as the UK and it feels very different in lots of ways and I think people are often quite shocked about how different it can feel and how different people are and I think that sort of puts people on edge a bit. And I do find some English people can come in with an almost slightly superior attitude towards services and systems over here, you know the ‘we’ve not been doing that for twenty years type of thing’. And I guess that can probably feel, well it is, bloody rude and arrogant and I suppose that can then get people’s backs up. Australians [that is] and they can perceive us as whingeing Poms.

The superior attitude Elizabeth alludes to here may indeed be a throwback to the colonial days, I shall discuss the idea of a colonial/imperial habitus later in the thesis, but it is also indicative of the fact that many have very high expectations of Australia and small problems can become magnified in the migrant experience and expressed as a failing of the host country.

As I have already discussed, on the whole the British have enjoyed a position of prominence among those who have immigrated to Australia. Where immigration is commonly viewed as problematic, particularly in the popular media, the British are largely excluded from this conception, their position as the charter group assuring this. Peters (2001, p.131) writes of an attitude in post World War Two Australia ‘that Australians should be grateful to receive Britons but that other foreigners should be grateful to be accepted by Australia.’ Peters goes on to say that ‘Immigration authorities claim that whereas some Britons came to expect preferential treatment as a ‘God given right’, conditions at camps for Europeans confirmed for these
people their position as ‘second-class’ Australians’ (2001, p.131). Arguably similar sentiments remain to this day; despite official policies of multiculturalism and denunciation of discrimination based on race or ethnicity, popular discourse on immigration to Australia retains strong elements of the hierarchical sentiments born in colonial times; this attitude is discernable in the *Whingeing Pom* magazine.

The magazine, thanks to its bold design and colour scheme, is instantly eye-catching on the newsagent’s shelves. This is something that had not escaped the attention of the staff in the newsagents in Nedlands where I bought the first edition; it had apparently “been a very popular choice”. This, in a suburb, unlike some, not recognised as having a significant number of Britons among its population; none of those I interviewed or who attended the lunches lived there to my knowledge. Anecdotally, however, I have heard of quite a few recently arrived engineers from the United Kingdom who have chosen to live in the vicinity, taken by its location between the beach and the city and also its proximity to the Swan River; in other words, for lifestyle reasons.

I was not entirely surprised that the magazine had proved popular, the iconography is striking; four out of the five first editions have a beach scene as the cover image and the other, an image of the desert. Images of Great Britain’s Union Jack and Australia’s Southern Cross flag are used liberally, as are shots of thongs, bottles of beer, and London’s famous double decker buses among other stereotypical representations of the respective countries. At the same time as highlighting differences however, these national icons also betray many of the similarities between the two places and reveal the commonalities. Notwithstanding the significant factor of the origins of the Australian flag, which contains the Union Jack within it, the celebration of blokes and beer stands out as the most obvious. The magazine, written by a team of comedy writers, has a masculine feel, and
the fashion shoots and restaurant reviews, which do feature, seem secondary to the beer and ‘blokieness’ that characterise the magazine. On my reading it appears to follow in the tradition of British comedy such as the popular UK sitcom Men Behaving Badly which celebrated the British ‘lad about town character’ and coincided, as a 90s phenomenon, with Brit Pop and Cool Britannia.

Hollow (2012), referring to *FHM*, a popular male lifestyle magazine in Britain notes that the style is ‘light and jocular’ and goes on to quote Bethan Benwell’s take on the ‘lad’s mag’ which sees it as ‘ironic, humorous, anti-heroic, and explicitly interpersonal, emulating the processes of social male bonding’ (Hollow 2012, p.23). It is important to stress the comedic, tongue-in-cheek nature of the magazine, as there are articles in it that may cause offence. However, as I will describe below, they do, even if in exaggerated form, speak to many of the issues discussed with participants in this study.

Pausing briefly on the comedic tone of the magazine, it is worth here referring again to the work of Kate Fox (2004) who talks about the English tendency to see humour in everything, noting that ‘most English conversations will involve at least some degree of banter, teasing, irony, understatement, humorous self-deprecation, mockery or just silliness’. Humour, Fox writes, ‘is our default mode’ (2004, p.61). As stated earlier Fox makes her claims solely about the English but there are no doubt aspects of what she says which apply more broadly across the United Kingdom. Some regional variations aside, those from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been exposed to many of the same popular cultural influences particularly since the advent of radio and television, which no doubt inform our comedic repertoire. It was not uncommon for informants to suggest that they missed the sense of humour in the United Kingdom; an example of such comments follows:
Gillian - Would you say that there is anything about the UK that you particularly miss?

Liz - I suppose television and laughs; the sense of humour is very different. Australians have a very different sense of humour. And I think the slightly sarcastic deprecating kind of humour. I think Australians like Americans perhaps don’t get irony too well and I find most Australians are quite pragmatic and call a spade a spade and are very sort of, em, black and white. Perhaps it is just the ones I’ve met.

Liz is an English woman but I have also found comments such as this commonplace in my own, mainly Scottish, social circle and there is a steady exchange among us of DVDs of the latest television shows from the United Kingdom, comedy shows in particular being a highly prized item.

I say that the comedy in the magazine is tongue in cheek but if it was directed at people other than Australians it may well be seen as racism, likewise the debate as to whether it is racist for Australians to call the British or English whingeing Poms. As Harrison (2003), drawing on the work of Kapferer, has argued however, the tension between Australian’s and the British may indeed be borne out of their similarities rather than their difference. He notes:

Australian nationalism strongly and overtly identifies with its Other in certain respects. This is alterity, then, but within the context of an overarching relationship of commonalities and shared cultural identity. The explicit connection with England is an essential component of this form of Australian nationalism, because, as Kapferer makes clear, it alone provides the felt common background (of history, culture, religion, language, and so forth)
on which ‘differences’ can be made to appear. This is why Australian nationalism defines itself by a contrast with the English and not with the Peruvians, Icelanders, or other unrelated peoples. One can distinguish oneself only from those with whom there is a relationship in the first place (Harrison 2003, p.348).

As this thesis states the British are a middling group largely invisible among both the Australian born population and other migrant groups. While it could be argued that this is possibly creating a need to define themselves, as proposed by Stratton (2000), my research suggests that a simple marketing strategy, rather than an overwhelming emotional urge to proclaim British identity, is the reason behind the publication of the *Whingeing Pom*. However, as Harrison goes on to say:

> It is those who imagine they have the most in common—or fear that they have, or fear that they may come to have, the most in common—who are most likely to categorize each other as different, as opposites or inversions of one another. It is they who have the most at stake in differentiating themselves (2003, p.349).

Bearing this in mind it is possible to see throughout the magazine various examples where Australians are viewed as lazy, inefficient and lacking in culture among other things, that is, Australians are set up in opposition to the hard working, efficient and cultured British.

Having said something about the overall look of the magazine and its position as a comedy/lifestyle publication, I will turn in the remainder of the chapter to look more closely at a few specific sections in the magazine. I begin with the regular column *I possie* and continue with *The Shopping Basket*. 

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I Possie: the best of both worlds

I Possie is the name of what was a regular column appearing in the first year's issues of the *Whingeing Pom*. Written by Ian Gerrard (2008), the first column in the inaugural *Whingeing Pom* explained to the reader what author Gerrard's definition of a Possie was. Among other things Gerrard noted that:

[A] true Possie holds dual nationality...is entitled to flit between cultural traits, accent, attitude and support for sporting teams without any need for consistency or explanation...and while the vast majority of Possies never went to the theatre while we lived in Britain, at least we could have done, which allows us to feel culturally superior to true Aussies. (Gerrard 2008, p.93)

The choice of the word ‘entitled’ in the first line, and the assertion in the last line that those from the United Kingdom have more claim to ‘high culture’ are the important things to take from this quotation. Gerrard concludes this introductory column by stating to his readership that:

[F]or the first time there is a magazine for all you in-betweenies. Granted it should be called The Possie rather than the Whingeing Pom, but we all know Aussies are simple-minded people who find it hard to let go of old-fashioned concepts, so we'll indulge them for old-fashioned marketing reasons, even though we know better. After all, knowing better is what being a Possie is all about. You know I am right. (Gerrard 2008, p.93)

The superiority in the article is certainly not subtle, but the notion that the British who have moved to Australia have made the right choice is one that runs throughout the magazine. There is a sense that they, they being the
writers and those they seek to represent, already possess all that is British, particularly what they see as the positives, and are now, through a move to Australia able to filter out any negatives and be left with a combination of the ‘best of both worlds’. If we return to the idea of this migration as shopping, or as a consumption good it is like they have purchased extra cultural capital. There has long been a kudos associated with travel and the message in the magazine is that the British in Australia are blessed with such. That dual nationality is an option for the British in Australia is a further indication of privilege, which I shall talk about in more detail in the section on citizenship to follow in Chapter Seven.

Of course, as I have already stated, the magazine takes a particular style, therefore the arrogance that comes across in this article is certainly not something particular to all British migrants but the notion of the superiority of everything British, with the notable exception of the weather, is certainly one which often seems apparent. Nurses and midwives frequently expressed their sense that Australia was ‘behind’, as in behind the times, when compared to nursing and midwifery in the United Kingdom, an issue that shall be addressed further in the chapter on work. Likewise, it was not unusual for respondents to assert that WA was backward or slower paced than the United Kingdom, and while some appreciated this and cited it among the positives of their migration it was not uncommon for this to be a source of complaint. One nurse observed of colleagues from the United Kingdom:

I don’t know what they imagined, I really don’t, but it wasn’t what they thought it was going to be, I think it was a lot slower. You know we came from Birmingham, we had quite a fast paced, you could walk out your door and go to any entertainment thing, the shops are open 24 hours and I think folk find that a real struggle, to cope with the fact that we
don’t have that here, and they are not willing to adapt.

As noted earlier, there is a sense that many arrive with unrealistic expectations, of course these expectations are related to one’s habitus, and as I have already noted, the notion of Australia holds particular connotations about lifestyle for many of the United Kingdom population.

That this nurse suggested an unwillingness to adapt on the part of the British migrants is interesting in light of the sentiments expressed in the editor’s welcome note to the August/Sept 2008 edition of the *Whingeing Pom*. Here, the editor, Simon Holloway, starts by talking of the burgeoning ‘self-help’ industry in Western Australia and notes what he sees as the irony of the industry’s success among a population that he argues is largely resistant to change. Holloway has his own editorial vision of how things should be, rather than the individualistic change Holloway sees promoted by the self-help industry he argues that:

Change can be much more subtle and homogenous. It can be gently applied to effect a general adjustment for the greater good of a large number of people: a broad stroke rather than an intense counselling session. Let’s try and alter the external things not the internal things.

You want an example? Well Perth is a city. People move to cities for convenience, ease and to mingle with other human beings; they sacrifice the tranquillity and scenery of the country for the ability to nip down to the shops after work for a few groceries. The city should be a living, organic entity that adapts to its inhabitants’ lives not the other way round. In this sense, many ex-pats feel a little short-changed by Perth and would like to alter just a few
things. Just the physical stuff, just to make life a little easier.

Maybe extended trading hours, or cutting through some of the red tape that makes every little task so difficult. How about much of the population easing up a touch, being a tad less uptight, possibly even adopting a more heightened sense of irony? Let that “laid-back” attitude extend to a more laid back approach to serving people- the customer is not the enemy.

Ex-pats have already made a huge change in their lives by transporting themselves to the other side of the world. We don’t really need to make any more upheavals. We’re probably all a little bit tired and cranky. We just want a quiet life – not too quiet though. And an easy life. A life where things can get fixed or installed on time. A life where we can decide not to cook at night and order in a pizza after 9pm. A life where we can go to the post office without filling in countless forms. We don’t want to stand out. We don’t want to whinge. We just want an easy life that is all.

So, where the nurse previously quoted suggested that migrants were unwilling to change the magazine lays this charge firmly at the feet of the hosts. There can be seen, in this editorial, similar sentiment to that discussed earlier in relation to the post World War Two British migrants that Australia is lucky to have them. This particular paragraph seems to increase the justification for Australians to label us whingeing Poms, and I include myself here because I too have often bemoaned the fact it is difficult to eat in Perth after 9pm. These sentiments also provide evidence for the suggestion that push and pull factors are inadequate when it comes to describing British migration to Australia; one country does not seem to
have ‘it’ over the other.

Often on the WBDFs the response to whingeing is fairly vehement. One particular thread asking what people missed from the United Kingdom garnered such a reaction leading to the response below which tried to introduce some reason to the debate suggesting, as in the old adage, that ‘familiarity breeds contempt’:

it's just familiarity... when I was in England I used to hate the place and go on about all things Aussie, now that I am back here I miss things from England. The grass always seems greener, the reality is that one paddock may well be better than the other but they are both patchy.

Another poster expressed similar sentiments about the migration experience in another thread noting:

Once an ex-pat, always an ex-pat. Have the benefits of seeing both sides of the fence but always at risk of comparing/contrasting the two. I don't think it's a case of either country is "better" as such, it's more the mix of pro's and con's that determine which country suits you best.

This is something I will discuss further in relation to return migrants in Chapter Six. Of course the reality of the migrant situation is for many slightly more complex than this ‘I Possie’ column would suggest. The chapter on labour to follow will demonstrate that work in Australia for many certainly does not provide a sense that they are getting the best of both worlds. However, in general the best of both worlds attitude is one that reinforces and is possibly reinforced by the sense of privilege and entitlement that can go hand in hand with being a British migrant in Australia.
**Purchasing a lifestyle**

Earlier in the chapter I noted that the lifestyle magazine has been compared to a ‘how to guide’ for the modern consumer, of course this proposition denies the complexity present in all consumption decision making. I take the view following Douglas and Isherwood (1978) that shopping, or provisioning, is an important activity in relation to both the expression and the generation of culture. The section to follow discusses the importance of shopping not so much in the act itself but in the way the act and the products themselves featured in the stories of those I interviewed and importantly in the *Whingeing Pom*. Unlike (Miller 1998) I did not accompany anyone on their shopping trips, but shopping was the subject of much discussion at the lunches and obviously features heavily in the magazine.

**Shopping and the shopping basket**

While the lifestyle component of this migration is significant, those I talked to differ from those most often addressed in the literature on lifestyle migration who are in a position where they do not have to work. Concern with the financial implications of the move is evident throughout my discussions with participants and a feature, entitled The Shopping Basket, that has appeared in each edition of the *Whingeing Pom* since its inception, is indicative of this. In the first edition introducing the feature article, which is not attributed to a particular writer, the magazine states that:

One of the most unsettling feelings the new ex-pat experiences when first arriving on these sun-kissed shores is the seemingly exorbitant price of everything. A local currency that is more than double good old sterling leaves us floundering around, trying to work out if we are paying more,
The magazine then goes on to offer price comparisons on everyday items, that in this edition include beer, a cappuccino and pies. Future editions include other items such as apartment rental, petrol, school fees, return flights between Perth and the United Kingdom, and a pallet of bricks among other things. As someone who arrived in 1998 at a time when ‘good old sterling’ was at around AUD$3.00 to the pound and everything seemed very cheap, I am very aware of the different experience moving to WA was for those who came slightly later. An economic boom in Western Australia exacerbated the experience of these more recent arrivals particularly as it coincided with the beginning of a decline in the United Kingdom and many had difficulty selling their homes there while watching the prices here in Western Australia rise. I will discuss in greater detail the increasing cost of housing in Western Australia in Chapter Five. What follows is an excerpt from my field notes that highlights my thoughts at the time on the price of socialising with the ladies who lunch:

I was at the lunch today, as is usual for a Thursday. What was unusual is that I forgot my purse; thankfully Wendy stepped into the breach and lent me ten dollars. I’d managed to rustle up five dollars from the bottom of my handbag, enough to get a mug of flat white coffee ($4.00), but the chicken sandwich I fancied was nine dollars, hence the loan. Apart from garlic bread which on its own didn’t seem like a very appetizing lunch there was nothing on the menu under five dollars, in fact most of the meals are over twelve dollars making it a reasonably expensive lunch to be having every week. That these women were also going out for lunch and coffee on other occasions
through the week meant that they must spend a considerable amount each week on entertainment. Of course, for a gathering that many described as a ‘lifesaver’, or as ‘keeping me sane’, among other things, the financial cost is possibly less of a concern, far outweighed by the social benefits.

It is worth noting here that the meeting was always in a café so the option to bring one’s own lunch was not available and I was never aware of anyone declining to eat with the others.

![Average Exchange Rate GBP/AUD](image)

*Figure 6 Australian Dollar to British Pound 2000 -2010 figures from fxtop.com (indicative only)*

**Shopping and family values**

Daniel Miller (1995a, p.155) writes that, "Shopping itself may be transformed into a major instrument for the enactment of a commitment to family values." I am proposing that the migration experience of the women I interviewed, and who almost to a woman expressed a 'better life' for their children as a reason for migration, can be described in terms of a shopping experience; they had a choice of country, they were exposed to advertising
in the form of government advertising and also a plethora of television shows on UK TV stressing how great Australia was. Further they were essentially 'cashed-up' in terms of their nursing qualifications. They were able to read 'reviews' of the product on websites such as Poms in Perth and British Expats, and in the *Whingeing Pom* embodies these notions of choice, purchase, and even the disappointment. Like any other 'purchase', migration does not always meet expectations. Sharon for instance stated to me that she was concerned about her children’s financial future in Australia, largely due to an increase in the cost of living since they had arrived in Perth from the United Kingdom noting specifically and quite emphatically that she ‘didn’t bring her children here for them to struggle financially in adulthood’. Here then the notion of social reproduction (Kofman 2012a) appears again and in conjunction with the idea of migration as shopping or the consumption of a better life[style].

For Kate (RN) coming to Australia was the fulfillment of a childhood dream, realized after her husband eventually came around to the idea of migration stating that ‘all the reasons not to come went away’. Kate said that her wanting to come to Australia had become a standing joke between herself and her husband, something that she mentioned at every possible opportunity until, stereotypically, one rainy day in England she said to him well it wouldn’t be raining in Australia to which he apparently replied ‘you are right, lets go’. He says the reasons for his change of mind are not exactly clear, even to himself but he feels that the timing was just right. Appleyard (1964) talks of people reaching an emigration threshold after which any objections to the move are outweighed by more positive thoughts. Kate’s husband said that he had always felt he wouldn’t be prepared to come unless he felt settled and content in his life in the United Kingdom, as he does not believe that migration is a way to solve problems. However, being married with two young children and both his wife and
him in employment he felt like he could finally entertain the idea of migration. Now, in Australia, he feels like he could not be as happy anywhere else. If we continue here with the theme or metaphor of shopping or provisioning it is almost like this particular recipient felt that he was in a position where he could afford to take the risk, he had the capital required to make the transaction.

What I am trying to illustrate here is that this was not a decision taken lightly. In Chapter Two I quoted King (2002) in reference to the occasion these migrants have to ‘shop’ for their desired lifestyle(s). Arguably there was a lot of weighing up of options involved in this couple’s migration decision and for Kate, the wife, even though it had always been a dream to come to Australia, she was clearly aware of the practical realities of the situation and noted that she became an Australia ‘nerd’ in the period between lodging their visa application and having it granted. Kate stated:

If you’ve researched it all before you won’t get any surprises…I knew how much a loaf of bread cost, I’d done virtual shopping in Coles online so I knew to the Nth degree that we could afford to come to live on one wage…we weren’t going to be in debt in a country we didn’t know.

Whist the virtual shopping basket appeared extreme in that no one else mentioned it there was no doubt that the women I interviewed had on the most part weighed up their options carefully before taking the plunge to move to Australia. Comments about the costs of housing, grocery shopping and clothing were also commonly asked on the WBDFs. Kate’s husband noted how important the Internet had been as a tool in their decision making process.

So while I am arguing that this migration is consumption oriented and about a project of the self it is also important to take from this section that
these are not ‘lemming’ consumers. The degree of research that goes into the migration is evidence of a high degree of reflexivity at play, something, which does not preclude the notion of habitus as an influential factor.

Shopping for a sense of belonging

Of course the shopping does not end with the act of migration, indeed it could be argued that there is an increased need to consume as one deals with the change of field and arguably more pressure to achieve ‘definition of themselves and their values’ (Miller 1995b, p.277). There are at least six ‘British Shops’ in the Perth metropolitan region and a significant number of other stores including grocery and butcher’s shops, among others, that promote and stock ‘British’ goods. These goods range from the ubiquitous Marks and Spencers ‘knickers’ to regional gastronomical favourites such as haggis, potato scones, and Lorne sausage. Football memorabilia and a wide selection of packet and tinned foods and biscuits and confectionery also feature heavily on the shelves of these establishments. Some advertise in the Whingeing Pom; for example UK Central, a store in Joondalup that boasts of stocking over 1800 product lines with photographic evidence of the availability of British staples such as Persil washing powder, Irn Bru (Scotland’s other national drink) and PG Tips teabags. Others such as the ‘Scottish butcher in Currambine’ are mentioned in conversation in revered tones. At the time of writing a close friend was delighted to announce that she had ‘found a butcher fae the Broch in Bentley fa dis white puddings on a Tuesday’, translated this means that there is a butcher in the Perth suburb of Bentley originally from Fraserburgh, a coastal town in North East Scotland, who makes white puddings, a savoury oatmeal pudding stuffed into sausage skin. While I have not made a special trip to the shop yet, a white pudding will be on my list of things to have when I next visit Scotland. This may seem like a departure from the magazine that is the
focus of this chapter but rather it highlights the importance of particular familiar items in some migrants day to day lives, many of which, as I have noted, feature at various points in the magazine, whether in a feature article such as ‘The Shopping Basket’, or in a contributors list of things he or she misses from ‘the old country’.

Brand familiarity is also recognised as important by Miller (1998) in his study of shopping in North London. Citing examples such as Heinz and Kellogg’s, Miller notes their contribution to a sense of continuity.

Soup is perhaps a rather obvious example, but it is also possible for a brand of toilet roll or kitchen cleaner also to evoke such generational links (usually implicitly), precisely because they become an invariant feature of the grocery purchasing, something that the house as a whole should never run out of. It is not that any one such commodity can bear this weight of descent constitution, but that within many households there is a group of long-standing branded goods, which stand for a continuity that transcends any particular generation. So far from consumption standing for change and modernity, the legacy of such brands is that they have remained constant, predictable and little changed during a century which has seen the most immense shifts in social structures and cultural ideology. As such, commodities become the objectification of family tradition, stability and history, which may be one of the reasons that the elderly shoppers seemed particularly conservative with respect to brand choice (Miller 1998, p.142).

Similarly these commodities could be argued to represent stability and history in the migrant community. It seems reasonable to extend this idea
of generational links, and suggest that a sense of continuity, or the known, is something which, to different degrees, appeals to the migrant community and to which the emergence of British shops, and British sections in existing shops, in the Perth Metropolitan area is also testament to.

The quote below from one of my participants speaks to this idea of continuity and the comfort of the known:

**Patricia** - the shipping arrived when they said it would and it was all intact and that was not a problem at all and there was no hassle but it did feel very strange unpacking everything though and I actually cried when I unpacked my bed linen because it smelled of home you know with the washing powder and it is just things like that that hit you sometimes and make you quite emotional generally it has been ok but the shops as well I miss, I have to confess I miss, I have to confess I have been to the British shop a few times, things like marmite and em, Cadbury’s double deckers,

**Gillian** - I think these things are quite acceptable

**Patricia** - I think it is great that it is available really, that it is here and people are sort of able to shop there and have that familiarity with home and I have to say that I do think that in part has helped me settle and this sounds really sad but I bought some Ariel washing powder because I just thought that smells of home and it has helped enormously just silly things like that and I mean I don’t go to the British shop everyday but I might go once a month and just have a few little things because it is expensive, but you know, well in the scheme of things you know, in its own little way it is helping.
In the first section of this quote the participant’s statement ‘I confess’ in relation to her visits to the British shop are typical of many such comments I heard. As noted earlier it seems that for some succumbing to the temptations of the British shop are a betrayal of the notion of migration as ‘adventure’.

This nostalgia for certain foodstuffs and other sundry items does not always arouse warm, fuzzy feelings of home. For some it is seen as a sign that the migrant is not trying hard enough to assimilate. Sophie one of the ladies who lunch noted that her husband was completely infuriated by the idea of the British shop, finding it ridiculous that people could migrate and then waste time hankering after the likes of Irn Bru and Picnic chocolate bars or any other number of confectionery items stocked there. I think the tension between wanting to be British and not wanting to be British, what might otherwise be described as a ambiguity about being British in an Australian setting, says something about the motivations for the move and possibly how those moves are decided upon within families; often one partner is keener than the other. But there is, it appears, sometimes an elitism or snobbery directed against those who admit that they go to the British shop, it is almost an admission that you are not cosmopolitan enough. There are lots of new things to consume and experience in Australia and for some, those who chose to stick to what they know are in some way less travel minded or adventurous. Elizabeth (RMHN) on being asked if there was anything she missed from home first of all referred to television and British humour as I discussed earlier in this chapter but then went on:

**Elizabeth** - em, gravy granules, [at this point she checked herself and continued in an exasperated tone]. Oh it always does my head in when people talk about Marks and Spenceers knickers and oh you
can’t get this and you can’t get that and I find that just absolutely bizarre that people get in such a stew about things like that. [Here she changed to sounding sympathetic and, in a manner which is probably reflective of her mental health nurse training, went on to say] But, I guess it is that all their securities are gone and those things are very important, they are just an outward sort of expression of what is going on… [Returning to her personal rather than professional opinion she continued] But I do find it irritating when you read all the posts like shops are crap type thing and I find that all those generalised sweeping statements about all the clothes in shops are crap and all the food shops are rubbish and all the meat is rubbish and that sort of thing and you just think oh dear… I find that very frustrating, that people are unable to see past that type of thing.

**Gillian** - but at the same time there are a lot of complaints about the migrants in the UK

**Elizabeth** - Yeah, who don’t integrate yeah, it is, it is just a bit crazy really.

This tension or ambiguity described above about the expression of ethnicity through the consumption of ethnic goods clearly warrants recognition of the class and or status element that obviously influences it. It can be argued that those who are, or see themselves, as of middling class or status and above will not be seen to have the same hankerings for that which can be found in the British shops. Products such as crisps and soft drinks and the tinned and packaged foodstuffs are arguably more readily associated with lower class or status designations. Even some of the butchery items I mentioned are most likely historically associated with a less prosperous consumer, being ways of making the meat content of a particular dish feed
a greater number by utilising the likes of oatmeal to eke it out.

Marks and Spencer knickers

From field notes

One of the first things Gemma, who had recently returned from the UK did when she turned up on Thursday was to hand Sharon a green carrier bag distinctly recognizable to all us Brits surrounding her, it contained 12 pairs of Marks and Spencer knickers, that important commodity that British women find it so hard live without.

This exchange happened before Marks and Spencer began to offer delivery to Australia as part of their online shopping service, something I remember causing a flurry of purchasing among my social circle and something that was been credited with contributing to a revival in the company’s fortunes. ‘Online M&S sells more of its famous knickers to Australia than anywhere else in the world’ (McCarthy 2009). The same article quotes CEO Michael Rose saying that ‘The bulk of our business comes from ordinary people, Mr and Mrs Normal, who have families, jobs, mortgages. Yet they are also people who understand value. We’re proud to serve ordinary people. There’s nothing to be ashamed of about being ordinary – we can’t all be Madonna.’ This ties in with my suggestion that British migrants in Australia are, by and large, ‘middling migrants’. Kate Fox also discusses Marks and Spencers in relation to class noting that across all classes in England it is acceptable to buy their underwear there, but elaborating to explain a complex situation where other purchases from the store including foodstuffs and home décor items such as sheets and towels are distinctly differentiated by class. Fox goes as far as to say ‘If you need to make a
quick assessment of an English shopper’s social class, don’t ask about her family background, income, occupation or the value of her house (all of which would in any case be rude): ask her what she does and does not buy in Marks and Spencer.’ Fox stresses that this test applies to females only, noting that men remain ‘blissfully unaware’ (Fox 2004, p.234).

We can see from the discussion above the importance of consumption in the lives of the migrants as they described them and also as they are portrayed in the *Whingeing Pom*.

Shopping is the construction of the other as the desiring subject. The purpose of shopping is not so much to buy the things people want, but to strive to be in a relationship with subjects that want these things...What the shopper desires above all is for others to want and to appreciate what she brings' (Miller 1998, p.148).

There is in all of this an element of justifying the decision to migrate; people often use the presence or absence of goods to explain their liking or loathing for Australia or the United Kingdom for that matter. There is also a tendency to either promote the country you wish to stay in and denigrate the other in these justifying actions, for instance one homesick respondent made a significant effort to assure me that her house in Australia was not really any bigger than the one she had left in the United Kingdom, suggesting that there really was not any good reason for her to emigrate and similarly no obstacles to her hoped for return.

**Advertising in the Whingeing Pom**

The advertising in the magazine is indicative of my argument throughout the thesis that utilising the lens of consumption to analyse British migration to Australia is an appropriate methodology. In the first instance the bi-
monthly magazine is glossy and printed on heavy weight paper setting it apart from cheaper weekly magazines and aligning itself more with those such as Scoop, a luxury lifestyle magazine that focuses on Western Australia. As already noted the covers are dominated with the beach theme; sand sea and sun predominate. Inside the magazine advertisements for interior design, furniture stores and building and landscaping services ensure that the migrant’s needs on the home front are catered for. Should the migrant feel the need to get away from home, possibly to escape the renovations or refurbishments, there are options for fishing charters, French patisseries and also fashionable clothes and jewellery to wear while enjoying these things.

In the first edition a feature article on holiday destinations in South East Asia talks of the need to escape WA. Reading this article it would appear that if the migration was about escape (Hoey 2009; O'Reilly & Benson 2009) then in someway the destination has fallen short. Notably those in my cohort did not cite escape as a significant motivating factor in their migration decision-making. However, even in the absence of an escape narrative the idea that one should want to escape the migration destination is important and I believe a manifestation of the consumer culture which suggests we keep striving for fulfillment and satisfaction. Australia in the British imaginary is frequently portrayed as an ocean side paradise but part of the Australian lifestyle is an aspiration to overseas holidays in search of that elusive idyll.

