



THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND DISCURSIVE PRACTICE OF PLACE IN LIFESTYLE

MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF STANTHORPE, QUEENSLAND

A Thesis submitted by

Rachael Dimity Wallis, BA, MA

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## **Abstract**

Lifestyle migration, popularly known as ‘tree-’ or ‘sea-change’ in Australia, is a phenomenon increasingly depicted in various media including films, television shows, books, blogs and magazines. Much of the previous research on lifestyle migration has been anthropological and sociological in approach, and has not fully examined the important links to the media so prevalent in late modernity. In contrast, this research is positioned within cultural studies and employs a cultural, materialist and phenomenological approach. Using three methods, textual analysis, interviews and researcher reflections, it examines how selected texts depict lifestyle migration, influence the lived experience, and impact identity. To pursue these foci, textual and discursive analyses of recent lifestyle migration media were conducted. These analyses were combined with semi-structured interviews with 12 lifestyle migrants—using Stanthorpe, Queensland as a case study—and personal reflections of the researcher, also a lifestyle migrant, to offer a fuller, hermeneutical analysis. The central argument of this thesis is that texts create and are created by imagined worlds which influence people to make life decisions that then impact their necessarily emplaced identity. I argue that employing a cultural studies orientation to the field of lifestyle migration, and engaging methods such as discourse analysis, interviews and personal reflections, produces new understandings that reflect the growing importance of cultural texts on the decisions made in our day-to-day lives. These understandings would not be possible using one method alone. This approach both extends and deepens the field of lifestyle migration research and situates it within existing social imaginaries and popular discourse central to the late modern experience.

**Thesis certification page**

This Thesis is entirely the work of Rachael Dimity Wallis except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Dr Kelly McWilliam

Associate Supervisor: Dr Jess Carniel

## Declaration

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

We had a perfectly good apartment in Brisbane, but we longed for quiet weekends away from the noise and traffic. We wanted to live more slowly, to build a fire on a cold evening and watch the sun go down from our porch. We wanted to garden and go for walks and see the seasons turn in nature rather than in shop windows. We drew a circle on a map and looked at all the properties we could afford within that circle, and we were lucky because there was one that was not far from Toowoomba that was relatively cheap because it had no power grid connection. We bought it and set up a solar power system. It did not make a lot of sense to buy a house in the middle of no-where, where we would have to travel miles to visit doctors or pick up groceries or go to work, but we wanted it badly enough that we did it, and we made it work. We grew tomatoes, pumpkins and zucchini, we watched wild birds, we cooked slow meals and read books curled up on the couch. Our friends thought it was a great idea and kept making comments like 'Gee, I've always wanted to do that'. I began to wonder what it was about living in the country that made otherwise normal people do irrational things to pursue a dream of a different life that was inconvenient and less sustainable than city living with its public transport, shorter distances and smaller footprints. It can be hard to justify country living against the benefits of suburban or urban life. I thought it might have something to do with the romantic ideals I had grown up with in television shows such as *The good life* (1975-1977) and *All creatures great and small* (1978-1990), and I wanted to find out more.

Images of the land, the coast and ideas of the rural have long been important to Australian identity and ideas of belonging (Ward 1978; Elder 2007 p. 6; Moran 2011 p. 2158) and it is clear that people choose to move to destinations already familiar to them through media and discourse (Salazar 2014, p. 125). However, it is uncertain what it is about Australian rural life, or the image of rural life, that draws people to change their lives so substantially. It seemed to me, as I started to think about this study, that ideas of rural life can hold an almost mythic quality that resonates with some people, attracting them to the particular ideas of the countryside and certain values espoused therein. Often, these ideas are shared in discourse and popular texts. Previous research in lifestyle migration did not speak fully to these discursive ideas and was not able to answer the questions this research project focuses on:

- How is lifestyle migration discursively constructed in popular Australian media?

- How do these thematised constructions and their related social imaginaries influence the decision to relocate to regional Australia and the lived experience following relocation?
- How do interactions with place affect identity?

To answer these questions, this study examines the discursive formations of lifestyle migration, including a selection of television shows, books and magazines. It aims to understand the role of the discursive representation of place for lifestyle migrants, to contextualise a fieldwork-based case study of lifestyle migrants in the Stanthorpe region in Queensland, Australia. The project uses popular media produced within the last ten years, in English, and created within Australia. The texts are examples of a cultural discourse sharing ideas of the country, moving to the country and life in the country. From this discourse emerge themes that are also present in many other works. It was the themes that emerged from these texts and were later mentioned by the participants that were important to this study, rather than the particular textual examples themselves.

Works chosen for the study include the television series *River cottage* (Season 1, 2013) and *Gourmet farmer* (Season 1, 2010), and the books *Whole larder love* (Anderson 2012), *A year on the farm* (Wise 2014), *A story of seven summers* (Burden 2012), *The simple life* (Hetzl 2014) and *A table in the orchard* (Crawford 2015). Selected articles from the Australian lifestyle magazine *Country style*, written from 2010 onwards, were also included. Obviously, it is possible for Australians to be deeply influenced by media produced overseas, but a delimiter ensured that the project was not overwhelmed by the vast volumes of work on the topic. For this reason, Australian materials with a focus on urbanites moving to the country (a phenomenon known as tree-change in Australia) were chosen. While Tasmania is a favoured choice for tree-change (see Wise 2014; *Gourmet farmer* 2009, Crawford 2015), significant works have been produced in Queensland (Hughes 2008), the state of the case study, as well as those which do not explicitly promote tree-change but share common themes and are situated in a non-urban setting (Hetzl 2012).

Stanthorpe, a rural town in Queensland, Australia, was selected as the site for the case study for several reasons. An inland lifestyle migration destination was chosen for this project because significant coastal migration numbers have meant that these areas now exclude many through rising prices, and there have been Australian studies on coastal migrations (Osbaldiston 2010a and 2010b). In addition, Stanthorpe has been previously identified as an

area with significant amenity (such as services, attractive climate, pretty vistas etc), and areas of high amenity tend to higher than average proportions of ex-urban residents (Buckley et al 2006, pp. 279-280). It also enjoys a healthy tourism market, another factor consistently present in lifestyle migration destinations (Buckley et al 2006, p. 282). These are important features in this selection because they differentiate trends in lifestyle migration from other forms of rural relocation. Emerald, for example, is another inland area in Queensland experiencing high growth, but it does not share these characteristics. Its population growth can be attributed to other factors, such as proximity to mining sites (Queensland Government Statistician's Office 2015). Personal conversations with Stanthorpe residents during early scoping excursions to the area confirmed the presence of potential research participants fitting the lifestyle migration definition used in this study as well as the criteria mentioned above. The town boasts a population of just over 5300 people (2011 census, cited in Centre for the Government of Queensland 2015) and is located 170 kilometres south-west of Brisbane. Its Granite Belt location and elevated situation means that temperatures are consistently cooler than surrounding areas and allow for different agrarian pursuits. Just under 20 percent of the population in this area are born overseas (ABS Stanthorpe Region Data 2013), a point which became important once some of the lifestyle migrants in the project indicated they arrived in Australia from Italy, Ireland or England. It has also recently experienced increases in population and tourism related industries (Centre for the Government of Queensland 2015), factors which help to qualify its place in this study.

My own position as a lifestyle migrant means that I am deeply involved in the life as well as in the research. Although my personal experiences and reflections were useful in the genesis and framing of the research, I needed a way of investigating the concerns of this project that encouraged interaction with other lifestyle migrants, and also incorporated methods for understanding cultural texts together with my own personal reflections. For these reasons, this research is positioned within the field of cultural studies and follows a cultural, materialist and phenomenological approach, engaging with sociological social theory to deepen understanding of the key themes and issues. Cultural studies is concerned with individual experiences in everyday life (During 2007, pp. 1-2; Couldry 2000). It often takes a critical and multi-disciplinary stance and seeks to understand political, social and ideological ramifications within this 'bottom-up' approach. As the research investigates the social construction of meanings to reveal how these understandings influence individual life choices (Carroll & Tafoya 2000, p. 6-8), it also assumes a social constructivist perspective.

Discourse in the form of cultural texts such as those mentioned above and the significance of the role of social imaginaries and imagination in forming attachment to place are the two key sites for exploration. Discourse 'is understood to be a body of knowledge (a way of understanding)' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009, p. 195) that reveals not only understandings but social constructions. Using media practice theory in relation to cultural discourses, as outlined in subsequent pages, means that these texts provide the framework to examine what people do and say in relation to the text (Couldry 2010, p. 41). Media practice theory works with texts yet focuses on the activities of people using the texts (Swidler, cited in Couldry 2010, p. 41). However, in this study, I extend this theory to include the social imaginaries which are shared in discourse so that in effect it becomes what people do and say in relation to social imaginaries which influence and are influenced by discourse. This places a greater emphasis on the importance of social imaginaries – including the themes highlighted in this thesis of escape, abundance and authenticity – to the textual analysis. This approach relates the texts to those who engage with them and enables the researcher to remain open to the unexpected, including data which challenges or confounds. It also enables the project to avoid abstraction and over-determination of the texts, keeping it grounded in the everyday lives of those participants I encountered, and provides a background and context for the case-study. This enables an effective examination of the research questions so that the resulting study produces a unique, complex yet partial understanding of the cultural phenomenon of lifestyle migration and the discursive practice of place. This project's positioning within cultural studies is discussed in greater depth in following sections.

With the texts and case study in place, the project's objectives include:

- Examining and understanding place for lifestyle migrants
- Understanding the role that social imaginaries play in creating a desire to move
- Understanding identity creation, particularly in relation to the role of place

The central argument of this thesis is that cultural texts create and are created in imagined worlds which influence people to make life decisions that then impact their necessarily emplaced identity. The range of discourses that influence people, including the lifestyle migrants in this study, is broad and diverse, and their influence changes as people experience growth and change themselves. I argue that employing a cultural studies orientation to the field of lifestyle migration, and engaging methods such as discourse analysis, interviews and

the analysis of personal reflections, can enable new understandings that reflect the importance of cultural texts on the decisions made in our day-to-day lives.

### **Contextualising the study within lifestyle migration research**

Lifestyle migration is a growing phenomenon, connected to the rise in mobility so crucial to the understanding of late modernity (Appadurai 1996, p. 3). Despite this, lifestyle migration research has lacked a strong connection with cultural texts, preventing more complete understanding in the late modern context. To date, much of the research on lifestyle migration has taken a sociological or anthropological approach (see, for example Osbaldiston 2015; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; Oliver & O'Reilly 2010). This research has been valuable to create definitions and theoretical positions, as well as to situate the field within migration studies, and generate understanding of the social phenomenon. However, it has not sought to understand the cultural and discursive influences that impact the decision-making process of lifestyle migrants in Australia from a creative, subjective and imaginative (yet still analytical) perspective. As forms of media, such as social platforms, websites, blogs, books and television shows, become increasingly ubiquitous and influential in the late modern age (Appadurai 1996; Couldry 2000), it becomes necessary to account for this influence among lifestyle migrants. Lifestyle migration texts, such as those included in this study, reveal contemporary interest in the phenomenon and highlight an ongoing questioning of normative lifestyles by some segments of the population (Hoey 2005; Korpela 2014; Salazar 2011). This questioning leads to an exploration of ideas about fulfilment or 'authenticity' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, pp. 4-5; Osbaldiston 2011, 2012a, 2012b), identity and relationships to place in cultural texts. This additional research is required not only to increase depth of understanding, but also to extend the ways in which to understand the field.

The current academic term for city-dwellers relocating to the countryside, 'lifestyle migration', covers many forms of movement including relocations to the seaside, rural idylls and to 'bourgeois bohemian' destinations (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, pp. 611-613). The word 'lifestyle' was originally understood by psychologist Alfred Adler (1870-1937) as representing individual character structure, but this meaning has changed to now describe 'personal and practical activities' (Elliott 2014, p. 12), with links to cultural belonging and identity (Thomas 2008, p. 683). Ubiquitous marketing in the Global North's current late modern period highlights lifestyle as a pursuit to be attained through consumer goods and services. However, as it is entirely possible to build a satisfying and socially acceptable lifestyle with few material inputs,

consumption must be considered as only one aspect of it (Chaney, cited in Thomas 2008 p. 683). For this reason, lifestyle as it is utilised in this project consists of day-to-day activities combined with values about what constitutes a meaningful way of life; it is an expression of meaning. While the word 'migrant' often refers to people who choose to move across international borders (O'Reilly 2012, p. 1), this study uses the word to distinguish a person who freely chooses to move to a different place, even if this is not an international relocation (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 1). A lifestyle migrant in this project then, moves to a new area to express the values they hold meaningful. This act of relocation begins a lifelong process for that person as well as those around them.

### **Contribution and significance**

Lifestyle migration is a significant area of research that is reflective of the growth of this phenomenon itself. Work to date has concentrated on defining lifestyle migration (Benson & O'Reilly 2009; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014 pp. 2-4), reviewing migrant motivations (Hoey 2005, 2014; Korpela 2014; Maile & Griffiths 2012), and discussing possible theoretical frameworks to account for the phenomenon of lifestyle migration (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; O'Reilly 2012, 2014). Important fieldwork projects have contributed understandings within lifestyle migration that have furthered the field tremendously (for example, Benson 2013). Much of the early work focused on the tangible, rational and pragmatic, such as impacts on communities and environments (Argents, Tonts, Jones & Holmes 2010; McManus & Connell 2012). There is now increasing acknowledgement of the importance of social imaginaries and imagination (Appadurai 1996; O'Reilly 2014) in the motivation and creation of lifestyle migrants. In the last few years, international lifestyle migration research has begun to examine how imagination and social imaginaries affect or impact lifestyle migrants, and their importance has recently been highlighted by several leading researchers (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 18; O'Reilly 2012; O'Reilly 2014, pp. 211-234). This project engages with, while expanding on, this work and the work of members of the international Lifestyle Migration Hub (Korpela 2015), many of whom are key researchers in this field.

The project employs a social constructivist analytic perspective to understand socially constructed meanings and the implications of gender in rural spaces, and can contribute to this under-studied area (Little 2006). Cultural studies has been 'overwhelmingly interested in the urban constructed as the general' (Driscoll 2014, p. 7), and this thesis aims to go some way to understanding the specifics of rural life. It also seeks to address that 'there have been few attempts to explore the significance of the notion of gender identity to the study of rural

gender or to a broader theoretical understanding of social relations in rural communities' (Little 2006, p. 7). Jo Little also states that 'there has been little questioning, within the adoption of the concept of gender identity in rural studies, of the validity of continuing to refer to 'rural women' or 'rural men' as a specific, definable group' (2006, p. 7). This is another area this thesis expands upon as it seeks to answer how rural place specifically impacts identity, and in doing that reveals the continuing role that femininities and masculinities play in identity formation in rural places.

This project's significance also lies in the acquisition of new understanding of the phenomenon of lifestyle migration and the role that discursive representations of place have for lifestyle migrants in Stanthorpe, Queensland. While forms of discourse, including cultural texts, are noted as core to conceptions of rural life (McManus & Connell 2011, p. 21), these ideas have not yet been explored using the three methods that this study takes, and so they have generated different results. The project's findings add to contemporary understanding of this conceptualisation in Australian discourse, how these notions influence the decision to relocate, and how identifications with place affect identity. As mentioned above, these areas have not been researched in this way before.

This project engages with a cultural studies methodology to study lifestyle migrants' everyday practice. To date, few studies have examined the links between discursive practice and lifestyle migration, and those that do are based in Europe (Etrillard 2014; Inês 2014; Kosnick 2014; Lawson 2015), focus on media conceptions of rural life without discussing lifestyle migration (Fish 2005) or use a very different methodology (Ragusa 2010). While John Connell and Phil McManus (2011) have touched on the impact of media in their brief historic overview of media engagement with tree-change themes as part of their study on regional council marketing to potential tree-changers, its focus is dissimilar and does not attempt to explain how media influences action and identity from a cultural studies perspective using the three methods of this project. Connell's 2014 review of *Country style* magazine articles highlights the magazine's creation of an idealised rural idyll without asking individuals how that idyll impacts people who move, nor how these interactions affect identity creation and performance. These studies' differing approaches and findings suggest a gap in understanding how discursive and phenomenological representations of place impact lifestyle migrants. This was noted by Aude Etrillard (2014), who suggested further research is needed in this area. This project will generate understanding of the role that discourse plays in lifestyle migration, which has not been researched in this way in Australia. It expands on previous

work that explores conceptions of place and identity creation (for example, Osbaldiston 2010; 2012) by engaging with discourses to further understanding. This research results in an original contribution that takes lifestyle migration research forward because the focus on the role of discourse in shaping social imaginaries, images of place and identity is a new emphasis in lifestyle migration research. While Australian in context, aspects of the findings may also be of interest to researchers in other nations, and particularly in post-colonial nations, such as Canada and New Zealand which have many cultural similarities with Australia.