In Chapter Seven of *Culture and Consumption* titled *The Evocative Power of Things: Consumer Goods and the Preservation of Hopes and Ideals* McCracken (1990, p.104) discusses the idea of ‘displaced meaning’, which he argues 'consists in cultural meaning that has deliberately been removed from the daily life of a community and relocated in a distant cultural domain.' To further explain this he cites the example of the ‘Golden age’
and also argues that

It is also possible to transport one's ideals across the continuum of space. Somewhere in the present day, a society can be found that appears to live a life in which "all keep faith and do the right thing." Ideally, this society is sufficiently distant to ensure that thorough scrutiny is not easily undertaken, for this scrutiny is almost always disappointing. With this condition, displacement in space works just as effectively as displacement in time. The imperfections of a given society can now be dismissed as local aberrations. Ideals have found a place of safety. (McCracken 1990, p.104)

I believe it can be argued that Australia constitutes such a space in the pre-migration world and social imaginary of most British migrants due to a powerful combination of factors including history, personal/familial experience, and not least of all advertising. Further as Benson (2012, p.1686) notes, ‘mass tourism has sparked individual imaginings of the lives they could lead, and the tourist experience often leaves people with a curiosity about how their lives would be if they lived in other places’. It is not hard to see the connections here between McCracken’s notion of displaced meaning and the idea of utopia as expressed in Hollow’s (2012) article on lifestyle magazines discussed earlier.

The images of Australia presented in the Whingeing Pom are merely the most current, at the time of publication, in a long tradition of tales and promotion of ‘The Lucky Country’. Historical television adverts urging Britons to ‘Come to the sunny side’ can be viewed on the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection’s YouTube™ channel19. A much more recently made video clip shows a British nurse and her

19 http://www.youtube.com/user/ImmiTV#p/u/68/JoY29Y6Y_lQ
family who have moved to Geelong in Victoria under the skilled migration programme, with the video again relying fairly heavily on the beach theme with shots of the family on the beach, surfers and boats in a marina. Earlier I referred to the South Australian government’s controversial advertising campaign urging Britons to ‘Sod Staines’ and move to Adelaide. Similarly advertising run by the Metropolitan Health Board of Western Australia showed images of a snorkeler surrounded by blue seas and skies with the caption ‘Dive into WA’. All of the above draw on the already popular image of Australia as permanently sunny, infinitely spacious and offering multiple opportunities. While there are no doubt negative aspects these are not the ones that have dominated. The ‘Lucky Country’ and ‘Land of Milk and Honey’ narratives make an ideal location for ‘hopes and ideals’ as McCracken would put it. They can be substituted for his ‘rose-covered cottage’ in representing ‘a large and diverse bundle of emotional conditions and social circumstances’ (McCracken 1990, p.114) After establishing the notion of displaced ideals McCracken asks 'How does the culture re-establish access to the meaning it has displaced?’ and in response he argues ‘partly through inanimate objects and consumer goods' (1990, p.109) I will argue that consumer goods should not be seen here as merely tangible things, for example, clothes, watches, home furnishings or cars, to name but a few, but also that this can also occur through the consumption of experiences, migration being an example of such.

The advertising in the Whingeing Pom is understandably heavily aimed at the British migrant market and the products advertised compound the notion of 'lifestyle', particularly in a consumer society. Jackson and Thrift (1995, p.223) describe advertising as a 'dream world' of contemporary consumption[...]with its evocation of other places and lifestyles, designed

20 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcJokFTAL60
to enthrall and attract the potential purchaser.' There is much to enthrall and attract throughout the *Whingeing Pom*. The opening pages of the first edition are a double page spread from the Auto Classic BMW Dealership advertising a bright red Mini, arguably a British icon, despite the fact it is now produced by German auto industry stalwart BMW. This advert is followed by a full-page advert for the Football Emporium indicating it is 'for everything soccer' and avoiding confusion with Australian Rules Football, more popular among West Australian locals. On page seven, Europcar is offering an upgrade if you are British, no doubt appealing to new migrants and the tourist market which follows in the form of visiting friends and relatives. The list goes on: insurance services, United Kingdom pension advice, home furnishings and renovations. As a Western Australia based magazine the companies advertising are predominantly local, unlike the lifestyle magazines described by Hollow that have large distributions in the United Kingdom, and the *Whingeing Pom* has not attracted the larger advertisers such as perfume and fashion houses. The closest exceptions to this are the advertisements for cars but these are all connected to locally operated motor dealers rather than being entirely brand driven.

So while the *Whingeing Pom* is a glossy lifestyle magazine the lifestyle it promotes fits with my assertion that these migrants are of ‘middling’ status. Although affluent to a degree I saw no evidence of designer clothes or any particularly ostentatious displays of wealth, neither when I visited the women's homes to conduct interviews, nor when I attended the lunchtime meetings, generally fairly casual affairs. When the women talked about clothes shopping, the British fashion staples of Next, Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins were among those commonly mentioned. When they talked about food shopping, it was often to bemoan the price of weekly grocery shopping here in Perth compared with that in the United Kingdom where it was regarded that the fiercer competition between supermarket
chains including Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's, to name just three, led to far greater potential to grab a bargain. These observations again highlight my description of the women as middling rather than elite migrants but it does also highlight what is probably an unavoidable but unhelpful connection between the notions of ‘middling’ and middle class. I am thinking of middling in the sense of average but middle class often conjures notions of above average.

By referring to the advertising in the *Whingeing Pom* I am not suggesting that all British migrants to Australia are slavish consumers or that they follow a certain pattern of purchases. As Jackson and Thrift (1995, p.227) point out:

> [O]ur identities are affirmed and contested through specific acts of consumption: we define ourselves by what we buy and by the meaning that we give to the goods and services that we acquire. But there is no essential, one-to-one, correspondence between particular commodities and particular identities: the same commodity can have radically different meanings for different individuals and for the same individual over time.

It must be noted however, that the goods advertised fall firmly in line with the narratives of the migrants I engaged with as part of the study.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter on the *Whingeing Pom* was to highlight the argument that consumption is a productive lens through which to analyse this migration. Due to particularities regarding ethnicity and class among this migrant group I am arguing additional theoretical, conceptual and
analytical analysis to that used for labour and forced migrants is necessary. For the British migrants in this study, migration to Australia offers a new avenue of consumption opportunities that were not available to them in the United Kingdom. The respondents sought to purchase a better life[style] but simultaneously many utilised consumption as a means to maintain a sense of self demonstrated in their occasional hankerings for familiar products be that washing powder or a particular television programme. For others the nostalgia for British products was an affront to the lifestyle they sought; one considered more cosmopolitan than PG Tips tea bags and the famous Marks and Spencer’s underwear. That these respondents are in a position to make such choices is of course of importance to the thesis as it speaks to their inclusion in the Australian context. At the same time the feelings such as embarrassment about shopping in a British shop also demonstrate the ethnic invisibility or lack of ethnicity I have talked about, there is something almost laughable about a British shop which would not apply in the same manner were it Italian, Greek or Chinese for example as these ethnicities are continually exoticised.

The next chapter focuses on the discussion of home and housing in the migrant testimonies, a suitable follow-up to a chapter on shopping given that the home is generally one of the most significant purchases a person shall make in their lives. Concerns and questions surrounding homes and housing featured heavily in the migrant testimonies, on the WBDFs, and, not least of all in the Whingeing Pom, hence the allocation of a full chapter to this discussion.
CHAPTER FIVE - ‘An Englishman’s home is his castle’

The focus in this thesis on migrants from all the constituent nations in the United Kingdom means that I have taken a very liberal dose of artistic licence in choosing this chapter title. However, I believe that a shared class culture across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, evident in the aspirations associated with this middling British migration to Australia, mean that there are potentially more similarities than differences in our attitudes to home ownership. The expression ‘An Englishman’s home is his castle’ is one that would be familiar to all as, I argue, are the sentiments attached to it. What I want to convey here in the use of this title is the importance I place on a discussion of the home to this thesis. Firstly in the home’s standing as one of, if not the most, significant purchases any of us are likely to make in our lifetimes (Richards 1990), and secondly in its strong association with our identities, increasingly the home stands as a status symbol (Kilkey, Perrons & Plomien 2013).

This chapter then begins with a discussion of the importance of the home in the British imaginary. It continues by discussing the locations chosen by those in my study when they arrive in Perth. It pays particular attention to the way this decision is determined in large part by existing social networks, no matter how tenuous the link. This is not a ‘village-out’ chain migration in the traditional sense but as I will reveal it would be remiss not to highlight the connections that exist. I tie this observation to my earlier assertion that this migration, as a component of a dream of self-realisation, is based upon a relational notion of the self rather than an overtly individualised one. The next section of the chapter focuses on the home itself as it features as part of the Australian dream for both Australian’s themselves and the new arrivals. Finally, I discuss the backyard swimming pool and its iconic status, utilising this to reinforce what I believe are the
connections between the migrancy projects of my respondents and consumption.

**The home and identity**

Kate Fox writes that ‘an Englishman’s home is much more than just his castle; it is also his identity, his main status indicator and his prime obsession. And the same goes for English women’ (2004, p.113). Fox highlights the attachment to bricks and mortar by trying to explain the English dislike for real estate agents noting that it is easy if:

> you replace the word “house” with “identity”, “personality”, “social status” or “taste”. Everything that estate agents do involves passing judgement not on some neutral piece of property but on us, on our lifestyle, our social position, our character, our private self. And sticking a price tag on it (Fox 2004, p.124).

In discussions with Swedish retirement migrants about their homes in Spain and the ‘residential strategies’ they employ, it has been noted that:

> Studies of migration and transnationalism in particular tend to emphasize a deterritorialized understanding of home, which refers to belonging, identity, community, and memories rather than to place (Al-Ali & Koser 2002). Yet, place matters. The psychological and symbolic meanings of home are often strongly connected to physical settings (Gustafson 2007, p.70).

Early in the thesis I noted that for British migrants perceptions of an expanded array of consumption opportunities in Australia, over those available to them in the UK, are fundamental drivers of their migration decision making. As I have hopefully made clear, this migration is not
about wanton spending for the sake of it but rather about an opportunity for these migrants to achieve a lifestyle commensurate with their aspirations, which can be viewed as products of, and also produced by, the migrant’s habitus. It is clear from the migrant narratives that a significant component of such a lifestyle is the home, the bricks and mortar as Fox calls it above, something which represents much more than shelter or a roof over one’s head.

The impact of family finances on the settlement experience should not be underestimated even in this group of what I have called ‘middling’ migrants’. One couple I met at a picnic organised through one of the online forums were in a house share arrangement with other recent migrants with whom they had a tenuous link prior to migration. Both couples were building their own homes here in Western Australia and the house share arrangement was purely to save money. Heather is one nurse who has noted a significant drop in their family’s disposable income since moving from the United Kingdom in 2006. Her husband ran his own business in the United Kingdom and by her own admission their children:

Probably, were spoilt little brats to be honest because anything that my children wanted from the states if [husband] wasn’t over there buying we’d get it shipped. For them it has been a bit of a hard hit because I’ve had to turn around and say no I can’t and I’ve never had to say to them I can’t afford that. But I have to say to them I can’t afford that, you want that but you can’t have it.

At the same time she acknowledged that they have a lovely house here, that they had recently purchased and indeed just moved into the weekend preceding the interview. She mentioned how important she felt it was that they were now in their own home rather than a rental property and looked
forward to it hopefully becoming a hub for their own friends and their children’s friends as their home in the United Kingdom had been. Despite feeling that they had had to make sacrifices financially another decision she had made was to drop her hours noting:

Now that we are in our own home that I am thinking that I am going to drop my hours. You know you are a long time dead. I don’t need to work full time, although I have to say I have enjoyed it, it has been a bit of a shock as well going from you know working twenty odd hours to working forty five plus a week I have enjoyed it but I thought even if I just dropped one day it could make a huge difference just by you know being able to take the boys to school or going to meet the girls that do the walk on a Friday. Or just so that I can be a bit more flexible or accessible rather than just going oh no sorry I can’t do that or oh no sorry I can’t do that either.

So for this family the lifestyle changes have involved a reassessment of their spending patterns and their working patterns. Elsewhere in the interview she comments on the fact that the boys are closer to their father as he is away less than he was in the United Kingdom. This is also connected to her comment that she wants to reduce her hours in order to be ‘a bit more flexible or accessible’ socially. This is particularly important in light of the idea expressed by Douglas and Isherwood (1978) that consumption is about availability in society, arguing that the better off are more available. This is applicable even if we consider the quote a little earlier in the section when Elizabeth (RMHN) tells us that she would rather have lived closer to the city but in the time it took to process their visas and then sell their house in the United Kingdom that desire had become financially untenable. This reflects the observation, raised already in Chapter Two, that ‘[o]ne has the Paris that goes with ones economic capital
and also with one's cultural and social capital’ (Bourdieu 1983, p.128). As previously noted all of the women I interviewed or their husbands were in a position where they had to work here in Australia. Indeed this is not so different from most of the lifestyle migrants who feature in the broader literature, with the exception of self-funded retirees all are involved in some economic activity.

The quote below refers to the changing financial situation during the time from applying for a visa to having it granted. This was a commonly expressed problem.

Unfortunately, when we got our visa in July 2006 and we put our house on the market in the UK it took nearly a year to sell so we couldn’t come over. And that year, that made the big difference, that is when it all of a sudden went crazy price wise. We came over and validated our visa’s in September 2006 and we were looking at properties then and they were still very much within our price range nearer into the city. I’d have preferred to live sort of like closer in but just couldn’t afford the prices so it’s, rather than stretching ourselves we decided to live a bit further out and given that although I have to travel in, I only go two days a week into the city.

Perth property prices were subject to a huge surge, peaking in 2008. As this respondent states it was common for migrants to have to adjust their ideas about where to live by the time they had arrived in Western Australia. These migrants were significantly impacted by fluctuations in both the foreign exchange market and the housing market. With the benefit of hindsight, Helen (RN), who arrived in 2002, realised how fortunate they were to sell their house so quickly and then buy something here. She expressed appreciation that they were very lucky with the timing and had
they come later might have struggled to sell their house and would not have been able to afford one here in Perth. ‘We tripled our money coming over, so all those factors although, we weren't aware at the time, we were looking back, just very lucky.’

Figure 5 Perth House prices: REIWA, 2013

Location, location, location: suburbia and the North South divide

I have already established that the migrants in my study are somewhat invisible in the Australian context, not least of all due to their admission to the country’s cultural core, facilitated by the shared history of the two countries. The section to follow further seeks to challenge that invisibility by looking more closely at the migrants’ location not just within Australia, but also within Western Australia.

Perth in many ways epitomises suburban sprawl. Within the Perth
metropolitan region, recent British migrants can be found largely clustered around the western coastal corridor in the northern suburbs. ‘[N]ewer suburban districts’ were the preference of post-war British migrants (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.218) and the trend continues today. The main reason for the concentration of British migrants in these particular suburbs is the attraction of the coast. The beach and ocean are two of the enduring symbols of the lifestyle package that makes Australia so attractive to those from the United Kingdom. This speaks to the influence of tourism on the migration decision-making of these migrants and the following quote gives some sense of this; it was a far from isolated example:

We used to go to Spain a lot on holiday. One particular year we went for 3 weeks and you always get those holiday blues going back home, and em we just kind of well, [thought] this has been great eating out every night you know at the apartment, the kids jumping in the pool and everything. And I think on that holiday we decided to take stock of our lives, we thought well we are in our 30s now, are we going to stay where we are for the rest of our lives or are we going to try to do something a bit different? And I had a friend who at that point had been here 7 years and another one who was in the process of moving over here and then so we started to think, well should we think about emigrating and if so where would we go? And well we needed to go somewhere where they spoke English basically, so Spain was kind of, although it is a lot closer, was out of the picture. So we went back home and we were craving that kind of lifestyle of eating out on the veranda [etcetera]. (Angela RN)

Andall’s (1999) article on migration shopping, mentioned earlier, is concerned with destination and this is something that is also apparent to a
degree in my research. As already noted, the Internet is a well-utilised resource in planning the purchase, threads are started regularly with titles such as ‘Help choosing a Perth suburb’, Family friendly suburbs SOR?’, ‘Where in Perth?’. Many of the women chose their suburb because of an already established connection there, no matter how tenuous. A regular feature in the *Whingeing Pom* is ‘Norf or Sarf’, North or South written in the Cockney or Estuary English style where ‘th’ is pronounced ‘f’. The by-line to this feature states that ‘There’s a strange divide that exists in Perth between North and South. Once settled, Perthites often seem more likely to move to another country than to the other side of the river.’ The article offers a comparison between suburbs in each; for example, Willeton a suburb south of the river is compared with Innaloo, North of the river. The comparisons, in keeping with the overall tone of the magazine, are often fairly tongue in cheek but nonetheless acknowledge what seems to be a fairly important consideration, that is whether one should choose to live North or South of the river. Few of my interviews happened South of the river and while Rockingham, a beachside suburb around 40kms south of Perth, has always been recognised as a British enclave, those I interviewed displayed definite tendencies for the Northern coastal corridor living as close to the CBD and the ocean as finances would allow. Of course that is almost certainly influenced by my own bias, as I do live, in Perth parlance, ‘North of the River’.

This is important in that while British migration to Australia does not follow such a definite pattern of chain migration as has been identified in other migration studies it was not unusual for participants to note that they had been introduced to an area by friends or family or in some cases more tenuous links. Kate (RN) for example didn't know anyone in Western Australia on arrival but like many of the women I interviewed had been given a contact through mutual friends in the United Kingdom. The
contact, who lived in the Southern suburb of Baldivis, picked them up from the airport and put them up for a couple of weeks when they arrived. This was the woman whose research had included the virtual shop in the Australian supermarket mentioned earlier and she noted that she had assumed from her internet based research prior to moving that they would most likely settle in the Northern suburbs but the initial connection to Baldivis led them to purchase a house and land package there.

Helen (RN) had a very tenuous link to the suburb she settled in. A Scoutmaster who taught one of her sons in England had done a teacher exchange in Perth and they met with the woman he exchanged with who also taught French in the high school her boys now attend. Their move to Sorrento was then based mainly on that one contact, who had suggested to them that the school was very good. Coincidentally, the suburb also fell within a triangle mapped out for her by the clinical nurse specialist she was working under. The advice given was that the family should limit their search to this particular area because without local knowledge it was argued it would be difficult to judge the suburbs. It was suggested to them that to outsiders driving around Perth all the suburbs would all look pretty good, but insider knowledge could make sure they avoided the worst, hence the designated triangular search area.

Another respondent said that North of the river had always been her choice but the changing property market in both the United Kingdom and Perth at the time conspired against them and caused them to settle somewhat further north than they had initially.

Gillian - And was North of the River always?

Elizabeth - Yeah because our friends live in Mindarie so we were we never I think we had a drive down and looked at it but it was a bad day a rainy day so it just didn’t look as nice and I don’t
know, clean and sparkly looking as North of the River. But I mean, now I’ve lived over here for a while you sort of realise there is a lot to be said for more established suburbs as well.

Again having friends in Mindarie, a beachside suburb around 30 kilometers north of Perth CBD, they focused their search in the newer suburbs around that area, which have blossomed over the last decade or so, even though the respondent qualifies her statement by acknowledging that having now experienced life in Perth that she can also see the attraction of the older suburbs too. Typical of urban sprawl many of the new suburbs in Perth are lacking the infrastructure commonly found in the more established suburbs such as a café strip and speciality shops. In many cases distance from the city and a lack of public transport, particularly outside commuting hours, can further disadvantage the residents.

Vivienne (Midwife) chose to move South of the river as she wanted to be close to work but still referred to the North South divide in reference to socialising here in Western Australia:

Vivienne - there was… I can’t quite remember now, but there was some migration network. There was a newspaper that came through the letterbox. I can’t remember now how we got it. Maybe we subscribed or something but … it gave you contact details of folk who were willing to be sort of ‘meeters and greeters’. So we hooked up with a couple who moved over a few months before us. We just met them and they sort of said, ‘oh this is how we managed to get a mortgage’, and you know, just an empathy kind of conversation. This is our experience; it is sort of similar to yours. There was another couple we went for dinner with who had children and we didn’t keep…. I thought we might
have kept in touch with them because she was a nurse and our experiences were very similar, but that sort of, I think because of the distance, they were right up in Ocean Reef and you can’t cross the river can you! (laughs)

Gillian - No it becomes very apparent as soon as you get to WA doesn’t it.

Vivienne - You do need a passport, so they weren’t inclined to come down here and we sort of saw it as a cut lunch and a water bag away and you know you’ve both got kids and that just kind of fizzled out really, no we didn’t know anybody we really came here sight unseen we just thought that looks like a nice climate we’ll go.

Vivienne, Kate and Joyce all commented upon my arrival at their respective homes that I wouldn’t be spending much time in their particular areas, as none were recognised as particularly ‘British’. Joyce who based her choice of suburb on a particular high school noted that although she was north of the river, it was not one of the suburbs more commonly selected by migrants from the United Kingdom.

Gillian - So where did you end up living?

Joyce - Em Morley, […] Well we knew we were coming north of the river because my daughter is really good at drama and so we scouted round the schools and we needed to be living in the catchment area for Mount Lawley. So we knew where we were going to live more or less clustered around that school, I might have gone further up north actually if it hadn’t been for that, you know might have gone nearer the beach but we were quite happy in Morley and the school was just down the road so it was
This topic of location in Perth is hotly debated on the WBDF’s and was often mentioned by participants in my study. As noted earlier Paula, the nursing agency employee I interviewed said she actively discouraged migrants from working at Armadale hospital. Armadale is an inland suburb approximately 35 kilometers south-east of Perth city centre and in Paula’s experience of the nurses whose migration she assisted it was thought to be more difficult to settle there when compared with the beachside suburbs. Paula’s advice was to head for the Western Coastal Corridor that is anywhere from Mandurah to the beachside suburbs around Joondalup. Veronica (RN) noted that her and her husband ‘bought in [one such suburb] within six months’ but what is perhaps more telling is her following sentence where she noted that people had warned them it was an ‘English’ area but they liked the feel of it and are quite happy with their choice.

One woman noted on the subject of migration that she previously felt aggrieved about migrants, for example Pakistani’s and Polish, ‘taking over a street or a suburb’ in the United Kingdom, but feels more sympathy now she has experienced migration herself. The fact that she was sitting in a café in Australia at a table of around twenty other British women as she told me this, had not escaped her. Interestingly, her family also live abroad, indeed it is not uncommon among the women I have interviewed for at least some of their family members to live in Spain and in one case France.

So while there are visible signs in the individual suburbs of the presence of British migrants such as the British shops in Floreat and Joondalup, among other speciality retailers catering to this particular audience, these locations can be argued to contribute to their invisibility, at least in terms of public policy and academic discourse. This geographical context is important. Daniel Miller in his monograph Stuff refers to 'the middle class of suburbia,
a class so universally derided by theorists that no one had bothered to theorize them properly' (Miller 2010, p.84).

**Little Britain**

Despite the attraction of friends with similar backgrounds, which I have just discussed in relation to the preferred location of British migrants, there also seems to be a point at which the similarities become less attractive. This is particularly the case in relation to notions of Britishness and the idea of forming ‘Little Britain’s’ here in Perth’s suburbs. Almost all of those who I have talked to assert that they wish to ‘mix with the locals’ even though as I have already pointed out that this often does not occur to any great degree. So while Jane admits that the majority of her friends are fellow British migrants, the following exchange also demonstrates her aversion to the establishment of British dominated areas and her concern that the monocultural environment she believes exists in Western Australia is detrimental to her son’s upbringing. I had asked what made Jane and her husband choose Fremantle over other suburbs in the Perth metropolitan area and she told me that they had been there while initially living in Australia on a working holiday visa and wanted to return there. The conversation continued as below and offers a different angle to the discussion about the north south divide in Perth’s suburbs.

Gillian - And had you looked North of the River at all or?

Jane - Em, we’d been up there for like, there are some friends of friends that live in Quinns Rocks and I think we maybe considered it for about three seconds but then just drove round Mindarie and went ‘it is just a bloody housing estate’. And I think what was really important for us, and maybe it is because we are both kind of urbanites, that we like
to be able to walk to the shop and to the pub. And up there you can’t, you know you get in your car, you know you get in your air-conditioned car you drive to your air-conditioned office you come back you watch your home theatre and that is just a load of bollocks to me that’s not why you live in Australia, and yeh it just wasn’t… That British enclave it really does not appeal to me at all and from friends that do go up there some of the people they meet just seem really bigoted and are kind of trying to establish there own expats community up there. Which seems, that sounds like the pot calling the kettle black because I really only have expats as friends em but that isn’t an active choice. Whereas it does appear to be up there, you know they all want the house off plan that has all the things that you can’t get back home and then they just seem to yeah they go for a BBQ or they just stay in there little WASP community so em yeah I much prefer to be able to walk to the pub. And em I think the thing that kind of really attracts us about Freo is that it does have its fair share of weird and wonderful people around and it is a bit more interesting, em it is not so sterile… That is one of the things that bothers me about living in Australia which is so monocultural, that he’ll [talking about son] kind of not really grow up knowing how to interact and respect other cultures. That is something that concerns me but I think it seems to be getting better, certainly there seems to be a little bit of a browning up of Perth, not everybody you see is white anymore, em things seem to be changing slightly but that was a big concern. It just really struck home to us we were on a train when he [son] was just starting to speak and unfortunately it came out clear as a bell
when one of the transit guards got on he said ‘look Mummy that man is made of chocolate’… a completely innocent comment nothing meant by it other that the fact that he had genuinely never seen a black man before and it was kind of a stark realisation because you just think… in the UK that wouldn’t happen. By the time they were speaking they’d have come across people from so many different cultures that they wouldn’t see it odd to point it out so that was a bit of a concern but I think we are doing all right now we are sort of trying to find places to expose him to other cultures so you know he goes to an international day care we try to go to when there is Divali festivals on and things we try to go to those just to say look there is something rather than what you and I are. But that is just something that drives me really. One of the jobs that I had done here, I was seconded to a migrant health job, which was refugees, it wasn’t British migrants, and mainly humanitarian refugees and just seeing some of the bigotry that they came across from health service workers as well, it was appalling, em that really kind of hammered that home that it was important to incorporate that into his sort of social, em everyday social life.

The fact that it was so blatant really bothered me, I was like if you have racist ideals just keep them to yourself. That was such a change from the UK you know, yes there is racists all over the UK but it is rare to hear it in everyday conversation and certainly at work, you just wouldn’t, you’d be sacked straight away. But yeah to hear it so openly and condoned pretty much by the seniors as well yeah, it’s horrific. It is quite interesting isn’t it about saying Sorry to
the stolen generation, how that public opinion shift has taken place from the first time we were out there was very much the ‘why should we say sorry?’ Eh because you stole peoples children, to now the general consensus is that yes you should say sorry and that is quite a, I think that is quite a big shift, in a relatively short time.

But it does concern me about Perth but I do think it is getting slightly better, I am hoping, but also because of the friends we have got mainly because they are from the UK they have a similar attitude. Some of the South Africans struggle a little bit but again they kind of say from their point of view that is how we grew up you know with the divide and that we know that it is wrong but that it takes a long time to change your whole being.

So for Jane and her husband the idea of having lots of fellow migrants in close proximity was fine up to a point but her experience both in the UK and here in Western Australia had convinced her that she did not want to live and bring her son up in a British enclave. This seems to be reflective of a cosmopolitan conception of migration, as something that enhances one’s cultural capital.

**Dream home**

When I asked Joyce (Midwife) what she took the most pleasure from in her decision to move to Western Australia she said emphatically ‘the weather’, and continued:

yeah it is the weather and the blue sky and I mean how many houses do you know in England that’ve got an outdoor swimming pool? You know it is a millionaire’s job, and a lot of Australians don’t
realise… in England you don’t have a pool unless you are very rich.

It then emerged in our conversation that Joyce and her family had initially planned to spend two years in Australia before returning to the United Kingdom but enjoying it as much as they did decided to stay and purchased their own home. This was something Joyce found herself unable to tell her parents even when they came out to visit; they believed initially that it was a rental property. She eventually asked her husband to tell her parents, noting that she had tried to but could not get the words out. Despite her concerns she found her parents supportive and understanding and her reasoning for this was that they were able to fully appreciate the difference in living standards for this family between the United Kingdom and Western Australia, in her own words:

Joyce - They knew what I’d lived in before I mean how the hell could you buy a house like this in England, well you couldn’t, no way.

Gillian - There’s a vast difference between the standards?

Joyce - A nurse doesn’t have a house like what I’ve got, come on, we lived in a block of four [In England] and the four houses would take up about half my plot. It is a different world, mind you we got in just in time but…it is a different world. When you think what you’d pay for my house [referring to the Australian property] in England this is beyond even the wildest dreams. You couldn’t have a property like that you know, I’ve got fruit trees and everything. My Mum can’t get over my grapefruit tree and my lemon tree, if you want a lemon go out in the garden and get one. [In England] You’d be running out in your umbrella or what have you, no
Kim (RN) Similarly noted of her husband that ‘he’s only ever owned a house in Australia. This is his first house and it is only a small four by two. But it is ours; we’ve got a pool. You couldn’t do that in England’. Of course it is worth remembering as mentioned earlier that the significant increase in the Perth house prices mean this lifestyle is less attainable for more recent migrants.

While the majority of the women I interviewed had a common career in nursing, this should not be seen as an indication that their financial situations were the same. I did not ask about their financial situations specifically, but certain details emerged in our discussions, such as that above, regarding the affordability of housing, and these should be treated as pertaining to the individual only.

A 2009 summary of housing market trends published by Australia’s Commonwealth Bank\(^{21}\) quotes average home sizes from around the world and suggests that the average Australian home is 214.6m\(^2\) while the average home in the United Kingdom is on 76m\(^2\). This is a commonly recognised fact and is often used as one of the points of comparison as evidenced in the exchange below:

**Gillian** - I think, also, people would think 4x2 but a 4x2 in Australia is quite different to a 4x2 in the UK in terms of space

**Brenda** - You know you can’t really compare, people will think oh well but I had a three bed roomed house in the UK but the chances are here you’ll have three bedrooms here plus

Accessed 29/06/2014
Gillian - Everything else

Brenda - Games room, pool in the back yard. My husband’s brother made me laugh ‘cause I picked them up from the airport because my husband was still working away at the time and he walked through the door and he walked up the hallway and he said “which part is yours” and I went all of it, you could fit his house in just our lounge room

Gillian - I remember the first time I went back thinking I didn’t consider these houses necessarily small before I left but after being here and everybody is so used to so much space…

Brenda - I mean ours was just a semi, a three-bedroom semi, that we put an extension on that was just a long living room then it went off to the side but it was quite a decent area, but I mean it is not a patch on this.