The project also contributes to the critical and theoretical understanding of phenomenology as a method of inquiry. Phenomenology's application to this project enables further dissemination of the research to be prepared based on its theoretical and methodological use within cultural studies, and these may help to clarify its role within cultural studies. Its compatibility with discourse analysis is also an area for new theoretical understandings resulting from its practical application. It also contributes to the extension of media practice theory to include social imaginaries as influential contextual structures impacting texts and subsequent textual analysis. The resulting extended application of this theory increases the applicability of the theory as well as offering another way to research social imaginaries.

Many Australian regional areas have experienced significant growth in population in recent years (Hugo 2013, p. 2). This growth, including the trend towards inland migration (Buckley et al 2006), has implications for regional planning, infrastructure and servicing, and it has been noted that there is a lack of research into these and associated tree-change areas (Ragusa 2010, p. 73) which may hinder future development. This study makes a contribution that can help to ameliorate this. It has generated information which will be available to other researchers, local councils, tourism bodies and business which can be used to inform decision making such as the focus for further research, regional marketing plans and informational brochures to encourage regional growth and development as well as greater resilience. This will assist the transitional process of lifestyle migration and will produce positive outcomes for both receiving communities and lifestyle migrants themselves.

### **Thesis outline**

The current chapter describes the aims and outline of the project, provides justification for the research and highlights aims, objectives, scope, limitations and contributions (White 2011 p. 177). It also provides an outline of the structure of the thesis, introducing the concerns and



discussions which frame the inquiry and which are expanded in subsequent chapters. Relevant examples in the existing body of literature are discussed in Chapter 2: 'Literature Review and Methods'. This chapter introduces several recurring narratives important to the study, including such themes as place, identity and belonging. During the course of the research, it became clear that place, identity and belonging involved ideas about gender and its role in situating women within the particular rural understanding that was apparent in the texts. For this reason, gender is explored in some detail within the thesis. Similarly, the legacy of colonisation has lasting impacts on lifestyle migrants and rural communities, becoming a theme throughout the thesis. Chapter 2 also outlines the epistemological positioning of the research and the theories used in the project. Social theory highlights how external and discursive factors work with imagination and social imaginaries to influence both individual and societal habitus and create ideas about new ways to live. As a result of this positioning, the subsequent Methods section highlights the techniques used and shares how the research was conducted. As outlined above, these methods include a thematic analysis of the television shows, books and magazine articles selected, semi-structured interviews with lifestyle migrants living in the case study area, and personal reflections and observations inter-woven into the narrative of the thesis. The aim of these methods is not to uncover an existing, essential or underlying truth but rather to crystalize personal and subjective experience and meanings to explore a new understanding of lifestyle migration.

The research themes highlighted above are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3: 'Discourse Analysis and Discussion'. This chapter examines how lifestyle migration is discursively constructed in selected Australian media outlined in the Introduction. This provides an understanding of the social imaginaries currently being shared in popular discourse, with such themes as authenticity, a desire to escape from the city and live in rural abundance revealing how tree change is represented. The texts illustrate a desire to escape the city into a rural idyll, where authenticity is seen to be more easily obtained through a close relationship with a more natural way of living. 'Living the dream' of the rural idyll is represented through depictions of time, space and the commons, rather than through materialist notions of status and wealth. Issues around gender and colonisation are apparent in the discourse discussed, illustrating how ubiquitous and pervasive they are, yet also how unseen and unaware people can be of their impact. There is an element of myth in the texts, as intrusions such as drought and other adversity are downplayed or ignored in the dialogue.

The participants in this study share their stories in Chapters 4 to 6. Chapter 4: 'The Influence of Discourse on the Decision to Relocate' examines the impact discourse has on the decision to move. Participants indicated a wide range of influential texts, including the decades-old television series *The good life* (1975-1977), more recent shows such as *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009), and books like *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)) and *Moby Dick* (Melville 1851 (2008)). The texts showed how lifestyle migrants wanted to live their life closely aligned with their values, and that those values were linked to ideas originating in colonisation and its legacies, gender performance, patriarchy and the environment, as well as ideas around food and family life. Discussing discourse with participants revealed how it enabled them to glimpse a new way of life, which they then grew comfortable enough with to pursue through relocation. The personal success of the relocation was mixed, with challenges arising for those who did not ascribe to rural social imaginaries.

The discussion of how discourse influences the decision to move in Chapter 4 is followed by a consideration of how it impacts the lived experience after the move in Chapter 5: 'Discourse and the Lived Experience following Migration'. On settling in a new area, lifestyle migrants' relationships to discourse inevitably changed, with several describing it in terms of a fantasy world separate from their own life. However, participants accepted the existence of rural social imaginaries and their partial truths, even if they did not personally adopt rural social imaginaries for their own lives. The impact of gender, patriarchy and colonisation was strongly felt in discourse, in works such as *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)), as well as in magazines such as *This England* and *People's choice*. It was also felt in the material culture adopted, in dress and home decorating, leading to a reinforcement of the current hegemony existing in rural areas.

Place and identity is explored in Chapter 6: 'Interactions with Place and their Impact on Identity'. With place considered both virtual and physical in this project, it is an area in which elements connected to identity formation are identified as important and then chosen through interactions with discourse, social imaginaries and imagination. The participants in this project did not just operate within these social imaginaries, they defined themselves in relation to them and so constructed their identities in relation to them. The discussion of the use of the descriptors 'city girl' and 'country girl' in conversations was one way that this relationship became apparent. These terms highlighted the importance of gender in constructing identities in relation to place. In addition, participants used elements of material culture to define their relationship to place and to create a bricolage of identity that was related to their experiences

of place. Place and material culture are interwoven as an integral part of identity, shaped through ongoing transactions which share meanings with others.

The final chapter is the Conclusion, which summarises the discussions and outlines the contributions this study has made to lifestyle migration research. It highlights the ways in which this project has extended the work of previous researchers by generating new knowledge about the role of place, social imaginaries and imagination in the lives of lifestyle migrants. Its engagement with a cultural studies approach brings together new ideas of place, material culture, social imaginaries and imagination that offer a new way forward for future research into the field. It suggests that while the interview data in this project are obtained from within Australia, its international application extends to other former colonies, including New Zealand, Canada, the United States, as well as to Great Britain itself. In each of these places, colonisation has had, and continues to have, impact, even today during what is often referred to as a post-colonial era. Post-colonialism is not simply part of an historical period following the end of colonialism, but rather can be 'understood as a phase of imperialism, in turn best understood as the globalising of capitalism, but that it is not simply or everywhere reduced to these categories' (Childs & Williams 1997(2013), p. 21). As a result, post-colonialism is not a certain nor a finished project, with internal colonisation still present within these nations, framing issues, worldviews and cultures (Offord et al 2015). For these reasons, these nations share a common bond where studies such as this one can have relevance across oceans and borders. This can help to move lifestyle migration forward in these countries.

## **Conclusion**

Using a cultural studies lens to look at lifestyle migration, this thesis offers a phenomenological and discursive approach to examining place for lifestyle migrants and embeds these understandings within the context and experiences of people living in Stanthorpe, Queensland. The three different methods add distinctive elements to the whole, enabling phenomenological, cultural and materialist ways of understanding lifestyle migration and place identity to emerge. The analysis of the selected texts pays attention to constructions of colonisation, gender, identity and belonging as well as to specific ways that ideas of the countryside are created and shared. The interviews presented in the subsequent chapters both crystalize and help to theorise the experiences of the participants while locating them within societal structures. The personal reflections made by the researcher narrate a journey that seeks to add to the whole, while acknowledging their partial and incomplete

understandings. However, before exploring this substantive material, the next chapter, Chapter 2 examines the literature and theoretical background for the research framework.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methods**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses what lifestyle migration is, and how it has been theorised and understood in previous research using concepts such as place, identity and belonging to form a picture of how lifestyle migration impacts participants. It presents a wide-ranging yet relevant analysis of the work of previous scholars whose ideas have contributed to the approach this project engages with. The cultural studies framework this study takes is outlined in more detail, highlighting how this approach differs from the social sciences. The chapter then briefly outlines how the city and the country have been discussed historically in discourses, before moving into the study's theoretical positioning. The study is oriented within a phenomenological framework that emphasises a hermeneutical approach to the examination of everyday life, using social theories such as Bourdieu's habitus, field and capital as well as extended practice theory to guide this exploration. This phenomenological perspective is indebted to the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty and the understanding that people are embedded in a world of culture, objects and relationships that create a situated lived experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkins 2009, p. 21). The work also engages with a materialist perspective descended from the work of Raymond Williams and Daniel Miller and refers to the way that material objects are used to signify and communicate beliefs and values (Barnard 2002, pp 38-39). Materialism provides a mobilising theorisation of the ways lifestyle migration is practiced and experienced by the participants of this study. This enables a more nuanced and critical examination of the construction of practices within place, allowing exploration of social and political considerations. Finally, each of the methods used in the study are explored, including discourse analysis, interviews and researcher observations to show how each of these methods adds an essential component to the overall picture.

### **Defining lifestyle migration**

This study is positioned within the field of lifestyle migration research where 'lifestyle migration' is defined as relatively affluent people moving for a better way of life (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 609; Benson & Osbaldiston 2015, p. 3; Salazar 2014, p. 119). Lifestyle migrants are generally 'privileged, typically middle-class agents...[who exercise] individual agency and freedom' (Korpela 2014, p. 42). They can also be understood as 'relatively affluent individuals moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 621). This broad definition automatically creates notions of

limitation and exclusion, with participants requiring the social as well as economic capital to choose the way they want to live. For this reason, lifestyle migrants typically live in wealthy nations where foundational needs such as income generation and lifestyle are somewhat negotiable (Buckley et al 2006; Costello 2009), enabling the migrant to act on their agency to achieve desired lifestyle choices. This immediately excludes the vast majority of the world's population who experience a structural lack of agency, choices and capital which prevent them from making lifestyle choices such as this. This privilege is evidenced from the earliest studies of lifestyle migration (Butler & Hoggart 1994; King, Warnes & Williams 2000), as well as more recent studies (Benson & Osbaldiston 2016).

While this makes it a phenomenon of the Global North, lifestyle migration is not open to all within even these privileged societies. In Bauman's terms, lifestyle migration is limited to 'tourists', not 'vagabonds' (1998, pp. 94-98). 'Vagabonds' may move to the country, but their actions are likely to have been 'pushed from behind' (Bauman 1998, p. 92) rather than being an exercise in agency. 'Tourists', on the other hand, act out of the positive selection of choices available to them.

As lifestyle migration often manifests in affluent nations, it can appear to be 'driven by consumption' (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 3). However, if lifestyle is considered an individual expression of actions, values and meaning evident in material form, lifestyle migration becomes 'a deep, meaningful re-negotiation of the self through place identification' (Osobaldiston 2012b p. 143). While many lifestyle migration studies focus on people moving to the country or to the seaside (see Benson & Osobaldiston 2014 for examples of this), a desire to move away from urban areas is not necessary for a person to be classified as a lifestyle migrant. The search for a 'better way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 609) is an individually defined project that can take people to a city as well (Griffiths & Maile 2014), or it can take people to a lifestyle such as wife and mother, or to a desirable job – whether this is in the city or the country. The lifestyle they seek is defined by their own values, desires and concerns (Griffiths & Maile 2014 pp. 147-148).

Lifestyle migration is 'an act of becoming' (Kargillis 2013, p. 397), where participants are (often) searching for transformation through relocation in response to existential concerns (O'Reilly & Benson 2009, cited in Benson & Osobaldiston 2014, p. 2). In choosing carefully considered alternative consumption and lifestyle practices, lifestyle migrants enhance their sense of self and live more closely in line with their values in their new place (Hoey 2014b;

Osbaldiston 2012a and b). Consequently, lifestyle migrant consumption is most often related to the way they are presenting, negotiating and performing their selves within place.

Place is clearly important in a phenomenon which encapsulates moving from one place to another. In this project, place has contextually differing meanings. When referring to social imaginaries, it means an abstract concept distinct from locality (Pink 2012, p. 23), which creates and offers meaning and identities to individuals while also shaping them (Torkington 2012, p. 76). It is a world of ideas and imagination, thoughts and plans. Place when considered an abstract notion allows for an understanding of its role in multiple arenas inhabited daily, including the material, political and social places which help individuals achieve a sense of place and belonging (Pink 2012, p. 24). In these places of power relations, social interactions and connections, identity is formed and performed in material ways as well as via social imaginaries, language and dialogue. A definition of place that moves beyond physical borders to encompass all of these areas creates a more diverse and open view of human practice and experience and the places that are inhabited and enables a deeper understanding of how people are socially shaped and contextualised within place.

However, it is also useful to understand place in a traditional, anthropological sense, where it is 'relational, historical and concerned with identity' (Augé 1995, p. 81). The connectedness of these places to those occupying them then enables an understanding of the contrasting yet ubiquitous non-places of late modernity, which are spaces lacking in these relational ties, including transit lounges, airports and supermarkets (Augé 1995, p. 94). Within these non-places, occupants are temporary and transitory, with identity revealed primarily by the use of payment cards, passports or tickets rather than nostalgic or personal ties. Those passing through are '[a]lone, but one of many' (Augé 1995, p. 101). Finding a relational place becomes important to the late modern inhabitant seeking to build connectedness, a sense of identity and belonging: 'Place becomes a refuge to the habitué of non-places (who may dream, for example, of owning a second home rooted in the depths of the countryside)' (Augé 1995, p. 107). The potential lifestyle migrant, facing the inevitability of non-places which prevent a deepening of essential ties and bonds and the creation of identity, reacts by forming associations with places with strong meanings, such as a home in the country where imagined ways of life can be performed and presented in a process to achieve belonging.

Place, for this project, then, is contextually dependent on the physical, social and political, yet intertwined. It is where an individual spends their time physically or mentally. It manifests as

an abstract concept in discussions of social imaginaries presenting in discourses such as television shows, books and other media, where it is a non-physical location where people perform and express identities (Pink 2012, p. 23). Conversely, geographical locations include places and non-places, which do not have the qualities associated with places. These are each physical areas in which the inhabitant resides and moves through in material form. It is in these places, virtual and physical, that identity is formed. This combination of a geographical acknowledgement of place along with a consideration of a more materialist, constructionist perspective has similarities with the work of Rob Garbutt (2011), who combined these approaches in his work on how being a local is constructed in rural Australia. As the idea of place as a geographical construct enables telling of the experience of place from the position of 'insiders', there is a need to understand place as a construct, to enable a 'more politically nuanced view' (Garbutt 2011, p. 57) to be explored.

Creating identity involves making life choices about existential issues (Giddens 1991, p. 9). Lifestyle migration may provide solutions to these essential questions by offering alternative ways of living to those questioning hegemonic values or the 'fictions' culture presents (de Certeau 1984, p. 187). Uncovering the connections between imaginings, social imaginaries and cultural practice in place can provide an understanding of power relations within society (Gramsci, cited in Seidman 2004, p. 137) and consequently inform understanding of lifestyle migrants' role in questioning hegemonic practice.

Lifestyle migrants might be questioning hegemonic ideals, but they are not rebels or revolutionaries. The participants in this study live well within socially constructed boundaries of 'acceptable' lifestyle. Although some lifestyle migrants may choose more alternative lifestyles (Vannini & Taggart 2014), they are still operating within and accepting the paradigms of society, even if they are questioning their role in them or openly criticising them (Hickey 2012, p. 94). This re-creates a continually self-limited framework which adapts, ironically, to the neo-liberal agenda by producing and rewarding people who are able to negotiate success and build flexibility in their own lives (Korpela, 2014; O'Reilly 2014, p. 229). In this sense, lifestyle migration can be viewed as an altermodernity project (Hardt & Negri 2009).