Incidentally, one nurse who was particularly unhappy here in Australia went to great pains to explain to me that her house here in Australia was not significantly bigger or better than what she was used to in the United Kingdom. Although I did not see where she lived in the United Kingdom, the house I visited in Perth’s northern suburbs was a considerable size, very modern and stylishly decorated. It appeared that this declaration was part of an attempt to justify returning to the United Kingdom, particularly as return was in opposition to the wishes of her husband and sons who were quite settled here in Perth.

Whingeing Pom dream home issue

As with the general Australian population, many migrants, decide that the
best way to get what they want in a home, again an expression of identity, is to build rather than purchase an established home. The February March 2009 issue of the *Whingeing Pom* displays the headline ‘Bruce the Builder: Constructing Your Dream Home Aussie Style’ alongside an image of a sandcastle topped with an Australian flag built beside the ubiquitous Australian Colorbond™ fence. Inside the magazine the article begins:

Remember that time in primary school when Mrs Butcher, or whoever, asked you to imagine your perfect home? Lots of excited discussion followed. Talk of mansions […] whole rooms put aside for massive televisions, a swimming pool […] in the backyard, spiral staircases leading up to attic retreats… Well [the article continues] clever old Mrs Butcher was preparing the way for any of her tiny charges who would one day wave goodbye to windswept Wymondham and head off around the world to set up their stall in Australia.

The article goes on to discuss the experiences of an immigrant couple recently arrived from the United Kingdom who chose to build their ‘dream home’ in Western Australia. The couple are quoted in the article as saying’ We hadn’t planned it [building] …[w]e were looking at long-term rental or buying a house…there were some nice places around but nothing that seemed perfect’. Regarding the house they built, the author notes that what they’d ordered ticked all the boxes – a theatre room, study, five bedrooms, two with en-suite, an extra-wide garage to fit both their cars…a computer nook and, of course, a pool out the back…The property is basically designed around their family, even down to the second ensuite being on the first floor [I think the author means ground floor here] negating the need for aged relatives to negotiate the
stairs when they come and stay.

This provision for family who do not even live in Australia is an important part of the requirements of British migrants. As noted earlier, the distance involved means that people come and stay for lengthy periods. Also, and importantly, I think the desire to have a space for relatives is an important statement for many migrants who want to maintain a connection to family and indeed close friends still in the United Kingdom. The desire to have room for relatives to stay was often expressed when talk turned to house purchases. This of course draws attention to the transnational aspects of these migrant lives and more specifically to the notion of transnational care giving (Baldassar, Ballock & Wilding 2006; Baldassar 2007; Baldassar & Merla 2014), that has clearly influenced the consumption decisions of the couple featured in the *Whingeing Pom* article.

The transnational aspects of the move are further visible in advertising in the February/March 2010 edition, which contains a double page advert for Summit Homes. Accompanying a photo of a young man and woman is the following text:

Many builders showed them ‘A Spacious Home’
But we [Summit Homes] knew they wanted ‘A We Can’t Wait To Send Back Photos Of Us in Our Huge Kitchen And Out On Our Sunny Alfresco Area Home’. At Summit Homes we spend less time talking about ourselves and more time listening to what our customers say, so we get to know exactly what is important to them. That’s how we’ve helped so many British people into their perfect Summit home, with all the wide-open space to enjoy that great West Australian freedom. You’d be surprised how affordable it can be. Contact us soon for a chat. We’d love to hear what you have to say.
The text in this advert is significant the way the statements ‘Huge Kitchen’ and ‘Sunny Alfresco Area’ sum up the type of desires frequently expressed by British migrants in relation to their expected lifestyle in Australia and also, importantly, recognises the importance of promoting the migration as a success to those left behind in mentioning the sending back of pictures.

A further full page advert featured in the magazine within the article discussed above takes the form of a checklist, in fact its design is such that you need to read more closely to see that it is actually an advert for a Perth building company ‘The Western Australian Housing Essential Features Checklist’ sounds rather official or at least suggests that it is informative rather than advertorial. However, it transpires to be a list of what Jaxon Builders believes are ‘a few of the main features you’ll need to take full advantage of the great local climate and lifestyle.’

The home is then a significant aspect in the migration story of these middling migrants. While I have noted that most articulate the option to return to the United Kingdom if things do not work out as planned or fail to meet their expectations there is still an emphasis on the home as a significant part of settling into Australia.

**Gillian** - So would you say, it is not a financial decision really to come to Australian

**Patricia** - No it wasn’t and in a lot of respects em I am better off but financially I’ve got a bigger mortgage than I had in the UK. That is even with a fifty percent deposit because I had quite a lot of equity but a very small mortgage in the UK and a modest house. And you know when I got here and I was looking on the website, the realty thing, [even] before I got to Perth thinking oh my goodness these house prices are just shooting up. I was really concerned that I wouldn’t even get into the property
market so when I was looking I kind of concentrated in the area where I had friends living Mindarie and Kinross but I knew I wanted a small property because even if the children come there are only going to be three of us I don’t want a whacking great big place. You know being on your own you want something that is easily maintained and you don’t have to worry too much about a big garden or lots of decorating and up keeping so this is ideal for me.

Patricia came to Perth on her own leaving her two children behind to finish school and an apprenticeship. Due to her age Patricia was approaching the deadline (45 years of age) for applying for an independent skilled visa. Having discussed the situation with the children’s father, from whom she had an amicable separation, they agreed that the potential for the children to also gain entry through her skilled migrant visa was something that they should not miss out on, even if it meant an extended separation. While she states above that the house was small and in comparison to many I was visited it was, still had to my mind spacious. It had a generous open plan living kitchen and dining area, three bedrooms and two bathrooms required on the premise that the children would definitely be coming to visit again, if not to live with her. They had arrived with their mother to validate their visas, had a holiday here and then returned to England to live with their father.

Hammerton and Thomson (2005, p.223) talk of a ‘nesting narrative’. They also discuss the various hardships and sacrifices which migrants had to make to achieve the homes of their dreams. Carol stated to me ‘I didn’t really come to Australia for my career I came to Australia because I wanted a change of lifestyle, something better for my children’. Yet her revelation of less than satisfactory childcare arrangements highlighted the different ways in which this can be interpreted and is significant in light of
Hammerton and Thomsons’ observation that ‘[t]he quest for improved living conditions and good financial prospects was frequently reduced to the pursuit of “a good place to bring up our children” and to assure their futures’ (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.218). During our interview, Carol (Midwife) revealed to me that she occasionally worked night shifts leaving her sons aged, 13 and 8 at the time, at home alone.

Carol - Well my husband is an electrician, he’s actually an auto electrician and he’s come out here and he’s done really really well compared with Scotland where his wages as you can imagine, were dire. He started, he got an opportunity to go up North and that’s without a trade assessment. They just took him on with what he had, as he said one vehicle is the same as the other whether it’s, it’s just big or small, so six months after we arrived he got to do that. So then I had to make the decision of what to do with the children because we’ve got no family here and not until you meet my eldest son will you realise, he was 13 then, but he’s totally different from the one who’s coming up for thirteen now and I thought well I am five minutes away at [hospital name omitted] so I did have to leave them at night and that was such a heartbreaking decision. I know my husband was home a lot but just those nights that I was working and he was away and I’m thinking oh my god, I had really good neighbours but you, and that is the sort of decisions you have to make when you are earning and you can’t afford you know and I couldn’t work days because I wasn’t there for them in the morning and in the afternoon. I couldn’t get set hours and I couldn’t get school hours…[W]ith night duty at least I was back to take them to school then I was sleeping then I was up in the afternoon to
get them from school and to give them their tea and get them off to bed before I went to work but those are the sort of decisions you have to make which is really hard.

Gillian - And at that point was it [work] still a stipulation on your visa?

Carol - I had no stipulations on my visa but we needed my wages as a permanent wage to be able to afford to, we built our house here. We were building at the time so that was, yeah it is very hard but it worked out really well and it wasn’t I mean I had to make sure that he was quite happy to do that. But I suppose not until you meet my son would you realize, because he’s been the same he’s never really changed he always looked older and acted older and is extremely mature I mean my husband went away to work and we built our house and moved in, and when things went wrong in the house my son would fix them. He’s a very mature lad but it was hard.

Carol’s justification for leaving the children gives some indication of the importance of the house in the migrant story. As the interview was carried out in a café I did not see the house but do know that it is a 4 x 2 with a pool and she did make reference later in the interview to the spa parties that she held having had a new spa installed. This can again be related back to the various observations recorded earlier in the thesis regarding the increasing capacity to need rather than to want, to heightened expectations and of course to the social necessity to consume in order to fit into particular lifestyle situations. The importance of the concept of social reproduction, mentioned earlier, on these migrant stories, relating as they do to homemaking and the notion of a better life for the children should also be noted.
Do It Yourself: DIY using cultural materials

In discussing DIY in England, which she calls ‘the real national obsession’; Fox notes that ‘[t]he most common motive for DIYing…was that of “putting a personal stamp on the place”’ (2004, p.113). These observations by Fox regarding the idea of ‘putting one’s stamp’ on a property were reflected in conversations throughout my research. While DIY itself wasn’t so much the focus when I asked in interviews if there were particular events, watershed moments, in the settling in process the response was commonly along the lines of ‘moving from a rental property into our own home’, the assertion being that this allowed the freedom to ‘put one’s stamp on it’. In this context, ‘own home’ may not necessarily mean one that they own outright but it does refer to one which they are in the process of purchasing and importantly it is one that, assuming you are meeting your regular mortgage repayments, you have control over. You are free, unlike in a rental property, to choose to paint the walls and whether you wish to put up pictures and where those pictures should go. Similarly for the migrants in Hammerton and Thomson’s study ‘Rental is often remembered as an interim measure before realization of the ultimate dream of home ownership’ (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.219). This was certainly the case for the nurse who informed me that:

We lived in rented accommodation, two lots of rented, 6 months on The Cut looking out to sea and then 6 months just further in, in Port Bouvard and then we decided to look for a house because I wasn’t settling very well and I thought if I had my own home I’d settle better.

One significant difference between those in my study and that of Hammerton and Thomson’s is that for the post-war working class migrants renting was still a fairly entrenched idea, according to the Office of
National Statistics (2013) 77% of household in England and Wales were renting in 1918, with 23% either purchased or being purchased, this reached parity in 1971. By 2001 there had been almost a complete reversal of the situation with 69% of homes owned or being purchased compared with 31% rented. Most of those I interviewed had been homeowners, or at least in the process of purchasing prior to their migration. This of course has its own problems as many have experienced problems selling properties in the United Kingdom depending on the particular timing of their migration.

The idea of putting ‘one’s stamp’ on a property has been explored by Daniel Miller who argues that ‘householders must enter into creative strategies of consumption to appropriate that which they have not themselves created’ and further argues that:

\[ \text{The failure of most current social theories to have regard to consumption activities such as home decoration has its roots in the more general denigration of consumption and other such 'women's work' (Miller 1988, p.370).} \]

We can see in this statement a central theme, running through Miller’s work over the last few decades, which is critical of the lack of attention paid to consumption, something he believes is rendered invisible due to its quotidian nature and, as he says, the gendered assumptions associated with such. As the quotation above points out Miller believes that it is important to acknowledge the appropriation, that for many migrants, and certainly those in my study comes in the form of buying their own home and having their own belongings around them.

It is important to note that moving from a rental property was also the point where many respondents received their personal effects from storage where they had been since shipping from the United Kingdom. I remember quite
clearly and fondly the day our container load arrived and I unpacked it in our new home. News of containers arriving from the United Kingdom with personal effects such as furniture etcetera was greeted with great enthusiasm at the lunches I attended. One woman told me that she dismissed the removalists stating ‘I was so excited I unpacked it myself, how sad is that?’ Having ones own ‘things’ around was therefore viewed as an important step in the migration process. I have a note in my field notes stating the following:

I was talking to Brenda today, she feels like she is settling in, her container has arrived and she is sorting out the house before her mother arrives on the 9th of December.

The occasion of the container arrival was also used to explain an absence at the lunchtime meets, ‘oh [insert name] won’t be here today her container is arriving.’ It was common for people to express that they wanted to have their house in order, so to speak, before relatives came to visit. One practical reason for this is the fact that when people visit Australia from the United Kingdom it is seldom for less than a month, something I shall discuss further in the next chapter. Another reason is grounded in the sense that you want the move to be seen as successful. Baldassar (2001) has discussed this in relation to Italians returning to Italy after periods of migrancy whether in Australia or elsewhere, it is common to want to justify the move for a variety of reasons that may include financial reasons and feelings of guilt at leaving in the first instance.

It is interesting that while the expression ‘container’ holds a lot of promise few see the actual container; possessions are generally emptied from the container at the docks, under the coordination of shipping agents, and the contents transported by removal lorry to the owners home. As a little aside
and to further highlight the meaning that the ‘container’ has, I have included the following quote from Amanda, an unhappy midwife who saw it not as exciting and a symbol of settling in but rather as a symbol of her escape back to the United Kingdom:

You know I’ve got this little shoe fetish, you know I love shoes I can’t walk past a shoe shop without looking in and trying on about half a dozen pairs and anyway a few months ago Jim [husband] had said to me did you buy anything when you were at the shops? And I said no. And he said what, not even shoes? And I said no I am saving my money. And he said what are you saving your money for? And I said the container to take our stuff home.

This couple had very differing ideas on where their future lay. Having persuaded Jim to give Australia ‘a go’ Amanda had found it very hard to settle and was desperate to return. Jim on the other hand, despite his initial reluctance, was enjoying life in Perth very much, and as such had no desire whatsoever to spend any money on a container. It is not unusual it seems for the person who is the driving force behind the move to be the one who then struggles to settle; again this may be due to heightened expectations. In Amanda’s case, as I shall discuss further in Chapter Six, her frustrations as a midwife were a significant factor in her unhappiness here in Australia.

What the f**k’s the point of being in Australia and not having a swimming pool?

In addition to the family home, one of the significant markers of a successful migration to Australia is seen to be the backyard swimming pool. One of the nurses I interviewed noted in our discussion that a move abroad had always been something that her husband and her had talked about. They had been together since the age of sixteen, got married and had
children and it seemed at that time that they had other priorities both financial and family based. It was only later in life, at around forty and when their children were a little older that they were in a position to reconsider the move and ultimately to make it. They had also considered both Ireland where her husband had family, and the USA particularly after a holiday in Florida. They moved from a three-bedroom semi in the United Kingdom, that she noted was ‘quite decent but not a patch on this’. This being a four-bedroom two-bathroom house, which also has a pool and a substantial motorboat, parked in the driveway.

It is in this description of what the migrants have come from and what they now have or further aspire to that we can see elements of what (McCracken 1990, p.123) calls the ‘Diderot Effect’ at work. French philosopher Diderot ended up transforming his office in response to the gift of a new dressing gown, that ultimately made everything else look shabby. Likewise we see in the actions of the migrants and also the advertising aimed at them that upon arrival it is often not enough to have sun and sea but one needs a jet-ski or a boat to go with it. Likewise, a swimming pool becomes almost obligatory. As a well-established Perth businessman originally from Yorkshire said emphatically to my husband when we moved into our house here in Perth, which, at the time, did not have a swimming pool. ‘What the ‘fuck’s the point of coming to Australia if you don’t have a swimming pool?’ This has become a bit of an in-joke between my partner and I and many of the fellow Brits who we are acquainted with and have made the move here since we arrived in 1998. It is one of the first questions those remaining in the United Kingdom ask of you and like a boat or jet-ski is almost an established symbol of a successful migration to the point that one friend commented after their swimming pool was installed ‘at least I won’t have to lie to people back home now.’ This was clearly said in jest at the time, but it is recognition of the stereotypes that exist of migrant life for the
British, and I would venture other groups, in Australia. It also says something about the normative values, I have already discussed as influencing consumption elsewhere in the thesis.

One respondent and her family had just had a swimming pool installed in their back yard and were in the process of completing the patio area around it when I conducted our interview. When I asked whether she had had many visitors she replied only her husband’s parents and qualified this statement saying ‘I told everyone not to come out until next year when it’s all done’ in reference to the swimming pool. Aileen (RN) noted the novelty value for her grandchildren back in the United Kingdom and stated that the swimming pool was a must have for the two daughters who moved with her when they were looking at houses:

Yeah it is great talking to them on the phone just now because one has just turned three and the other is 5 in December and she says I can swim Nanny, without armbands. And I said oh and where are you going to swim then? “In your pool.” She thinks it is great that we’ve got a pool in the garden.

It was one of the things when I was looking for a house to buy, the kids said we’ve got to have a swimming pool, we’ve got to have a swimming pool. So we bought the house with the swimming pool. They don’t want to keep it clean they hardly ever use it, it costs a bomb I am thinking oh… but when the summer comes and Helen’s mates turn up yeah they enjoy it then, but it’s just sporadic use, you’d have thought they’d be in it every day but they weren’t.

Interestingly then these migrants have discovered as have many Australians that a swimming pool also comes with responsibilities and costs, something
not always considered in its idealisation. Referring to the swimming pools put in by British homeowners in the Lot, France, Benson notes that they 'were an emblem of the leisure opportunities that these new surroundings offered' (2011a, p.98). For some British migrants in Western Australia it would appear that a focus on the leisure opportunities associated with the migration meant that, as with the example of the swimming pools, the costs of migration were sometimes not fully considered.

Kim whose husband was also a nurse suggested that were the financial situation comparable her husband would most likely prefer to live in England but went on to say:

You do spend a lot of time comparing you know you wouldn’t be able to have a bungalow like this in England and you certainly wouldn’t be able to have a pool two nice cars in the drive holidays good jobs you just wouldn’t have it.

As justification, if one is required, for the purchase of the swimming pool, the boat or the jetski, among other things, I can again turn to McCracken who recognises the effect of these normative values when he writes:

Our taste for luxuries, for goods beyond our conventional buying power, is not simply greed, not only self-indulgence. It is also attributable to our need, as groups and individuals, to re-establish access to the ideals we have displaced to distant locations in time or space. This cultural and psychological phenomenon has its own peculiar rationality, It is at once more complicated, more systematic, and more curious that we have previously recognised. (McCracken 1990, p.116)

The advertisments in the *Whingeing Pom* would certainly attest to a level of class pressure in the British migrant community. This similarly appears
in some of the conversation on the web based discussion forums. It can be argued that this consumption led migration then brings this displaced ideal into reality and demands a readjustment. For some this readjustment takes the form of buying a boat and then aspiring to bigger and faster boats for example. Others focus attention on their homes, and in particular ‘making it their own’.

Miller, while on the subject of houses, discusses the work of his PhD student Alison Clarke who 'looked at changes that take place through the refurbishment of rooms within the home.' He writes the following:

What Clarke discovered is that, in practice, the key relationship was to the home itself, rather than to neighbours. People feel more the discrepancy between the actual home they live in and the images they possess of aspirational or ideal homes, derived from various sources (Miller 2010, p.97).

Again, in this statement we can see the connections between consumption and identity, the important role consumption plays in the cultural project of the self.

This should not be seen as an entirely new phenomenon. In their classic study Family and Kinship in East London, Young and Wilmott (1957, p.100) write of migration from Bethnal Green to Greenleigh that 'A migration such as this gathers its own momentum, people who have moved persuading others by their example. They go on to say of visitors to the estate that 'When they visit relatives on the estates or stay with them, the experience widens their horizons and raises their aspirations. They see a new house a new way of life’ (1957, p.124). Of course the timing of this particular migration described by Young and Wilmott does coincide with the beginnings of the period of mass consumption. However, it was not uncommon for those included in my study to report that their desire to
migrate had been inspired by holidays either to Australia or to other tourist destinations, like those in Young and Wilmott’s cohort their experience widened their horizons and raised their expectations.

I know they all socialise in their houses but how do you get past the front door?

Discussing what has been an unexpectedly long time for people to settle into the new estate and establish new friendships, Young and Wilmott (1957, p.153) write that '[o]ne reason that it is taking so long is that the estate is so strung out – the number of people per acre at Greenleigh being only one-fifth what it is in Bethnal Green – and low density does not encourage sociability.' By no means all, but many of my respondents have discussed the built environment in WA as detrimental to the settlement process. I recall one Scottish man I worked with noting that there was no chatting over the back fence to your neighbours here because the fences are so high, similarly, because the trend is here to live at the back of the house, you have no interaction with passers-by. One respondent noted that as people drive into her street their electric garage door is activated by remote control from their car and closes behind them as they enter their house through a connecting door in the garage. She went on to complain ‘you don't see them until they drive out again the next morning; there is no opportunity for interaction’. This participant’s street did in fact seem particularly lifeless, however, many of the streets I have been to did and that it was a new estate with less established gardens than some others I visited appeared to add to its starkness. The one interaction I can remember having when entering or leaving a house during fieldwork, was in Leederville, an inner city suburb, where I was greeted by a woman walking along the street as I left the respondents house and got into my car. It was merely a brief comment about the weather but it was notable in its rarity.
and I commented on it in my post-interview notes. Another respondent noted to me with a degree of frustration ‘I know they all socialise in their houses but how do you get past the front door?’ As I noted in Chapter Three it is the limited opportunities for casual interaction that lead many to turn to activities such as the lunchtime meeting described in Chapter Three as a means of socializing.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the importance of the home, in the physical rather than metaphorical sense, in the migrant narrative. I have explained how it is intimately connected with notions of settlement and of family, the latter in the desire to make ones home available to visiting family and also in regard to the place of the home in the ‘better lifestyle for the children’ narrative. Many of the respondents talked of establishing themselves here in Perth with the ubiquitous 4x2 as part of the efforts to give their children something more than they could offer them in the United Kingdom. On the whole the home was part of a positive discussion about the migration experience despite some stresses, mainly it should be noted financial. In the next chapter I turn to the issue of work, arguably the source of more negative sentiment than anything else in the migrant narratives.
CHAPTER SIX - Labour : A means to an end

Labour can be considered an essential component of this migration, primarily because skilled migration was, for these respondents, the only way into Australia, a country, as I have already noted, with significantly restrictive immigration policies. In the case of nurse migration, increased outsourcing of care from the immediate family and advances in interventional medicine leads to an increased need for skilled and unskilled labour, and therefore to the commodification of care. So arguably the consumption needs of the host nation comes to be serviced as a result of the consumption needs of the migrant workers.

Labour then, becomes the nexus between the two major drivers of this migration flow. Australia seeks skilled labour and the migrants utilise their acquired skills and their various forms of capital to facilitate a lifestyle choice allowing them to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Great Britain did not afford. While the structural underpinning of this migration is Australia’s thirst for skilled labour in certain sectors, this does not appear to be a feature of how the migrants in my study perceive their migration choices or trajectories. As I have already stated the overwhelming awareness I gained from the participants in this study was that lifestyle, rather than labour, was the attraction. Those I talked to did not, on the whole, appear driven by career aspirations; work was described in terms of a means to an end, the end being the attraction of a lifestyle, which I have described in the previous chapters. So while work was a necessity in the pursuit of the desired lifestyle it was also unfortunately, as this chapter shall discuss, a source of much frustration and unmet expectations. Continuing with the themes of this being a consumption led migration, of migration as shopping, I argue that labour, was, among those I talked to, the greatest source of post purchase dissonance, or buyers
remorse, as it is more commonly referred to.

The decision to migrate is one that I have already argued is not taken lightly with the migrants or consumers carefully weighing-up their options. While most expressed the caveat that they could always return to the United Kingdom if things did not work out this is a significantly costly exercise both financially and often emotionally. This particular migrant group are in a situation where there are no grave circumstances forcing their migration, life in Australia is in many ways similar to that in the United Kingdom something I have argued heightens expectations of Australia as a destination. It also means that there is a higher perceived risk, it sometimes feels like there is a lot to give up. While the move to Australia is on the whole reported as a positive experience, work, as I shall elaborate upon further in both this and the following chapter, is an area of contention and one that for some is enough to cause them to question the overall decision. In combination these factors suggest that the potential for post purchase dissonance or buyers remorse as introduced in earlier chapters is significant.

‘High hopes’: Migrating for a better lifestyle and post purchase dissonance.

In Chapters Four and Five I discussed the work of Grant McCracken (1990) and the notion of displaced meaning. I suggest that Australia holds a place in the British imaginary representing the ideal society and that this can in part explain the hankering for a ‘better life’ so frequently nominated as the reason migrants chose to move, at least in the case of the British migrants I have encountered who have moved to Australia. Further, in arguing as I have earlier in the thesis and in line with King (2002, p.95) that this particular migration be viewed as a consumption good, I connect this migration to McCracken’s notion of a bridge. McCracken talks of
goods as ‘bridges’ to displaced meaning and asks whether the ‘unhappy discovery that the purchase of a "bridge" does not indeed give one access to displaced meaning’ can explain ‘post purchase dissonance’ (1990, p.116). What I am suggesting here is that the displaced meaning remains somewhat out of reach; some aspects of life in Australia fulfill and often exceed pre-migration expectations, but not all. We can then connect the idea of displaced meaning with that of ‘post purchase dissonance’ that I utilize here in an attempt to explain the feelings of discontent, which permeated the discussions of work life in Australia I had with those in my study. Overwhelmingly there was a sense of frustration regarding work, not apparent in relation to other areas of the women’s lives, which for most had met their pre-migration expectations. There is indeed an irony in the fact that the sense of dissonance was most apparent in relation to labour, the very reason they had access to the site of ‘displaced meaning’.

I think it is reasonable to assume that the nurses I talked to had more of their identity invested in their careers as nurses than they possibly realised and it was only migration that brought this to the fore. We could of course attribute this to habitus, as noted earlier a change of field is sometimes the point where habitus, usually taken for granted, reveals itself. If, as I argue, migration arises out of a desire to complete or even merely contribute to what McCracken calls the project of the self then this feeling of a loss of autonomy is a significant factor. It brings into question the assertions that privileged migration is frictionless. The nurses it seems underestimated the significance their production based activities had in the formation of their selfhood/personhood. It left them feeling in many cases, as shall become apparent throughout the chapter, like a ‘fish out of water’ (Sweetman 2009, p.9).

In The Human Face of Global Mobility: A Research Agenda Favell et al. (2007) highlight the paucity of research on the global movement of those
categorized as 'skilled, educated, or professional' and argue that rather than the almost exclusive focus on 'lower-end labour and asylum-seeking migrants' that:

[A] better test case of the supposed liberalization of human mobility in the world economy...[would focus on] those who face the least barriers linked to exclusion, domination, or economic exploitation (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007, p.15-16).

In the Australian immigration context, skilled migrants from Great Britain can surely be counted among those migrants who face the least barriers and I agree with the premise that their experience is under-researched. This chapter, as with the overall thesis, offers a contribution to this literature and provides evidence to support Favell et al.’s contention that highly skilled mobility ‘is not a frictionless mobility but rather a differently tracked mobility with its own costs and constraints’ (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007, p.20). These costs and constraints, I argue, can usefully be explored through the lens of consumption, which as I have already stated is in large part about access to goods, and about forces of inclusion and exclusion.

There are, as Favell et al (2007) report, assumptions about the global mobility of skilled, educated and professional migrants that obscure the reality of their migration experiences. They are critical of the polarized view of the world often apparent in migration studies, which sees, as they note, 'corporate downtowns populated by a sharp-suited global elite service industry workforce, but serviced by an army of lower-class immigrant cleaners, shop owners, domestic home help and sex workers' (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007, p.17). This thesis deals not with either end of the spectrum identified above but with a group of British migrants who occupy the under analysed area between these extremes and to whom I, along with Favell et al. and others, as discussed in Chapter Two, apply the label
'middling'. In addressing a group of 'middling' migrants I do not wish to imply hardship where it does not exist but instead emphasise that while these are skilled migrants I do not believe, for reasons already discussed in Chapter Two, that they operate in the realms of the global elite.

Lesleyanne Hawthorne (2001. p.213) talks about the low levels of labour market participation among migrant nurses with a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and contrasts this with English-speaking background (ESB) nurses who she sees as ‘passing seamlessly into employment’. Indeed, for the women I have talked to this has generally been the case, finding employment is not something which they struggle with. This is aided no doubt by the fact that ‘recruitment efforts largely target those nurses who have been educated in a Western system and who are recruited for their capacity to fit rapidly into the Anglo-Celtic nursing workforce’ (Eisenbruch 2001, p.5). This chapter, however, looks at what happens next and suggests that while those in my study may be participating in the labour market it does not appear to be on their terms, and their narratives do not suggest that their employment is satisfactory.

The idea of ‘satisfactory employment’ has been raised in a paper discussing some of the difficulties refugees in Australia encounter in their search for employment (Torezani, Colic-Peisker & Fozdar 2008, p.138) The authors note that they ‘took it as a given that satisfactory employment is the crux of successful settlement for migrants and refugees’ and went on to define satisfactory employment as ‘securing a job appropriate to one’s qualifications, skills and work experience.’ While I have no doubt that refugees have indeed, as the statistics show, a much tougher time in securing employment, as have NESB overseas educated nurses and midwives (OENM) (Hawthorne 2001), my own research suggests that ‘satisfactory employment’ can also be fairly elusive in what is a cohort of white English speaking migrants who were in a position to make choices
about their decision to migrate.

Drawing again on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus I postulate that in part the difficulty in adapting to their employment situation is due to the lack of fit between their habitus and the new field that they find themselves operating in. As English speaking migrants in Australia their ‘feel for the game’ is arguably better than those who come from more culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, I argue that the expectation of ‘fitting in’ leads to particular challenges in the occupational field. As I have stated in the introduction to this chapter work/employment is, for these migrants, the real ‘fly in the ointment’ in regards to their migration experience. Work in this case becomes the object of migrant frustrations specifically because it is the area over which they have the least control. A situation arises, as I shall detail below, where these skilled workers who expected to slot easily into the occupational field, and who are equally the subject of such expectations, find that the rules of the game are different here in Australia.