Altermodernity indicates 'a decisive break with modernity and the power relations that define it' (Hardt & Negri 2009, p.103), but progresses from simply being antimodern through its requirement for 'anthropological transformation' (Hardt & Negri 2009, p. 117) that renders change and alternative ways of living crucial to the metamorphosis. Altermodernity has similar concerns to Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualisation of "liquid modernity" in terms of change,



flux and fluidity and expands on the concepts of response to the challenges of modernity. One of these challenges is described by Georg Simmel as the struggle to assert oneself in the city, where division of labour leads to an unsatisfactory existence where 'everything connected with progress, spirituality and value' are taken out of the individual's hands (Simmel, 1903, p. 18), creating a hollow, fast-paced world. He contrasts city life and country life by noting the rapidly changing images of the metropolis, as opposed to 'the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm' of rural life (1903, p.12). Following Engels, Raymond Williams argued that the city exists as a result of capitalism, and that 'resistance to capitalism is the decisive form of the necessary human defence' (1973 (2016), p. 434). Lifestyle migration can then be regarded as an altermodern project in which participants seek to disrupt hegemonic capitalist ideas through the creation of new or revived values often found in rural life. However, there is also a paradox here, as the adoption and reinforcement of these values can signal a modern-day continuance of a form of internal colonisation in rural areas.

Altermodernity has been discussed in relation to 'new domesticity' and 'housewifery', (Padilla Carroll 2016), phrases which describe domestic practices such as cooking from scratch, making jam, using homemade cleaners and sewing clothes. These practices are common among lifestyle migrants, and are discussed in many publications (Anderson 2015; Crawford 2015; *Gourmet farmer* 2009; Hetzel 2012; Wise 2014), although practitioners do not always associate themselves with 'housewifery'. For example, Matthew Evans of *Gourmet farmer* (2009) and Rohan Anderson of *Whole larder love* (2013) and *Practiculture* (2015) cook and eat food as a family or community-oriented practice that is more about health, sustenance and the joy of good food than about the gendered idea of food-production as housewifery. They do not generally relate to these activities as gendered, even as many in society do (see, for example, Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015). These practices are also visible in other contemporary social movements such as down-shifting (for example, in Duane Elgin's *Voluntary simplicity* (1993), and Samuel Alexander's (2009) edited collection of the same name), simple-living (for example, Rhonda Hetzel's *The simple life* (2014) and Janet Luhr's *The simple living guide* (1997)), and the local and 'slow' food movements (see Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, vegetable, miracle* (2007)). Combined, they form alternative ways of living that challenge normative, consumptive habits and question ways of life that have become ubiquitous in the Global North. This 'new domesticity' is 'a response to and a result of' (Padilla Carroll 2016, p. 5) structural changes to Australia's economy as it moves from an industry to a service base which has created challenges to the traditional patriarchal structure of breadwinner and

housewife. It is also a reaction to concurrent social movements in feminism, environmentalism and civil rights (Padilla Carroll 2016, p. 5). These practices embody a new lifestyle that invokes a person-centred, relational and environmental approach that results in the generation of a different type of identity and sense of belonging for lifestyle migrants, one which is essentially materialist in orientation. The increasing interest in altermodern lifestyles, and their potential to be more community oriented and environmentally friendly for a world seeking solutions to climate change (Suzuki & Boyd 2008) invites further examination of their viability and potential within the findings of this project. They have ‘the potential to be a potent revolutionary activism’ (Padilla Carroll 2016, p. 2).

This new domesticity emphasises the place of gender and feminism within this project. In this project, I use the word gender as reflecting social constructions, meanings and practices that are enacted by men and women, rather than relating specifically to biology (Butler 2006; Posey 2016). Although it was not my intention to recruit predominately women to the interviews, the people who came forward were predominately women, with a few bringing their partners or husbands to the interview, and many of the authors of popular books and blogs about living in the country are women. These factors brought gender to the fore. It appeared that many women found a voice in discussing these topics, even as gender roles remain strong in rural areas with the everyday experience of country life contributing to their creation and performance and negotiation (Little & Panelli 2003). Ken Dempsey (1992) highlighted how these roles affected the daily experience of women, both economically and in terms of the social and community opportunities open to them. Structural barriers like this are prevalent in rural communities, where women are seen in domestic and supportive roles while men can take ‘outside’ roles with corresponding financial and societal rewards. These uneven prospects are still visible in current discourse, which disseminates gendered divisions of labour as well as symbols of social class to project desirable rural femininity (Keller, Lloyd & Bell, 2015). Perhaps in opposition to mainstream cultural discourses that emphasise the importance of women working outside the home, many rural discourses, as well as the study’s participants, emphasise the role of family and a woman’s role within that – the new domesticity. However, issues around declining rural jobs as well as increasing opportunities due to better internet coverage mean that negotiation about gender roles could well see new ideas about combining work and family life. For example, rural women often start small businesses or market stalls at Farmer’s Markets, sell goods online, or write blogs that ultimately make money and generate book contracts (for example, authors Michelle Crawford

and Hilary Burden; see also Luckman 2012). By doing this, they combine family and personal life with the new domesticity, and create new opportunities for themselves that contribute to their structural power as well as their financial independence.

Doing this, choosing a new way to live, enables the expression of a revised personal narrative (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 613) and the creation of a new identity (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 616). Identity building is a 'matter of "becoming" as well as "being"' (Hall 1990a, p. 435). Bauman, via Levi-Strauss, describes it as a 'bricolage', where people choose the pieces that are meaningful to them, without knowing what the final outcome will look like (2004, pp. 47-49). Cultural practice, including place, belonging and history shape it, while it is also constituted by language and structured by class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Weedon 2004, p. 157), and formed by cultural discourse. Interaction with this discourse, through books, magazines and television and other forms of media, influences identity formation through legitimising hegemonic structures, shaping ideas about what is 'acceptable' and not within society, and forming dialogues about place. Social discourse provides a setting in which people present and perform identities (Torkington 2012), and engage with new ideas, enabling participants to develop and refine their ideas of self.

While located within social discourse, identity, femininity and status are also closely tied to property and material culture (Hardt & Negri 2009, p. 326), ensuring embodied practices of place. As Miller says:

The key themes of material culture developed in the 1980s demonstrated that social worlds were as much constituted by materiality as the other way around (eg Bourdieu 1977, Appadurai 1986, Miller 1987). This gave rise to a variety of approaches to the issue of materiality varying from material culture as analogous with text (eg Tilly 1990, 1991) to applications of social psychological models (Dittmar 1992) (Miller 1997, p. 3).

The lifestyle migrant may find new ways to form and demonstrate identity through ownership of a rural property and related material choices. Reacting to the non-places of late modernity, they may create an environment where they can retreat into the self by 'cocooning' (Augé 1995, p. 119). In part, this dream is enacted socially through the consumption of objects that are embedded with nostalgia or imagined nostalgia for ways of life that offer their owners distinction from more mainstream ways of life (Appadurai 1996, pp. 75-78). A sense of continuity, of belonging, is inherent in objects which demonstrate history and age, and this 'becomes a key index of their high status (Appadurai 1996, p.75). While '[t]he patina of objects

takes on its full meaning only in a proper context', lifestyle migrants demonstrate this context in buying old houses (Burden 2012) or in celebrating the old over the new (Imhoff March 2016, p. 21). This provides the owners of the objects with a status available only to elites with access to items with age and patina and at the same time it speaks to nostalgia for lost lifestyles (Appadurai 1996, p. 76) and imagined histories.

Identity and status are also revealed through the material culture of lifestyle migrants' dress, where the body becomes a 'site of identity' (Entwistle 2015, p. 138). This physicality, made possible by the purchase and use of material objects, shares information and communicates discursively. The wearing of clothes embodies and presents multiple entanglements (Kaiser 2012, p. 39) that encapsulate identities which are then presented by the performing self. Aspects of modernity discourse are found in colonised countries, in rationalisations that emphasise the progressive and fashionable nature of the coloniser's dress (Harding 1999, cited in Kaiser 2012, p. 46). These discourses of modernity are apparent in the apparel of lifestyle migrants and include the wearing of jeans, but are often tempered in the public, display space of magazines by romance and impracticality which are more related to elite status and nostalgia. Examples of this include pictures of women wearing lace and white clothes in workaday settings that become performative spaces in the magazines (see Imhoff October 2016, p. 24). Modernity discourses, then, are subject to alternative social imaginaries that involve colonial ideas of the romantic rural and the ideal feminine figure. Ideas of femininity, particularly rural femininity, are classed and rely on divisions of labour along gender lines (Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015). They may represent a differentiation from modern ideas including rationality and materialism in favour of a more personalised, individual and imaginative approach to dress as identity (Entwistle 2015, p. 131). This can embody altermodern ideas (Hardt & Negri 2009) that are designed to provide an alternative to normative fashions that are more in line with values opposing rampant consumption, while operating within the mainstream hegemony. For lifestyle migrants, a change in dress from that worn in the old life may represent the creation of the new identity and personal transformation and the abandonment of previous identities and careers (see Burden 2012). It may also indicate a desire to fit in with or contrast from the normative dress of longer-term residents of the area to which they move. Many of these transformations and identity creations are revealed in society, in everyday life, or in various forms of media.

Also present in the majority of media associated with lifestyle migration is a focus on the production, preparation and preserving of food, which facilitates identity creation in place. For

many, it is a central theme that dominates the lifestyle (Anderson 2015; *Gourmet farmer* 2009; Wise 2014). Growing food, raising animals and preserving harvests are time-consuming and laborious processes at odds with mainstream consumer messages presenting 'easy entertaining' (Jones 2016, p. 91) and recipes that use packaged and processed goods for 'minimum time' meals (Jones 2016, p. 69). Close engagement with sources of food and its preparation may speak to the fulfilment and 'authenticity' that lifestyle migrants appear to seek (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, pp. 4-5; Osbaldiston 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

Lifestyle migration appears to be a phenomenon predominately experienced by people living in a romantic, heterosexual partnership, with one Australian study finding that 86 percent of tree-changers were partnered (Ragusa 2010, p. 89). This is higher than the 61 percent of partnered people in the general population (ABS *Australian Social Trends* 2009). The predominance of partnered tree-changers is also evident in lifestyle migration stories depicted in media (Anderson 2015; Crawford 2015; Wise 2014). It is unclear what it is about being in a partnership that encourages or fosters lifestyle migration, or whether the support of a relationship is beneficial to enactment of the migration process, but these are interesting points that speak to the way lifestyle migration is both conceptualised and lived.

### **Limits to lifestyle migration**

During the course of reading for and writing this thesis, I became increasingly aware that the original inhabitants of the land did not appear in the narratives of those people I spoke to, or in my texts. Yet the area I was working in is the Bundjalung nation, a large area covering the coastal areas around Tweed Heads and inland over the McPherson Range past Warwick. I offer my respect to the Elders and their ancestors and acknowledge their custodianship of this place. I am not from this area, and as lifestyle migrants, the people I research are not from there either. Starting from this point, it is clear that settler populations have contributed traumatic, life-changing and continuing impacts on this area which must be acknowledged, and which problematise any claims to belonging as if it were a right. As Garbutt states:

If there were difficulties with my way of relating as a local, in the first instance they concerned the cutting of relations between locals and Aborigines, and secondly the locals' collective postcolonial amnesia that enveloped those acts of cutting...the unstable position of "being a local" is stabilised through the (cutting of) relations between the locals and others (2011, pp. 2-3).

Lifestyle migration, then, is not a simple or unproblematic process in Australia. I recognise those who belonged here long before I arrived and experienced great loss at the hands of settlers. I also acknowledge that continuing internal colonisation and ambivalent anti-colonial discourses within some segments of the Australian population today still create challenges for a truly post-colonial state of being (Offord et al 2015, p. 2). As much of the motivation for lifestyle migration can be summed up as nostalgia for a past constructed and supported by white colonisation, the issue is insidious and on-going.

In many ways, lifestyle migration does not bring certain or absolute benefits to all participants or communities, even settler communities. If lifestyle migrants limit or avoid previously familiar and possibly comforting consumer activities, they may experience a void in their lives that could require supportive services to overcome (Etzioni 2004, p. 414). They may also wonder how to perform and present their new identity in ways that are not as consumeristic or that are more compatible with their new life (Etzioni 2004, p. 416). On an inter-personal level, lifestyle migrants may experience social isolation as they move from situations that are familiar and are occupied by people who share similar interests, and it may be difficult to make friends in the new location (Benson 2016, p.9). This can be compounded by sadness about leaving family and friends behind (Benson 2016, p.10), and guilt that they are not there to assist family members on a day-to-day basis with care or support when required. These difficulties can arise regardless of the age of the person who moves or where they move to.

Tree-change destinations experiencing an influx of retirees may become known pejoratively as 'god's waiting rooms' (Connell & McManus 2011, p. 29), and older populations in these communities may lead to them not being seen as progressive (Smith 1999, cited in Osbaldiston 2012, p. 69). Substantial increases in the number or demographics of residents can change the nature of the community in ways that are perceived as negative (Connell & McManus 2011, p. 35), disrupting images of the bucolic lifestyle in the new location. Likewise, popularity of a particular location may lead to the area becoming too expensive for new potential residents or locals to purchase into (Osbaldiston 2010, p. 252). New buildings, shops and streetscapes can also degrade the very features which drew people to the area in the first place (Osbaldiston 2010, pp. 251-2). Land once used for agriculture may be converted to housing, affecting amenity and the rural nature of a location. The mythical rural/urban binary that underpins historical and contemporary discourses of escape is fractured if or when the new location presents new stressors, such as long travel times in cars or difficulties accessing services. These negative aspects of lifestyle migration invite a deeper investigation into the

phenomenon and what it can actually bring, of a positive nature, to an individual or a community.

It has been proposed that those aiming to 'downshift' or simplify may have a surplus of cash available through their lower consumption (Etzioni 2004), but many lifestyle migrants find that in relocating they simultaneously downshift professions or careers (Hoey 2005), a factor which may prevent this happy occurrence. However, with lifestyle defined as an expression of values and meaning, lifestyle migrants can create identities based on the evidence of their agency in bringing the change about. They are 'living the dream', which for many is a status-raising, identity creating action in itself, particularly for those who feel trapped by the treadmill of contemporary modernity.

### **A cultural studies perspective on lifestyle migration**

The lifestyle migration studies mentioned above draw from a sociological or anthropological orientation and many focus on Britons moving to Europe (Benson 2016; Buller & Hoggart 1994; Griffiths & Maille 2014; King, Warnes & Williams 2000) or to India (Korpela 2014). The understandings developed in these projects can also apply to the similarly privileged people of European and British origin who moved to Australia and participated in this project. They can also extend to the Australian citizens in this study who moved from urban areas to regional Australia, enabling some translation of experience. Lifestyle migrants emphasise 'that they have made an active choice to improve their lives by moving abroad' (Korpela 2014, p.29), and that they are living their dream. The same is true for Australian lifestyle migrants, but their structural options regarding visas and distance to other countries often limits their choices to domestic ones.

This previous research has generated a wealth of solid understandings and theoretical viewpoints through which to understand the field, but has not yet sought to understand the impact of discourse and material culture on lifestyle migrants from a cultural studies perspective. Etrillard completed an analysis of five books written by British lifestyle migrants who moved to France and suggests researchers 'investigate the actual impact of this literature on the migrants' relocation processes and practices' (2014, p. 81). Although Etrillard adopted a sociolinguistic approach within an interactional studies framework, this study takes up this challenge using the cultural studies method of discourse analysis.

Sociology and anthropology are social sciences which take their methodological and hermeneutic stances from this positioning, embedded within a scientific viewpoint. This

perspective has its basis in objective approaches which often use empirical deduction and rational induction alongside more subjective stances. Social sciences often apply tests such as reliability and validity to legitimise conclusions and enable replication of research findings. In contrast, cultural studies falls within the humanities, which aims to understand the meaning and purpose of human life while using an interpretive and reflexive approach that interweaves the experiences of the subject and object rather than keeping them separate. It is 'an adaptation to its terrain' (Hall 1990, p. 12) that enables scholars to study the culture of the day in a way that sociology cannot. It embraces multi-disciplinary, critical and political positions and seeks to understand:

contemporary culture from non-elite or counter-hegemonic perspectives ("from below") with an openness to the culture's reception and production in everyday life, or, more generally, its impact on life trajectories. Engaged cultural studies encourages and takes notice of culture's capacity to express and invoke less restricted (more "other", counter-normative) ways of living (During 1999, p. 25).

This perspective is well suited to understanding the sometimes hegemonic-resistant lifestyle migrant ways of living, and is also compatible with the phenomenological perspective the study takes, which relies not on incidence but on experience. Cultural studies is embedded in the idea that 'culture is ordinary' (Williams 1989 (1958)) and that this everyday experience is a necessary and valuable area of study. Orienting this lifestyle migration research within cultural studies, including the phenomenological and hermeneutic examination of discourse and material culture, fosters a shift of emphasis within lifestyle migration approaches, enabling new understandings to develop that are cultural rather than sociological or anthropological in nature.

### **The country and the city in discourse**

I have mentioned above many instances of lifestyle migration appearing in or shared by those who have moved to the country and subsequently written about it, even though they may not use the term 'lifestyle migration' when referring to their relocation (for example, Anderson 2012 and 2015; Crawford 2015; Wise 2015). The increase in attention paid by media to tree-change (Padilla Carroll 2016, p. 1) raises questions about media as a legitimising authority (Couldry 2010, p. 48). Media representations, including images, framing of discourse, patterns and themes about lifestyle migration 'embody claims about the social world' (Couldry 2010, p. 49) that use the authoritative voice of media to position subjects and objects. More than just



legitimising, however, media present possibilities to people that power lifestyle changes (Appadurai 1996, p. 55) and connect people into collectives of like sentiment (Appadurai 1996 p. 8). These are central concerns of this project, elaborated on in detail in a later section.

This interest shown in media reports of lifestyle migration may suggest that the idea of a bucolic countryside juxtaposed against a demonised urban lifestyle is essentially a late-modern phenomenon producing tree-change, but this is not the case. For Epicurus (340BC to 270BC), moving several miles from the commercial centre of Athens, where he could live simply and grow vegetables, was crucial to finding happiness (de Botton 2000, pp. 56-61). Virgil's (70BC-19BC) 'Eclogues', also known as 'Bucolics', posited a rural idyll that was popular in the culture of his day as well as during the Renaissances of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries (Weissman nd). Later Romantic painters such as John Constable produced works that idealised the Romantic tranquillity of nature over the rational thought of the Enlightenment (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005 p. 839). These art works exude nostalgia for the rural life depicted (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005 p. 839).

In Australia, this was also evident in works by Eugene von Guérard, who painted Romantic landscapes that were both realist and yet 'elevated' from the mundane (Art Gallery of New South Wales n.d.). This continued, as 'late nineteenth-century Australian culture was replete with the making of myths and legends. None was more important and far-reaching in its influence than the rural mythology centred on the Australian bushman' (Astbury 1985, p. 1). Catering to a largely urban audience (Astbury 1985, pp. 2-3), artists such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder and Frederick McCubbin expanded this positive emphasis on rural life with impressionistic works which became known as part of the Heidelberg School. In these works, rural pioneers were idealised and the hard life they led glorified into pictorial legends depicting such scenes as clearing land, building settlements and shearing sheep that catered to 'the nostalgic dreams and yearnings of the urban dweller' (Astbury 1985, p. 4). The works were popular, with a lasting longevity which did much to influence social imaginaries about the beauty and desirability of the countryside as well as the hard work involved in living there. Around this time, the *Bulletin* began publishing stories and poetry, including *On our selection*, by 'Steele Rudd' (Arthur Hoey Davis), which 'contain repeated references to the virtues of rural life, the way in which the city deprives people of their usefulness and sense of equality' (Waterhouse 2005, p. 175). The *Bulletin* also published works by AB 'Banjo' Patterson which 'claimed that people in the Bush were far happier than their urban counterparts' (Waterhouse 2005, p. 176) and drew attention to ideals of mateship. In these

works, the Australian landscape became central to national identity and ideas of self within the fledgling nation (Ward 1966). Painter Hans Heysen built on these myths with pastoral scenes that depicted a beautiful and idealised Australian landscape (Art Gallery of New South Wales, n.d). These narratives were still current in much later productions such as the movies *Sunday too far away* (1975) and *The man from Snowy River* (1982). Together, they created, built on and shared a world where Romantic and nostalgic ideals about Australian country life were illustrated in a compelling, continuing material culture. In many of these works, men are predominant and women play supportive or ancillary roles to the primary work of the men depicted, a theme noted throughout this thesis.

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1845) promulgated the literary theme of the urbanite moving to the bucolic countryside in America. These ideas were taken up later in the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s and 1990s (Hoey 2014a, p. 73), with tales such as *My side of the mountain* (Craighead George 1988) and the more recent *Animal, vegetable, miracle* (Kingsolver 2007) adding to the genre. British writer Peter Mayle's *A year in Provence* (1991) is said to have started the proliferation of literature in Europe (Etrillard 2014, p. 71), and has been described as 'myths for the English' (Aldridge 1995, p. 417). This theme was continued by Frances Mayes' *Under the Tuscan sun* (1997) and numerous others (see Etrillard 2014 for a discussion of several of these). Raymond Williams discussed many of the myths and themes discussed in the first-hand examples stated above in his examination of literature contrasting rural and urban themes in *The country and the city* (1973).

Throughout these centuries of biography, poetry and art, there is a strong sense of the historical propensity for idealising the rural over the urban. While ancient works are well outside the scope of this project, it is worth relating the modern situation with that of the late modern for this project. With the modern era beginning in the seventeenth century (Taylor 2004, p. 3), and the late modern generally regarded as dating from the onset of globalisation and the arrival of the internet in the 1980s (Bauman 1998), there remain echoes and continuities of the modern into the late modern (Beck 2009, p. 206). While important differences are apparent in contemporary late modern society, aspects of modernity are still present (Beck 2009, p. 206) and their constancy and allure may explain the continuing regard for myths of the rural idyll that are present among lifestyle migrants and the social imaginaries they espouse.

For researchers of lifestyle migration, the social imaginary of a 'rural idyll' is not new. It has not only 'inspired the act of migration...but also framed...post-migration lifestyle choices' (Benson 2011, p. 1). While it is difficult to define in terms of substance, value and cultural importance, and is complicated by the mismatch of the idyll to reality (Halfacree 2014, p. 96), it is also 'a potentially very powerful force within contemporary capitalist society' (Halfacree 2014, p. 96). This research project refracts constructions of the Australian rural social imaginary, including themes and ideas inherent in its make-up, that leads to people moving vast distances. It also examines some of the risks and limitations that moving often bring (Salazar 2014 p. 121).

## **Theoretical framework**

### *Phenomenology*

This project focuses on how people make sense of the major life experience of moving to the country, suggesting not only a qualitative approach, but one which centralises examination on the phenomenon, or experience, itself. Phenomenology is a term first used in philosophy, dating from 1765 (Kochelmas 1967, p. 24, cited in Moustakis 1994, p. 26). It emphasises the importance of studying the lived experience, 'the things themselves' (Husserl 2001 (1900/1901), p. 168). Phenomenology's philosophical roots inform the approach taken, ensuring that it is 'logical, systematic and coherent' (Moustakis 1994, p. 47), while contemplating and theorising the ways in which a phenomenon manifests (Vagle 2014, p. 22). With an Aristotelian orientation of the researcher's thoughts to the experience of the people involved (Moustakis, p. 28), the researcher remains open to particular understandings unique to the situation rather than judging or viewing the experience through the researcher's own personal viewpoint. This ensures that each of the methods used in this epistemic framework provide the means to challenge, confound and confuse established ideas, assumptions and preconceptions (Smith et al 2009, p. 30), building interpretations based on the individual and the particular. This idea consequently means that the methods used are 'intended to demonstrate existence, not incidence' (Yin 1989 cited in Smith et al 2009, p. 30), emphasising the importance of understanding of the individual in relation to the phenomenon rather than the impact of the phenomenon over a broad cross-section of society. For this project, this means that it was not of critical importance to interview large numbers of people, but rather to seek deep understanding of those who were involved.

Focusing on the lived experience of the lifestyle migrants meant that the qualitative and interpretive approach engaged in this project, along with my own experience as a lifestyle migrant, furthered an empathetic understanding of the complexity and layered nature of the phenomenon. Although it is often desirable to 'bracket' out (Smith et al 2009, p. 13) the researcher's experience, it is also virtually impossible to remain perfectly neutral to the experience of others. For this reason, my reflections on and my closeness to lifestyle migration created a different set of research conditions. My participation in and understanding of the phenomenon brought benefits, including an understanding of the cultural texts that benefitted the hermeneutical and reflective approach of this thesis. It also enabled my own ideas and thoughts to emerge as a contribution to the results of the study.

Phenomenology and discourse analysis share an interest in the relevance of context to the individual's experience, such that the two forms of investigation can be both complimentary and compatible (Smith et al 2009, p. 196). Peter Willis offers this perspective:

One of the ways phenomenological description can be attempted is by using various texts from various perspectives to generate a "layered picture" of a phenomenon rather like a series of transparencies overlaid on an overhead projector. These are then explored for common elements that recur not in the idea of the thing but in its experience narrated from different points of view. This process creates a multi-perspective text (Willis 2001, p. 8).

Using this approach, this study takes selected cultural discourses and examines how they create a layered understanding of the way lifestyle migration is discursively constructed in Australia. Meaning-making occurs in narratives, texts and language, while Heidegger notes 'that our interpretations of experience are always shaped, limited and enabled by, language' (Smith et al 2009, p. 194). Discourse analysis can detail the context and structures experienced by the individual, while case studies compliment this through understanding how people relate to and act within these structures (Smith et al 2009, p. 196). This complimentary engagement of the two methods of inquiry can lead to a more nuanced answer to the research questions in this project.

Using a phenomenological approach does not restrict the use of theories in the analysis of data (Vagle 2014, p. 74). While Husserl, in a response to his own positivist research environment, asserted the importance of the lived experience in phenomenological research over theorisation, this idea has now been modified in response to the current post-positivist

research environment. It is now understood that while theories 'should not be used to determine or test the ways in which humans experience the world', it is certainly possible, and indeed a requirement for researchers to 'contribute to ongoing theorizing (Vagle 2014, p.74). This project focused on the lived experience of lifestyle migrants during interviews, then theorises their experiences in the analysis and conclusions made in accordance with this approach. It also engages with the theory of discourse analysis as a method for understanding the texts analysed.

Phenomenology, then, is a methodological cue that orients the interview technique as well as the analysis of discourse outlined in the methods section of this thesis. Its history and philosophical orientation guides the researcher to set aside personal preconceptions to delve into the participant's experience to uncover the understandings unique to that individual and to be open to a disruptive, critical and shifting approach to phenomenon. Its ontological and epistemological focus on lived experience in context shapes the nature of the project and shakes taken-for-granted orientations.

### *Social theories*

Social imaginaries express meanings that are culturally situated, relational and external to the individual. These social imaginaries are at the core of most migration motivations (Salazar 2014, p. 124) and perhaps all lifestyle migrations, where people are imagining the self-described 'better life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 609). They inform individuals' expectations and world-view (Taylor 2004, p. 23; Salazar 2011, p. 576). While they can be understood as external social structures, their presence is relevant to individuals (O'Reilly 2014, p. 220) because of the role they play in mediating actors' life choices in the collective construct. Agency is situated in this external, social setting. Social imaginaries operate through myths or symbolic idealisations of an imagined life to create images with which people engage and may go on to enact. This interaction with social imaginaries influences and alters ideas and then actions, creating outcomes potentially leading to new personal narratives (Giddens 1991, p. 199) and ways of living.

Some of the ideas in social imaginaries include nostalgia. Nostalgia can be considered a longing for home or a yearning for innocent and happy times (Santesso 2006, p. 39) or Romantic Other landscapes, but the idea of it as 'a way of knowing worlds – and a discourse on knowledge' (Radstone 2010, p. 188) means that it can then be considered not only as a response to the flux of modern society, but also a way to engender confidence in spite of

these uncertainties (Radstone 2010, p. 188). Nostalgia relating to idealised times and places often appears in both general discourse and tourism imaginaries. Many lifestyle migration studies have connected discourse and tourism imaginaries with relocation (Benson & O'Reilly 2009, p. 613; Ragusa 2010, p. 77; Osbaldiston 2010a, p. 54; Green 2010; Torkington 2012, p. 71), and these discourses are an area of exploration for this project.

Nostalgia facilitates the establishment of identity through the selection of memories which reimagine past and present selves (Wilson 2005, pp. 34-35) and relates to lifestyle migrants' relationship with place and belonging. Memory 'constructs the past in the present' (Radstone 2011, p. 111). While '[t]he alien Australian landscape was felt to provide little support for the British imagination' (Offord et al 2015, p.21), interactions with and feelings toward landscape in Australia remain embedded in a colonial past (Offord et al 2015; Seddon 1997; Salazar 2011, p. 578; Said 1978). Understanding this enables us to see the continuities and origins of current mores (O'Reilly 2014, p. 224), as this British heritage is often considered normative and lived as the 'Australian' way of life (Smolicz, cited in Dixon 1999, p. 36; see also Offord et al 2015), particularly in regional communities that may not have benefitted from multiculturalism (Carrington & Marshall 2008). This 'colonial gaze' (Boehmer 2005, p. 68) has effected the engagement of a paradigm through which the desirability of landscapes is understood and communicated and a nostalgia for Other is conveyed. This prism influences taste-making functions, land desirability (and therefore affordability) and even the notion of owning and taming or conquering land by changing the landscape through inhabitancy and landscaping (Seddon 1997, p.111). In this way, nostalgia becomes important to the ways the participants imagined lifestyle migration.

Imagination is an internal structure (O'Reilly 2014, p. 218), and is 'the set of symbols and meanings we use when trying to communicate to ourselves or others a possible, yet non-existent situation' (Bachen and Illouz 1996, cited in Aden, 1999, p. 6). Imagination is 'also about make-believe as an alternative set of symbols and meanings' (Aden 1999, p. 6). Previously restricted to the 'creative' world of art and myth, imagination has now 'entered the logic of ordinary life' (Appadurai 1996, p. 5). While often considered a response devoid of rationality, 'imaginative thought and rational thought have a lot in common' (Byrne 2007, p. 2). Ruth Byrne contends that alternative realities are imagined using the same cognitive processes that rational thoughts use. While Byrne uses counterfactual thoughts in her examples (what might-have-been), this argument is also valid for the imagining of possible alternatives in the future – not just what might-have-been, but what might be. This is a similar

argument to Ruth Leys (2011), who contends that the idea that emotion and affect are separate from the cognitive process is flawed. Late modernity requires us to use imagination and emotion when making life choices, and they are constitutive of, rather than superfluous to, lives lived and paths chosen (Skrbiš 2008). The Basic Emotions paradigm, however, presents a belief in the unintentionality of affect and emotion within an individual (see Leys 2011 for a discussion on this) but may actually be an over-reaction to earlier predominance of rationality in lines of enquiry. Instead of being unintentional and separate, human affect, emotions and imagination are part of the cognitive process. As Leys states, '[t]here is nothing about the cognitive position that is opposed to the idea that humans...are emotionally embodied creatures' (2011 p. 470). Lifestyle migrants may act with myths and emotions in play, but these actions are fully cognitive responses to the outside world, responses which effectively find an alternative way to the modern life imposed upon them (Bauman 1998, p. 98).

Ideas of a new or different life are explored through imaginative questioning of habitus. Habitus is an ambiguous term that 'is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and perceptions of practices, but also a structured structure' (Bourdieu 1984 p. 170). Beliefs, norms and ways of doing things that are considered common sense in a society are habitus (Aden 1999, p. 3). Habitus can be internal to an individual or external in a society. It is through the imaginative creation of new personal narratives, in contrast to the tradition of perpetuating grand narratives that Jean-François Lyotard describes (cited in Aden 1999, p. 3) that individuals can question the boundaries of habitus and find new ways of living. Pierre Bourdieu 'notes that "only in imaginary experience (in the folk tales for example)... does the social world take the form of a universe of possibilities"' (1980/1990, p. 64, cited in Aden 1999, p. 5). Habitus is tied in a dialogical relationship with Bourdieu's ideas of field and capital. Field can be understood as context, particularly in terms of social systems. Fields are organised around forms of capital; these include cultural, economic and educational capitals. These form social structures which influence one's social standing, ways of thinking and inform objective attainments such as credentials and titles (Bourdieu 1984). Imagination allows individuals, including lifestyle migrants, to permeate and expand the boundaries of habitus to explore new places and ways of living that are of value to the individual. Fields are the places where lifestyle migrants act, using the capitals available to them. Combined they can be engaged to demonstrate how lifestyle migrants to conjure possibilities of a new life more in line with the values they see demonstrated or illustrated within fields, including media, and which they then go on to adopt themselves with available capitals in play.