Complaints of loss of autonomy and deskilling are common to both the migrants in my study and those reported in other work (for example Kingma 2006; O'Brien 2007). The midwives in the cohort, whom I shall also discuss in more detail later, are particularly illustrative of this but similar concerns existed across the sample. It is worth noting at this point that securing employment was far less easy for many of the nurses husband’s and I shall discuss some of their concerns in the latter section of this chapter. First however, I want to introduce what I mean by nurse and also offer some statistics regarding the presence of British nurses in the Australian workforce.
British nurses in Australia

Of the forty-nine women I interviewed forty-five were nurses and midwives\(^\text{22}\). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) offers the following definition of nurse:

\[ \text{[T]he term ‘nurse’ includes all persons who were either registered or enrolled with a state/territory nursing and midwifery registration board at the time the Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Census was conducted. ‘Registered nurses’ include registered midwives, direct entry midwives, nurse practitioners, midwife practitioners (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2008, p.1).} \]

Following the AIHW lead I shall refer to the above groups in the main as nurses unless it is necessary to further differentiate their particular roles.

British nurses in Australia, along with nurses from the minority world, and from English speaking countries in particular, do not feature heavily in the literature on international nursing. This is especially true in relation to lived experience, studies of which tend to focus on the difficulties faced by international nurses from non-English speaking backgrounds in the global south or majority world (for example Omeri & Atkins 2002; Allan & Aggergaard Larsen 2003). A notable exception to this is the comprehensive overview of nurse migration authored by Mirelle Kingma (2006). A focus on nurse migration from the majority to minority world is understandable given the problem of ‘brain drain’ which places undue strain on the training budgets and staffing requirement in many countries; however it fails to acknowledge those such as English speaking British trained nurses in Australia who, according to the 2006 census, have, over the last twenty

\(^{22}\) Of the remaining five, four were women who attended the lunchtime meetings and one an employee of a nursing agency based in Perth.
years, consistently made up around 25% of the migrant nursing intake (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2008). This census data further indicates that 24.9% of recently arrived nurses, those who arrived in Australia in the last 5 years, were born in England, more than double the amount from New Zealand, the next most common source country, where 11.7% were born. As Buchan and Sochalski (2004) noted the majority of nurses migrating to Australia in 2002, in the midst of the period this research covers, were from high to high-middle income countries. These figures are important, as there is little research on the movement of nurses from either of these countries; the focus in the literature being on the movement of nurses from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds rather than within the minority world.

At the time I was interviewing one of the pre-requisites for employment as a nurse or midwife in Western Australia was professional registration with the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia (NMBWA)\(^{23}\). For many Overseas Educated Nurses and Midwives (OENMs) a registration-bridging course was also part of the pathway to registration in Western Australia. There is no such requirement for those who have completed an education programme in the United Kingdom leading to registration there. Also, of eight hundred OENMs registered with the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia in the financial year ending June 2007 four hundred and thirteen nurses were from the United Kingdom. The next largest intake from overseas stood at only fifty-five nurses from New Zealand followed by fifty-two from South Africa (Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia 2007, p.15).

One of the main reasons for my focus on nurses was that I was interested in

\(^{23}\) Since 2010 this has been overseen, on a national basis, by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA).
a sample of skilled migrant women. Nursing in Australia remains a female
dominated profession (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
2008) and is also a profession which features in the top five occupations of
skilled migrants to Australia. Clearly the class and gender issues that
surround nursing as a profession have a bearing on the migration
experience and this must be taken into consideration, particularly when I
offer comparisons with the experience of the women’s husbands and other
trades and professions as I do in Chapter Seven. However, I do believe
these comparisons are valid and at the least recognising these limitations
strengthens the argument for further research among middling migrants.

**Objections to recruitment of nurses from overseas**

At this point it is worth noting that there is a huge body of research critical
of the recruitment of nurses from overseas. The two most obvious
objections centre around brain drain from developing countries and also on
the failure to recruit and retain local staff, both a cause and effect of
overseas recruitment. It has been argued that the recruitment of overseas
nurses, while obviously fulfilling a vital role, perpetuates ‘hierarchies of
disadvantage’ which are significantly influenced by class, gender and
ethnicity but which also have ‘roots in colonialism and empire’ (Smith &
Mackintosh 2007, p.2217). As I argue throughout the thesis it is important
to include the British in the story of Australian immigration not least of all
because it challenges the core periphery model evident in those ‘hierarchies
of disadvantage’ mentioned above.

In focusing on a group of arguably privileged migrants I do not seek to
diminish the experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)
nurses. Or indeed to understate the hardships they face, which, in the
extreme, can see them ‘consigned to years of underemployment and skills
atrophy’ (Hawthorne 2002, p.81), likewise for the refugees seeking
employment referred to by Torezani et al. (2008). At the same time it would be remiss not to report the concerns surrounding skills atrophy and the feelings of being underemployed, which I discovered in the course of my research among this particular group of British nurses. As Forsey states:

Understanding and comprehending how people come to grips with their particular social location and realities, no matter where they are positioned in social hierarchies, is surely a key component of our jobs as social researchers. (2006, p.9)

This aligns with the work of Favell et al. (2007) quoted above who stress the importance of a broader focus in the migration literature.

**Invisibility of nurses**

The invisibility angle is particularly significant in relation to this chapter in highlighting the fact that access to goods is not merely an economic concern but is affected by other factors such as race, class and gender.

Consumers are always making deliberate selections among co-consumers, both for their clubs and for their private rituals. The result of their selection is a community of a particular type. To take a serious interest in social integration—and disintegration—we have to study the principles of exclusion being used. (Douglas & Isherwood 1978, p.xxiii & xxiv)

At the outset of the thesis I stated that these British migrants were to a large extent invisible. Here I want to point out that not only are they invisible as migrants but that there is a corresponding invisibility in their occupation. Nursing has arguably never enjoyed the prestige that other professions allied to medicine have. A Commonwealth Government discussion paper
noted ‘a level of invisibility and lack of understanding of nursing among governments, the wider community and other healthcare leaders who appear to have minimal knowledge and are generally ill informed about nursing today’ (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2001). Arguably this is due to a combination of factors not least of all gender but further, I would argue, because it is also associated with their middling status.

**Fly in the ointment**

Despite the fact that work and career did not appear to be a priority for these women it has certainly turned out to have an impact on their settlement in Australia. What became apparent soon after I began interviewing was that for these women nursing was in many ways the ‘fly in the ointment’ of their migration story. Work was the locus of much of the disappointment with their consumption led migration, regardless of the rhetoric regarding their supposedly desirable skills, for many their working experience has been characterised by professional frustration and dissatisfaction. Kingma (2006, p.5) asks:

> [W]hat welcome is reserved for migrant nurses? After they have been aggressively recruited, what will be the quality of their new social environment and work life? And how will their managers and colleagues treat them?

These questions are very pertinent to my own research and although it is reasonable to assert that a hospital based ethnography may have allowed a more nuanced answer to the last question in particular I also suggest that as the interviews, in most cases, took place away from the workplace, there was an opportunity for the women to be more open about workplace issues.

Rose, an oncology nurse, provided an example of this when she noted to
me during interview that it would have been quicker for the family to come out if she had been prepared to accept sponsorship rather than come out on a skilled independent visa but she ‘wasn’t prepared to work full-time for two years’. So while Rose initially worked full-time upon arrival in Australia she has gone ‘from eighty hours per fortnight to thirty-eight hours a fortnight’ and concluded ‘it is far more civilised, it is lovely.’ It is in this context that I go on to discuss the issues surrounding the employment experience of British trained nurses working and residing in Western Australia.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, Australia is promoted heavily in the United Kingdom as a migration destination and many of these nurses and midwives have been lured/encouraged to Australia by the notion that their skills are very much in demand. As Kingma (2006, p.228) notes 'Professionally active nurses have become prime resources in an increasingly competitive global labour market.' This was acknowledged by Michelle who commented ‘I used to joke [to her husband] and say you only married me for my RN’ (Registered Nursing qualification). Kim, another nurse, had listened to her mother, a nursing auxiliary, talk about her qualified colleagues and stated that:

It made me realize, that once I had done my nursing training the world is your oyster, you know that you could always have an income, you'd always have a job wherever you were in the world.

In the main, for those I talked to, the value in their qualifications and experience was in the opportunity provided to gain an Australian visa. They employed a migration strategy based upon demand for their skills, with only one nurse explicitly expressing that career advancement informed her decision-making.
Most of the nurses interviewed were working part-time or at least had the intention of reducing their hours, so although it was their qualifications which provided the entry route to Australia the work roles within the families followed a fairly traditional pattern. Where the husbands were not the main breadwinners there was an expectation that this would change in the future. Jess (RN), pointed out during interview that she was quite resentful of having to work full-time when they arrived. Her husband struggled initially to find work and she noted feeling quite aggrieved by the fact, noting, “It was really difficult that first 18 months. I was really quite resentful of having to go out to work and him staying at home and enjoying the school holidays with the kids and stuff like that, it was really difficult”.

At that stage, as reported, her idea of a better life was far removed from the reality, despite her status as the primary visa applicant. By the time the interview was conducted however, the family appeared to have turned a corner, her husband was by then in full-time employment and she had reduced her hours, and she reported feeling far more settled.

**Autonomy**

One of the things that struck me most during the interview process was the frequency with which I was told that there was a lack of autonomy in connection to nursing here in Australia compared with what the women had been used to in the United Kingdom. This was particularly the case among the midwives but also more common than not among the nurses. Kingma, a consultant for Nursing and Health Policy with the International Council of Nurses writes the following:

Nurses often face the dilemma of being held accountable for patient care but being denied the authority to make decisions and exercise their professional autonomy. Health care facilities that
value nurses' clinical judgment, encourage their participation in decision making, and grant them autonomy in exercising their profession have better patient outcomes. They also have higher retention rates, lower turnover rate, and even waiting lists of nurses seeking employment. Professional autonomy continues to be very dear to nurses, and health employers, colleagues, and patients reap the benefits when it is exercised. Autonomy is a key characteristic of the workplaces that retain nurses in active practice (Kingma 2006, p.228).

Bearing this in mind it appears problematic that while health Departments across Australia are reporting issues with recruitment and retention, and while overseas nurses continue to be actively recruited to deal with a local shortage, many of those OENMs who find work here report a lack of autonomy as their main frustration in the workplace.

The following are some examples of statements I heard on the subject of autonomy:

We don’t have the same autonomy as we do in England but you get used to it, we are at the other side of the world. I just came and thought; well however they do it I’ll do it. (Michelle, Midwife)

You are not as autonomous now as you are in the UK, but I’ve learned to adapt to that because I am not going back […] I realise that and I can adapt my skill to reflect that absolutely. (Heather, Midwife)

I think in England we always battled against that thing of not having enough autonomy but we had no idea how much autonomy we had (Hazel, Midwife)

It really is like when I first started my training [in
the UK] and you’d get the trolley ready for them [Doctors]. Well I’ve not done that for 15 years or something, it was like get your own trolley ready mate I am busy with my trolley doing things. You know I don’t think nursing will change much [in Australia] until that focus shifts. (Kim, RN)

The following quotation comes from one of only two nurses I interviewed who worked in rural Western Australia:

I actually picked up a practice nursing job in [regional WA] which was probably more what I wanted to do, but there were quite interesting challenges there because, practice nursing in the UK is pretty autonomous because it is fairly much recognised as a branch of nursing in its own right and it is not like that here. It would be interesting to know how I am comparing city life in Scotland to country life here and I don’t know how much of an effect that has but certainly it is not nearly as autonomous a situation and I found that quite tough. Being answerable and being told what to do, but on the things that I knew that I had more expertise than the doctors did like wound management and those sort of things. I had run a wound clinic for years and a lot of doctors don’t really know about stuff like that and so I found that quite a challenge […] I also found and again I don’t know whether this is a country thing, I found that nurses here were very, bow to the doctors type of thing, and it just did my head in. I just thought oh what am I doing you know, so I’d say professionally it was quite frustrating […] Very much, you know, “I am doing it because the doctor told me to”. Well that is not the way I was trained in the UK and it is not the way I
worked in the UK, and I won’t work like that. But they found that quite hard to cope with and I’d be saying to them but you need to know why you are doing it. “But the doctor said” doesn’t stand up in a court of law you know. I think it is still like that although they are getting better but I never worked in the city here and it would be interesting to know if I worked in a big city hospital in Perth or one of the other cities whether that would be as much of an issue? I suspect it wouldn’t be.

Interestingly this nurse had put her experience of diminished autonomy down to the fact she was working in a regional hospital, which she felt was very patriarchal, with a management structure influenced to a great degree in response to certain egos who had established their position over a considerable period of time and were reluctant to implement changes. That her experience mirrored so closely those of others in the study who had worked in the large metropolitan teaching hospitals, suggests that the issue is widespread.

Kim (RN, also qualified as a nurse practitioner and with a masters degree in Health Service Management) was seconded to a management role at the time of interview. She reported her previous experience of a clinical nursing role in WA as frustrating stating that ‘there is not the same standard of professionalism and knowledge base here, I am quite disappointed with the standard here to be honest with you.’ Kim went on to say that while she realised that the health service in the United Kingdom had its problems she still felt that nursing as a profession was held in higher regard there. Like the midwife quoted above she felt that nursing here in Western Australia was very medically led, and also noted its patriarchal nature noting:

[I]t is very doctor led, the management is very
doctor orientated, it is very male orientated in management here and I don’t think that that is helping the workforce at all. It is quite a stagnant profession nursing you almost get treated like a non-trained person, not that any body should get treated like that, but you get treated as if you don’t know anything and as if you are just a hand maiden to the doctors and that really used to irk me, I couldn’t do it. And I think that is why I can’t go back clinically now here because I couldn’t work with these doctors who have no respect, they have absolutely no respect, a lot of them, for nurses at all.

While I only interviewed two midwives still in the United Kingdom, both friends of a migrant nurse I also interviewed, their responses seemed to confirm what the British nurses here in Western Australia were reporting. They both expressed that their relationship with the medical staff was generally one of mutual respect and that they were in the main free to get on with the job unless they encountered a problem that they deemed necessary of medical attention.

It appears that the migrant nurses from the United Kingdom have had significant exposure to the idea of evidence-based medicine and that is one of the things they find lacking here in Western Australia. As Kim explained it ‘there is seemingly no academic side, even though they are all degree based. There is no academic intention at all they are quite happy just to do their degree and that is it.’ She went on to note that she has had newly arrived British nurses come to her and say “they are doing things here that research showed you ten years ago that you are not supposed to do” To which Kim said her response was ‘yeah but they don’t even read the research here, they are not using evidence based practice, so for you to come in and talk about research and evidence based practice to the normal everyday nurse, it is like you are some sort of alien’.
The quotation below is from Michelle, a midwife who identified herself as a ‘to and from Pom’ having emigrated three times in the space of ten years. Although they are currently living in Perth, Western Australia Michelle’s husband has found settling in WA very difficult, as I will discuss later, and her own employment experience appears, from the way she relates it, to have been characterized mainly by frustration and compromise, despite containing some satisfactory spells.

**Michelle** - I worked in a private hospital when I first came which was totally different of course to midwifery back in England, very different, and when we came back [again] I started working [in a public hospital] and I loved it, it was very similar to the UK still not the same autonomy but it was probably the best I was going to get really, and it was great it was good…

Michelle stopped working at this particular public hospital when her youngest child was born eventually returning to work in a private hospital as she explains below:

**Michelle** - So I worked at [Private Hospital] and then picked up some casual work at [Public Hospital] … and I [did this because] I just thought I can’t stay working here any longer because it is just very very frustrating with all the medical interference

**Gillian** - At [Private Hospital]?

**Michelle** - [Yes] It is just incredible you really are just an obstetric nurse there, you are not a midwife at all... so yeah I moved over to [Public Hospital] in August and it is great I really enjoy it. It is similar…still not the same as Britain but it is sort of
similar.

**Gillian** - And so would you say that that is because there is a shift in public hospitals here in Australia towards midwifery rather than medical models?

**Michelle** - Yeah, a lot of the women just don’t expect, in the public system they seem just so much more happy to let things progress naturally and normally really whereas in the private they just give themselves over to the obstetricians who seem to just dictate everything really. The women don’t seem to be empowered at all to say what they want. I mean 40% of Australians have private health funds and so they feel they need to utilise this, to have an obstetrician and they think they are getting the best care when they may not necessarily be getting it. Yes, so from a midwifery point of view I was happy at [Public Hospital] I hated [Private Hospital] but it really became a secondary point of view, I was really concerned with the children but now that they are older, a little bit older they are only 7 and nine, I can actually get back to em doing what I enjoy really.

**Gillian** - Now you mentioned there that when you were back in the UK midwifery in the UK didn’t suit you was that because of how you’d been practising here and you felt like you’d been out of it or…

**Michelle** - I felt like I’d been out of it a bit and I felt yeah my confidence had gone and yes I only wanted to do casual I didn’t want to work permanently I was told that I would have to do two weeks full time orientation because I'd been away from the UK for so long and then when they talked about midwives suturing, well I left as all the midwives were being
taught suturing in 1989 so I haven’t ever sutured and the midwives were doing vacuum deliveries, this was in York, where I am from and the midwives were prescribing Cintocin and I just knew the state of the NHS and being short staffed and I just thought I don’t want to do this I don’t feel safe practising in that environment so yeah. I think again, if we hadn’t have had our son and I could have gone straight back in working full time then I would have probably got my confidence and it would have been fine but I wasn’t prepared just on a casual basis to take that on

Gillian - Cintocin is that to induce

Michelle - Yes, that is to induce labour

Gillian - So that is quite a marked difference from the practice here then… lots of women I have talked to so far have said that there is quite a vast difference between practice here and there

Michelle - Yes, you are so much more autonomous over there you’ve got a list of rules that you just adhere to and you’ve got medications that you can give under doctors order and you are covered totally by, you’ve got a lot more backing really you’ve got a lot more safety coverage really whereas here it is all a bit more, it is very medicalised, really very medicalised.

The expression here that ‘it is very medicalised’ pertains to a belief that midwifery is overly controlled by the medical profession whereas it should, with the exception of certain complicated births, be under the supervision of a midwife due in large part to the belief that pregnant women are not ill and that childbirth is a natural process which should, in an ideal world,
proceed with as little intervention as possible. At the time of writing, an opinion piece by prominent child health researcher Professor Fiona Stanley (2008) raised her concern at the increasing rate of caesarean sections in Western Australia. This was a concern I heard repeatedly among the midwives I interviewed, alongside others, regarding the medicalisation of childbirth.

Below, Vivienne, also a midwife, expresses her reaction to her employment experience here in WA including her frustrations and coping strategies.

**Vivienne** - Oh it is a markedly different culture absolutely yeah, em what did we think it would be like? I think we probably did think it would be similar to the UK I thought well I suppose because we look and speak in a similar fashion but in nursing I actually found it was probably in nursing about 10 or 15 years behind in terms of thoughts and ideas you know ways of doing things are a little bit entrenched I don’t know if that is because we are on the West coast, because I haven’t experienced that profession on the East coast I don’t know. So I just thought you can either accept this for what it is or you can try and change it and I just thought it was probably easier just to go with it. Know what your own values are know what your knowledge is and just try not to get too frustrated because essentially what I found was that people didn’t know what they didn’t know, its no good me talking about those concepts and ways of doing things because it was just too, “oh no what are you talking about”

**Gillian** - It was alien to them?

**Vivienne** - Yeah, that thought kind of process hadn’t got there, yet you know so it was quite, it could have
been very frustrating and I think that is where, you know folks aren’t willing to make the leap backwards you know, oh I hate using that word but it is quite backward really.

It is not unusual to hear British migrants express the sentiment that Perth is ‘backward’ or ‘ten to fifteen years behind’. This can be associated with work, as in the example above, and also commonly in relation to shopping hours, and daylight saving hours among other things. The idea expressed by Vivienne above that her colleagues ‘didn’t know what they didn’t know’ was also noted earlier when I quoted Kim talking about a lack of understanding of evidence based practice as she noted ‘for you to come in and talk about research and evidence based practice to the normal everyday nurse, it is like you are some sort of alien.’ So we have a situation where these nurses feel that there is little hope of working in the manner which they were used to and which they believe is more advanced. Favell writes that:

For the highly mobile, the work environment is at least meant to function as well as a place where human capital is recognised and convertible. Here too, however, mobility has costs as well as benefits. Skilled migrants, because of foreign status, can face "glass ceilings" in professional advancement not commensurate with education, experience, or professional attainment. (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007, p.22)

This is detailed in the following extract from an interview I conducted with Morag a registered mental health nurse (RMHN):

Morag - I don’t know if this relates to your study at all but at the moment we have a lot of highly skilled nurses coming out [to Australia] who would be in
quite senior management posts who are then coming right back down to shop floor posts on the ward. It is an acceptance that they can’t walk straight into that same equivalent, same level of post in Australia, it just doesn’t happen.

**Gillian** - So these are people coming from the UK?

**Morag** - Yes, so they’ll come in, and for instance they would have been in management well they’ll actually come back as a senior staff nurse on a ward through sponsorship and a lot of them haven’t clinically been on the shop floor for many, many years and I mean they adapt to it quickly but it is just that they have to do that and then bide their time and then as posts get advertised in the paper they can then apply for them but they never come over and go straight into a senior managers post or a managers post at all, they always have to go into a fairly a lower post and then they can get promotion as people get to know them and their skills which I find interesting.

**Gillian** - So basically their qualifications aren’t really being recognised?

**Morag** - No, not at all

In this particular example Morag is talking of employees who have been sponsored by their employer suggesting that it is not just those that come as Skilled Independent Migrants who feel that their skills are under recognised but also those recruited to fill particular positions.

**International recruitment consultant**

Early in my fieldwork I met with Paula, an International Recruitment
Consultant with a Perth based nursing agency. Previously an enrolled nurse herself Paula had also worked in the United Kingdom recruiting Australian nurses. Dealing with nurses from the United Kingdom the EU and South Africa among other countries Paula was not involved in the registration process but dealt with British nurses whose registration she was fairly confident would go through. For those who were not registered she offered advice on how to go about the registration process and then asked them to contact her again when the process was completed.

Paula noted that she had previously been approached by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Britain’s national broadcaster, who were carrying out research for a documentary on British nurses. They were specifically targeting those dissatisfied with the National Health Service (NHS) and who had decided to migrate. Paula noted that when the producer approached her for contacts she felt confident many of those she had helped find employment would fit the bill. It was only upon checking her records that she discovered only one nurse who had cited dissatisfaction with the NHS as the reason for her departure from the United Kingdom in her initial correspondence with the agency, however others she noted have mentioned it in passing. In Paula’s opinion the most commonly expressed factor in making the decision to move is lifestyle, particularly for the migrant’s children. Around 75% of the permanent placements she makes in WA hospitals are for nurses migrating with partners and children (interestingly most of the enquiries she has from male nurses are for permanent placement; those who want temporary work and backpacking experience are more likely to be female).

While all the nurses Paula dealt with are the primary visa applicants she did advise those whose partners have a job likely to enable the granting of a

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24 Paula estimated she had placed around thirty-three British nurses in Perth hospitals between May 2005 when she started in the role and August 2006 when I interviewed her, she had received many more enquiries.
visa to take this option and not be tied to the sponsoring hospital. She noted that often this hadn’t been considered; the fact that it is widely acknowledged that nurses are required almost everywhere in the world means that other avenues are often not explored. Kate, a nurse whose husband is a physiotherapist, and whose visas were granted within three months of application, noted that ‘if we’d come on his occupation we would only just be arriving now’ three and a half years later. This she noted was due to onerous registration requirements including a two-part exam, which is only held twice a year. On the contrary nursing qualifications from the United Kingdom are recognised and nursing visa applications are often fast tracked.

Another important point I noted in my conversation with recruitment consultant Paula was that she encouraged the spouses and children of the nurses she was dealing with to e-mail her with their own questions, a service, which she said was readily utilised. Paula noted that she often ends up dealing with the spouse if they are the one who is, either not working and therefore has the time to engage in the correspondence, or if they are the one who is taking primary responsibility for the logistics of the migration, even if the visas are not granted on their skills. She said that her attitude to this has changed over the years and her initial reaction to getting a request from the husband or wife of a nurse looking for employment for them was that this reflected a deficiency in the nurse’s personality. Time has demonstrated, however, that this is as much to do with the division of labour within a particular household and it does not necessarily suggest a dominant partner forcing a submissive spouse into a migration they are reluctant to partake in. This observation supports what I gathered from the women I interviewed that the migration was very much a family decision and the labour associated with the migration process such as completing and submitting paperwork is subject to the normal variances among the
allocation of chores within any given household.

'I feel like I am working in hospitality as opposed to in a clinical environment’ Migrant nurses and deskilling

The loss of skill mentioned by many of the interviewees in this study is detailed elsewhere in the literature on overseas educated nurses and midwives. A special edition of the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* contained an article entitled *Overseas nurses in the National Health Service: a process of deskilling* (2007), in this paper O’Brien reports findings that echo those of the women I interviewed. A further example is detailed in the following statement from Jane, a nurse who had worked in Australia during a previous working holiday and had returned permanently:

[B]y that stage I had had a management position in the UK. I’d pretty much completed my master’s degree. I was [in] a senior role as well as doing this management role in a clinic and I was also a lot older and once again had to go back to being a pleb, you know the new girl who wasn’t allowed to do anything without being supervised, and that was so frustrating. Senior roles like coordinating the shift and triage you know taking charge you just weren’t allowed to do and that was really, really frustrating and I think after I had been there about 6 months and I was looking for jobs anywhere else, I was seriously considering going to work as a waitress or anything that just meant that I didn’t have to have people who were effectively junior to me telling me what to do.

(Jane, RN)

Similarly Kim (RN), told me the following:

You know my first day at [hospital name omitted] I
was getting in there and working like I would in England. I was putting cannulas in and stitching and then I’d say well what is your drug policy here can I give this man a tetanus and the doctors were saying ‘you can’t do that you are not allowed to do that’ and nobody had told me.

The insertion of cannulas and suturing were two tasks mentioned to me as a source of frustration, in that they were tasks United Kingdom nurses and midwives were often not allowed to carry out in Australia. Interestingly venapuncture and cannulation were also mentioned in O’Brien’s (2007) discussion of deskilling as tasks which overseas skilled nurses had to fight for the right to do in the United Kingdom.

The research for O’Brien’s paper was largely hospital based, which contrasts with the research I carried out none of which took place in a hospital setting. Despite this the concerns reported by the OENMs whether here in Australia or in the United Kingdom were very similar. What is different is that O’Brien, as is most often the case in literature concerning OENMs, looks at nurses who are viewed as culturally and linguistically diverse from the majority in the country the migrate to. That my research suggests similar outcomes for those who, as I noted earlier, will supposedly ‘fit’ more ‘readily suggests that more work is required in this area and that it is not enough to deem the problem one based in ethnicity and culture while we continue to ignore the fact that English Speaking Background (ESB) nurses from the majority world are also frustrated and concerned that their skills are under recognised and under utilised.

One of the conclusions, which O’Brien reaches is that valuable resources are being wasted and skills lost as the National Health Service and private employers in the United Kingdom apparently struggle to keep up with the diversity of their workforce. So while much of the focus surrounding the
employment of OENMs is centred on assessing their competence, admittedly an area of great importance, it does seem that this sometimes comes at the expense of a broader recognition of skills and attributes in turn leading to a frustrating and less than satisfactory employment experience.

Midwives

While I have referred above to both nurses and midwives it is worth noting that the situation for midwives is complicated by the fact that childbirth here in Australia is, by many, regarded as over medicalised. Further to this over medicalisation it is suggested that midwifery as a profession itself is undervalued and that ‘[w]ithin this organisational culture, many midwives are unable to fulfill the role for which they were educated and are losing their skills and confidence' (2006, p.43). This means that when Hazel a British midwife makes comments such as the following, it may be less to do with the migration experience and apply equally to Australian educated staff:

> Everything about it is em very very hospitality based which is not how I was trained so I feel like I am working in hospitality as opposed to in a clinical environment. And it is very much that way, that we are there to facilitate the women’s wishes and the doctors wishes but please don’t sort of interfere with that situation because we don’t want to hear your opinion thank you very much. (Hazel, Midwife)

At the same time, as long as the OENMs, including those of ESB, believe that their ‘foreignness’ is the source of the problem then it impacts upon their settlement experience.

The midwife quoted above was, at the time of interview, about to start a
new job in a hospital that she noted had a reputation for working more closely to the United Kingdom model. A few hospitals in Perth have such a reputation among the midwives I talked to. In relation to her new position the midwife stated ‘I am going to be doing casual work there to see if there is any last vestiges of midwifery in me before I think of changing careers’ (Hazel, Midwife).25

At the same time, my belief is that as long as the OENMs, including those of ESB, believe that they are at a disadvantage as migrants then it impacts upon their settlement experience. There were no evident expressions of solidarity between the British trained nurses and their Australian colleagues during the interviews, that is, there was no suggestion that their experiences were the same. Rather, as expressed below in a quotation from Vivienne (Midwife), Australian educated staff were viewed somewhat disparagingly as being obstetric nurses rather than midwives.

Yeah certainly when I trained as a midwife over here I should have done it in the UK because it is not as well respected here as it is in the UK and I can’t travel with this qualification whereas I can with a UK qualification. Had I realised that at the time I probably would have waited a couple of years and have done it there and then moved but anyway I did do it here and I was completely shocked with how disempowered midwives are here compared with in the UK. It is an American model it is obstetric nursing, you do as you are told by doctors no decision making, no, you know, it is not women

25 I presented this quotation as part of a conference paper in Melbourne 2008 and the end of my presentation someone in the audience approached me and said ‘I understand what you are talking about as my cousin has just given up and gone home to the UK after trying, and failing to adjust to life as a midwife here in Australia’.
centred care it is convenient care [...] I found that a struggle and actually I did my training year and I did my graduate year and very soon after that I put myself onto night duty because I couldn’t stand what was happening politically in the day. So you find there are ways of doing the job the way you want to do it and that for me was to come off, you know it compromises your health doing night duty that is for sure and your family life and the rest of it but for me the only way to work in that environment was to not be there during the day when the argy bargy was going on [laughs] so I did that for as long as I could stand it and then I just thought no I can’t. So I got a job as a research midwife and got out of clinical practice altogether and I don’t know if I will go back to clinical practice. While I was on night duty I thought you can either put up with this and shut up or you can do something to get out of it and I did actually make an escape plan, I did a masters degree. The hospital weren’t interested at all in supporting the findings and putting them into practice in policy and you know it was based in the clinical setting it was something as midwives that we were all interested in it was an issue that we could have done a better job with but the hospital wasn’t and that for me made it very clear that the hospital wasn’t focused on what is best for women and babies it was focused on, it is a private hospital. (Vivienne, RN & Midwifery Trained)

The statement above expresses the same concerns regarding the lack of evidence-based practice, aired earlier in this chapter.