## Methods

The literature review has outlined the cultural studies orientation as well as the phenomenological and theoretical approaches adopted by this study. The complexities of human experience and its situatedness within a wider, shared culture position this study within a phenomenological approach that emphasises the imaginative impact on the everyday experience that immersion in discourse produces. As language creates meanings and social realities that show how society is organised and is also 'the place where one's sense of self – one's subjectivity – is constructed' (Richardson 2000, p. 961), cultural texts, conversations and reflexive narratives are an essential point to begin a study of a culturally based phenomenon such as lifestyle migration. In this framework, truth claims are not validated through triangulation or other social science methods, but rather are evaluated through their contribution to a greater understanding of social life, their aesthetic merit, self-awareness and impact (Richardson 2000, p. 964). The methods used in this study are consistent with this epistemological positioning (Clough & Nutbrown 2008, p. 19).

The project uses three data sets: cultural texts to establish the discursive landscape of lifestyle migration as a cultural phenomenon; transcribed interviews which construct a case study of Stanthorpe in which to understand a localised manifestation of the phenomenon; and my own observations and reflections as a lifestyle migrant and researcher. As discourse is so central to understandings within culture, it becomes important to engage with it as a primary research method to show how language 'produces meaning and creates social reality' (Richardson 2000, p. 961). This is then contextualised through interviews with lifestyle migrants to understand how people relate to relevant media. Researcher observation and reflections add another dimension to the mix of 'different but complimentary data' (White 2011, p. 238) that serves to enhance the layered meanings shared in the discourse analysis and interviews. The relationships between the three data sets are complex and close, as each influence and impact on the other in a continuous intermingling that explores multiple layers of meaning that together help to create the social construction of lifestyle migration. I elaborate further on these methods in the following sections.

### *Discourse analysis*

There has been an ongoing tension between 'the cultural studies temptation: the fantasy that one can understand the workings of public cultural representations by interpreting/deconstructing the representations' and 'the ethnographic fantasy that doing



fieldwork in and of itself provides the kind of “data” necessary to correct for the cultural studies illusion’ (Ortner 1998, pp. 414-415, cited in Bird 2010, p. 88). Discourse analysis enables the development of a multi-sited project where the focus remains on what people say and do in relation to the text (Couldry 2010, p. 41), and to the social imaginaries which inform the text. This also emphasises the importance of context in life decision-making, which is important to both phenomenology and understanding discourse. In a world where media and culture are intricately linked, this enables deep reflection on the interrelatedness of both structures and agency and the interactions with and representations in media associated with lifestyle migration. This focus also enables investigation into media’s impact on lifestyle migration, and the corresponding impact on media by potential and actual lifestyle migrants. While it is well-documented that media influences and is influenced by cultural imaginings and is important to meaning making and experiences (Moore 2009, pp. 4-5), this has not been studied in Australia specifically in relation to lifestyle migration.

Discourse, which is here understood as instances of meaningful communicative action or behaviour (Johnstone 2008 p. 2) that form a body of knowledge, is inevitably positioned or framed in particular ways through language and visual text. Analysis reveals these frames and demonstrates how a subject is discussed (Weerakkody 2015 p. 272) and as a result, how lifestyle migration is discursively constructed in the selected media. Discourses, while they ‘may be traced in texts...are not themselves textual’ (Hartley 2002, p. 75). The word ‘texts’ refers to the actual form of communication, such as a book, movie, television series etc. The review of popular cultural texts such as these show how cultural landscapes related to lifestyle migration are conceptualised, the way ideologies and hegemonic ideals are represented, and how identification with place subjectively affects identity throughout the migration process. They are instruments of communication through which the social imaginaries which are so central to discursive conceptualisations are shared, altered and communicated.

Relevant publications which represent views pertaining to the research focus, objectives and questions were selected from within the past ten years. Ten years was chosen as a delimiter was needed to focus the selection within the vast selection of texts available. The texts selected were chosen because they present popular viewpoints and images of lifestyle migration. It was not necessary for the selection of texts to be influenced by the participants or that the participants had read or watched the texts. This is because, firstly, it was important to establish what was being said about lifestyle migration in popular media, to answer the first research question. Secondly, the cultural discourses and themes that emerged in the

analysed texts are social constructions present in a diverse range of texts and in many discursive constructions. The lifestyle migrant participants mentioned these frequently when relating their personal discursive constructions during conversations.

Print publications for this study included selected issues of Australian *Country style* magazine and four migration memoirs: *A year on the farm* by Sally Wise (2014), *A story of seven summers* by Hilary Burden (2012), *Whole larder love* by Rohan Anderson (2012) and *A table in the orchard* by Michelle Crawford (2015). Screen media included early episodes of *Gourmet farmer* (2010) and *River Cottage Australia* (2013). In her study of the memoirs of Britons moving to France, Etrillard notes that Mayle's *A year in Provence* (1991) substantially increased interest in moving to Southern Europe, and was the first major text in this category (2014). In the last 15 years, there has been a proliferation in the publication of these lifestyle migration memoirs (Etrillard 2014 p. 71), indicating that it is a discursive as well as social phenomenon.

This project employed a cyclical corpus building approach that began with a small and representative sample and built upon it until new representations are no longer obtained (Mautner 2008 p. 35). While individual stories are obviously unique, themes and similar approaches or understandings emerged from the texts, including a desire for personal authenticity and escape from the city to a rural abundance. Selecting the texts chosen is inevitably subjective but the process remained transparent and accountable (Mautner 2008, p. 37) and was based on the inclusion of easily accessible, popular texts about moving to the country. What interview participants thought, did and said in relation to the social imaginaries in the discourse was then examined (Couldry 2010, p. 41). The themes found within the texts analysed, of abundance, escape and authenticity, were also found to be relevant to the lived experiences of the interview participants as revealed through the discussions. They are also present in other texts and discourses, such as those mentioned by the interview participants. They are well-understood and widely recognised themes (Wallis 2017), which are shared and promulgated readily through Australian society. This generated an understanding of how thematised constructions and social imaginaries influence the decision to relocate and the lived experience after relocation, as well as how interactions with place affect identity (noting that place is both virtual and physical). This is different to the combined corpus linguistic and discourse analysis adopted by Michelle Lawson in her study of how British lifestyle migrants are depicted in media representations in France (2015). Lawson's work used a corpus of media that was quantitatively analysed for keywords, the results of which informed the

qualitative examination of sociocultural context within a Social Actor framework. This framework showed 'how social actors and actions are realised linguistically' (Lawson 2015, p. 4). In contrast, this research uses a qualitative, hermeneutical methodology that focuses on shared understandings and layered meanings in a culturally-constructed situation.

### *Interviews*

While sociological interviews often observe emotions and imaginings at a conscious, spoken level, a modified application of Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson's interview technique which also highlights narrative, associations and affective response (cited in Maile & Griffiths 2012, p. 36) enables a deeper examination of the meanings and interpretations that participants give for their actions (Liamputtong 2013, p.xi) and is relevant to this study's interpretive, imaginatively-based approach. The methodology and interpretive approaches guiding these interviews were oriented to the extended media practice theory, differing from Lawson's narrative analysis of integration in France (2017), as discussed above. This study does, however, build on similar concepts of identity construction within the social world.

Open ended questions such as "How did you come to live here?" (Maile & Griffiths 2012, p. 33) enable the participant to answer with associations and details that may only be linked unconsciously and imaginatively. These answers can then be understood not just as substantive content but in the context of their appearance and intensity of affect. During this responsive interview situation, the participant was guided through several stages, including introductions to the researcher and topic, followed by basic conversational questions to develop trust and confidence. This was followed by unstructured questions as outlined above and by more structured, cultural-sociological based questions using a framework engaged by other lifestyle migration researchers such as Nick Osbaldiston (2015) and Marcus Eimermann (2015) as well as Stella Maile and David Griffiths (2012). These questions included topics such as how the decision to move was made, what differences in lifestyle were desired, what media the participant engages with and other similar enquiries. The reflexive, transformative nature of lifestyle migration was explored through questioning that asked about change, difference and new ways of being. This was followed by wrap-up questions, opening the option for participant questions and offering thanks for the participant's time and engagement (Hughes 2002, p. 214). Particular attention was paid to factors such as mood, visible emotion, silences and emotional defences (Hollway & Jefferson cited in Maile & Griffiths 2012, p. 34) that were shared in the interaction between researcher and participant to uncover more than

is apparent in dialogue. Data collection became 'more akin to a dialogue, or a process' (Palmer, Fam, Smith & Kilham, 2014, p. 6), with the researcher participating in the dialogue and sharing experiences, rather than being an invisible entity. While the articulation of life narratives carries enormous risk for the individual (Bauman 2001, p. 9), the line of questioning illustrated here is not as inherently risky for the individual as it is more open and shared. The researcher also mitigated this risk by 'piloting' interviews and questions with critical friends to determine questions, technique, the best equipment and other factors crucial to successful interviewing (Clough & Nutbrown 2008, p. 130), to facilitate positive outcomes.

Participants were invited to select the location for the interview, although I suggested that the participant's home or a local café may be suitable locations. Most participants chose to meet at a café, although two couples (Bert and Lucy as well as Brian and Christine) invited me to their homes. Differences were apparent between interviews in the two residences and those which took place in public places such as a coffee shop or pub, which were not as intimate or relaxed, and which suffered somewhat from background noise. Sitting in a comfortable place, but before we began discussing anything substantial, I explained the reason I had asked to talk to the participant, asked them to sign the written consent form and asked if the participant would mind if we recorded the interview. This helped the participants feel that the questions were an important part of a bigger 'whole', and not simply an intrusive waste of their personal time. I used my smart phone, which has excellent sound quality and reliability, and was unobtrusive and distracted little from the conversation, as far as was apparent. This enabled the participants to feel comfortable and more relaxed than in a more formal interview environment. Interview questions were open ended, and participants were invited to share what media they engaged with and what it meant to them. Some of their answers were surprising and unexpected, as might well be expected in a phenomenological study such as this. Most of the interviews lasted somewhere between an hour and two hours, which seemed a comfortable length for the participants. I then personally transcribed the resulting conversations to ensure a detailed knowledge of and familiarity with the conversations.

Ethics approval was sought and obtained through the University of Southern Queensland, approval number H16REA143.

#### *Participant identification*

Participants were selected purposively (Maile & Griffiths 2012, p. 35). Participants had each relocated to create opportunities for personal change and had lived in the new location for at

least one year, to eliminate moves of a temporary nature. Additional criteria included the incorporation of differing views and perspectives, reflective of the complexity of society itself (Rubin & Rubin 2005, p. 67). There were valuable differences in opinions between people who moved many years ago to those who moved just a year or two past, and between people who moved to acreage and those who moved to house-blocks, or to those of higher or lower economic status (Rubin & Rubin 2005, p. 67). Further differences were noted between those who moved from Europe to Australia, and those who moved from an Australian urban area to the regional location. Moving from Europe to rural Australia raised cultural issues that were not as prevalent among Australians moving domestically. These alternative viewpoints were worth seeking and ensured that participants were able to contribute meaningfully to the research, as their participation meant that it was possible to explore how the themes and discursive constructions in rural social imaginaries worked for them. Twelve interviews of approximately one to two hour's length were required before no new themes were found in additional data (Kumar 2014, p. 383) following initial analysis. This number of interviews is comparable with the work undertaken by Weidinger and Kordel (2015), and Osbaldiston (2015), who each engaged 16 and 15 participants respectively.

### *Participants*

Initially, participants were identified through contact with the Southern Downs Regional Council's Economic Development Officer, as well as others in the area who offered to assist the project to find suitable participants. During the subsequent discussion, participants were asked if they knew anyone else who might like to participate in the study, and several additional people were identified. Thus, snowballing (Kumar 2014, p. 244) was used to tap into additional potential participants, particularly ones who would not have been otherwise identified. These people were then asked if they would like to participate. Most were happy to, and these two groups of people then became the group of interview participants. They were selected because they had moved to the country for 'a better way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009), with this way of life defined by the participants themselves. Once participants were identified as suitable and agreed to personal interviews, efforts were made to develop trust before interviews took place to assist with an open flow of dialogue. I let each person know that I was also a lifestyle migrant and that I was interested in understanding how discourse had impacted people when deciding to move. It seemed that letting the participants know this enabled them to feel that I wasn't going to criticise them or why they moved, and that I must have an innate understanding of their motives and aspirations. It created a discussion point

around our similar choices and enabled greater empathy, openness and relatability within our discussion. Three participants were interviewed twice (Rae, Viv and Barry), as the comments they had made in the initial meeting were of particular interest to me and I wanted to clarify some points that had been made, and to build further on the comments they made in the initial meeting. While no-one was asked their age, at an estimate, participants ranged from mid or late-twenties (Natalie) to retirement age (Viv and Barry). Several participants were in their thirties or forties (Rae, Bert, Lucy, Kate and Fae), while two were in their fifties (Tania and Diane). Brian and Christine were of retirement age, but they chose to continue working on their vineyard and were not inclined to retire at any point in the foreseeable future.

Of the 12 participants, seven were from Australia and five were from the UK or Italy. The study had not been deliberately designed to specifically seek out or include international lifestyle migrants, as any person moving for a self-defined 'better way of life' was a candidate for inclusion. This result may have stemmed from the use of snowballing, where the original participants (some of whom were from the UK) knew and introduced me to others who were also from the UK or Europe, as they were friends. It also may indicate a general willingness on the part of international migrants to participate in research studies as a community service, to respond in ways that helped them feel connected to their new place of residence, or to share their experiences and point of view formally. The level of international participants in this study, at approximately 42 percent, is higher than the 20 percent of Stanthorpe residents who are born overseas (ABS Stanthorpe Region Data 2013). That all but one of these international participants was from Britain (with that one from Europe), meant that it immediately became even more necessary to understand colonisation in discourse and its impacts on Australia today. For many of these lifestyle migrants, colonial and post-colonial discourses were an enormous influence on their world views.

Gender also became particularly relevant to the study. Of the 12 participants, only three were men, and those men were included because they were a husband or close friend of the person who had agreed to participate. No-one suggested unpartnered men for inclusion in the study, although those who joined as part of a partnership were happy to participate on this basis and voiced their opinions just as readily as the women. This raises interesting questions about the powerful role of women's networks and gender divisions in rural Australia. Women's friendships and business connections seemed only to include other women and this meant that more women were added to the study, enabling a strong picture to emerge of how being female impacts the lifestyle migrant experience in Australia. Women did not seem to have

friendships or even social ties with men who were not in a close relationship with them, a point raised by one of the participants in a later chapter. Women and men do not meet to chat in this rural space unless with partners or in groups, and a woman researcher meeting with a male participant in a pub would be a little out of the ordinary. It became clear during the conversations I had with participants that place was experienced differently by different genders, and that it had an impact on all aspects of life, from network and friendship opportunities to child-raising to work.

The discussion with Brian and Christine took place in the tasting room of their vineyard, a large, open space with a bar, gift shop and open fireplace. A glass wall opens onto vineyards and a large dam; it is a beautiful space in a beautiful location. The building was relatively new, and is a purpose-built structure which uses elements from the natural environment, including local stone. Similarly, Bert and Lucy invited me to their home to talk. Their house, a second-home that they use only on weekends, was recently listed on Airbnb, so may have lacked some of the amenity of a first home. Nevertheless, the space was warm and welcoming and we all enjoyed sitting around the fire while Lucy baked scones and we ate pastries from the local bakery. All the other discussions were held in various coffee shops, workplaces or one of the pubs in Stanthorpe. During these conversations, it was common for the lifestyle migrant to be offered greetings from friends and acquaintances in town, and through this, I could get a feel for the sense of community and belonging that most of them felt.

#### *Researcher observation, personal reflections and writing as inquiry*

I observed physical surroundings, if at a residence, including landscape, house design and decoration. This material culture, as well as other object realities, such as dress, provided another element of investigation in areas such as relationships to place and enacted myths of colonial heritage or Anglo-Australian ideals. As I am also a white, female lifestyle migrant of Anglo-Celtic descent (albeit to an area two hours' drive from Stanthorpe), I found that I was easily able to relate to the narratives the lifestyle migrants shared. I am older than some of the participants, and younger than some, and the participants seemed to feel comfortable talking to me about their experiences and the texts they enjoyed. As Barbara Pini says, 'this positioning afforded me a legitimacy in the rural context that I would not necessarily have otherwise enjoyed' (2004, p. 173). It was my experience that the 'sense of shared values, identities and purposes between the researcher and the researched often elicits richer responses and transactions in the field' (During 1999, p. 18). The understandings I developed

may have been quite different if I was a man, or if I didn't share the experience with the participants, and their responses may have been different for a different person. With some of the participants, the process was not so much an interviewer/interviewee situation as a shared experience which included story-telling and empathy on both sides. For this reason, personal reflections on my own story and experiences became an important part of the phenomenological experience of both the fieldwork and the discourse analysis. I wrote field notes and took photographs to record my surroundings and ideas throughout my time in Stanthorpe and when back at home. These became part of the inquiry, a method to explore the subjectivity of the narratives and their multiple, moving meanings (Richardson 2000, p. 961). These creative analytical processes 'are, in and of themselves, valid and desirable representations of the social [that] invite people in and open spaces for thinking about the social...' (Richardson 2000, p. 962). They help to clarify meanings that might otherwise be lost in the data-gathering process, meanings that are 'deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial' (Richardson 2000). As part of the narrative of lifestyle migration, they are included within each thesis chapter.

#### *Analysis and understanding*

The individual case studies enabled the recording and transcription of hours of interview data. This data provided valuable information about the everyday lives of the lifestyle migrants and their interactions with place, both physical and conceptual. One of the first understandings to emerge was the close relationships that the people in this study had with a wide range of media forms. They knew of most of the texts I mentioned, and some they had personally engaged with as well. This increased the feeling of a shared experience in enjoyment of and joint participation in the phenomenon.

While data were regarded holistically and interpretively to seek their multiple and subjective meanings, interviews were also transcribed so that the semi-structured elements could be thematised where necessary, to understand similarities and differences in conceptualisations of place and the phenomenology of relocation for the participants. Foregrounding contextual positioning during analysis meant that limitations inherent in the application of technologies such as NVivo, including the possibility of removing data from context through the process of coding, was avoided (Chowdhury 2015, p. 1141). This meant that snippets of sentences or phrases were not taken out of the context of either the conversation itself or out of the interview setting during analysis. While it can be difficult to analyse larger sections of data, in



this case it was necessary to understand the positioning of the lifestyle migrants as they spoke.

The research was limited by the nature of the project, a PhD thesis. It was constrained by available time, and also by geography and resources. It was necessarily the project of a single researcher, albeit one supported by supervisors and the university. Research funding was also limited, so field work was contained within nearby areas, limiting the scope of this project to a small case study within Queensland, Australia.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this project is to explore the phenomenological and discursive practice of place for lifestyle migrants, while acknowledging the essential process of personal growth that accompanies relocation. This exploration is positioned within a cultural studies framework and existing bodies of knowledge including theoretical traditions descended from Giddens, Bourdieu and Heidegger, among others. Informed by the philosophical history of phenomenological enquiry, the project engages with social theories to understand social imaginaries, imagination and habitus. The ontological and epistemological considerations described in the literature suggest an interpretivist viewpoint embedded in a late modern understanding of the multiple realities constructed in the culture of everyday life. This positioning led to the methods outlined, including discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, and research observation and reflections. The first of these methods, discourse analysis, forms the subject of the following chapter, which outlines the way in which lifestyle migration is depicted in the selected Australian media.

### **Chapter 3: Discursive constructions of lifestyle migration in popular Australian media**

In my doctor's office, there's always a pile of magazines to read while you wait your turn. Although this office is in Brisbane's inner suburbs, one of the most battered titles is the Australian magazine called *Country style*. Glancing through the pages, images of playful lambs frolicking and jersey cows munching lush green grass are juxtaposed with photos of comfortable and stylish homes and happy children bringing in veggies from the back garden. The visual text reveals a way of life vastly different from that just outside the window, where neighbours jostle for tight space bought at a premium and the hum of traffic combines with hammering coming from a nearby building site. It is enough to make you want to sigh and buy your own little patch of green, especially if it comes with those frolicking lambs.

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines conceptualisations of lifestyle migration and the subsequent rural lived experience, as presented in selected Australian texts. Using a cultural studies approach, it establishes a reference point in popular culture which is then used in the later analysis of the selected lifestyle migrants in Stanthorpe. Examination of the various discourses in society enables an understanding of the fluidity of identity that is core to the late modern experience and typical of a cultural studies approach. Discourse provides a different perspective from other investigations, such as interviews, because '[d]iscourses produce subject positions...that individuals are located in (locate themselves in). These subject positions, or bodies of knowledge, then drive individuals' perceptions, intentions and acts' (Alvesson 2002, p. 50). They reveal understandings, assumed truths and power relations. The discourse analysis in this section seeks an understanding of how this works for lifestyle migrants interacting with various media.

The phenomenon of lifestyle migration has produced a plethora of non-fiction texts, including blogs, books (frequently resulting from blogs), television series, and lifestyle magazines. The texts selected for this study were chosen because they represent a selection of lifestyle migrant interests targeting male and female audiences, while also being typical of most contemporary lifestyle migrant writing in Australia. They include two television series, *River cottage* (Season 1, 2013) and *Gourmet farmer* (Season 1, 2010), the lifestyle-oriented autobiographical accounts *Whole larder love* (Anderson 2012), *A year on the farm* (Wise 2014), *A story of seven summers* (Burden 2012), *The simple life* (Hetzl 2014) and *A table in the orchard* (Crawford 2015), as well as selected articles from the magazine *Country style*, written from 2010 onwards. The television series were chosen because of their wide appeal

and distribution on Foxtel (*River cottage*) and SBS (*Gourmet farmer*). *Whole larder love* (2012), written by Rohan Anderson, began as a blog that became popular enough to earn Anderson a book deal. This was also the case with Rhonda Hetzel, whose blog is called *Down to earth*; she now has several published books, including *The simple home* (2016), *The simple life* (2014) and *Down to earth* (2012). Michelle Crawford's blog, *Hugo and Elsa*, is named after her children while her book, *A table in the orchard* (2015) is oriented towards her recipes and food styling business. Sally Wise works on ABC radio food shows and has written numerous cook books, with the one documenting her move to a new country house discussed in this chapter (*A year on the farm* 2014). Hilary Burden, who had an extensive career as a journalist in London before returning to her home state of Tasmania, gained work writing articles for *Country style* magazine and was subsequently offered a book deal through her connections there. She alone among the authors is both a returning citizen (a person who moved overseas and then returned to her place of birth to live) and a lifestyle migrant simultaneously. The various *Country style* articles selected in this study were chosen because they conveyed themes typical of the magazine and are exemplars of the writing published in the magazine. The magazine has a readership of 317,000 <[www.newscorpastralia.com/brand/country-style](http://www.newscorpastralia.com/brand/country-style)>, which represents 1.4 percent of the Australian population aged 14 plus <[www.roymorgan.com/industries/media/readership](http://www.roymorgan.com/industries/media/readership)>. The magazine's readership is described as home owners, baby boomers, female empty nesters and regional men and women <<http://www.newscorpastralia.com/our-audiences>>, descriptions which emphasise the magazine's appeal to a mature aged readership. In each of these publications, a social imaginary depicting some form of a rural idyll was presented in a way that sold a type of rural lifestyle that was highly desirable to readers.

While I have noted that the idea of a rural idyll, particularly one that encourages people to move to the country is not new, it is the way that this social imaginary can be shared, disseminated and articulated in contemporary times that is new. Modern technologies have enabled the creation of blogs which can and have been used to diarise the lives of those present in them (see, for example, the blogs *Whole larder love*, *Hugo and Elsa*, *New Here*, *Foxs lane* (sic), *Farmer has a wife*). Those which become popular are then able to leverage opportunity to write a book or start a business or both, exemplified by all of the book authors above. The social imaginaries that guide the content choices in these publications are used by those seeking to gain economic advantage from potential lifestyle migrants. Lifestyle migration is now an industry propped up by the ideals espoused in the cultural artefacts described

above. The authors who write about their move and subsequent life, or that of others, tend to gain material and/or economic advantage from highlighting the ideals prevalent in the dream. Similarly, real estate agents often headline properties with phrases such as 'live the dream' or 'escape to the country', and hope to make sales based on the imaginative associations linked to these words. Responsible for revitalising small towns and bringing much needed dollars into rural communities, local councils produce tourist brochures which highlight the benefits, features and services of their towns to potential lifestyle migrants. Although based on centuries of ideas about the rural idyll and an escape from the evils of the capitalist city (Engels, 1891; Simmel 1903), those already in the country are not averse to making a living from others dreaming of escape as well.

Three themes emerged from the discourse analysis of the titles listed above; authenticity, escape and abundance (see Wallis 2017 for further detail). These themes appear to be important to those writing and reading the texts, and were commented upon numerous times in many different ways. Lifestyle migration is seen to be a way to enhance personal authenticity through escape from the city and the experience of rural abundance. While these themes, or variants of them, have been discussed in lifestyle migration and rural literature before (Connell 2014; Connell & McManus 2011), it is the examination of the role discourse plays in the imaginative exploration of habitus as well as its role in meaning making that is 'socially variable, context-specific and multi-dimensional' (Moore 2009, p. 5) that sets this investigation apart from other lifestyle migration research.

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity for lifestyle migrants often involves non-consumeristic solutions to material questions through the expression of value in a nostalgic orientation toward both the past and familial connections. Authenticity, as noted earlier, is often sought by lifestyle migrants (Osbaldiston 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Benson & O'Reilly 2009, pp.4-5). Authenticity is 'a powerful cultural paradigm that is born through myth and narrative' (Osbaldiston 2010, p. 215), representing culturally situated ideas about what is genuine or real, or what is valued. Escape and abundance, the other two themes, form part of the values of authenticity. However, they are discussed separately so that their individual meanings are clear.

Social imaginaries and imagination form a framework in which these notions of authenticity can be explored on a personal level and within the worlds of others and individual imagined futures. Personal authenticity is allied with identity creation, both of which are sought in the

depictions of rural migrations discussed here. Authenticity encompasses many aspects, including a desire to live more closely in line with personal values, which are not necessarily consumeristic. Considered purchases are important in conceptualisations of lifestyle migration, and these are designed to generate an identity that is reflected in individual, quirky or eclectic choices. There is also a degree of nostalgia in these choices, and many reflect a longing for past times or the perceived simpler times of previous generations.

This identity creation can be seen in the opinions shared by authors. While most lifestyle migrant media writings avoid overt political statements, Anderson (2012; 2015) does not. He talks of 'out of control carbon emissions' (2012, p. 12), the senselessness of importing out of season produce (2012, pp. 12-13), a 'messed up' world (2012, p. i), and the logic of hunting animals to feed his family (2012, p. 19). He is upfront about his forthright attitudes and the differences in his approach, saying 'I have attitude, I have opinions...I am just glad to be able to offer some sort of alternative' (2012, p. i), invoking for him a position at the forefront of lifestyle migration as an altermodernity project. While it is clear that these are views that are shared by many lifestyle migrants through their lived values and choices, their language tends to be less confrontational and more constrained.

Authenticity is a very different concept for Paul West, the host of *River Cottage* (2013). *River Cottage* began in England in the late 1990s as an exercise in sustainability and self-sufficiency led by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. Following his success there, he brought the concept to Australia, buying a farm and beginning a nationwide search for someone to set up a similar sustainable lifestyle with gardens, tree planting and animal husbandry (*River Cottage* 2013). West was selected, took over the farm and became the host of the television series. This makes this series vastly different to all of the other lifestyle migration works, which are initiated and lived independently of a guiding parent company. For many lifestyle migrants, independence is a stated aim, which is quite different from the *River Cottage* model. While West espouses many authentic ideals (such as home-grown food, and simple pleasures), just as the other lifestyle migrants do, he is an employee who earns a pay cheque for his efforts. Where others may have to find work in a local town and budget for buying numerous trees for windbreaks, or to stock the paddocks with farm animals, West seems unconstrained by such pragmatic concerns. He has no need to create some sort of income or have a partner who earns outside the property, and this is a fundamental variance in his version of tree change.

*River Cottage* (2013) is an excellent example of both the transferability of the values exhibited in the former colonising nation to those living in ostensibly post-colonial destinations, and also of the modern-day trend to monetise lifestyle migration as a globalised commodity. While the seasons in Australia may be opposite to those in the northern hemisphere, only minor details distinguish the Australian River Cottage project in substance from the English River Cottage. Shared values include growing vegetables, cooking food slowly, and living more in tune with nature. Of all the locations that could have been chosen for the series within Australia, the selection of the far south coast of New South Wales reflects aesthetics commonly broadcast in English rural idyll discourse (see, for example, Williams 1973 (2016)). These include green open space, fertile soil, proximity to commons such as coastal areas, picturesque views, pleasant weather and the availability of services. In this business model, these 'authentic' values are revealed in material choices that are shared and highlighted in the discourse, creating entertainment that reinforces rural social imaginaries. When the series ended in 2016 following a restructure, the property was sold, and West commented in a local newspaper that 'while the River Cottage Australia show was over, the brand might hopefully live on in another platform or medium' (cited in Gorton, *Narooma News* 10 May 2017). He went on to add that he might not be able to farm anymore and would have to take work as a chef because he had a wife and two children to feed now. Clearly for West, the lifestyle depicted in the four years of the series was not actually viable in real life.

This comment highlights West's rural experience, as an example of a simulation of reality and the media depicting it as simulacrum (Baudrillard 1994). A simulation in this context imitates something using an analogous device, and a simulacrum is the image of this (Baudrillard 1988, pp.166-184). Lifestyle migration depicted in media simulates an idealised rural life through engagement with items such as décor, gardens or animals that are seen to be rural, while not actually representing reality – Baudrillard's stage three (1994, p. 6). The lifestyle aims that many lifestyle migrants espouse, such as the search for authenticity and the adoption of nostalgic reminders of past times further emphasise this simulation and lack of reality. *River Cottage*, however, parallels Baudrillard's conception of Disneyland, where images appear as an 'idealized transposition of a contradictory reality' (Baudrillard 1994, p. 12). While all depictions of lifestyle migration in media represent a simulacrum of rural life, *River Cottage* (2013) operates as an imaginary concealing a reality that does not exist (Baudrillard 1994, p. 14).

The paradigm of authenticity creation through myth and narrative is evident in the actions of *Country style's* article about Vanessa Cooper, whose choice of a timber cottage at the end of a leafy street in Kyneton, an hour north of Melbourne, reflected a desire for a slower, less commercialised way of life (Imhoff, 2012, p. 44). While her father suggested that they buy the brick veneer house that was also available, Cooper and her husband chose a Federation era house in need of work instead. Its choice mandated renovations that took two years and involved 'reclaimed vintage windows...and eclectic collection of artworks, most created by friends...[and] quirky finds from the Kyneton store' (cited in Imhoff, 2012, pp. 49-50). This reflects an approach to consumption that is designed to enable its instigators to develop a greater authenticity through rejection of easier, mass consumption pathways and the choice of finds that reflect desirable attributes in their own persons. It also offers the protagonists the special status of owning older goods with patina that reflects a lost way of life (Appadurai 1996, p. 76).