Another midwife who had previously moved to one of the units with a
reputation for providing a more midwife led service expressed relief at finding a working environment more suited to the midwifery she was used to and then went on to describe the ways in which her previous position had failed to live up to her expectations of satisfactory employment:

Hallelujah, I am back to doing midwifery the way that it should be done and I mean all the research backs us doing it that way as well and yet they just don’t see it here I mean really I just don’t think they are midwives I think that they are obstetric nurses. So the doctor does all, you know, the assessing and planning and we just do what we are told, and I just [...] I’ve been qualified too long to put up with that and I just think that all my skills, they were deskillling me on a daily basis and by the time I got to [hospital name omitted] I was in this sort of junction where I thought oh my god if we go back home I am not going to be able to practice. And you know I was really really scared about that and I suddenly thought they have totally taken away all these skills, you know they, like, advertise saying they want people to come and they want our skills and they [say], you know, British trained nurses and midwives are, you know, years ahead and they really want all that and then when you get here they don’t want it they want you to just do as you are told and just not answer back.

While the employment may be deemed less than satisfactory it would be wrong to think that the women passively accept this. Working within constraints, which may include such things as finances and childcare, the women do have some options available to them in order to address the situation. As quoted above Hazel was suggesting leaving midwifery altogether if she failed to find the job satisfaction she was looking for and
she was not alone. Others have taken less drastic action such as electing to work only night shifts as described by Vivienne previously and below:

[T]hat was hard and I didn’t like having to stand back and let the private doctor deliver this woman that I had been looking after all night, that was really hard but I’ve got used to it. I just had to stand back and say well why did I come to Australia, I didn’t really come to Australia for my career I came to Australia because I wanted a change of lifestyle something better for my children…a lot of the midwives are struggling especially the new ones when they arrive and they can’t do this and this and they don’t agree with the practices and they just have to bite their tongues and they find it so hard. I just keep saying but it will get better and you have to just sit back and say why did I come here and you can always do something to make it better for you, you know I have made a point of doing night duty, most of my deliveries are normal spontaneous deliveries and I manage everything myself (Carol, Midwife).

Carol was not alone in stating that she chose to work nightshift in order to retain some of the autonomy in her midwifery practice, which she had been used to in the United Kingdom. Arguably at a personal level she has resolved the issues, however, in the context of recruitment and retention issues mentioned earlier it seems less than satisfactory. Similarly the actions of those who decide just to accept the change, arguably detrimental to job satisfaction, such as Joyce the midwife quoted below:

I thought the midwifery practice was a little bit behind what I was used to and midwives are definitely different here. We don’t have the same autonomy as we do in England but you get used to
it, we are at the other side of the world. I just came and thought well however they do it I’ll do it and so there’s no point in coming here and saying oh at home we do this and do that. If they ask me I told em, if they didn’t I didn’t and so I fitted in because I came and said I’ll do things how you do it unless you want any change. (Joyce, Midwife)

Given the effort and expense involved in overseas recruitment and the concurrent issues with retention of nurses in Australia, which sees attrition of nurses to other professions and overseas combined with an ageing nursing population (Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia 2006) it would seem that this is a problem which demands attention.

Throughout the interviews and fieldwork I have had a strong sense that while the women are here as a direct consequence of their chosen career that career was not the primary motivating factor for them in their migration decision making. In the very first interview I conducted Rose described how she secured her job and visa as set out in the quote below from our conversation:

**Rose** - I came out as an independent skilled migrant cause I wasn’t prepared to work full time for two years, yeah If we’d been sponsored we’d have probably come out within a three month period rather than a six month period…but I wasn’t prepared to be. They offered it [sponsorship] to me several times, several e-mails they sent asking me, telling me we could sponsor you, make it easier, but I didn’t want the commitment of being in the one job when I got here, it makes it easier for them

**Gillian** - because they have you…

**Rose** - Yes, they have you for two years, and I
thought no way.

Later in the interview this participant revealed that the decision to do night shift was not one that she had ever thought she would make however her daughter was unhappy with the after school care here and when her husband resumed full-time work, after a six month spell where he was the primary carer for their daughter, night shift provided the opportunity for her to both drop her daughter off in the morning at school and pick her up at the end of the school day.

Heather (Midwife) was one of the few who expressed professional frustration as a motivating factor in her move although it is important to point out that her first thoughts were to leave England and head back to her native Scotland rather than to come to Australia. As discussed previously she noted that the latter decision was influenced by a newspaper advertisement for an Australian careers Expo. In addition to her nursing and midwifery qualifications Heather completed postgraduate training in an associated specialty in the UK. Prior to leaving for Australia Heather was working two days a week in her specialist area and also doing two night shifts in a labour ward. In addition she undertook work with a leading charity and had a role developing guidelines with The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in her specialist area. Whilst she found the specialist aspect of her work rewarding the nightshifts on the labour ward proved less so. As she explained:

I was just getting frustrated and I just needed to get away because I don’t know if you, because the NHS is going down the pan basically. I went from having, I did two days a week [in specialist role] and I did two nights a week which was great but I would be going on to a ward […] we’d have, 12 birthing rooms 3 pool rooms and I had 6 midwives, you cannae work like that it’s unsafe. And if you had to
have a C-section and you didn’t have a dedicated theatre team you lost one of your midwives to scrub and you lost one of your midwives to take the baby and so there was me, a lot of the time it landed up that I was the only one that could scrub and there was me and very junior midwives and you saw these young girls getting very overloaded and getting burnt out so quickly and leaving and that really upset me because they were good midwives and they got no support but as much as people bitch about the lack of staff here I can’t fault it, I can’t fault it.

Gillian - So do you think that was worse in England than it was up in Scotland?

Heather - Yes because in Scotland they are special, in Scotland to work as a midwife it was dead men’s shoes if you wanted a job you had to wait for someone to move on. I trained and worked at the [hospital name omitted] and although it was 16 years since I’d worked at the [hospital name omitted] I still had and I still do have friends that work there. If you wanted to be promoted, you had to wait for someone else to leave, if you wanted to work in the community, you had [to wait for someone to leave], because the women loved their jobs

Gillian - Yes, and because the conditions are still slightly better than they are in England?

Heather - Yes, they are better and what you have to remember is that Scotland is still held up here it is still held up quite high as a centre of excellence ‘oh you are a Scottish trained midwife, fabulous’ and that really does…Yeah I do think that the conditions were a lot worse in England than they were in Scotland, very transient, particularly in the London
area they’d come and work a couple of weeks and then say this is not for me I am off love.

Heather’s perception that Scottish hospitals were better staffed was borne out for me in an interview with Carol (Midwife) who had moved from a Scottish midwifery unit to a private one here in WA and found that the staffing levels are much worse here. Heather went on to note when I told her about this ‘if I’d come straight from Scotland to here I would have lasted five minutes I think…just a shock just a big change, I couldn’t have worked in a private hospital, I just couldn’t have, for me personally I just couldn’t do that.’

Aside from the staffing levels Heather also stated that ‘you are not as autonomous now as you are in the UK…but I’ve learned to adapt to that because I am not going back…I realise that and I can adapt my skill to reflect that’. For Heather this adaptation involved employing strategies to cope with the differences and one for her was to avoid constantly referring back to how things were done in the United Kingdom. Of those she was currently working with in Perth she noted ‘there is quite a few British girls come through and I cringe when I hear them going ‘oh well in England’ and you can see the backs of every Aussie going up and I’ve said to a few girls if you can, try not to use that terminology, it is very antagonistic.’ She went on to say that she tries to address the situation in a less confrontational manner but also noted that in England she would have been much more likely to have just said that is not the way things are done here and set about doing things the way she felt was correct.

When I asked whether the majority of midwives in the hospital she worked at were still Australian she said yes but did remember one shift where everyone was British and went on to note:

It was really strange […] and you know even the
doctors were Brits and we had a really lovely night that night actually because we were all em probably being you know pseudo English [at this point she put on an affected/exaggerated English accent] and “oh shall we do this” and “oh no you’re not allowed to do that” and you know just taking the mickey really of each other and I think you know just a wee bit of black humour eh helps you through a few difficult times.

I have mentioned earlier in the thesis the importance of humour in the British psyche and in this context what is interesting is both the emphasis on humour and that this midwife remembers this particular shift so fondly. I distinctly remember instances in my own experience of working in a Perth hospital, albeit not in a nursing capacity, that I missed the humour, which I felt had accompanied the job in Scotland and which seemed to make a stressful job more bearable. This appears to point to the earlier discussion in Chapter Two that migration leads to a disconnect between habitus and field and in the example Heather gives above the particular staffing situation that arose on that night shift temporarily returned the field to a pre-migration state.

In one of a limited number of studies of British migration to Australia Sidebotham and Ahern employ what they term a 'purposeful sample' of 18 midwives from the United Kingdom who migrated to the State of Queensland to investigate what influenced their migration (Sidebotham & Ahern 2011). They conclude, in agreement with my data, that the desire for a better lifestyle for family is the main motivating factor in their migration decision-making. A significant difference in their findings over those of my study was the focus on push-factors which included workplace bullying and harassment, dissatisfaction with the job including the midwifery itself, pay and conditions and also an increasing workload, all findings which did
not come across in my study. This difference may be due to the fact that I was more interested in the respondents’ current situation in Australia, rather than what they had left behind, but it does indicate the need for further study as the midwives I talked to expressed significant dissatisfaction with their role in the Western Australian system. Interestingly Sidebotham and Ahern do note that 'Despite the fact that a number of midwives were dissatisfied with the aspects of their working environments, none expressed the expectation of an improvement in their professional lives’ (2011, p.501). This ties in with my comments in the introduction about the modest expectations I believed the migrants held. At the same time I do not believe they expected to be feeling the frustration and sense of skills atrophy which most described to me both in the field of midwifery itself but also in nursing in general.

Diversity at expense of similarity

Allan (1979:143) notes that there is a 'tendency in all dichotomous constructions to emphasise diversity at the expense of similarity.' This would certainly seem to be the case when one considers the rhetoric surrounding immigration in both Australia and Great Britain. The host/migrant dichotomy emphasizes difference, but if one includes, as in this example, the British in the migrant group the situation is complicated. Assumptions of an easy fit for those in my cohort can be challenged and suggest it may be more productive to look at similarities rather than to further perpetuate the focus on difference which is detrimental to the non-British migrants. Much of the literature on OENMs appears to adhere to the core periphery model even when it takes an activist stance in recognition of the hardships faced by NESB OENMs. One would hope that by also identifying more clearly those of ESB and the problems that they also encounter there is more potential for resolution of these issues. As is well
documented, nurse migration is likely to continue, probably at an increased level for the foreseeable future making the issue urgent and relevant.

While calls from those such as Chandra and Willis (2005:37) to ensure that OENMs are treated on a par with domestic nurses and midwives are understandable I would suggest that this can only happen if there is greater recognition of the differences in nursing background in the early stages in order to facilitate the transition and reduce the feelings of inadequacy and frustration which are well documented in the literature and which came across quite strongly in the interviews I conducted. It would seem that the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia recognised this. Suggesting that ‘OENMs need ongoing support after registration to become familiar with Australian custom and practice, legal and ethical norms and even colloquial language.’ They further recommend that ‘[i]t might be sensible to ensure that all OENMs undertake a compulsory unit of professional/cultural issues…whether from an English speaking background or not.’ Importantly they postulate that ‘[t]his may then assist employers to build on a known level of knowledge in their ongoing support for the nurse/midwife’ (Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia 2006, p.43). Were this to prove successful it may contribute to the dismantling of the core periphery model through treating all OENMs equally; of course this is only beneficial if it also seeks to generate equality of status between them and nurses from the host country.

I have no recent evidence that such an orientation program has been implemented anywhere but it was indeed something which the nurses themselves suggested during interview. Alice (RN) noted her belief that:

If you are an overseas nurse of any description in any country I think for the first three months you should be, not on a performance management, plan but on some orientation plan because you just get
While I agree with Hawthorne's (2001) argument that overseas educated nurses and midwives from NESB face considerably more obstacles to finding gainful employment in their field I think that my research suggests that this is not the whole picture and that adjustment issues once these barriers are overcome are significant for all. I would argue that this could apply to nurses from the United Kingdom as to any other group. This further strengthens my belief that research on British migrants is not misplaced, there are many commonalities between the experiences of different cohorts of migrants and a greater understanding of the issues faced can only be achieved by looking at the whole picture. It is surely more beneficial to take an inclusive approach rather than subjecting those viewed variously as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Visible Minorities, or as being from a NESB to further separation from the so called mainstream.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted a situation where a group of migrants granted entry to Australia through the value of their accumulated qualifications, skills and experience then find themselves professionally frustrated and often struggling to deal with a weight of unmet expectations in regard to their ability to ‘fit in’ in the host country workplace. They expressed concerns about losing skills and feeling professionally undervalued. While recognising additional difficulties in the settlement process among CALD migrants and refugees I also argue that there are enough similarities to warrant a more inclusive approach when detailing the experiences of skilled migrants. Rather than continuing to perpetuate an ‘ethnic’/’non-ethnic’ dichotomy a more holistic approach is recommended.
In Chapter Seven I consider the experiences of those whose stories I heard throughout my fieldwork who were not nurses or midwives some of whom I encountered as part of the lunchtime meetings. The chapter will also include information from those in my own social circle who have often provided a source of clarification or indeed further questions throughout the fieldwork and writing up of the thesis.
CHAPTER SEVEN - Jumping through hoops and sliding down snakes: Challenges in the employment sector for British migrants in Perth.

As discussed in Chapter Six, the nurses in this study had an employment experience often characterized by frustration emerging from concerns regarding deskilling and lack of professional autonomy. I have suggested, in line with the theme of consumption running through this thesis, that this is a form of post-purchase dissonance, emerging at least in part from high expectations of an ‘easy fit’ for these British migrants. This chapter looks beyond nursing and midwifery to take a broader look at the employment scene in Perth at the time of the study. It suggests that the problem is a more extensive one rather than something occupationally based which the previous chapter might suggest. Among the nurses and midwives, their own employment experience was not their only concern, with many reporting that their husbands and partners were struggling to adjust to life in Perth with the employment being a particular area of concern. This aligned with concerns I heard expressed at the lunchtime meetings and from friends and family.

This chapter proposes that the overwhelming sense of Australia as a leisure destination in the British imaginary colours the workplace experience and has an impact on the settlement of the migrants in this cohort. In the first instance, I discuss the sense that there is parochialism in the job market, which these migrants see as detrimental to a successful employment experience. I then go on to discuss the sense of superiority and of British professionalism, which permeates the migrant stories as they attempt to make sense of their new working environment. The final section in the chapter looks at the issue of return migration. I am not suggesting this is exclusively related to the employment issues discussed in this and the
proceeding chapter, but that it can be seen as an expression of post purchase dissonance and is strongly connected to the sense of a mismatch between expectations and reality.

Labour is important in the migration story of the migrants in my cohort, not just because their entry to Australia was dependant on their skills, but because they were dependant on work. Employment was a necessity, if not for all of the women, then at least for their partners. No one that I talked to implied that they were in a position to give up work, although some certainly intimated that they would like to. Despite this however, labour was not the main consideration in these women’s migration stories. Only one of the respondents when asked why they had come to Australia stated primarily that they had come for a better job or to better utilise their skills. Most resorted to the more generalised ‘for a better life’ or, more specifically for some, a better life for their children. They did not migrate to Australia for career advancement; rather they talked of, increasing quality time with their families, of adventure, and of not living with regret.

In light of this, I propose that Australia is held primarily in the British imaginary as a leisure destination, the extract from The Australian newspaper with which I opened Chapter Two is an example of this. This is important in the decision making process, as Benson notes:

[T]he decision to migrate is framed by their imaginings of what a particular destination might offer individuals and what they might be able to make of themselves and their lives there (2011b, p.224-225).

Equally I argue it has an impact on the later stages of the migration journey. As Salazar argues:

[H]uman mobilities – be they physical or
imaginative – are moulded by cultural knowledge and practices. Culturally rooted understandings of mobility, coloured by media images as well as personal accounts, in interaction with physical movements, are important in attempts to explain migratory phenomena. (Salazar 2010, p.64)

I believe for the migrants in this study that there was a significant expectation that work will be largely the same as it was in the United Kingdom, however, as the testimonies of those I interviewed show, this is certainly not the case.

'Wherever he went a door would shut in his face'

Jess (RN) moved from the north of England with her husband and three sons. Although Jess’s nursing qualification was used for the visa application it was intended that her husband would work with a family member who had already emigrated and was intending to establish a business. This opportunity did not transpire and Jess, who had never intended taking the role of the main breadwinner, was forced into a situation that she became quite resentful of. It also caused her husband considerable stress, as she reported:

Jess - My husband, god it took him 18 months to get any work he just couldn’t get any work he was a telecommunications engineer in England his skills weren’t even recognised as a telecommunications engineer for Telstra here. It was like wherever he went a door would just shut in his face and I think it did a lot to his, em, sort of ego and you know the way he felt about himself you know it knocked his self-confidence for six […]It was really difficult that first 18 months, I was really quite resentful of having to go out to work and him staying at home
and enjoying the school holidays with the kids and stuff like that it was really difficult.

**Gillian** - And how did he find it?

**Jess** - He found it quite frustrating ‘cause like he went for a job at Mitre 10 and didn’t get it, he got a job at Bunnings 26 but it was only like $16 an hour and there was no way with my wages and that we could support our family so he found it quite frustrating. He almost felt like he was being, not that the Australians were being racist but because he was English that he wouldn’t be considered that is how he felt. He did feel very frustrated and I suppose he felt like he wasn’t pulling his weight as the male in the family kind of thing so it was quite difficult time. I don’t think that helped us settling.

Jess’s husband slowly managed to establish a reputation locally as a handyman and spent sometime working for himself doing small renovations. At the time of interview they were in the process of buying a business from someone he had ended up working alongside and Jess reported feeling quite positive for the first time in eighteen months. However, their initial experience was clearly not in line with their expectations.

Below I introduce Veronica (RN) who emigrated with her husband and children. Veronica’s husband has found his employment experience in Perth frustrating and remains unhappy with his job situation despite being in Australia for over five years now.

> My husband really struggled to get a job, he tried various things but found he could not come to Perth and slot into the type of middle management role

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26 Mitre 10 and Bunnings are both hardware stores prevalent in Western Australia.
which he had come from. He was a senior administrator in government but he felt that ‘they wanted local experience’ here and obviously could not get it. They don’t give you enough credit for your experience or accept that you’d be able to adapt, so he could not get an administration job, they just wouldn’t let him he just couldn’t get a foot in the door at all.

After trying his hand at a few jobs that he felt were not reflective of his training and experience Veronica’s husband eventually applied for a trainee position but the application was complicated by the fact that he had to prove that he had the equivalent of an Australian High School Year 12 Certificate. This was something, which Veronica reported that they both found very frustrating given that he had over 25 years of service in a government role behind him. Veronica went on to say that ‘it’s been an uphill struggle for him and he still would prefer to be in administration and had I been in the position that I am in now I probably could have helped him out because at [hospital name omitted] it is who you know’. This final statement is an acknowledgment of the benefit of local connections. It should be noted, however, that despite the ongoing frustration with his employment situation, Veronica reports that her husband is in fact more settled in Australia overall than she is.

Gemma, one of the ladies who lunch, came to Perth with her plumber husband and their son and was biding her time in Perth until the family are eligible to apply for citizenship, as a fallback for her daughter in the future. Talking of her efforts to find employment Gemma noted that she had applied for an administrator’s job at a local hospital stating:

The very first job I applied for, it was eighteen hours a week at Joondalup hospital and there were 502 applicants! I know that because the lady who did the
interviewing told me and the job went to her friend in the end.

Gemma is unhappy and frustrated with life and Perth noting:

I think what it is the main issue for me is work, lack of work, 'cause I have never, not worked, ever, and it is quite hard having to be dependant on my husband for money. That is hard, em work, you know I think that is one of the main reasons why I’ve not settled really is not being able to find a job.

Gemma’s own employment woes are compounded by the fact that her husband, a plumber, is not earning as much in Perth as they had expected, particularly as prices, including rent, had increased considerably in the two years between their visit to Perth in 2005 and their subsequent migration in 2007. Gemma noted that they currently had some equity from selling their house in the UK in a high interest bank account, but were having to dip into the interest to get by. She felt her own failure to find work had compounded this issue and it was not what they expected of life in Perth.

At the time I talked to Gemma, Western Australia was experiencing a resources boom and interestingly she noted that not all were benefiting.

Yeah, there is work for people. If you are an engineer, IT, accountants, the resources boom, definitely you are not going to loose but I think just ordinary tradesmen, admin, I think there are too many people chasing too few jobs now, without a doubt.

These comments are particularly interesting in light of my argument that those in my cohort are middling migrants and align with Kofman’s claim that:

[M]uch of the literature on skilled migration pays
attention to the contribution of skilled migrants in the knowledge economy, and in particular the science, information technology, financial and managerial sectors which are seen to be the driving forces behind global wealth creation (2012, p.64).

Kofman is making this claim in support of the argument that there is a gender bias in the migration literature that focuses attention on male dominated professions such as those listed above. Further Kofman argues that the skills and experience of skilled migrant women who are not the primary visa applicant are often ignored.

If labour migrants encounter difficulties in maintaining professional identities, it is all the more so for skilled spouses of labour migrants and those who have moved as marriage migrants and refugees (Kofman 2012, p.81).

I agree with Kofman’s position, however, my own study suggests that this can also be the case for men who are not the primary visa holder and even those who are and who are employed in sectors and occupations that have not attracted the same level of academic attention.

Recognising this lack of opportunity for what is often called the trailing spouse, one nurse told me that she thought it:

[I]ncredible how many English nurses there are with husbands who are doing PCA27 and orderly jobs’. She went on to say that this was not something she had ever noticed in the UK and concluded that it was ‘because the nurses have come across and just stepped into a job and the males obviously find it more difficult […] it is a necessity, I don’t think

[27] PCA stands for Patient Care Assistant often referred to in the UK as an auxiliary nurse. Like a hospital orderly this is a position that generally does not require any formal training.
they would have done it in the UK [...] Don’t get me wrong I am not saying it is a demeaning job or anything like that but I just don’t think that would have been acceptable in the UK but they are willing to do it here to fit in.

Recognising then that it is often difficult for the non-primary visa holder to gain suitable employment, I go on below to discuss some of the obstacles they encounter in their job search.

Do you have local experience? Obstacles to successful employment.

A lack of local experience, narrower breadth of employment options (when compared with the United Kingdom), and frustrations with licensing requirements in some professions, were all hindrances to satisfactory employment cited by those I have talked to. A close friend likened his career to the board game snakes and ladders and felt he had ‘certainly slid down a snake’ when he moved to Perth from the UK. Although he felt the lifestyle benefits were worth the compromise, it remained a source of frustration for him. One nurse’s husband worked in IT and she stated that ‘he doesn’t feel valued or that his skills are being utilized in a market where the technology is not so advanced’. It is worth noting at this point that these feelings that Australia was backward are not confined to the British community. In Xiang Biao’s comprehensive study of the role of Indian labour in the information technology industry in Australia and the United States, one of the informants noted work in the United States was more highly valued due to the fact that ‘after you stay in Australia for five years, you can’t go anywhere. You will be outdated [in technology]’ (2007, p.104). For Gemma, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, lack of local experience and a competitive environment appeared to be the biggest obstacles in her path to employment. She reported that when she
approached an employment agency looking for part-time work that would fit around her son’s school hours, the agent laughed and said ‘do you know how many British tradesmen’s wives I’ve got looking for exactly the same thing’.

An article, Jobs for the Boys, which featured in the June /July 2008 edition of the Whingeing Pom, sees the author, Gallagher (2008, p.61) writing about the difficulties of finding employment in Perth, despite the constant pronouncements of a skills shortage. Gallagher’s article reflects the kind of comments I have heard from British migrants frustrated with the employment process in Perth. Gallagher’s focus on the metaphorical hoops he had to jump through to secure a call centre job reflects the frustrations regarding deskilling and satisfactory employment noted in Chapter Six and in the opening of this chapter. For Gallagher, the job was a stop-gap, which it appears exacerbated his frustrations.

The article gives a detailed account of an interview and the incorporated teamwork exercise in which, Gallagher reports, the participants had to create a spaceship, out of drinking straws and paper, capable of keeping an ‘egg intact on a four foot flight’. This was, from the tone of the article, an exercise that he clearly found offended his sensibilities and certainly made him come across very much as 'the whingeing Pom'. He concludes his rant with the following statement:

The fact that barely five days later I was offered the job despite my own desperately open contempt says something so excruciatingly tragic about the general standards of employers in Perth, I can't even conceive of it for fear that it would drive me to take a running jump at a moving combine harvester. But when you have to go through a two-and-a-half hour interview, a subsequent phone interview, a full
physical and build an egg spaceship made out of housewares just to work in a call centre, you know that the days have long gone where actually being good at stuff got you employed, and the demographics have truly won. If the Perth job scene has anything to teach us, it's that if anything offends the intellect and soul more than mediocrity, it's mediocrity with an overinflated sense of its own importance. (Gallagher 2008, p.61)

The article is arguably derogatory and I would imagine has been written with a significant degree of artistic licence, characteristic of the magazine overall, however, like other articles in the magazine it speaks directly to issues raised by the participants in my study.

The idea that British migrants primarily regard Australia as a leisure destination is closely tied with its image as a laid back society; I say idea because I believe that the bureaucratic nature of some elements of Australian life are in direct contradiction to this. Australia is imagined as a country where there is little heed paid to rules and regulations, where the pioneering spirit continues and where hard work and common sense will get you by. The reality, however is far from this romanticised notion grounded in the ‘bushman’ legend (see Ward 1992). Australia is a highly urbanised, modern industrialised economy, with all the bureaucratisation that goes along with that. I have lost count of the amount of times my parents have said things along the lines of ‘oh you are lucky, it’s very difficult to do business here [in the United Kingdom] with all the rules and regulations’, implying that Australia is much more relaxed about such things.

Below I offer the example of a thread on one of the WBDFs (posts read as they did on the forum), which speaks to this. The original poster, identified as CarlB began a thread on the forum with the title ‘Is Australia as
paperwork obsessed as UK?’ He continued:

A quick question. Are Australians less, more or same with the obsession with paperwork for doing things, as there seems to be in the UK? Not that long ago I could do my job, and safe working practices would be more common sense than anything. I know a safe code of practice has helped to reduce the number of deaths and injuries in work places, but it now seems to have got totally out of hand. I'll have to check, but I think to make a warm drink, I'll probably need a method statement and risk assessment (I hate those words) not to mention wearing a hard hat, boots, gloves, safety glasses and high visibility jacket.

The responses, some of which I have included here, express the sentiments that it is at least as bad if not more bureaucratic and further that this is a source of frustration:

Speaking from my experiences in Queensland - the UK nanny state has nothing on here......sometimes seems like you need a licence to breathe. :rolleyes:

Comparing Australia now, to the UK 6 years ago, Australia has much more rules, regulations and paperwork. Although they are beginning to make it easier in some areas, for example with GST for the smaller businesses.

Aus is same..... bureaucratic I'm afraid :(

My plumber has just asked me to sign a risk assessment statement before he can use a tube of glue, if that’s the sort of stuff you are after, Australia will drive you insane.
When I first arrived in Australia, I worked for 3 months in the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC), the AU equivalent of the UK Health and Safety Executive. Most of the chemical regulations here are direct copies of UK HSE regs [regulations], however they are Australianised. Take for example the UK's "Approved classification and labelling guide", which runs to 62 pages. The AU equivalent contains 170 pages!

These statements, such as ‘sometimes seems like you need a licence to breathe’, ‘they are beginning to make it easier’, and ‘bureaucratic I’m afraid 😞’ (this last one followed by the commonly used symbol for a sad face), all serve to suggest disappointment on the part of the respondent.

In an article in the careers section of The Weekend Australian, Karalyn Brown (2004, p.184) reports on the notion that Australian employers are parochial in their recruitment efforts:

Many of us will go overseas to work, valuing the career and life experience we bring back—yet we appear to view the experience that others bring here with suspicion.

The issues Brown discusses seem to resonate with what I have heard in the course of my research. It certainly has some resonance with the situation of Jess and Veronica’s husbands as described above and that of Gemma who noted, ‘I’ve had a lot of trouble getting a job without having any Australian experience and even my Australian experience from 20 years ago in Adelaide doesn’t count, they need it in WA.’

While Brown’s article exposes some of the issues faced by those I interviewed, it also takes the all too common approach of equating migrant
workers with non-English speaking workers, something I have already pointed out occurs frequently in the work on nurse migration. The article starts out talking broadly about recruiting from overseas and then slips into comments about communication difficulties. Brown concludes the article with a quote from a recruitment professional in engineering who states that:

They are less likely to move on than an Australian hire and they have a great work ethic and less baggage from their background...They bring new skills not available in Australia, and support our international operations with their knowledge and language skills (Brown 2008).

While Brown is highlighting the benefits of recruitment from overseas, there is an underlying assumption about difference, that permeates her words. The notion of an ‘us and them dichotomy’ is ever present, and further it would appear from the final point regarding language skills that English speaking migrants are not included in this discussion of overseas recruitment, that they are not migrants.

Hugo (2009) reports similar responses from Australian returnees after experience working abroad. These returnees were surprised to find that the skills and experience they felt they had gained during time spent overseas were of little interest to Australian employers, to the extent that some returned overseas rather than put up with such an attitude in Australia. This is indicative of the existence of ‘tensions between different hierarchies and criteria of status and privilege as travelers move from one context to another’ (Amit 2007b, p.2). As with the British migrants coming to Australia, the expectation is of an easy fit but their social and cultural capital is not as easily transferable as they might have hoped. Baldassar and Pyke (2013) have noted a similar situation among recent skilled Italian migrants to Australia whose entry to the established Italian community is
not without friction.

As I have already noted, these skilled migrants come to Australia with certain expectations, commensurate with their class or status and indeed their habitus. In a comparable situation, Torresan (2007) notes an expectation among middle class Brazilian migrants to Portugal that close historical ties between the two countries, the common language, and of course the migrants qualifications and skills would facilitate an easy entry in to Portuguese society. Instead, as Torresan reports, their reception was coloured by resentment rather than the respect they had expected (see also, Baldassar and Pyke 2014). Parallels can be drawn between this example and that of those in my study. While no one reported resentment from Australians as such, the nurses I interviewed, and others I talked to, expressed a sense of incredulity regarding what they saw as a lack of recognition of their skills. These were the skills they brought from the United Kingdom and that they expected to be valued; after all it was this ‘capital’ that allowed them entry to Australia in the first place. What they found upon arrival, however, was that their skills were, in their eyes, under valued and underutilized.

‘Best of British’ – notions of superiority

In early 2009 I was standing in a room with three tradesmen. Brief introductions revealed that all three were from the United Kingdom. They were working on a renovation project in metropolitan Perth where the ceiling had been removed exposing an array of electrical wiring which seemed entirely random and to my untrained eye extremely dangerous. I remarked that it looked like the electrician
working on the project had his work cut out in rectifying the situation. A brief exchange of complaints about the standard of Australian electrical work ensued. One man noted that it was unfathomable to him that a British trained electrician had to pass a test to work in Australia, while another, looking upwards to the jumble of wires hanging overhead glibly noted ‘it’s a test of nerve that they require’ to which the others laughed and agreed wholeheartedly.

Keith, a carpenter, and one of the group described in the paragraph above later explained to me that he had found working quite a challenge since arriving in Australia. ‘I like it here’ he said, and then added in an exasperated tone, ‘but I am City and Guilds trained and I’ve had to forget many of the things I’ve been trained to do.’ This exchange, which challenges Australian competencies and elevates British ones to a higher standard, is only one example of many I have heard outside the nursing and midwifery cohort. As with the nurses and mid-wives, concerns were expressed regarding the idea of de-skilling along with the view that things in the United Kingdom were done to a higher standard, or were more advanced, an idea that seems to permeate many of the discussions around work among British migrants in the West Australian setting.

Arguably, there is arrogance about British standards of workmanship, organisation, etcetera that often comes across in conversations with British migrants. It was apparent in the quotes above, regarding bureaucracy in the Australian setting, where there was more than a suggestion that despite an unhealthy obsession with paperwork, standards are not necessarily better. In many ways it is not surprising, as mentioned in the introduction, that
these migrants were for a long time, indeed probably still are to a large extent, the charter group, those by which all other migrants are judged. Schech and Haggis suggest that for British migrants:

Australia is placed on a colonial time line, awaiting the modernising influences of the more advanced British migrants (see Fabian 1983). The interviews indicate that British migrants see modernity as something possessed by them, as an aspect of their distinctively British whiteness; it is as if they assumed the right to know modernity through the proximity of birth to the metropolis. (Schech & Haggis 2004, p.184)

The notion of superiority couples with the surrounding notion of professionalism, or in this case the perceived lack of it in the Australian workplace, which, I have also often heard expressed. In the example given below it is cited as a reason for difficulties in ‘assimilating’ in the workplace culture. The quotation below came from Michelle, the self-confessed ‘to and from Pom’ who had come and gone three times with her husband and family and refers to her husband, who had extreme difficulty settling in Perth:

He found the people he worked with were just very different to the people he was used to working with in the UK. That was one definite thing; he just found they were unprofessional here. He couldn’t handle the unprofessional ‘she’ll be right mate’ sort of attitude. You know he couldn’t handle that and em and he’s not a real drinker and he’s just... I think that Australian men are quite different to British men really and I think he just couldn’t, and even now a lot of our friends and it is not by choice it has just happened, but a lot of our friends happen to be
Despite the difficulties and their obvious turmoil about where to settle, this couple have finally opted for WA because they feel it is better for the children. However, Michelle still claims that if money was no object they would probably live in the United Kingdom where, she argues, her husband would be more settled, in his working life at least.

In keeping with the idea of an unprofessional attitude is another similarly critical article in the *Whingeing Pom* this time directed at business owners/managers. Its focus is on the perceived Australian propensity for what is often referred to colloquially as ‘chucking a sickie’ or taking a days sick leave when not actually sick. The article concludes:

> So in order to get by in business in WA, you have two options: you can put up with the demands and excuses of the local workers, slow down to your colleagues’ pace, get a life and join in the workers’ solidarity slogan: “It’s all good”. Or you can do the same thing the British entrepreneurs and captains of business did 200 years ago – arrange to have a workforce of British and Irish labour shipped over. (Cadden 2008, p.59)

As with the first article quoted, there is a definite assertion in the statement above that British business and the British workforce are superior, which may be a good example of the process described by Harrison (2003) where groups must set themselves apart in order to reinforce their own identity.

While the British promote their apparently superior work ethic and attention to detail in the Australian setting, Datta and Brickell (2009) describe a similar situation among Polish builders working in London. The Polish builders were found to be carving their own niche in an established white English working class male environment by reference to their
apparently superior Polish work ethic and greater degree of cultural capital, that one worker described as a ‘finesse’. Similarly the Polish handymen described by Kilkey, Perrons et al. (2014), who further cite work by Sarti (2005, p. 20) on ‘racialised and ethnic niches – or ghettos—in the labour market’. While the tradesmen and those outside nursing and midwifery were not the main focus of my research, there is clearly a significant opportunity for more work to occur in this area of identity formation among migrant groups.

Due to the prevalence of such thoughts across a fairly wide spectrum of the British migrants in my acquaintance and those I met through my research, it strikes me that it is these sentiments about having under utilized skills and undervalued experience that lie at the heart of the discontent among both British migrants I have interviewed and those in my acquaintance. Thinking again of this migration as a ‘consumption good’ (King 2002, p.95) it seems that this post purchase dissonance is at the heart of accusations of ‘whingeing’ directed at these same migrants. At the same time it can be argued that such dissonance is a result of heightened expectations, arising from an imaginary, which sees Australia as a sunny extension of Britain, a known quantity, rather than the foreign country it actually is.

While I describe below the experiences of British migrants in the Australian workplace, it is also worth considering that policies designed to fill skills gaps through migration programs may not account for migrant agency. My data would suggest a potentially high attrition rate from the trades and professions over time if the discontent I describe, particularly in relation to employment outcomes, is factored in. I suggest that although the migration is a labour migration the women and their spouses take from it what they want rather than what is expected of them, which is to fill a skills gap. They use it as a means of entry with little consideration of career or
their intended role in filling a skills gap. As has been argued the actions of private actors can have a significant effect on migration policy:

Immigration, like other international processes does not so much take place between compartmentalized national units as within an overarching system, itself a product of past historical development. Nation-states play an important, but not exclusive role within this system, which also includes the activities of a multiplicity of private actors from large corporations to working class households. The activities of these unofficial actors across national borders are the reason for the limited effectiveness of official efforts to regulate immigration. State policies designed to control such movements are often modified or derailed by the countervailing actions of other participants in the process. (Portes & Borocz 1989, p.626)

There is not the sense from the migrant narratives I have listened to that they are coming to Australia to fill a skills gap; while this is indeed how they gain entry, it is the opportunity for a different lifestyle that is the prominently cited motivation for this particular migration. That, the labour component of the experience is often the most problematic leads me to now turn to the issue of return migration, which has always occurred among the British migrant population in significant numbers, despite the promise of a better life[style].

**Sunny with cloudy spells: return migration**

The final section in this chapter, which has highlighted the discontent felt by many in regard to their employment opportunities in Perth, turns to the phenomenon of return migration. That this comes towards the end of the
thesis should not suggest that the stories of these women and their husbands who sought to return to the United Kingdom are less important but that they were in the minority of those I talked to. Overall I heard very positive things about life in Australia with the obvious exception, of the work situation, as discussed in Chapter Six and at the beginning of this chapter. The issue of return migration to the United Kingdom like the initial emigration is not a particularly common topic in the popular media or in the migration literature, (Hammerton & Thomson 2005; Lunt 2008). That said, during the writing up phase the phenomenon of return was the subject of a journal article (Burrows & Holmes 2012), that I shall discuss later, and also featured in an article titled ‘Why are so many Britons leaving Australia?’ (Bosworth 2011) on the BBC news website.

Exact figures of Britons returning to the United Kingdom from Australia are hard to determine. Transnationalism and circulation can be mixed into the figures and therefore, the statistical waters are significantly muddied by ‘serial returnees who move back and forth’ (Hammerton and Thomson 2005, p.265). However, it has been suggested that 'the numbers are not insubstantial' (Burrows and Holmes 2011, p.3). Figures of anywhere between 25% and 50% have been quoted but this of course speaks to the fact that migration, which was often viewed as a one-way street from home to host country, is far from it. As the transnational migration literature testifies (see for example Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992 ; Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton-Blanc 1994 ), it is unproductive to view migration as a single journey, rather it should be viewed as processual. It is helpful in this instance to offer some suggestions as to why this type of migration, emerging, as I have argued, as a response to socially determined patterns of consumption and a drive to self-realisation, is sometimes unsuccessful. Clearly this is problematic for Australian policy makers and employers who have gone to both considerable trouble and expense to
attract labour and in particular British labour. This is also not an issue confined to contemporary migration, indeed Appleyard’s study carried out in the early 1960s was commissioned in an attempt to find out why so many British were returning to the United Kingdom.

While up to this point I have mainly been discussing the ‘Aussie Dream’, as it were, here I turn to what for some is a harsh reality. I have already introduced Amanda (Midwife) who used her known love of shoes to express to her husband how serious she was about wanting to leave Australia. Angela (RN), also quoted earlier, had agreed with her husband to give it the customary two years but was fairly adamant that she would be happier back in the United Kingdom. Gemma whom I discussed at the beginning of this chapter in regard to her frustrations at being unable to find work had previously lived in one of the Eastern states and her happy memories of this time were a catalyst for her subsequent move to Perth with her husband and son in 2007; however, her return has not met her expectations. Both of these women were unhappy in their work situation but for them their unhappiness was compounded by a significant sense of loss in regard to their social situations. Both expressed a desire to be back in the United Kingdom in close proximity to friends and family.

Aside from the lack of employment, one of the things Gemma blamed her unhappiness on was moving from a small village in England to suburban Perth and the subsequent feeling that she was missing a sense of community. That her son had been unable to get into the local school because of a lack of places, forcing her into a fifteen minute drive each way for the school run, was something she felt had compounded the problem as she wasn’t meeting other mothers in the course of her day to day activities such as shopping. Like others Gemma wished to gain citizenship before they left, again citing future opportunities for her son as one of the main reasons. Citizenship aside, she was literally counting down the days until
they could leave. Interestingly, in light of my thoughts on post purchase dissonance expressed in the thesis, Gemma noted the following:

I would definitely say, well I can think of two ladies who go to lunch who would go home in a heartbeat but they are not brave enough to say and they stay here for the sake of their husband’s and their children. I think it is really sad and I mean they are the ones I probably get on with best ‘cause they’ve told me, I mean one of them has been crying on my shoulder in the toilet and I just feel so sad I just say why don’t you just say [and they say] “oh I can’t everyone will think I am stupid, I am a failure.” I said you are not a failure but it is very sad, and also a lot of people on British Expats [WBDF] are not as happy as you might think ‘cause I have met them.

This apparent denial of the problem fits with thoughts around post purchase dissonance, which suggest that consumers try to avoid the negative aspects of their purchase and/or emphasise the positive.

Stella was one of the lunchtime ladies’ who was quite critical of the whingeing that sometimes went on at the lunch noting as in her comments below that it was not really what you need to hear. She started by telling me that she found some of the sentiment on the WBDFs quite depressing and went on to include the lunchtime meetings in that sentiment.

Stella - I find that if I do read it [WBDF] I get really quite, it depresses me because whinge whinge moan moan whinge whinge whinge moan. I just want to take myself away from that because if I am having trouble coping with it myself I don’t want to hear. Like, Deirdre and I can sit up in the corner and have a whinge and a moan to each other but I wouldn’t then go and like spout that to everybody sat at the
table on a Thursday. If I was feeling a bit low I probably just wouldn’t go. I’ve had a couple of weeks, only a couple of weeks. It’s very rare where you know I’ve probably been a bit premenstrual or something and thought I don’t really feel like sitting down there and you know I feel miserable and I’ll probably bring everybody else down so I don’t go. I dunno it’s just, it does irritate me when people moan and moan and groan and that is what we are there for you know to like support each other and stuff but I think, you know you then get to the point where you know the people that do it just because they do it. Do you know what I mean? There doesn’t seem to be any like substance behind it is just like oh well they just moan anyway and whatever you put in- front of them they are going to moan about.

**Gillian** - And maybe don’t even realise they are doing it.

**Stella** - No that is it, I did have one girl there that goes down there I won’t mention any names but I did actually say to her for god sake shut up will you. You are not going to find that here, and you are not going to find that here, and Deirdre has done the same thing with somebody, she’s said you are not going to find everything you want in Woolworths. And you know if you want things that badly go to the Poms shop ‘Taste of Britain’ or whatever and go in and spend your ten dollars on Hellman’s Mayonnaise or whatever it is you want, you know you just have to don’t you.

It becomes apparent in the quotations above from Gemma and Stella that there are differing ways of handling settlement issues; Gemma who was unhappy herself felt that more honesty would be beneficial rather than
bottling things up and adopting a stance of denial, while Stella had more of a put up and shut up attitude, feeling that the moaning of others compounded your own uncertainties.

Stella was not the only one to suggest it was easy to get caught up or should that be dragged down, in the negativity of others; it was also as discussed below a factor in the discontent of Rose’s husband. Rose, interviewed in late 2006, was what is often called a ‘ping pong pom’ as she had already moved to Australia and returned to the United Kingdom, before returning to Australia in 2004.

**Gillian** - And you mentioned on the phone that you’d been out here before?

**Rose** - Yeah came out in 1990 [...] and we did permanent residency then because he was over the age of 25 which meant he couldn’t have a work permit for one year and so we had to apply for migration then and it was so much easier than what it is now and so much cheaper then. We applied in the October, visas came through in the April, and we left the next October. We arrived in Australia on the 1st of November 1990. And this time around we arrived in Australia in December 2004.

Yeah so we just travelled around spent 6 months in Melbourne 6 months in Sydney and 6 months in Perth and in between we travelled all around but we never applied for citizenship at that time which looking back would have been easier to do. We enjoyed travelling around; it had its ups and downs of course, like anything. One thing I did find hard was at that time we were in Perth and the weather was awful in October and we were living in a campervan, cause we travelled round in a camper
van, and having a letter from home where my friend had qualified as a mid-wife because she had done that extra training she’d had another baby they’d moved house she’d learnt to drive she’d done everything you know she’d changed, things looked really ohh!(expresses surprise). You know that is what made us go back, as well as family. You felt that things were moving on over there at home compared to what we were, you know it is raining you are sat in a camper van and her life had moved on and you thought even though we’d gone around Australia ours hadn’t gone anywhere because when we moved back we had to start all over again. Lived with my in-laws for a while then we moved into our house and had to start from scratch again. And it is hard, people move on, your friends move on. I couldn’t get a job where I’d worked before because at that time the NHS weren’t taking new nurses on due to money, funding all that. I ended up going to a completely different place to start work and having to make new friends all over again and then we just carried on with our lives there and had a son and then my husband decided he wanted to come back and I didn’t.

Gillian – So what does your husband do?

Rose - he’s a fitter by trade but he was a warehouse manager prior to coming out here. He said ‘oh I’d like to come back’ he was fed up with England, and I said oh I’ve just had a kitchen, 20000 pounds of renovations done on a kitchen, I had the kitchen of my dreams. We’d just finished doing up the house that we were living in and the only thing we needed left was to buy a new three piece suite and a television and the whole house had been decorated
from top to bottom even the garden done as well, so it was an upheaval. I was settled in my job and I had friends and I used to go out for lunch and things like that but I did say to him it would be Australia or bust this time because I am not doing it again. We applied on my nursing, I vested an interest in a job on the internet at [hospital name and department] and that was in October, had the interview in November over the phone, got accepted for the job and we hadn’t even started our application for the visa so we applied in the Jan and got our visas through by the Aug. I came out as an independent skilled migrant cause I wasn’t prepared to work full time for two years yeah If we’d been sponsored we’d have probably come out within a three month period rather than a six month period but I wasn’t prepared to be. They offered it to me several times several e-mails they sent asking me telling me we could sponsor you make it easier but I didn’t want the commitment of being in the one job when I got here. They have you for two years, and I thought no way.

In the above excerpt from my interview with Rose we can see that there are various factors at play in regards to migrant settlement. For Rose herself employment was not a problem because as noted she had come out on a skilled independent visa and had been fortunate enough to be able to choose her hours; as I quoted in Chapter Six Rose was only working 38 hours a fortnight. Interestingly in relation to the theme of consumption, which runs through the thesis, Rose and her husband’s return to the United Kingdom after migrating in 1990 was at least in part due to a feeling that her friends were progressing to the next stage of their lives. One friend, Rose noted, had moved to a new house, done further training to enable her
to become a midwife and had another baby. These things left Rose feeling left behind although notably on her return they were, at least initially, still out of reach. In the first instance she had to stay with her in-laws and then was forced to move away from friends and family within the United Kingdom in order to secure employment. Nevertheless Rose expressed that she did settle in eventually and, as she said, acquired her ‘dream kitchen’, a marker it seems that return to the United Kingdom had been successful. At this point, however, Rose’s husband declared his desire to ‘try Australia again’, stating that he was ‘fed up with England’.

Unfortunately for Rose the return to Australia was not a cure for her husband’s feelings that the grass might be greener and she finds herself again in a position where he is considering returning to England for the second time. Rose gave various reasons for this, including her husband’s discontent at work, his feeling that everything was expensive here in Australia and also the fact that he was working with a fellow UK migrant who was similarly unsettled.

**Gillian** - So would you say that you feel quite settled here?

**Rose** - Yes

**Gillian** - But you said that your husband doesn’t?

**Rose** - Oh (sighs) I think it must be a man thing because several men I have spoken to are all the flipping same. I think women are better at making friends than men […] His first job he thought he was treated like dirt, the pay is not very good at all for the men here, the pay is actually less than the UK for him. I think he’s, they just find it hard here.

I think going back to the UK [husband had recently made a visit] made him realise what we do have
here, the lifestyle we do have here. Less traffic for a start, even though the pound seemed to go a lot further than the dollar he felt, he realises what we’ve got here and he wouldn’t change that. But then he does get days where he’ll come home from work and he’s actually working with a guy from Fife just now and they’re [colleague and his family] thinking of going back, they’ve been here for two years. You know he comes in [to work] with negativity about ’my mortgage is high and this and that’ and it sends my husband on a downer […]

So you have to keep him buoyed up. I think I ain’t going back. […] I said we’d be going back and we’d be starting all over again and we’ve done that twice now you know going back and starting again and coming out, no way we ain’t starting again it’s ten thousand pounds every time you want to ship everything across. No. If he goes back he goes back alone (laughs). He say’s oh wouldn’t you come with me? And it’s no.

So, like Stella feeling that whingeing at the lunchtime meetings and on the WBDFs drags you down, Rose at least in part attributes her husband’s discontent on a sympathetic ear in his workplace. In unison, the relationship between these colleagues, where they were constantly moaning to each other, compounds the problem in Rose’s eyes.

Michelle is the final ping-pong pom in my cohort but has also immigrated most often.

Michelle - We came out the very first time, cause we’ve been back and forward a bit, in 1989 I was in my late twenties and my husband was a few years older. We came out on my visa and it took a long
time for my husband to settle. It was both our
decisions to come in the first place but we only ever
intended to come for two years. [Two years was
commonly spoken of as a good amount of time to try
Australia out.] I started working probably the
following week of arriving and he didn’t actually get
a job a permanent job until five months after we got
here and that in itself unsettled him of course. He
didn’t like that job and he stayed there for a year and
then we got to the point of thinking well we said
we’d give it two years we’ll perhaps just pack it in
and so that was in 1991 we’d never bought a house
here, we were just renting we were very sort of
transitional we were not sure what we were doing.
So we went back to England but it was the time of
the Gulf War and it was a big recession and it was
just a bit of a nightmare and so we thought no we’ll
just come back here [Australia] again for a few years
and so we came back later in 1991. I mean it was
only a few months and then we bought a house and
he tried a few other different jobs, he was in
marketing in England, reasonably high up, and
found it very difficult to settle here.

We were sort of still not quite knowing what we
were doing, still the family pull and trying to then
fall pregnant thinking we really we can’t be putting
off a family forever because of our ages and then I
was aware that if we need to have assisted
reproduction treatment we’d be better off here than
in the UK so this sort of led on to oh we’ll stay a few
more years and try to get pregnant. It took two and a
half years, eventually we got there and then we had
our son. At the time [husband] was really still
messing about with his job not really quite sure what
he wanted and had tried different things and I of course was on maternity leave and the bottom line was that he then thought I’ve had enough I want to go back to England, so that was in 1999. I really wasn’t keen on going back I thought it was the wrong thing to do with a young baby I just thought we’d be totally unsettled. But we went back anyway and we lasted less than a year, and as much as it was nice in some ways to be close to the family we’d been away for 9 years and you can’t really slot back in as easily. It is harder to slot back in, and so we came back in 2000 and since then everything has been good we’ve never really looked back. I mean you still miss the family but we know now that we are better off the children have got a better future here and we almost put work as a second sort of consideration. I suppose it was more thinking of the children and the children’s future and things and a better lifestyle and stuff.

**Gillian** - Now you said that your husband struggled to settle initially. Do you think it was just job related?

**Michelle** - No, it wasn’t just job related it was em the UK as well not so much family but just, yeah I don’t know really, I guess it is just the whole countryside environment area locality to Europe lots of all that sort of thing really which I missed as well. But I didn’t dwell on it as much as he did. He really used to get focused on these things and em but now since we’ve come back and yeah I suppose it is just being over there for nine months and realising that the grass is always greener on the other side because when you are working there you are not seeing all the things that you are missing anyway, you can’t
live in the area you want to live in anyway because there is no work and where you are living it is so busy and I think. I mean I still feel that probably if ever we won a huge amount of money we would possibly go back to live in the UK. We’d have to have an awful lot of money to be able to afford to enjoy the things that we enjoy. I mean it was financial definitely that brought us back here because I wasn’t prepared to go back to work full time and put [son] into day care full time. There was no point when we had been trying for two and a half years to conceive and if we had stayed in Britain we would have had to do that because it is just the cost of it all. And nobody over there could really see that that was a problem it was all well it’s okay you can put her in day care it was just a different. I think in Britain they seem to live to work whereas here you are more work to live I think that is probably more the focus. Two friends of mine who I trained with they both emigrated last year and they are both working full time and they can’t quite get round the fact that Mums here want to meet for coffees and do things because they are so used to the British way of just work, work, work. One is a midwife and one is in surgical and I am sort of saying can you not maybe cut your hours because they are so stressed and so busy but financially they can’t afford to at the moment but it is something that they have always done, they have always worked full time. So I think it is that different mindset that in Britain you just assume that you are going to work full time and that is just it. Where as I’ve been here for 9 years and saw that I didn’t have to do that and I didn’t want to do that, not that I am lazy, I just wanted to spend time with my son you know so that is basically
Michelle’s assertion ‘I still feel that probably if ever we won a huge amount of money we would possibly go back to live in the UK’ is telling. It speaks to the main argument of the thesis, that central to the way these British migrants imagine their migrant trajectories and possibilities is the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not afford them. Michelle concedes that for herself and her husband the decision to remain in Australia is a financial one.

Discussions on what people miss about the United Kingdom while they are in Australia and their reasons for homesickness or unhappiness are always fraught with tension. As noted above in relation to Gemma and Stella those who are unsettled feel the need to vent and those who like it here tend to feel that the naysayers should put up or shut up. In one WBDF thread where the original poster asked what people missed about the United Kingdom the following things were popular choices: friends and family, long summer evenings, cheaper shopping and more variety in the shops particularly of higher quality ready made meals such as those from Mark and Spencers, Indian food, and local pubs. As already discussed in Chapter Four these things may seem trivial and given the tone of some of the responses many migrants themselves thought so, dismissing these responses as whingeing. In the context of homesickness, however, these trivialities or minutiae can be quite significant. A friend once described homesickness to me as a feeling of heaviness deep in her core, something, which she had never experienced before, at that time she struggled to see any positives in Australia. Although she is now more settled, and appreciates Australia for the opportunities she sees her children having here in particular, I think it is fair to say that nearly ten years on, thoughts of living in the United Kingdom are still never far from her mind. Like Michelle and her husband quoted above there is a significant chance that
were things financially equivalent they would return to Scotland. As Yeoh notes:

Even in cases where transnational subjects move with relative ease, affordability and even finesse...they remain (unevenly) embedded in friendship networks, workplace relationships, cultural norms, and personal or family lifecycle projects, which limit or inflect their mobility.' (Yeoh 2005, p.410)

Arguably, as middling migrants, those in my study were all able to move with relative ease but as Yeoh contends this does not grant them immunity from the disruption that migration entails. Clearly, for some, such disruption is too great to overcome and they return to their country of origin.

Burrows and Holmes (2012, p.111) also recognise that ‘[p]ursuing this dream life can result in disappointment’. They state that ‘The dream did not include dealing with the heat, mosquitoes, commuting to work, finding “a decent pub”’ the list goes on. In other words these migrants are experiencing a post purchase dissonance; their pre-migration expectations are dissonant with the reality of their post migration lives. They rightly suggest that more research into what constitutes the dream is required. A more realistic view of migration, which does not deem it something that ‘others’ do, may contribute to a greater understanding of the challenges it poses. There is little doubt in my mind that many of those I talked to had little idea that work would be such a different experience for them here in Australia. At the same time I am not sure that they could have been expected to factor this potential disappointment into their migration decision-making. The variables are too many; some who are happy in their work have said that they work with a good bunch of people; leaving the
attainment of a ‘better life[style]’ subject to such inconsistencies as one’s shift pattern.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to establish a connection between the idea of this particular migration as a consumption good and the notion of post purchase dissonance, which is common to the study of consumer behaviour and which I believe manifests in this cohort of migrants particularly in relation to their experience of work or labour in the host country. There are potentially many areas of migrant life in Australia, which can, and do, conjure feelings of post purchase dissonance or buyers remorse. Many of the migrants in the cohort included in this study were dismayed at the cost of living, particularly the house prices here in Western Australia. Missing family and friends was something which many expected but not to the degree with which it hit them upon migration. Uppermost, however, in the migrant narratives when it came to the negative attributes of migrant life in Western Australia was work or labour. This was the source of much frustration, exacerbated, I argue, by the expectations of an easy fit which accompany these migrants and which are the norm in the host country. This chapter, as with Chapter Six, does raise questions as to the ability of British migrants to integrate into the Australian way of life, something which, as I will discuss in Chapter Eight, is ironic given the pressure on immigrants to the UK to do so.
CHAPTER EIGHT - The Irony of immigration

On Wednesday the 21st of May 2008 I was in Paris’s Charles De Gaulle airport en-route to the United Kingdom from Australia, heading home to my family for the first time in 2 years. We had arranged our flights to tie in with a trip my sister-in-law and her family were making, to Euro Disney near Paris, and had spent a couple of days with them at the resort. At the airport we were having the obligatory browse through the newsagency when the headline, on a European edition, of British tabloid newspaper the ‘Daily Express’ caught my eye. While it was the headline ‘Immigration Soars to New Record’ which caught my attention, it was the subtitle, 'It's no wonder two million Britons have moved abroad', which really struck a chord. The article went on to state that 'Almost 1.2 million foreigners have been told they can stay permanently since 1997...During the same period, almost two million Britons have left the country fed up with failing public services, rising crime and the spiralling tax and cost-of-living burden.' There was no suggestion at all throughout the article that these Britons were now themselves foreigners and immigrants elsewhere. Neither was there any apparent recognition of the irony of such an article featuring in a European edition of a British newspaper printed in Belgium, and catering for the large amount of British living and working in Europe.

I begin with this vignette to highlight what has been called the ‘irony of immigration’ (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006, p.49); the irony identified being that emigration from the United Kingdom has, on the whole, drawn far less attention than immigration to the United Kingdom. The newspaper
headline discussed above, in the introduction to this chapter, provides a blunt example of this ongoing tendency to normalize emigration from the United Kingdom at the same time as apportioning the blame for things such as ‘failing public services, rising crime and the spiralling tax and cost-of-living burden’ to those who chose to immigrate. A further irony was, as noted, that this headline appeared on a European edition of the newspaper printed in Belgium, and therefore was presumably targeted at Britons living, or at least holidaying or working in Europe.

In this, the penultimate chapter of the thesis, I explore the idea of the irony of immigration and I suggest it is one worthy of more attention. Not least of all in light of the assertion that ‘very often and perhaps most fundamentally, irony is a questioning of established categories of inclusion and exclusion’ (Fernandez & Taylor Huber 2000, p.9). As the thesis is largely about inclusion and exclusion, topics common to any discussion of emigration and immigration, irony seems an appropriate concept to continue with. The chapter aims to highlight the irony that abounds in relation to the popular rhetoric about immigration, something that occurs, in relation to this particular migrant cohort, in both the United Kingdom as the sending country and Australia as the receiving country.

The chapter initially looks at the idea of privilege in relation to the migrants in my cohort but also as an attribute of migrants more broadly. It then moves on to look at narratives of decline and the notion of white flight. I argue that rather than white flight it is more appropriate to focus on white privilege; something, I argued earlier in the thesis, which has been a constant feature of Australian society since the arrival of the British in 1788, but which largely goes ignored. Finally the chapter discusses citizenship and goes on to connect these areas to the notion expressed in the Whingeing Pom that as a British migrant in Australia it is possible to have the best of both worlds, to be ‘having your cake and eating it’ as the
magazine states it, surely a fairly obvious connection to consumption and clearly ironic given the rhetoric surrounding migration in the UK and Australia which is increasingly returning to a requirement that migrants assimilate.

In the conclusion to their report Sriskandarajah and Drew write of Britain's immigrants and emigrants that:

The vast majority of both groups want to better themselves and their lives through the migration experience. Yet, while a Briton moving abroad is seen as part of the natural order of things, the movement of an immigrant into the UK is often seen as a major departure from how things should be.

(Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006, p.91)

This is not only the case in the UK, as stated earlier in the thesis there is a continued, sense on the Australian side of British immigration being part of the natural order of things particularly when compared with arrivals from other countries. I argued earlier in the thesis that this has a strong historical context, Jayasuriya talks of a lingering hangover from the post second world war days when ‘anglo-conformity’ (1997, p.60) remained the desired outcome of immigration policy, but arguably going back much further as I proposed in the introduction. In both the sending and host countries then, this particular migration is normalised, a privilege, which at the same time ironically, imparts certain invisibility on it.