Cooper's relocation to the country was also situated in the difficulties faced due to the urban housing affordability dilemma. As Cooper states, '[w]e had an apartment in St Kilda and we didn't want to buy in the suburbs; this was nice, we could afford it' (cited in Imhoff, 2012, p. 44). There is a sense in these words of something undesirable about suburbs, that they are not 'nice'. This idea seems to tie in with Osbaldiston's work on the sacred and profane (2012), where the city is perceived as profane and the countryside as sacred (Engels, 1891; Simmel 1903), with people moving from the profane to the security of the sacred as an act of self-hood. However, it is clear in Cooper's statement that although she chooses country over city, she is not understanding her choice as a simple binary. She acknowledges the possibilities of the suburbs, just noting that they were not for them. Rather, suburbs for Cooper appear to be a place of mediocrity, 'an unacceptable compromise and [possibly]...a form of entrapment' (Dovey 1994, p. 145), because of the high prices many suburbs command. For those in the 'creative class', living in a suburb can create perceptions of an anomaly status and bring about offers of sympathy from friends (Nichols & Schoen 2008), clearly not something one wishes to elicit. Suburbia has been described as 'a middle landscape, as a "place" that is forever in between' (Healy 1994, xvii), but it is also one which is often unappreciated. This in-betweenness means that suburbs neither enjoy the benefits of the city, such as proximity to cultural and social events as well as jobs and services, while also not experiencing the aspects of rural life seen as positive, including wide-open spaces, peace and quiet. The suburbs, generally experienced as feminine places, have neither the nurturing qualities of the

countryside, the ruggedness of the bush, nor the sophistication of the city, rendering them a poor facsimile of these other choices. In Cooper's case, she found it more desirable to choose an affordable house well outside of the city and to establish a sense of place there than to move into the suburbs.

A similar story is told in another *Country style* article about Allanah Zitserman and Stravros Kazantidis's move to the Upper Hunter Valley from Sydney (Gripper 2012, pp. 52-57). The couple are photographed in front of a stone and unpainted wood cottage, with interior photographs revealing a mix of vintage and reclaimed furniture. Zitserman states, 'We wanted the place to have a warm, rustic feel, so we gleaned...from demolition sites' (cited in Gripper, 2012, p. 57). Consumerist, mass-market solutions hold little sway in the search for the authentic. They are rejected in favour of a more complicated, difficult to obtain nostalgia for a different, older way of life. This way of life may never have actually been experienced before by this couple; it represents an imagined experience that holds meaning yet never was (Appadurai 1996, p. 77). This creates a simulacra of time and in time where representations of lost, distant, never experienced worlds are achieved through nostalgic consumption (Appadurai 1996, p. 78). It also offers a comforting nostalgia that enfolds ideas of past worlds that are related to these idealised times and places (Radstone 2010, p. 188).

Despite this rejection of mainstream, normative consumerism and adoption of identity enhancing goods, the article highlights urban-sourced income as necessary and desirable. As Ali Gripper writes, 'The desk, like the couple's other second-hand pieces, suggests the quiet life...[b]ut on closer inspection you'll see that, like many rural homes, it bristles with the same electronic capabilities as any busy city office, including two laptops, two mobile phones and an internet router' (Gripper, 2012, p. 55). Zitserman and Kazantidis embrace the opportunities of neoliberalism, but on their own terms, in their own space. This authentic identity, then, is no down-home, techno-phobic resistance to the modern world. Rather, the protagonists are firmly located in the middle of a busy film-industry business that they run from their country idyll: authenticity with connectivity.

*Country style* magazine continues with the rejection of mass consumerist solutions and the adoption of authenticity criteria in an article depicting Susie Martin's home, despite the apparent conflict in her work in a home interiors shop (David, August 2015, pp. 32-39). Martin states 'I like one-offs... Things that are old and not made anymore, or crafted pieces that are a bit more bespoke' (cited in David, August 2015, p. 39). These pieces embody the altermodern



lifestyle which encompasses an environmental sensibility, as well as a person-centred and relational approach. The article goes on to name 'souvenirs from holidays, paintings by family and friends, maps of places they've lived. Far from being 'curated' to create a particular look, everything has been accumulated organically, combining to tell the story of their lives so far' (David, August 2015, p. 39). Authenticity for Martin and her husband Gavin is achieved through lives filled with travel, adventure and connections with creative people, pieces that are old and unique. It is also something which is sought effortlessly and without the need to strive too hard or buy off the shelf, which would not meet authenticity criteria. The layers of nostalgia produced reflect belonging and connections that are important to the couple's lived experience.

Katie and Boyd Webb take a similar position in another *Country style* article (Imhoff, August 2015, pp. 40-45). They relocated an old house to the family property and restored it over a decade, with their material choices reflecting a desire for authenticity and nostalgia for the past as well as connection and belonging. They highlight certain pieces in their home, such as the coffee table from Katie's childhood home, the cupboards built by a friend who also shared the house painting with them. These features are important signs relating to their shared values. While physical work was involved in the acquisition of many of these pieces, the message is of objects that serve as 'memory-evoking pieces ...gifts or handed down by family' (Imhoff, August 2015, p. 44). This sense of connectedness, of belonging to place and people, is important to the creation and performance of the authentic life.

Relationships, nostalgia and belonging in an idealised Anglo-Australian past are highlighted in *Country style's* article about Paula Kilpatrick's vintage country retreat in Victoria (Nette King 2013 pp. 34-41):

"With our books, old postcards and family pieces, it feels like we've been here a long time. Much of the furniture belonged to Antony's parents, Lex and Jennifer, while the stained-glass cabinet and wicker chair came from my grandparents. There's even a gorgeous china tea set that belonged to my mum when she was a little girl" (Kilpatrick cited in Nette King, 2013, p. 40).

These words illustrate the importance of an idealised idyllic past that is connoted through the physical goods. By highlighting these pieces and their importance to the couple, they inadvertently reveal how closely tied their sense of identity and status are to their property (Hardt & Negri 2009, p. 326). Burden also describes authenticity in a local shop filled with old

wares and old-fashioned music (2012, p. 34) and in the wooden floorboards of her new house, exposed after years hidden underneath carpeting (2012, p. 35). These images exemplify Benson and O'Reilly's comment that '[r]ural locations are imagined to offer lifestyle migrants a sense of stepping back in time, getting back to the land, the simple or good life, as well as a sense of community spirit' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 612).

Getting 'back to the land' is an important component of authenticity performance for lifestyle migrants. All of the television series and books, and many of the magazine articles, devote space to gardens, gardening and livestock ranging from cows to chickens. Growing and harvesting crops and gathering eggs are featured, along with recipes for home-style meals deemed 'peasant-style cooking' or 'log-cabiner' food (Anderson 2012, p. 22). While food growing and animal rearing often fall short of self-sufficiency, they are essential to the creation of authenticity in the identity building process. Wise (2014) goes so far as to collect hops from a local shop to make 'an authentic convict/colonial style yeast' (2014, p. 188) during one of her gathering forays. Yet, it is an authenticity belonging to a past that is imagined romantically rather than having existed; it creates a bucolic simulacrum for its participants.

Place making through material culture is important to the people depicted in the texts analysed, and helps to build and define the fields in which they live and work. Identity is not only expressed and performed through property and food but also other material culture, such as dress. The ability to present an authentic self through dress has become an important concern in contemporary society, where images and tropes can be manipulated to present desired traits (Entwistle 2015, pp. 132-133). This illustrates a need that lifestyle migrants often mention, to alter the appearance that they performed in their previous life to a new appearance more reflective of the post-migration experience using the cultural capitals available to them. Burden describes her old London 'wardrobe of jackets still sitting in plastic bags...destined for the op shop' (2012, p. 204), redundant and out of place. Her real success lay in the vegetable stall she had set up that day, profits of which presumably represent a fraction of the cost of the discarded jackets. The jackets were no longer representative of her life and so became useless in the new life. Hetzel speaks of learning how to mend old clothes rather than buying new (2014, p. 27) as part of her adopted lifestyle, while Anderson suggests that good quality gear is essential, on a page with a full size picture of leather boots, a checked shirt and rugged coat (2012, pp. 232-233). Crawford speaks of wanting to wear gumboots everyday as part of her dream of country life (2015, p. 3).

However, dress for lifestyle migrants is not all about the practical and rugged. Interestingly, *Country style* depicts clothes that are more romantic than might be expected, in amongst the usual jeans, t-shirts and button-ups. In one story (photograph by Cohen in Nette King, 2013, p. 39), a woman is pictured hand feeding sheep while wearing a flowing white lace blouse. In another (photograph by Roper in Imhoff October 2015, pp. 23-26), Myfanwy Kernke wears a red wool cloak, bright red lipstick and black patent boots to feed sheep and potter about the farm. These images simulate rural life as an imagined bucolic myth akin to a Little Red Riding Hood story or Baudrillard's Disneyland (1994, p. 12). Where other lifestyle migrants may move away from consumer solutions to home-made, mended and practical clothes in an alternative approach to mainstream values, these tree changers present a nostalgic and romanticised paradigm of rural that works with current consumeristic norms. They demonstrate a preference for the 'Romantic notions of rural idylls and the picturesque' evident in much tourism literature (Beeton 2004, p. 134), and in the artwork by Heysen, Roberts and Condor (among others) mentioned earlier. These images don't necessarily reflect the reality of much of the landscape and the lived experience of newly located rural dwellers (Luckman 2012, p. 150), and the nostalgic construction is certainly a troubled one (see, for example, Williams' *The city and the country* (1973(2016))). While the sheep may not care what is worn so long as they get fed, a successful life in the country as depicted in these articles asks readers to suspend disbelief while the protagonist presents an identity shaped by social imaginaries of a romanticised Anglo-Australian past. Social imaginaries and cultural perceptions of authenticity combine in an identity performance that highlights lifestyle migrant identity as one of privilege and leisure while simultaneously being contradicted by the practical nature of the activities being presented. Readers need to suspend rationality to engage in this idyllic, bucolic portrayal of rural life. This consumption and identity performance serves to create an image of a perfect, romantic rural ideal in which the protagonists not only live the ideal, but have become it.

The quest for authenticity goes beyond the material to a need to create a personally authentic self. Burden, who is the most open and explicit about this, states the desire for personal authenticity as a long-term search to find a 'true and real path in life' (2012, p.7) and live a 'simple life doing good things' (2012, p. 86), as well as in her appreciation of local artists following their craft (2012, p.139). Similarly, Hetzel also questioned what she valued in life (2014, p.14) before she set out on her path of self-sufficiency. After deciding on what was important to her – retiring early from paid work – Hetzel realised that to achieve it she would

need to minimise costs, grow food and cook from scratch, as well as following other cost-saving home production methods. These became her path to a life she valued and which was authentic to her. Imaginings such as this impact habitus and the creation of a new way of viewing the world. They are an internal response to the imagined new life and external expressions of the values espoused.

### **Escape from the city**

Escape from the city is seen as a creative antidote to the stresses of modern life, with the rural idyll providing a nurturing place in which to 'live the dream'. It is a two-part process where escape from the city is inevitably tied to a move towards a dream. This dream is an ideal that is part of lifestyle migration's social imaginaries of authenticity. Escaping from the city is not simply an end in itself, as where the lifestyle migrant ends up is crucial to the success of the project and the fulfilment of the dream. Discursive images clearly highlight Anglo-Australian ideals in the creation of the mythic Other rural idyll and images descended from colonial times that are presented as desirable and desired by lifestyle migrants. These ideals are represented most clearly in Australian geography in areas such as the Hunter Valley and Bowral in New South Wales, as well as parts of rural Victoria and Tasmania. These areas are strongly represented in lifestyle migration media as popular places to escape to. Anderson lives in Victoria, while Burden, Wise, Evans and Crawford are all Tasmanian residents. *River cottage* (2013) is filmed in Tilba, New South Wales. Hetzel is the only Queensland resident, and she lives in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, which is home to a rolling, green landscape with rich soils and abundant rainfall. All have successfully escaped the confines of the city. The promotion of bucolic, Anglo-idyllic landscapes reinforces deeply entrenched cultural ideals of the countryside that are already prevalent in Australian society. The authors, photographers and editors do not create new myths or ideals, rather they present certain formulations of the bucolic ideal sought by lifestyle migrants. This gives their work more opportunity to be understood and accepted by readers and viewers, despite overstatement or limited reality in their imagery and language.

Lifestyle migration is conceptualised in popular media as a considered alternative to normative suburban lifestyles, one that better reflects the personal values of the individual. It is conceptualised as a way to 'live the dream' and escape from the suburban rat-race (Burden 2012; Crawford 2015 etc). The magazines, books and television shows selected here demonstrate many similarities in their conceptualisations of lifestyle migration. They all point to it as desirable course to take (Anderson 2012), an urban dream, and a lifestyle for people

whose special and often defining qualities, such as adaptability and creativity, set them apart from others and enable them to escape the normative lifestyle (*Gourmet farmer* 2010; Crawford 2015). Difficulties are downplayed, minimised or even excluded from discussion. This representation – or lack thereof – then encourages replication not just of the lifestyle but also of the media, as they share a continuing success. None of the conceptualisations present stories of a failure to adapt or thrive, or a rejection of country living, even though these narratives are present in every society. This could be because the protagonists prefer not to admit that they made a large life decision that had limitations or was flawed, or because these stories may not be desirable and would be rejected by publishers who are riding the groundswell of a positive image of lifestyle migration, or because it can be socially awkward to admit that a phenomenon with such widespread and popular appeal has not worked out for a particular individual. Certainly, they are not part of the escape plan as the would-be migrants leave the city. As argued previously, lifestyle migrants inhabit late modernity, and in this context, individual success is paramount. By minimising or excluding images that disrupt the idea of ideal country living in their published work, protagonist-authors reinforce this narrative of success. This is a complex success, however, where authentic values and lifestyle choices are channelled into consumer-friendly packages that are marketable to ensure the ongoing fiscal success of the lifestyle migrant experiment.

In choosing where to relocate to, lifestyle migrants take into consideration global, local and personal factors. Decisions may be formed in mythic environments, but there is still a cognitive element to them. Neo-liberalisation, globalisation and economic rationalisation have created changes to late modern society that many in the population are unreconciled to or angry about (Pusey 2003, p. 58). Risk has moved from corporations to the public (Pusey 2003, p. 47) while income, power and resources have shifted to the private sector and elites (Pusey 2003, p. 6). Jobs are now less secure than they were for previous generations, with job prospects diminishing at the same time that families are becoming increasingly dependent on dual incomes to pay ever-larger mortgages and higher child-care costs. Choices about how to live as a family – who looks after aging parents, who cares for children, whether both adults in a partnership participate in outside work or not – are increasingly answered by economic imperatives that over-ride personal preferences.

It is not surprising, then, that lifestyle migration is conceptualised as an antidote to these conditions. Escape from the city can offer more affordable housing so that mortgages may be unnecessary or serviced with one income. This makes working for both partners in a couple a

choice that can be more freely made and may also allow single people a greater ability to choose what work they engage in. These are points with relevance regardless of life-stage, as those starting out with young families and few assets may make decisions about child-care and full-time working just as those approaching retirement may find that moving to the country enables them to realise city real estate assets and leave full-time paid work. These considerations are clearly apparent in lifestyle migration discourse. Place matters a great deal in this equation; it is place that enables this version of an altermodern lifestyle and so makes these texts different from those solely about simple living, slow living or de-cluttering. Crawford (2015), a young mother, and Burden (2012), a middle aged single person without children, both find that the lower pricing of rural real estate frees them to choose what work they take following their move to the country. Crawford and her husband, who works full-time, buy a run-down Tasmanian cottage (2012, pp. 7-8) that they gradually renovate, and this allows her to stay at home with their children. She also takes up writing, using a blog to establish her food styling credentials and a following which she later leverages into a book about her experiences (2015) and paid work styling food for cookbooks. Crawford and her husband's lifestyle reflects the middle Australian belief that 'dual-income arrangements should be open as a choice to those who want to take it' (Pusey 2003, p. 86), rather than a presumption driven by economic imperative. This choice, while seemingly admirable and desirable, can have unfortunate ramifications in that it makes women dependent upon men, and can promote male hegemony (Tallichet 2011, p. 147). Despite this, Crawford clearly articulates her desire to live in such a way as to allow her children to experience 'the type of freedom I enjoyed as a child' (2015, p. 3), an idea that reflects a sense of diminishment of the social resources which enable that as a given (Pusey 2003, p. 113). Being able to live how they want to, to have the mother predominantly at home with children and not having to earn a primary source of income reflects a great deal of privilege in the choices open to them. Flexibility in the workplace and the secondary nature of the income within the family are particularly gendered attributes in rural work (Dufty & Liu 2011, p. 85), but in this case, the flexibility is also a function of class as the work sought is not menial but as a self-employed person. These sorts of choices are only available to people who have the resources and skills to create opportunities for themselves and shape those opportunities around their lifestyle. Burden, who also buys a house in Tasmania, takes a similar course in that she also writes, but she focuses on magazine articles (for example Burden, August 2015 pp. 64-69) and her book (2012), while also securing income through operating a locally grown vegetable box

scheme. She was 'committed to earning a living without relying on a pay cheque' (2012, p. 139), inspired by others who were doing the same and 'carving a niche of their own, living where they wanted to live, without money being their motivation' (2012, p. 139). Burden arrived in Tasmania following a successful career as a magazine journalist and makes much of juxtaposing the differences between her London life and the simplicity of her Tasmanian life (Burden 2012, pp.4-14), particularly comparing the superficial nature of her former existence to the simple abundance of country living (Burden 2012, p. 265). For Burden, moving to the country offers an antidote to all that was wrong or unsatisfactory in her former situation. Both Burden and Crawford find that they can live within macro structures and also manipulate existing intermediate structures such as real estate markets and job opportunities to their own advantage to suit their personal ideals and imaginings, in the process creating new ways of living and outcomes. They do not have to step outside familiar norms to live this more considered choice.