I have discussed in previous chapters the idea proposed by Eisenstadt (1953) that migrants leave due to inadequacy and insecurity in the home setting and the focus has until now tended to address inadequacy, as I have said a driving force in the migration decision making for these migrants is the ability to consume in ways which life and opportunity structures in the United Kingdom did not afford them. This chapter looks a little more
closely at the idea of insecurity, which feeds much of the rhetoric surrounding immigration to the United Kingdom. These claims are often exaggerated (King 2002), in the manner displayed in the newspaper article with which the chapter opened.

Mulvey argues that during the years of the last Labour government in the UK (1997-2010) a situation arose in relation to immigration, facilitated by intersections between government policy, public sentiment, and media interests, whereby an ‘atmosphere of perpetual crisis’ was created (2010, p.450). For Mulvey, the eventual result of this was that ‘[n]ew and long term settled migrant communities were portrayed as not having the values of the British population’ (Mulvey 2010, p.451), and further, that there was a shift from a multi-cultural rhetoric to an assimilationist one. This is then the context for the newspaper headline discussed at the beginning of this chapter a context where immigration is something ‘others’ do.

In Australia a similar turn, from the multicultural rhetoric of the 1970s towards a more assimilationist tone, has occurred. While this was undoubtedly connected with the period of Howard’s conservative government from 1997 onwards it was continued under the auspices of the Labor party when they succeeded in 2007. Of course it should be noted that multiculturalism remains the official policy in Australia.

For Carrithers (2012) exaggeration or ‘hyperbole’ is an important component of irony. Irony it is argued can be found in the interaction between different or competing realities or certainties (Fernandez & Taylor Huber 2000; Carrithers 2012); the more vehemently a certainty or reality is expressed, that is subject to hyperbole, the greater the potential for irony (Carrithers 2012). Arguably the topic of immigration is one which is often addressed by hyperbole, terms such as ‘swamped’ and ‘flooded’ are commonplace and this has certainly been the case in both the UK and
Australia yet they are directed, in these two countries at least, to particular
groups of migrants and in the Australian context this does not generally
include the British.

Privilege

Throughout this thesis I have noted ways in which the migrants lives,
which I describe and analyse are viewed as privileged. Amit suggests that,
‘what drive all forms of movement are the potentialities unleashed by
expectations and experiences of asymmetrical distinction’ (2007b, p.8).
While it is recognised that those who migrate tend to have a comparative
advantage over their peers (Torresan 2007, p.106), one that can take many
forms; educational, financial, and social support among others. The
asymmetrical distinction in the case of these British migrants is rooted in
their position as the charter group of migrants, added capital arising from
the shared history.

I have already emphasised the historical continuities present in the story of
British migration to Australia, in this I concur with Schech and Haggis who
state that '[t]he imperial imaginary is the backdrop against which the
British migrants construct a familiarity through a centring process in which
they operate as the normative benchmark' (2004, p.184). As already stated
the privilege afforded to the British in this migration is largely borne of the
colonial history and I propose that there are at least vestiges of a colonial
habitus, which inform British migrant decision making to this day.

As discussed in Chapter Two, habitus functions in relation to a field. Fields
may be cultural, occupational, institutional etc. Here I propose that there is
a colonial habitus, which I would argue functions across various fields in
which the British migrants investigated operate. Where the colonial habitus
has been written about (Dhareshwar 1989; Srinivas 2013) it is associated
with a colonized subject position rather than a colonizers subject position. It is less common, to my knowledge, for the term to be used in regard to the habitus of the colonizer, although Hindess (2005) does talk of what has been called a ‘Western habitus’ summarised as ‘a belief in Western superiority coupled with a liberalist political doctrine’ (Hillier & Rooksby 2005, p.27). That there is more recognition of a colonized habitus is commensurate with my earlier observations that the dominant are less likely to be the subject of scrutiny than the dominated. This thesis contributes to a potential rebalancing of that trend.

**Ethnicity**

Throughout the thesis I have said that it often appears that British migrants are not thought of as migrants in the popular culture sense of the word, this is normally in the sense of an omission rather than something that is stated outright, but there were two particular occasions during the research when this was brought home to me more directly. The first was during an interview with Patricia (RN) who told me that on one occasion at work she was fetching a brochure on migrant services for a client and suggested half jokingly to her colleague that she should maybe take one herself. Her colleagues response ‘sadly, you are the wrong colour’ brought it home to Patricia that she was not categorized in the same manner as the clients she was helping, and her colleague verbalized what for many is the crucial difference.

Patricia’s experience is closely related to one detailed in a post on one of the WBDFs. The post was made in response to a request on the forum for long term updates and offered a summary of one particular family’s first seven years in Perth. In one subsection labeled ‘Settling in’ the poster writes: (NB the post is copied exactly as it appears on the WBDF)
We always knew it would be hard starting again in a new country and boy we weren’t wrong. The first few weeks felt like a holiday then we started to get everything organized – Tax file number, medicare, driving licences etc.

This still makes me laugh when I think back, but I had discovered via the internet before we had left that there was a migrant resource centre in Mirrabooka that would assist new migrants settling in, so we decided to pay it a visit to get some info etc. The first indication that it wasn’t going to prove much use was there were lots of files with information but none in English! The other was the guy we dealt with had limited English and struggled to find us the info we wanted and then gave us the wrong information. I can still see his bemused face, obviously thinking what the hell are these people doing here!! Word of advice – don’t go there!

As I have previously stated, in the rhetoric of otherness in Australia the British do not have ethnicity and ethnicity is implicitly linked to immigration in this context as it is in Britain. I proposed at the beginning of this chapter that a colonial habitus remains and the above examples are illustrative of this continuation. Alba (2005) talks of ‘blurred’ and ‘bright’ boundaries between migrant groups and their hosts. Arguably for the British in Australia the boundaries are blurred to a point where they are almost imperceptible. For other migrant groups, particularly those of non-English speaking background and those who are visibly different, the boundaries are bright, as demonstrated in the examples above.

The tendency to normalise white, English speaking migration to Australia, or in Alba’s (2005) terminology to blur the boundaries between migrant and host, is documented in the work of Jon Stratton (2000:34) who argues
that:

Absorbing British migrants directly into Australian culture, and, since the advent of multiculturalism, into the ‘Anglo-Celtic’ core, helped to preserve the ideologically naturalised status of the members of this group as non-migrant Australians.

In an article on what he sees as an increasing tendency among British migrants to identify as ethnically British Stratton (2000:34) sees potential for a ‘deconstruction of the core/periphery system of official multiculturalism’. For Stratton the ‘self-ethnicisation of the British upsets the claim to a homogeneous ‘Australian’ culture that is set against the variety of migrant, ethnic cultures’ eventually, he proposes, leading to ‘a dismantling of the distinction between core and periphery’. While Stratton’s proposal has it’s attractions, in particular the idea that the core periphery distinction could be abolished, I agree with Hammerton and Thomson (2005) who struggle to see the increased ‘self-ethnicisation’ which Stratton talks about, apart from in a small vocal minority. Certainly, as I shall discuss further below, many still see themselves as British rather than Australian but not in the sense that this precludes them from being included in the ‘Australian’ culture Stratton talks about. I posit that their privileged status, which I have talked about at length, and which is illustrated in the *Whingeing Pom* in the rhetoric of the ‘I Possie’ feature mentioned in Chapter Four, allows them to be situated in both camps.

To illustrate my point above I offer some opinions on Britishness in Australia from a discussion I started on one of the WBDFs. I have abbreviated some of the posts for brevity and clarity but with consideration of the posters point of view.
Hi,

I am studying British migrants as part of my PhD research ... I wonder if anyone would care to give me their 'tuppence' worth on what it is to be British in Western Australia? As someone who migrated in 1998 and is an Aussie citizen too I'd still say I probably feel more British or Scottish than Australian. I think for me that is largely tied up with the fact that my family is still in the UK but I'd be interested to hear how others feel about it. Also is Britishness (or Scottishness, Welshness, Englishness, Irishness, in no particular order) something you've thought about more since you migrated?

ithelpdesk

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 5:17 pm

Never ever been British that went out with Captain Cook, Waterloo and the Boer War. The majority of Welsh, Irish and Scottish would, I guess, never see themselves as British. A good number of English however may see themselves as British but that could be because they always appear to cling to the "Great" in Britain and the "Empire" both of which

28 I chose the username Gathering Info for my membership of both discussion groups I joined in order to be up front about the fact that I was collecting data. I have left the other user names as they appeared on what is a public forum.
are long gone, dead and buried.

Now that should start a good debate.

The response above from ‘ithelpdesk’ to my original post that being British went ‘out with Captain Cook’ etcetera may be an exaggeration but there is evidence to show an increasing tendency particularly in Scotland and England to no longer identify as British (Park et al. 2013).

The responses continued as follows with ‘Loch Lomond’ confirming the point above about identifying primarily as Scottish rather than British.

LochLomond

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 6:10 pm

I still consider myself Scottish, though not the extent I would have a Scottish Football club's logo, pennant etc sitting on the parcel shelf of my car...sorry, it's just one of the things that annoys me here. I don't remember seeing that even when living near Glasgow. I suppose it identifies that person’s heritage and that they are proud to show they are from a particular town in the UK or shows allegiance to a Football Club. Yes, I know I don't really have room to talk calling myself Loch Lomond!!

I have been here 3 1/2 years this time (first time I was here was from 1998 and left in 2001), I still see a lot of "Britishness" in the way things get done here - particularly in business and beaurocracy (sp?). I can also see Australia trailing the UK by 10 -15 years, what I mean is events happening, country development etc. My wife is an Australian and can't understand me going to the British Shop in Joondalup and then the butcher in Currambine to get
my "fix" once a month. I also travel back to Scotland once a year (to see family mostly), however next year I will be eligible for Australian Citizenship...will I take it....who knows!!

Hope this is the type of thing you were looking for.

Gathering Info

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 6:38 pm

I probably do first and foremost identify as Scottish so I can see where you are coming from Ithelpdesk. At the same time there is a lot that we have in common with our counterparts throughout the UK, which for me goes a bit beyond just what we associate with the individual nations. I am thinking of things like the TV programs we grew up with as just one example, which gives us a shared experience.

Gathering Info

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 6:51 pm

Thanks LochLomond,

All replies so far fit the bill and I have to admit that my research so far has included at least a couple of packets of oatcakes! I may also have to drop by the butcher in Currambine now that I know about it. Generally I don't think too much about things like that but if the opportunity comes my way I am happy to indulge.

Gillian
ithelpdesk

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 7:17 pm

As for flying flags on your car from the country you have deserted for a better life I just don't get it either Loch Lomond.

Could it be the old Rule Britannia spirit rising again? Whatever happened to integration?

This response, which agrees with a previous post that it is questionable to display UK football club paraphernalia is connected to the idea that it is a betrayal of the cosmopolitanism which some associate with making a move abroad. It is made more interesting by Loch Lomond’s own observation that his user name could easily fall into the same category, as could his visits to the Scottish butcher. Similarly Hammerton and Thomson note a tendency for return migrants to the United Kingdom to use Australian names for their houses with at least one of their participants noting the irony that “people seek to remind themselves of places they’ve tried so hard to get away from!” (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p.314). Evidence at least in part that these migration and return migration decisions are seldom straightforward, rather for many remain a source of contention.

The subsequent poster picks up on this contradiction by justifying her and her husband’s personalised car license plate and implies that it merely demonstrates their allegiance to a football team. Below Martin and Karen argue that their club stickers have facilitated their settlement process through providing a talking point with other football fans both Australian and British.
Mark and Jackie

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 8:11 pm

My husband has one of those football number plates......... the only reason we have it is that they are more affordable here, not the squillions they would ask in UK.

We consider ourselves both British and Australian. We are season ticket holders at the footy but my husband watches the real football as he calls it on the internet. He has never been back in the 6 yrs we have been here and has no desire unless his team gets to the cup final.

I love the way Australians call a spade a spade and don't pussyfoot round issues. I work with many cultures and encourage all of them and like the way they are accepted here

I think our children have encouraged our integration into Australia as they are young enough to embrace it.

I agree that Australia is 10-15 yrs behind in some of the culture here, but I like that. I dread to think it might become the UK I left 6 yrs ago.

My brother is heading out here in January with his family and he says the reason is he sees hope here for his children and a life, not the doom and gloom of the UK.

I'm afraid that Britishness is often defined in the way the Express or Mail reports the news each week […] and it saddens me that the rest of the world sees it
that way too.

Gathering Info

Posted: Wed Nov 14, 2007 9:16 pm

It is interesting what Jackie says about the doom and gloom aspect of reporting on Britain as I heard someone from the UK police on the radio this morning saying that negative and exaggerated reporting of social problems actually compounds them. It is a long time since I have lived there so can't comment on what things are like in the UK currently but there is definitely a lot of negative press and I think this is arguably where the governments push for some sort of collective 'positive mental attitude', for want of a better expression, comes from.

Whether they should be directing their resources elsewhere is another matter and I better not be the one to go off topic!

Keep the responses coming you are giving me loads of food for thought, thanks.

T&B

Posted: Thu Nov 15, 2007 2:53 pm

Hi

We have been here 18 months now and I have personally found it quite refreshing how a lot of the barriers between north/south, scots/english, have been left behind, probably due to everyone being in
the same boat. People tend to be a little more tolerant than say if you met on holiday in the Med somewhere for two weeks.

As for Britishness I don’t think I will ever lose it. Have met some out here who seem very eager to adapt very quickly. One couple we met ran the UK down something rotten with broad aussie accents, only to learn they were English and only been here a couple of months. But at the same time others have been here 20 years plus and you would swear they just got off the plane.

Each to there own, personally no matter how long I stayed here, I think I always feel more British than Aussie.

MartinandKaren

Posted: Sat Nov 17, 2007 1:37 pm

I think the football car sticker thing is not people flying their British-ness every where. I have (and did have in the UK) car stickers for LFC. I have no intention to say "look at me...I'm English" because of it.

The same as Eagles and Dockers fans don't have the intention to say "hey, I'm Aussie" for flying their clubs colours.

Plus I have met Aussie Liverpool fans who also have similar car stickers. I and they do it only to show support for the club.

It has also been a good way to expand my social circle as I have made a few friends here because of
As for any other part of being English, I will always think of myself as English no matter where I am in the world, as that is what I am. I will however respect Australia for the life it gives me now. If I ever become a citizen, which is the plan, I would do it for 1 very important reason. The right to vote.

I don't think anybody should forget where they come from but at the same time it shouldn't be thrown in the face of their hosts.

AusBos

Posted: Sun Nov 18, 2007 6:34 am

What an interesting topic! My tuppence or ten cents worth....

I have been here since 1992 and consider that this country has given my family and me the life-style we enjoy, we settled very quickly and love it here. My 24-year old daughter considers herself Australian and my 20-year old son ‘feels’ far more English or British; when he went back after ten years as a 15-year old, he felt ‘at home.’ I think there is a strong possibility he will end up back in the UK in the future, as it holds more of what he wants out of life.

I consider myself both Aussie and English, in as much as I love so much about each country. I love living here, but I love going back to the UK on visits (note, I did not say ‘home’) and I drink in all the stuff I miss when I get there (things like the history, the countryside, the sense of humour). If I was in
some far off land and I heard “Waltzing Matilda” it would tug on my heartstrings the same way as, “Land of Hope and Glory” once did – it still does, but to a lesser extent these days.

I really miss Europe too, but I think that’s the history thing again, I just love European culture and history. I support Australia fervently in everything – until they play England, but I still want to see the Aussie’s do well in the contest, providing England wins!

I think my ‘confused’ outlook on what it is to be a migrant is great! I am in a win-win situation, I am living in a country I love and can afford to visit another country I have so much connection with reasonably regularly. Could I live in the UK again, absolutely, but I would much prefer to live here. If I won Lotto, I would live in the UK in its summer (ahem....), and travel to Europe every now and again. I would consider that arrangement as the perfect lifestyle.

Interestingly in the posts then there is little sense that there is an increasing self-ethnicisation, particularly as British, the responses concur with other research which sees a decline in numbers of people self-identifying as British, rather they associate more readily with their national identities, English, Scottish etcetera (Park et al. 2013). Even when ithelpdesk suggests that the British football club stickers and number plates may be a case of a rise of Rule Britannia he is countered by subsequent posters who see it as merely support for a football club rather than a statement about national identity. Ausbos declares that he has a ‘confused outlook on what it is to be a migrant’ but sees positives in that. Expressing sentiments in line with those in the Whingeing Pom, which I discussed in Chapter Four, Ausbos
states ‘I am in a win-win situation, I am living in a country I love and can afford to visit another country I have so much connection with reasonably regularly.’ Although this is clearly only a small sample it is comparable with the attitudes I encountered at the lunchtime meetings and during the interviews.

Despite failing to be convinced of Stratton’s proposal of increased ‘self-ethnicisation’ I do agree that including British migrants in the core of Australian society is problematic. As seen in the discussion above there is clearly a sense that they are at liberty to self-identify as they choose and as is so often stated to enjoy the ‘best of both worlds’. This in itself would not be so problematic were it not occurring in the context already described where this privilege is not available to other migrant groups. Rather many are under increasing pressure to assimilate and to avoid behaviours deemed ‘un-Australian’ contentious as that terminology is. Clearly, and as I stated in the introduction to this thesis, the continuation of British position as the charter group compounds the disadvantage experienced by other groups. Further I believe that it may invalidate their own migration stories which can, be dismissed merely as whingeing by a group of arguably privileged migrants rather than offering important insights into the migration experience overall and its complicated intersections with the concepts of race, class and gender which, albeit in different ways, affect British migrants as they do other groups.

For (de Lepervanche 1980, p.34) a focus on ethnicity is problematic as it hides class differences. She argues that ‘there are in fact no ethnics, only ways of seeing ethnics’ and proposes a refocusing on class. I agree that this would be a more effective way of breaking down some of the assumptions embedded in the core periphery model than waiting for the self-ethnicisation of the British to reach its zenith; something I struggle to believe, would change perceptions of other ethnic groups, particularly in
light of my argument that the British attitude retains a healthy dose of its imperial or colonial habitus.

So we can see above that practices of inclusion and exclusion are in operation in contemporary Australia and again I argue that we can utilise the lens of consumption to shed some light on how these operate. I return to the work of Douglas and Isherwood quoted earlier in the thesis where they refer to the processes of inclusion and exclusion apparent in household provisioning (1978, p.57). This is an idea, which can be extrapolated beyond the household, as previously demonstrated in the Australian political context. Pauline Hanson, one time member of parliament and leader of The One Nation Party famously said in her maiden speech to parliament of what she saw as problematic levels of Asian migration to Australia: ‘if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country’ (Australia, House of Representatives 1996, p. 3859). Echoing similar sentiments former Prime Minister John Howard said in a speech during the 2001 election ‘[w]e will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come’ (2001). The recent political situation in Australia is then arguably similar to that in the UK described earlier in the chapter where an assimilationist rhetoric still holds sway and migrants continued to be othered. Like Douglas and Isherwood’s housewife what we place on the table for our guests says as much about ourselves as it does them. If, as is suggested, that the ‘rightful measure of poverty is not possessions but social involvement’ (1978, p.xiv) then in this respect the women in my study are affluent. As British migrants in Australia their combined capital in all of the instances which Bourdieu proposed: economic, cultural, social and symbolic give them access to the Australian social world which is unprecedented when compared with, for example, new NESB arrivals.

Both Douglas and Isherwood (Douglas & Isherwood 1978) and Miller
(Miller 1995a) highlight the way in which reduced or limited access to goods implies or even enforces a lesser position in society. That Australia remains fairly accessible to Britons is indicative of and perpetuates their privileged position here. If you compare the experience of those I described in Chapter Six in relation to feelings of being under valued and deskilled with that of for example a Sudanese doctor forced into taxi driving as his qualifications go unrecognised, then the former appears trivial. It is possible, however, that the way to get recognition of this situation for skilled migrants across the board, within a situation where hierarchical judgements of migrants remains, is by including discussion of the migrant experience as it is expressed in the dominant group (see Favell et al. 2007) and offering comparisons, something which I argue can be done at least in part by utilising a lens of consumption.

**Narratives of decline**

At the same time as talking about privilege I also acknowledge prejudice and some of the thoughts expressed in what has been described as a narrative of decline. My observations at the beginning of this chapter go someway to explaining the prevailing attitudes at least in the British tabloid newspapers, which tend towards the political/ideological right. Unfortunately this all too often becomes reduced to an anti immigration rant, something which can easily be found on the WBDFs. While I feel it is necessary to include this I do not want to over emphasise it particularly in relation to my cohort, who overwhelmingly talked of the positives of Australia as a reason for moving rather than the negatives of the United Kingdom. Similar sentiment, regarding migrancy decisions that hinge on the positives of destination countries ‘rather than the negative attributes of the UK’ was noted in research by Sriskandarajah and Drew (2006, p.ix).

Benson and O'Reilly (2009, p.610) talk of 'narratives of decline', which
lifestyle migrants use to justify their migration decision but caution that these often do 'not reflect objective reality’. They go on to argue, however, that:

[T]he exaggerated comparison between life before and after migration provides a rationalisation of this form of migration extending beyond the discussion of economic privilege. Through such narrative accounts, the migrants challenge their depiction as consumers, emphasising instead their substantial personal reasons for migrating.

In this area the women I interviewed seemed to differ from those discussed by Benson and O’Reilly, and Hoey (2009; Hoey 2005), among others writing on lifestyle migration.

For the respondents in my study the narrative of escape or refuge seemed absent, not least of all because most appeared to be hedging their bets stating that ‘if we don’t like it we can go back’, for me this is not suggestive of escape. Of course as stated earlier in the thesis, the lifestyle migration literature from which Benson and O’Reilly’s article emerges did not seem sufficient to describe those in my cohort and a significant factor in that was that those I talked to were migrating as skilled migrants, they were, unlike those in Benson and O’Reilly’s work, fully expecting to be resuming their established careers upon arrival in Australia. There was not the same requirement of them to rationalise the decision, as there appeared to be for the ‘lifestyle migrants’ Benson and O’Reilly studied. There were occasional references to an idea of escape but they were not at the forefront of discussions. For example one participant who at first suggested that increasing crime in the United Kingdom was among her reasons for moving went on to qualify that neither her nor her family had been directly affected by crime and that it was ‘just something that you read about in the
newspapers’. Worth noting here is the possible connection between the narratives of neglect and the concept of post purchase dissonance, while Benson and O’Reilly report that their respondents try to distance themselves from a consumption narrative I suggest that in some cases migrants talk down their pre-migration lives in justification of their ‘purchase’. It is recognised that consumers take action to avoid post purchase dissonance by looking for and emphasising the positives in their purchase and denying the negatives.

It is also worth noting that the views expressed in the WBDF thread above regarding leaving the ‘doom and gloom’ of Britain were not predominant in the interviews I carried out and again that may be related to class. It has been noted (Schech & Haggis 2004) that middle-class Australians are more willing to embrace postwar immigrants than are members of the working class, an indication of how middle-class identities are more closely aligned with ‘civic’ as opposed to ‘ethno-nationalist’ forms of identity (Pakulski and Tranter 2000 quoted in Tranter & Donoghue 2007, p.178). Whether this is equally pertinent to the British is debatable but would prove an interesting avenue for further research.

In a historical look at the notion of white flight we can see a similar discursive framework at work with subtle variations in the detail pertaining to the particular period. The villains of the piece for Appleyard’s respondents were ‘West Indians and “Teddy Boys”’. As he notes

> Fear of unemployment, the 'bulge', class distinction, the West Indians and "Teddy Boys" were specific instances of inadequacies in their social setting, often convenient pegs upon which to hang their justifications for emigrating (1964, p.171).

Today similar sentiments might be directed towards Muslims (Poynting & Mason 2007) and ‘Chavs’ (Nayak 2009). The ever-changing nature of who
the ‘other’ actually is can be seen reflected in the Australian immigration rhetoric. This shows a steady progression through different ethnic groups as they move from abhorrence to acceptance; this has been the case in relation to the Irish, Italians and Greeks, and more recently the Vietnamese.

In the WBDFs one of the popular tabloid newspapers in the United Kingdom *The Daily Mail* is often referred to as ‘The Daily Fail’ as it is seen to promote such a negative view of the current state of affairs in the United Kingdom, this is something many migrants are critical of. One return migrant now in the United Kingdom after living in Sydney and a couple of other spots for about 21 years noted in a post of the British media that it is ‘still miserable, doom and gloom sells papers, Daily Fail still spouting its racist crap’. There is no doubt of course that a section of the British migrant population that are in strong agreement with this tabloid view of Britain ‘going to hell in a hand basket’ as one poster put it, but it was not one which permeated the discussions I had.

Crime is another factor that sometimes stands alongside immigration as a reason for departure from the United Kingdom. However, only one respondent suggested strongly that crime had driven her and her family from the United Kingdom. Even then she noted that the decision was fuelled by the fact that they had bought a house in what was considered a nice area in the city they came from and had been disappointed, although mainly with the location of the house itself rather than the area overall. She noted that they had been considering the move to Australia for over a year and in that time they had started to see things in the area around them decline. In part therefore, as she rightly acknowledges, utilising crime as an explanation for the move may have been fuelled by her attempts to justify the move. She felt quite guilty about leaving her parents and parents-in-law and of taking her children away from their grandparents but justified her decision as being for the best, in particular for their children. The excerpt
below from our conversation shows how she described their reasons for moving:

I think as time wore on we realized we were doing the right thing because I was becoming more and more unhappy… we were having a bit of bother with kids throwing stones at the window had the tyres slashed and I saw someone get beaten up outside our house with baseball bats, drug related. I just didn’t like the way what was a really really nice area was turning into this no-go zone, it was just really, really, horrible and I saw as my children were getting older, they were only 4 and 5 at the time, as they were getting older I thought I do not want my children growing up like this. They are quite nice kids and I know everyone says that but they are nice natured and everything and I thought if they start hanging around and start going out they are going to end up the same ‘cause you know peer pressure and everything else. That is the only route they are going to go down because that is the only route in the area, they can’t fall into something different because there was no activities for them to do. I mean the park was kept nice because the residents paid for the park and everything and it was all secure there was security and that but they couldn’t get to the park because they couldn’t cross roads they couldn’t without us taking them so we were only safe within the boundaries of our house and I just felt it wasn’t the right place to be bringing them up. And as time wore on [the city] just seemed to be getting worse and worse. I mean it could have been influenced by the fact that we did want to come here so we were seeing more and more things wrong with where we were living but we’d already agreed that if we didn’t
get into Australia we were going to move, we were going to go to Spain or somewhere else. You know we looked at other options like NZ and [husband’s] got family in Canada. So we felt that we weren’t going to stay anyway, our minds were made up that we needed to make a move and Australia was the first choice.

The recognition in the statement that ‘it could have been influenced by the fact that we did want to come here so we were seeing more and more things wrong with where we were living’ corresponds with the research discussed above (Appleyard 1964; Benson & O'Reilly 2009), which suggests that migrants may overstate problems in the country of origin or understate those in the destination country as part of a justification for the migration decision making but it is interesting that this migrant was aware that she was potentially doing this, evidence of reflection on the decision making process, something which is important when we are thinking of the respondents being engaged in cultural projects of the self.

‘The British in Australia are all here to work and make an effort to fit in’

While narratives of decline are often used to justify migration we must recognise the irony in that the decline is frequently blamed upon immigration and migrant populations. This was evident in the opening vignette where the newspaper sub-headline noted ‘no wonder two million Britons have moved abroad’. Having discussed some of the reason for leaving the United Kingdom I now turn to ways in which British migrants justify their presence in Australia. As I have said, the irony of immigration in this particular context is that emigration from the United Kingdom is taken for granted while immigration to the United Kingdom is problematised to a staggering degree in popular culture. I offer two
excerpts from my field notes to highlight the way in which this is presented in day-to-day speech. The first conversation occurred on St Georges Day 2008 in an English pub in the centre of Perth.

Being St Georges day I though it a good idea to venture to a local drinking establishment and see what the English to get up to on their Patron Saint’s day, one which there is talk of making a public holiday in England in an attempt to bolster national pride. The Australia Day model has been cited as a fine example, however, I think there may be a few too many complaints from the other nations in the United Kingdom were the 23rd of April to be chosen.

I headed for the Moon and Sixpence on Murray Street in the CBD and was pleasantly surprised at the effort, the place was bedecked in Red and White balloons, a sandwich board at the door stated that they were offering a St Georges Day special of Fish and Chips. There was certainly evidence of Englishness in the form of various men wearing cricket or football tops and numerous St George’s flags hung around the establishment. Sitting observing I was aware of a proliferation of English accents I was also struck by how much the interior décor did resemble that of an English pub even if tending towards the themed recreations which are the feature of many high streets in the United Kingdom.

I wandered over to a table with three guys, wearing a noticeable
combination of red and white, and a similarly bedecked woman, she
was wearing a t-shirt with a St Georges flag on it and a red cardigan
on top. The guys had t-shirts with England written on them or the
three lions and one had a flag draped over his legs. I was relieved
that one of the men was accompanied by his wife as I certainly felt
more than a little bit awkward announcing myself as an
anthropologist, and a Scottish one at that! My fears were unjustified
they were a friendly bunch and more than willing to talk, although I
sensed that it was less my skills as a researcher and more the
alcoholic drinks sitting on the table in front of them that facilitated
the conversation.

We talked about their reasons for coming to Australia and as usual
the commonly cited ‘better lifestyle’ was aired. It was also suggested
to me that the migrants in the United Kingdom were often less than
willing to integrate in the same way as British migrants to Australia
were and while I pointed out the paradox of this statement being
made in an English themed pub celebrating St Georges Day I was
assured that they were more than willing to embrace Australia and
while none of them were yet citizens they felt that should they,
hopefully for all, become one, they would always be on this one day
of the year English, because that is their heritage.
On another occasion I was in suburban Perth\(^{29}\) and recorded the following exchange:

After leaving the Fox and Hound a British themed pub I wandered into a nearby shop with a Union Jack in its signage. The person behind the counter told me they had been in Australia for 21 years and had no desire to go back to the UK although they did return on business fairly recently, something, which did not change their sentiments. They then went on to complain about the amount of immigrants in the United Kingdom and only half joking said there will be more Poms here in Australia in 10 years than there are in some areas of the United Kingdom. When I pointed out that we were both migrants here in Australia and that it was essentially the same thing I was offered the oft repeated justification that the British in Australia are all here to work and make an effort to fit in, this despite the name of the shop which undoubtedly reflected British heritage and the Union Jack featured in its signage.

In both of the situations reported above there is evidence of the belief held by many British migrants that they just fit. This has been reported elsewhere (Schech & Haggis 2004) and I believe is connected to the idea that ‘[w]hites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average and also ideal’ (McIntosh 1988, p.4). This observation also sits well with my argument in Chapter Four that British migrants have an air of superiority and further, as I continue that argument, by proposing that there

\(^{29}\) Names and location have been changed.
is an active colonial or imperial habitus that informs their migration trajectories. What I am trying to convey here is the idea of an institutionalised, unearned privilege, which is pervasive and informs the British imaginary to the extent that we see its effects in what has been called the irony of immigration.

**Citizenship**

In 2005 the UK government introduced the Life in the UK test, something followed in 2007 with the introduction of Australia’s citizenship test. Both are stated by their respective governments to be about preparing migrants for citizenship including having at least a basic knowledge of the English language. These tests were introduced in their respective countries due to a perception that migrants were not doing enough to ‘fit in’, something aired in the excerpts from my field notes above, but the ambivalence towards citizenship which I found among my respondents suggests that a test is unlikely to change much. Arguably the ambivalence, or maybe more appropriately complacency, is borne out of the significant capital, in all its forms, which many British migrants are privileged enough to bring to Australia.

Burrows and Holmes (2012, p.113) cite a post from a WBDF in their article on return migration which is an example of someone advising migrants to hold out for citizenship in order to keep their options open. I heard of many people who had either lived to regret not doing so, or on the other hand benefited greatly from their parents decisions to stick it out. Based on these stories I advised my youngest brother to do the same and after approximately six years in the country he left within a year of his citizenship being granted, finally giving in to feelings of homesickness and a sense that despite the positives Australia did not offer what he wanted in life. I have a friend whose flight out of Australia was booked on the
evening of her citizenship ceremony and who has returned briefly on two occasions in the five years since but has no intentions of living in Australia again. On the other hand, another friend now aged around forty had parents who had come to Australia under the assisted passage scheme and passed up the opportunity to become citizens as they were returning to the United Kingdom and did not think it necessary. My friend has now gained citizenship herself but her mother was limited to visiting on holiday visas despite her own eligibility for citizenship in the past. She would have dearly loved to join her daughter here but it is not financially viable on a tourist visa and subsequently my friend, has returned to the United Kingdom, albeit with citizenship for herself and her Australian born son, so they can be closer to family support networks.

Angela (RN), when discussing her unhappiness at being in Australia, revealed that she and her husband had an agreement to give things 2 years after emigration rather than make any hasty decisions. Despite the fact that it was her qualifications that had enabled their migration and that for some months after their arrival in 2007 she was the main breadwinner in the family she noted that ‘Well 2009 is ‘D’ day for us but in all honesty I probably won’t go back, I’ve got to weigh up what is best for us as a family not just me’. At the time of interview migrants were eligible to apply for citizenship after two years [now four] of permanent residency and this was a goal many had in mind. As Angela stated ‘we’ve always said we would wait ‘til we got citizenship otherwise the whole thing has been a complete waste of time because, although we might never use it, it would be for the kids and they would always have that choice’.

Elizabeth (RMHN) was also aware of the two year point as being important and for her that centred around a desire to include her eldest child in the citizenship process as she details below:
**Elizabeth** - October, that will be my two years. Yeah we definitely want to do it before my eldest gets to 16 so he’s got no choice in it. ‘Cause I know to him it sort of doesn’t seem very important, he’s like what do I need that for, and he could, just as like an awkward thing, say no I don’t need that so we want to apply before he gets to 16, he’ll turn 16 in December, so we’ll get it in, just so that even though he never needs to use it it is just there as a backup. I’d hate for him to go back to England and then sort of like five years later want to move anywhere in Australia and he can’t do it. It would just be stupid to my mind.

**Gillian** - So would you say form your point of view it is just a pragmatic, it’s just a practical thing to have that option rather than a sense that you really want to become Australian

**Elizabeth** - A bit of both I think, there is certainly the sort of like pragmatic approach about being able to come and go and go back to the UK for a while and not have to worry about return visas all of that sort of stuff so it will be easier in that sort of respect. But I also do feel, it is sort of like, if I am paying taxes and being part of the society to not have a say in it in terms of voting is really important to me. I feel I think that’s awful that although you are resident in the country and that you have no voice really so that would be important and also to acknowledge that this is where we are making a decision to stay and so we’ll take up citizenship. Though my husband would never in a million years take up English citizenship even though he’d lived in the UK longer than he’d lived in Ireland he would never. I mean that would be that would just be too
much.

**Gillian** - And is that just that English Irish rivalry?

**Elizabeth** - Yeah it would be, he could not bring himself to be…

**Gillian** - But he’d be happy to become Australian?

Elizabeth - Yeah

**Gillian** - It’s quite interesting isn’t it

**Elizabeth** - Oh you know if I even had suggested to him, he comes from quite a Republican Nationalist family so it just wouldn’t be thought of.

**Gillian** - And did he just move to England originally for work

**Elizabeth** - For work yeah, it was very much an economic migrancy for him, 17 and no real opportunities and so you sort of say to him well England’s been very good to you, good job and lovely family, [laughs] but still it would be just that step to far.

**Gillian** - We are citizens now and I am like you, I do think it is quite important to be part of it but I can’t imagine that I’ll ever feel anything but Scottish.

**Elizabeth** - Yeah and I don’t think it will take away my Englishness either I don’t think I’ll be anything other than English, I don’t think I would ever feel truly comfortable saying I was Australian. Australian citizen I think would be different but I will never be an Aussie and I don’t think my children will ever feel totally Australian, I think they’ll be totally integrated but I don’t think. I think
probably that perhaps their children will do but I suppose that all depends on who they marry and they may feel more English than I do. Some people become very, hanker after roots don’t they… like Irish out of Ireland are always more Irish than the ones that live there, you have a sense of grounding

Having talked about citizenship and her own family this particular participant went on to vent some frustrations, detailed below, about people feeling unsettled but sticking things out to get citizenship and therefore keep their options open for return at a later date. Of course this could appear as somewhat contradictory in light of her statement above that she wants to make sure that her teenage son becomes a citizen while he is included on the family application as Elizabeth does not trust him to be proactive about citizenship if it is his own decision.

**Elizabeth** - I guess sort of the citizenship I find it frustrating that people stay just to get their citizenship I find that bizarre although I can understand the pragmatic approach to it I just find it all wrong really it just sort of irks me a bit that. I mean I am not saying that people should stay for ever and ever but when you are very clearly, and people do post that they are only staying to get their citizenship and then they are going to book their flights back home, well if you’ve got no intention… Then people say well what about our children, to give them the opportunity but I just think it is very unfair to a country to take up that citizenship without ever going to be a part of the society which you say you are going to be…It’s having your cake and eating it and it just doesn’t feel very right I don’t think, I don’t know if I was put in that position if I would bother I don’t know maybe it would be
important to do it, I suppose what some people might feel is it’s important cause if they’ve invested so much of themselves into migration it is their only way of taking something back that is meaningful perhaps.

Elizabeth makes the connection which I have done earlier in the thesis with consumption, when she talks of those migrants who have no desire to stay but are happy to take out citizenship ‘just in case’ as ‘having their cake and eating it’. She further alludes to the idea of a purchase when she talks about migrants needing a return on their ‘investment’ and utilising citizenship as such.

Carol a midwife had a slightly different take on citizenship from Elizabeth and others, myself included, who feel that we would never really feel Australian.

**Gillian** - Do you feel like a migrant?

**Carol** - (Pauses) No, not really I’ve got my Australian citizenship now so I am an Australian, so no I don’t

**Gillian** - And so do you feel Australian?

**Carol** - I think, yes I do

**Gillian** - Do you feel quite committed to Australia?

**Carol** - Yes I do, (pauses) maybe because I live in [a suburb named after a place which is ten minutes away from where I used to live [in Scotland]. Nearly every street name is a Scottish name maybe that does give you a bit of a comfort zone, even though I am in Australia I have got a little Scotland in Australia and most people in [the suburb] are either Scottish or English. I don’t know, maybe that does
make it easier because you are always chatting to someone who is from the same area able to share experiences. But I feel like an Australian at the same time, I don't know if that makes any sense?

The historic ties that we have mentioned throughout the thesis have clearly functioned in Carol’s adjustment to Australian life to the extent that she feels quite comfortable in identifying as Australian now that she holds citizenship. In part she reports that this comfort comes from being surrounded by the familiar in the form of place names and fellow migrants. Again we can see the privilege, which extends to these migrants who can retain their sense of the familiar without fear of being accused of being ‘un-Australian’ or for that matter of forming ‘ghettoes’. This is a privilege that is not afforded to all migrant groups either in the UK or in Australia.

Kelly was one of the few non-nursing interviewees in my study; I met her at the regular lunchtime meeting and she had a fairly casual attitude to gaining citizenship, as demonstrated below, but one which she acknowledged to me was influenced by financial pressure due to ongoing home improvements and a significant health issue for her husband, the costs of which were at that point an unknown.

**Gillian** - You haven’t got citizenship yet have you?

**Kelly** - No, we can actually apply for it, I’ve gone as far as looking at the website and that is as far as I’ve got […] I mean we’ve planned to do it but it is not an immediate priority we are not heading back you know, our visa is actually valid until 2010 so there is no immediate rush, we can apply for it whenever. So we want to get a few more things out of the way first.

**Gillian** - So do you have to do the citizenship test?
Kelly - Yeah I think we will have to do the test but we still qualify for the two-year thing. [...] We were quite lucky we got here before it went to the 4 years. I mean we are not in any rush to do it but it is something we are going to do particularly after 2010 if you have to get return visas and stuff like that it just saves a lot of messing around.

Kelly’s statement that it ‘just saves a lot of messing around’ demonstrates ambivalence about gaining Australian citizenship that it appears comes from the lack of necessity. It is quite possible to remain in Australia on a permanent residency visa indefinitely albeit with the requirement to have a valid Resident Return Visa if one wants to travel overseas, the ‘messing about’ as Kelly termed it, which is not a requirement of Australian citizens.

Kim (RN) spoke in very fond terms about when asked about their family citizenship ceremony and was particularly happy that they had been able to share the experience with her husband’s brother and his wife who were visiting from the UK at the time.

Kim - Yeah we did that, it was nice actually because we did it when [husband’s] brother, his first brother he’s got two of them, came over em a couple of years ago now, about two years ago it was an amazing citizenship ceremony, it was quite funny really because [daughter] had got this book through school and she knows her national anthem you know inside out back to front and she was training us on the national anthem me and [husband] we knew it but not as well as her [...] And all these people were there who couldn’t say their name couldn’t sing the anthem and we are stood their [...] and the mayor said to this one lady what is your name? [Kim explained that the lady did not understand the
question] and she went on like this for about five minutes and obviously this poor lady she was an older Czechoslovakian woman she was about 60, 70 and it said on the form you have to speak English and understand English and all these people from the crowd were shouting to her in her own language what she should say.

Kim’s observations on the Czech lady who was gaining citizenship at the same time betray the sense of entitlement which many from the United Kingdom feel about their place in Australia and which I have mentioned earlier in the thesis. In stating this it is important to note that I am not suggesting that this is a conscious sense of entitlement. Indeed, as Schech and Haggis note of their participants:

In suggesting that our subjects' perceptions of themselves as familiar newcomers to Australia are informed by the hangover of empire, we hasten to emphasise that this hangover is not obvious to them' (2004, p.183).

As Kim states below she was also aware that citizenship was important for her daughter but at the same time acknowledges that her daughter’s sense of belonging is somewhat challenged by the fact that she has a different country of birth from her parents and even at ten years old shows a need to retain a sense of being English which it appears she believes connects her and her parents.

[My husband], he is quite an English, English man and he used to go you know pheasant shooting and on hunts and all that kind of thing that snobby southerners do as I call them. So I thought when he came to Australia, I gave him three months, I thought he’d be on the plane after three months away back to England and I didn’t think that he’d do
his citizenship but he did it and he did it whole heartedly, I think more for [daughter] than his self but em and he has now sort of relinquished his British passport. All those things that I never thought he’d do and he really loves Australia really loves it […] so yeah we are fully-fledged citizens with our little badges. [I was also given a small lapel pin at my own citizenship ceremony].

**Gillian** - And would you say that you feel quite Australian?

**Kim** - Em, not really, I mean I love Australia, I love Perth I love the Australian people the way of life but I suppose really I will always be English, I’ll never get rid of this accent em and I don’t think. I just wonder if an Australian’s daily routine you know in their homes and things are the same as mine you know in the sort of walking around with no shoes on and spending hours at the beach and I am still doing a lot of the English things like cleaning your house, cleaning your windows and they don’t seem to put as much priority on that as on the beach and things so I don’t think I’ll ever be Australian but I love the country and I think as [daughter] gets older she’ll be Australianising me I think because the things they do at school and the accent that she’s now got and all those things. And [daughter] says to me well I am English too because I’ve got English blood and I say yeah but you are Australian because you were born here and she says but I know I am half Australian and half English and so that is hard for her I think

**Gillian** - I guess she doesn’t want to be different from you and her Dad.

**Kim** - No it is quite a strange thing because she gets
While as I have stated white privilege plays a significant role in the story of British migration to Australia the phenomenon is not without its complexities. Belonging among these migrants and their children is not a given nor is it a uniform experience as the quotations above show. Including their stories in the overall story of Australian immigration is important both for the British migrants themselves and other migrant groups whom it often seems are not afforded the same levity in regards to expressing their sense of belonging, either in Australia or in the UK.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to highlight the fact that white privilege exists in the story of Australian immigration and more specifically that British migration to Australia continues to be informed by a colonial history that has established British migrants as the charter group, against which all other migrants are judged. In relation to the theme of consumption running through the thesis evidence is presented to suggest that Australian Citizenship is part of the package British migrants purchase in their migrant decision-making. Their position as the charter group and the shared history between Britain and Australia creates a situation where the expectations of British migrants regarding their post migration life in Australia are high, and in some cases prove to be unrealistically so. I argue that normalising British emigration and specifically migration to Australia in this context is ironically detrimental to both the British migrants and
other groups who are set apart in this normalisation.
CHAPTER NINE - Conclusion

This thesis arose out of my own concerns that as a British migrant in Australia my experience was treated differently from other migrant groups, that in effect it was normalised. Similarly, as an emigrant from the United Kingdom my experience of mobility was not equated with many of those who chose to move to the United Kingdom. There is clearly a migration hierarchy in operation, with different attitudes to migration or movement depending on country or region of origin and choice of destination. However, this often goes unacknowledged, hence my decision to study a group who benefit greatly from their position in the migration hierarchy. I wanted to draw attention to this mobility so that it is included in the overall picture of international migration and not taken for granted.

The findings of the thesis are located in the broader migration literature, which has undergone significant changes in the last fifty or so years. The emergence of a feminist strand to migration studies in the 1970s placed greater recognition on women as immigrants in their own right but arguably still emphasised their role in the private or domestic sphere (Hondagneu-Soleto, 2000). The 1990s saw what is recognised as the transnational turn (emerging from seminal works from Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992 and Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton-Blanc 1994) and its emphasis on migrant networks (e.g. Levitt 2001) and family care exchanges (e.g. Baldassar & Merla 2014) operating on a day to day basis across national boundaries offered new space for the inclusion of women in the migration story.

Arguably at the beginning of the 21st Century there is still some way to go in regards to a more inclusive theorisation of migration. As Kofman (2004) has pointed out, while there has been much greater acknowledgment of female migration, the movement of skilled female migrants, either as
primary visa holder or accompanying person remains under researched. The findings in this thesis offer a modest contribution to that area of study.

In addition to contributing to the discussion of gender in migration, the findings highlight what I argue is a taken for granted migration trajectory. The phenomenon of British migration to Australia is in no doubt statistically significant, despite this it remains under represented in the migration literature. This omission has occurred, as argued in the thesis, due to a sustained focus on labour migration and on what Amit (2007a, p.68) has called the ‘ethnic template’. The omission is further exacerbated by the invisibility of those in ‘the middle’, generally overshadowed by attention to opposing ends of the migration spectrum comprising, at one extreme disadvantaged labour migrants and at the other the global elite (Favell, Feldblum & Smith 2007). At the same time as this lack of academic recognition, representations of migration in the Australian media tend to talk about migrants in a manner that does not include the British or indeed other Northern Europeans. Similar situations have been reported elsewhere (Torkington 2010), as has the lack of acknowledgement of emigration from the United Kingdom, the latter despite very negative press coverage concerning recent migrant arrivals in the United Kingdom (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006).

This thesis sought to make a contribution to redressing that imbalance and to make those, whom I have argued are invisible ‘middling’ migrants, visible. The issue has been addressed by approaching the phenomenon of British migration to Australia through a lens of consumption, despite the fact that the structural underpinnings of the migration lie in Australia’s thirst for skilled labour. This approach emerged from the narratives of the participants in the study who overwhelmingly privileged lifestyle over labour in their migrant decision-making. While, as already stated, this migration is ostensibly a labour migration; upon analysing the migrant
narratives I became aware that this is not how the migrants themselves frame it. Work is, for most, merely a means to an end. Rather, central to the way these British migrants imagine their migrant trajectories and possibilities is the ability to consume in ways life and opportunity structures in Britain did not allow them. As one respondent noted ‘a nurse doesn’t have a house like that in the UK, no way!’

The research began with a focus on the settlement experiences of British migrant women, specifically nurses, who had arrived in Perth, Western Australia from the year 2000. As explained in Chapter One the migration of these women follows a long history of emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia beginning with the expansion of the British Empire and continuing through the famous call for Ten Pound Poms emerging from Australia as it sought to ‘populate or perish’ in the Post World War Two period. Emigration to Australia, I argue, has a significant place in the British imaginary and likewise Australia is accepting of this particular group of migrants to a point that their movement goes largely unquestioned.

How then to explain the migration of this arguably privileged group of English speaking migrants moving within, and with the attendant privilege, of the minority world. Their motivation was reported as being for ‘a better life’ or regularly ‘a better life for the children’ which I argued actually meant a ‘better life[style]’, based on the fact that their pre migration experience was in general a fairly positive one. Little or none of the hardships that are constituent of many less advantaged migration narratives were applicable in this situation. It seems at face value for this group of migrants the expression ‘better life[style]’ can be reduced to sunshine, proximity to the ocean and a four-bedroom, two bathroom, house, but which in reality hides what is a complicated amalgam of consumption, taste and individual identity. In Chapter Two I proposed that utilising the lens of
consumption, that is, shifting the focus from labour or production, as it would appear the respondents themselves have done, offers an alternative approach. Utilizing consumption as a lens has the potential to make the migrants visible in a way ethnicity and class currently cannot due to existing preconceptions or stereotypes regarding white, middling migrants.

I have stressed in Chapter Two that when I talk about consumption in the thesis I utilise it in the manner of Douglas and Isherwood (1978), McCracken (McCracken 1990) and Miller, among others, who as Miller specifically states embrace it as ‘the main arena in which and through which people have to strive towards control over the definition of themselves and their values’ (Miller 1995b, p.277). In this regard I go on to suggest in Chapter Two that we can view this particular migration as a ‘consumption good’ in line with King (2002, p.95). The idea of migration as shopping has been touched upon elsewhere (Andall 1999) but, notwithstanding the modest contribution of this thesis, the idea remains underdeveloped.

I have also suggested in Chapter Two that this particular migration is influenced by a colonial habitus or an ‘imperial imaginary’ as deemed by Schech and Haggis (2004, p.176). While the two concepts may differ they share the commonality of helping to explain a contemporary phenomenon such as British migration to Australia in proper historical context, acknowledging the taken for grantedness of such a context, that is acknowledging that the actors do not operate consciously in regard to the historical context on a day to day basis.

The thesis emerges from an eclectic mix of methodologies, explained more fully in Chapters One and Three, and in that regard it mirrors the migrant experience; as I explored different avenues to unearth the migrant stories I discovered the various ways in which migrants facilitate their
establishment in Australia. I gained a significant amount of information from the Internet and specifically WBDFs such as Poms in Perth and British Expats, as did many of the migrants. I also attended an informal, weekly lunchtime meeting, a grass roots initiative if you like, which emerged out of one woman’s recognition that British migrant women could benefit from some friendship and support. In addition I have drawn heavily in the thesis particularly in Chapter Four upon the Whingeing Pom an irreverent look at recent British migrants in Australia, which in its comedic tone explores many of the issues raised in the migrant narratives. The forty-nine interviews I carried out are clearly also a substantial source of the data in this project and to add to this is the information I have gained through my own experience as a British migrant and the networks of migrants I have connected with over my years in Australia. As anthropologist Nigel Rapport (1994, p.63) has stated ‘social life is an ever muddling through’ and the results of my efforts at muddling through, as these women have done, are presented here in the thesis.

In Chapter Five I talked about the home and identity, demonstrating the importance of home as a physical and psychological entity, something which I believe is likely more significant in the context of migration. Chapter Five also offered some insight into the ways these British migrants established themselves in particular suburbs around Perth and in doing so highlighted the importance of social networks, including both strong and weak ties, in migrant decision making. In addition, Chapter Five, using the examples of the dream home and the swimming pool, sought to demonstrate, in agreement with the work of McCracken (1990), Miller (2010), and Young and Willmot (1957), that striving towards the achievement of ‘ideal’ homes or indeed ‘ideal’ lives is a long established social phenomenon in a modern consumer society borne out of being part of a group as much as it is attributable to individual consumer
requirements.

Chapters Six and Seven continued the theme of consumption suggesting that if there was a source of post purchase dissonance or buyers remorse in regard to migration as a consumption good then for these British migrants in Australia it centred around work or labour. This was certainly reported as the subject of most frustration and discontent, most likely I argue, due to unrealistic expectations. The subjects had expected to miss family and friends and for distance from home to be a problem and indeed it was for many. What I believe they had underestimated, and what the evidence in the chapter shows, is the challenge that working in a different country, albeit an English speaking one with close historical ties, would pose. As I have stated this was a consumption rather than a production led migration with a focus on leisure and therefore the realities of work did not appear to feature highly in the pre-migration decision making and considerations, rather it was taken as a given that work would be similar to their experiences in the United Kingdom. This is in no doubt somewhat attributable to the messages received that British qualifications, trades and skills are much sought after in Australia. The normalisation of this migration has again served to increase expectations to an unrealistic degree.

I completed Chapter Seven with a discussion of return migration something borne out of feelings of frustration and a disembeddedness, which proved for some difficult to overcome.

I used Chapter Eight to discuss the idea of white privilege and highlight the way in which the normalisation of British migration to Australia in both the country of origin and the host country impacts on the overall discussion of migration and immigration in both settings. Immigration is still seen as something ’others’ do. This, I argue, ironically puts undue pressure on the British migrants through expectations of an easy fit and clearly disadvantages those who do not fit the White British mould. This situation
skews the debate on migration focusing on what are seen as its negatives rather than offering a realistic picture, something, which this thesis seeks to challenge. Also in this chapter I suggested that Australian citizenship was an acquisition to be made as part of the immigration package; even for those intent on return to the United Kingdom gaining citizenship was seen as an important ‘thing’ to take away. Citizenship ensured that for those who wanted to return their expenditure wasn’t entirely wasted, they had something to show for it, which importantly might be of benefit to their children in the future or should their own circumstances change.

Strengths and significance

This snapshot of a specific group of mainly female British migrants in Western Australia contributes to a much larger body of work that increasingly recognises the feminisation of migration flows but which to date has focused more closely on those considered disadvantaged (Kofman 2004). The main strength of the thesis is its contribution to the somewhat sparse discussions about emigration from the United Kingdom and British immigration to Australia. In doing so it seeks to challenge the prevailing thought in the United Kingdom, which it is argued, sees ‘the conflation of migrancy and blackness on the one hand, and national belonging and whiteness on the other’ (Walter 2011, p.1298), that is, sees migration as something ‘others’ do. The thesis proposes that a similar feeling persists in Australia and that it is this that allows a situation where British immigration is generally considered unremarkable. I have shown in the thesis that to the contrary there is much to say about British migration to Australia that can contribute to the migration literature. Assumptions of an easy fit and of cultural homogeneity with the host nation hide the varied realities of the migrant narratives, which I have presented here. As Favell et al. argue there is no such thing as ‘frictionless mobility’ (2007, p.19).
Studying these migrants, who in many ways represent the ideal, not only allows us to make comparisons with the more commonly researched groups such as disadvantaged labour migrants but further adds to the conceptual framework. As skilled, white women from the United Kingdom the respondents in this study have certain opportunities, desires and consumption patterns, in common with those of the same class and racialised identities. They are able to make choices but their choices are also affected by cultural and structural factors, something that the thesis demonstrates.

Australia’s reliance on OENMs is well established and any change is unlikely in the foreseeable future (Hawthorne 2012, Schultz and Rijks 2014). Similarly, movement from the United Kingdom to Australia is likely to continue, as previously noted it is the most popular choice among Britons considering a move overseas (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006). It has also been reported that ‘[i]n 2009/2010 eighty seven per cent of all the verification requests from UK based nurses considering an international move were for just four destination countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA – the main countries of the English speaking developed world’ (Buchan and Secombe 2011, p. 17). This validates the choice to study this particular group but also adds strength to the argument for further research in this area, which I will address further below.

Limitations

As with any research this project has limitations. In the first instance, the geographic location in Perth Western Australia is likely to attract a particular subset of British migrants. As mentioned earlier in the thesis Perth is unlikely to be the destination of choice for example for a young professional in banking or finance who would find limited opportunities here when compared to Sydney, more generally recognised as a world city.
Seeking participants for interview through advertisements in hospitals, a hospital newsletter, the WBDFs, and through word of mouth mean that although there is a fairly broad range of sources the sample is not representative. In triangulating the data with that from the discussion on the WBDFs, the Whingeing Pom, and my own experience as a British migrant I hope to have eliminated some of the bias arising from the sampling method. If, as I hope, further research is carried out among British migrants in Australia there are various methods which could be employed to augment the type of data I collected including surveys which would provide a complementary quantitative source. While the limitations mentioned above do not negate the data collected, it is important to acknowledge its specificity.

In regards to the concepts utilised in the thesis there are again clearly limitations. Utilising the lens of consumption has the potential to dehumanise the behaviour or separate it from the realm of the social and cultural such is the influence of economics and the idea of the rational consumer on this field of study. Another negative aspect to viewing the migration as shopping is that it may have a trivialising effect; shopping often being relegated to a private concern and specifically a gendered one. I have endeavoured to emphasise throughout the thesis that this is not an approach I advocate.

In the thesis I have strongly asserted that those in my study are “middling” migrants and I understand that this may be difficult to reconcile with their obvious privilege when compared with other migrant groups. Despite issues of relativity I do believe that it is important to recognise those whose experience may otherwise be overlooked. That their narratives are essentially devoid of any recognition of privilege, nor indeed of any particular allusion to hardship is further evidence that they believe themselves to occupy a position somewhere in the ‘middle’, one which I
argue is under-researched. The women I studied more starkly reveal the core alienating dynamic of mobility across international borders thus the very real need to study these middling migrants.

**Possible areas for future research**

My belief that there is a lack of research on this statistically significant migrant group has been stated throughout the thesis. This omission allows stereotypical notions, not just of British migrants but also of the groups who are ‘other’ to them to continue and sometimes to flourish. It further denies the diversity inherent in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland population and subsequently in its emigrant population. Although I have touched on the idea of a continued colonial hangover informing the migrant experience in this particular location, I endorse the idea of a much fuller exposition and possibly comparison with other Commonwealth nations.

I established early in the thesis that the British remain the ‘charter group’ in discussion of Australian immigration but argued that this contributes to their invisibility as it normalises their presence here in Australia. Things may have improved since Laura Nader (1969) called for anthropologists to ‘study up’ over thirty years ago but if we adhere to the anthropological tenant of holism in our research endeavours we must be open to the study of all groups across society. Comparative ethnography is impossible if dominant groups are left out.

On the theme of consumption I concur with Burrows and Holmes (2012) that further investigation is required into what constitutes the ‘dream’ or ‘better life’ that migrants so frequently mention in their reasons for making the move. Not least of all because this may lead to more realistic expectations of post migration life and therefore reduce the incidence of
post purchase dissonance, which is apparent in this migrant group and possibly, all too often dismissed as merely ‘whingeing’. I believe there are significant reasons for more research into how and what migrants consume when they reach Australia. I have discussed in Chapter Five the importance of the home as a physical entity and used the particular example of the swimming pool as an important signifier of successful migration among British migrants and I believe some comparative research among different ethnic groups on what is important to them in this regard could enhance our knowledge about settlement patterns.

Lastly, in relation to areas for future research I would suggest a broader focus not limited to only female migrants, while I touched upon the stories of accompanying husbands and of some male primary visa applicants there is clearly more to be explored. These men are skilled middling migrants too, not least of all in regard to the language of immigration policy. However, arguably for many their experience is also lost in the focus on knowledge-based industries such as finance, science and IT (Kofman 2012a). Who is telling the stories of the mechanical fitters, electricians and carpenters for example who constitute a significant section of the migrant workforce in Australia?

This thesis is an exploration of recent British migration to Western Australia. It asks migration scholars to be aware of the continued existence of migration hierarchies and to include the full range of migrants in future work. I would hope that this thesis serves to promote a more enlightened view of migration within the core countries. The rhetoric on migration in Australia is often unfairly biased against refugees and asylum seekers who are often dismissed as economic migrants. By utilising the lens of consumption to tell the story of this recent British migration to Western Australia it is hoped to contribute to a more holistic view of migration in general. Likewise migration in the United Kingdom is generally viewed in
the popular press as problematic with little recognition of the large numbers of Britons who settle abroad and are migrants themselves, again I hope that analysing the migration narratives of those in my study and presenting them as I have done in the thesis, as borne out of a need to establish one’s place in an increasingly competitive western world, where mass consumption is the current norm, that I contribute to addressing that imbalance.
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# Appendix A

## Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Visa Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Visa Type</th>
<th>Year of Arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>End 2006</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>VWH, Independent</td>
<td>1990; 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Nursing Agency</td>
<td>Early 2007</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Early 2007</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>~38</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Early 2007</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2002</td>
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