Both Burden and Crawford, along with other lifestyle migrants represented in media, including Matthew Evans, Rohan Anderson, Sally Wise, Lucy Vader and Grace Wood, create their own income streams through developing self-employment opportunities following their escape from the city. Acting on individualistic impulse, they embrace 'the belief in the individual's full freedom of movement' (Simmel 1903 (2003), p. 19), even as they express it by moving to the country and away from the metropolis. They take on 'being different' (Simmel 1903 (2003), p. 18), while explicitly drawing attention to themselves to advance their livelihood within a capitalist framework. Escape intersects with abundance and the movement away from industrialised food production, leading to the result that food is, in differing ways, a source of income for all of these lifestyle migrants, except Vader and Wood, who work as artists. Burden distributes locally grown vegetables; Crawford styles food for cookbooks; Evans produces animal products to which he value-adds by making cheese and cured meats to sell at markets; Anderson writes hunting, gathering and cooking books; and Wise runs a cooking school. Escape from the city is made possible through adaptation to the new life including harnessing the rural abundance available to them. They employ creative endeavour while working within existing societal structures and using them to their advantage. This type of flexible, adaptable approach exemplifies the qualities necessary for success in individuals in the neo-liberal late modern period. The protagonists endeavour to build or retain the personal power and resources that are commonly granted to corporations and big business in neo-liberalist, economic rationalist ideologies (Pusey 2003, p. 6). They have gathered 'the

necessary resources...in response to what are now fragile and unstable boundaries between different spheres of life' (Pusey 2003, p. 107).

In all of these accounts, creativity is an important component of escape, where 'destinations offer...the antithesis of the lives that they are leaving behind' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, p. 615). Escape for Allannah Zitserman and Stavros Kazantzidis, a young working couple depicted in *Country style*, unexpectedly involved a revival of creativity and their cottage 'ended up being a crucible for their many creative projects' (Gripper, September 2012, p. 55). Kazantzidis continues, "A lot of creative people have a getaway like this...[i]n the city it's constricted and narrow, but here, you find your mind can really stretch out" (Kazantzidis, cited in Gripper, September 2012, p. 57). These words could have been said by any of the artists of the Heidelberg School, who fled the city to explore creativity in the countryside. It was certainly true of the imaginaries shared by Lawson and 'Banjo' Patterson and their written works idealising Australian bush life, and later works like Mayes' *Under the Tuscan sun* (1997). Decades later, this is also apparent for *Country style's* Vader, a professional artist who paints in rural New South Wales (Trousdale, August 2015, p. 20). The rural locales allow the artist to "immerse myself in solitude and silence...paint the joy and beauty of rain, purple skies" (Vader cited in Trousdale, August 2015, p. 22). Countryside is not just a means to creativity, it also becomes subject matter as Vader builds her artistic portfolio alongside her own self. Escape from something naturally involves a comparison of ways of life in each place (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 611), and it is clear from these accounts that the country is perceived as nurturing creativity and productivity in ways the city is unable to.

Moving to the country is also depicted in *Country style* as a healing project enabled by the process of escape. Helena Elms, who moved to Wollombi in the Hunter Valley states, '[w]e loved the idea of our own escape. The country grounds you; it draws you in and slows you down...coming here just seems to heal you' (Owens, February 2011, p. 42). There is an implication in this comment that when one is absent from the country, one is exposed to the potential of hurt, either physical or emotional, but that returning to the rural utopia can not only envelop and sooth, it can actually heal. Grace Wood, a felt artist who faced cancer at age 24, moved to her parents' farm to convalesce (Creswell Bell, August 2015, pp. 92-96). As she grew stronger, an aunt taught her the art of felt-making, launching a country inspired career (Creswell Bell, August 2015, p. 96). There is no discussion of the difficulties that country patients experience due to an absence of high level treatment or care in rural locations, nor of the inevitable long distances traversed for cancer treatment. These aspects of rural reality are



deleted in favour of a romantic idealism that emphasises healing and creative inspiration found within the bucolic and nurturing landscape.

The healing, nurturing nature of rural conceptualisations not only applies to physical health, but also to mental health and the stresses of modern lifestyles. Escape here is as much mental as it is physical, as 'ideas about health are...cultural' (Napier 2014, p. 1607). Large mortgages and demanding jobs with long hours and commutes leave people feeling depleted and exhausted (Pusey 2003, p. 97), and lifestyle migrants respond by opting out; the cover of *Country style* displays the motto 'escape the everyday'. The people depicted inside do just that, at least in the narratives presented. Alison and Andrew Fraser describe their reasons for leaving Sydney that way, choosing to 'free themselves from their inner-city mortgage and dreaming of clean air and open spaces for their sons...' (Hickson March 2016, p. 40), with Alison then exploring her creativity through art. Hetzel also emphasises that her new lifestyle following early retirement from writing technical journals for the mining industry was a vastly less stressful and more satisfying routine from the 'gruelling...life that was making me sad and miserable' (2014, p. 10). Burden, taking a physical approach, 'wanted to shed the stuff I associated with cities: suits, masks, labels, credit cards, microwaves, going out, dressing up...' (2012, p. 32) on arriving in her new home, before subsequently 'absorbing a more human rhythm' in the day-to-day routine of her new life (2012, p. 66). She no longer experienced the 'bottomless downs' (2012, p. 274) she had contended with in London, where stress depleted her mental health.

Besides healing and nurturing qualities, escaping the city is depicted as a route to a better quality of life. Quality of life is important to many (Pusey 2003, p. 46), and an idea both actively sought and individually defined. Most lifestyle migrants (Crawford, Evans, Hetzel and Anderson, among others), actively distance themselves from previous lives except to highlight how much better the new life is. Evans, who had been a chef and then Sydney's 'most feared food critic' (*Gourmet farmer* 2009), left this career to grow vegetables and craft artisan cured meats and cheeses, with the resulting minimal financial reward balanced against his personal satisfaction and enjoyment. Hetzel (2014, p. 55) describes the simple pleasures of routines such as collecting eggs, making beds and cooking meals for her family that inspire a life that brings her happiness. Anderson (2015) writes about ill-health and stress-related conditions that dogged his life before moving to the country, before re-gaining health through country-inspired activities including food growing, gathering and hunting. These lifestyle choices reflect their desire for living in line with their values and with their pursuit for happiness

(Benson 2014, p. 41). Quality of life and ultimately, happiness, for each of these people is not seen to be achieved through neo-liberalist entreaties to work harder, more productively or more efficiently while spending ever increasing amounts of money, but rather on slowing down, spending less and enjoying more time with family and in engaging with values that are important individually. This is in line with the growing evidence that leisure is important to people's health and well-being (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002, p. 39). However, the limited availability of cultural events, community facilities and varied leisure activities mean that leisure choices for rural dwellers are limited. Those activities described above, such as looking after chickens, growing gardens and cooking meals, are sometimes the only ones available to people in small towns. In this sense, place ultimately 'dictates' what the residents do (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002). While lifestyle migrants might celebrate their lifestyle as health-giving and satisfying, it could be that these activities are the only ones available to them.

The idea of living the dream or following ones' own dream through tree or sea change is a particularly resonant concept in lifestyle migration media. Crawford writes of a 'daydream about a classic cast-iron wood stove in a weatherboard farmhouse' (2015, p. 2) that motivates her to act. Burden speaks of her former life as a disappointment: 'some people lived lives that other people dreamed about and that [in London] I was to be one of the dreamers with a life unlived' (2012, p. 7). Even her relationship ideals were based in images of country living, as she 'fantasised about a partner who could also throw a dog in the back of a ute' (2012, p. 4). Similarly, Evans (*Gourmet farmer* 2009) opts for the country life over a big-city career, while Wise (2014, p. xii) dreamt of a cooking school in the country where local produce could be turned into preserves and other edible delights. Lifestyle migration is not conceptualised as a pragmatic decision that one is compelled to make: it is a personal choice that is made to fulfil life dreams. While rooted in privilege, however, the dreams also depend upon industry and hard work in order to succeed in the late modern world. Marketing the lifestyle is crucial to the on-going success of these migrants.

Escaping from the city and identifying with the new place builds personal identity for lifestyle migrants. Burden relates this most explicitly when she states, 'who you are is where you are' (2012, pp. 268-269). Her statement is a value judgement she would probably be less inclined to make had she been living in less ideal circumstances where the connection to place may have held little appeal, and in many ways it reflects her position of privilege and status. Cultural landscape and place myths for this returning migrant 'have the power to encourage

people to bond to a place and give meaning and identity to the unknown' or the unfamiliar (Tuan 1991, cited in Hopkins 1998, p. 79). Throughout her book, which outlines the first seven years of her living in Tasmania, she describes actively pursuing a 'different destiny' (2012, p. 50) through changing her activities, thoughts and habits. Hetzel also talks of changing through the adoption of new values, of wanting to reinvent herself (2014, p. 19). In the beginning of her book, Crawford (2015) describes some of the dreams she and her husband share and how she wants to be able to slow down in her new life. On the last pages, she celebrates the dreams they have achieved by summing up: 'In this house we live a slow life; a simple life, a hand-made life. Where we've learnt to live on less and be rich beyond measure' (2015, p. 304). This neatly encapsulates both the process of becoming and the journey of change of the lifestyle migrant, as well as the rejection of consumerism, and the budding of individuality and creativity in the family. The myths and ideals that were originally tentative ideas fuelled these authors' imaginations sufficiently to 'encourage the desire to transcend the symbolic landscape' (Hopkins 1998, p. 79) and actually explore the reality. However, the presented images are still mythicised and idealised in the public presentations of lived experience.

### **Rural abundance**

Rural abundance is part of the dream for lifestyle migrants, and central to its meaning is a wealth not measured in monetary values but in time, space and the shared experience of the commons. It is reflected in natural, preferably home-grown or locally sourced produce cooked from scratch and enjoyed in an unhurried manner with family and friends. As discussed previously, Anglo-Australian views of the countryside are predominant in the pages of the lifestyle migration discourse examined. This outlook propagates and perpetuates the myth of rural abundance available to the country dweller without a realistic or sustained discussion of drought, flood, bushfire or pestilence. Abundance is depicted in two ways in the discourse, through the time and space found in rural living and in actual, physical abundance of the food available through gardening, rearing animals, creative pursuits and foraging foods.

Foraging is widely discussed (Feldman, May 2014; Burden, August 2015; Anderson 2015; Hetzel 2014; Wise 2014; Crawford 2015). While common foraging prizes, such as blackberries, are a noxious weed in Australia, poisoned by councils and farmers alike and perhaps placing hapless foragers in peril as they pick, many lifestyle migrants delight in these free edibles. Anglo-centric heritage had ignored and all but erased Indigenous knowledge following colonisation, so that would-be foragers today have to carefully and deliberately discover native food sources rather than learning them organically. These knowledges are

now being sought out by lifestyle migrants such as Josh Tyler and Emma Handley (mentioned below). Wild and cultivated foods are conceptualised as a natural and freely available abundance that simply takes time and space to achieve, the antithesis of commercialised consumer products that involve marketing, packaging, an exchange of cash and other consumerist practices.

Foraging is described in terms of rich abundance. Crawford enthuses over the abundant blackberry bushes along a nearby river, where she and her children gather buckets full to make into pies and jam (2015, p. 95). She describes wearing gumboots to minimise the risk of snakebite and the tendency of the thorns to snag clothing, but neither deter her from the fruit. Restaurant owner Tyler learned about Australian native foods from a book and 'was struck by the abundance of wild produce around him: "I'd been walking past all these edible ingredients everyday and had no idea. Every time I went surfing, I'd see more things I could use"' (Tyler, cited in Feldman, May 2014, p. 68). Chef Handley moved to Victoria's north-east and enjoys both garden produce and foraged edibles (Imhoff, September 2012). As the article's author states:

The move to the high country has let her focus on the superb produce that is a hallmark of Italian cuisine. Harvesting vegetables, fruit and eggs from the Villa's permaculture garden...is a particular joy. "We have such beautiful produce up here and I'm right into getting back to the earth, planting my garden as well as finding things on the side of the road. I love preserving and that whole country thing," Handley states (cited in Imhoff, September 2012, p. 90).

The lifestyle migrant's life of rural abundance is depicted through photographs of lush, green gardens bearing ripe fruit and vegetables alongside rich descriptions of the bounty produced. Gardening for food production is a learning process discussed through a paradigm of abundance and the desirability of getting closer to nature. Photographs show carrots being carried by the armful (Crawford 2015, p. 84), lemons abundant on a tree (Crawford 2015, p. 77), neatly organised raised vegetable beds (Burden August 2015, photographed by Claire Takacs), lines of apple trees bending under the weight of their fruit (Crawford 2015, p. 61), pigs fattened for slaughter (*Gourmet farmer* 2009). These are images that readers want to experience, believe and derive pleasure from. Wise describes her region as 'valleys of incredible abundance' (2014, p. ix), going on to say that '[e]ach summer saw an orgy of preserving strike the kitchen and such was the abundance from fields and orchards that we

had the luxury of experimentation, involving lots of recipes...' (2014, p. xiii). It becomes a natural sequence in these conceptualisations that growing food then necessitates the acquisition of preserving and bottling skills (and the time to do this), to ensure the abundance is not wasted. This becomes a theme prevalent throughout all accounts (Wise 2014; Crawford 2015; Anderson 2012 and 2015; Hetzel 2014 etc).

These myths of rural abundance exclude stories of drought, grasshoppers and searing winds that destroy livestock, crops and relationships with bank managers. Readers suspend intruding images of reality to participate in the narrative (Hopkins 1998, p. 79) and maintain the myths depicted in the discourse. At most, there is light-hearted mention of frozen zucchinis in summertime, laughed off as a quirky fact that does not deter the rural dweller from planting extensive fruit and vegetable gardens (Burden, August 2015, p. 66). Little mention is made of the devastating hardships endured by rural people due to climate change and drought (Anderson 2014), although these have had tremendous impact on rural communities. Similarly, the costs of starting or maintaining a garden, including tools, seeds or plants, soils and fertilisers and the like, are downplayed or excluded from narratives. Rather, media conceptualisations idealise the ability and skills acquired by the lifestyle migrant to find wild foods or grow one's own. These skills set country residents apart from city dwellers, who visit artificially lit supermarkets filled with aisles of processed foods vastly different from the wholesome delights displayed in media. In none of the texts was there discussion of displaced Indigenous Australians or the need to re-form stories of belonging that encompass and include both the original inhabitants as well as other minority groups including LGBTI, people of colour, people with disability and those who have differing beliefs to the mainstream in Australia. The stories that were told, based on white settler myths, were ways to claim belonging and possession for this select group.

In these narratives, what is depicted as important is the idea of natural bounty and shared commons, in opposition to the over-sated and over-wrought abundance of consumer-oriented city life. It is slower, quieter and less harried, a result of a human and personal nurturing rather than bought through wages in an anonymous, impersonal setting, such as Augé's non-places (1995). Burden mentions hearing the sounds of the outside world that were blocked from her hearing in the city and how she could relax into her new, 'more human rhythm' (2012, p. 66). Crawford describes her children fearlessly climbing over rocks on a beach, their outdoors-oriented childhood inspiring confidence and assurance that a city life would not have engendered (2015, p. 304) and delights in 'the sweetness of doing nothing' (2015, p. 156).

Similarly, Anderson shoots game for his table (2012, p. 71), enjoying the bounty at a price of time, a bullet and the work of preparing the carcass. These lifestyle migrants find value in the slower pace of reaping or producing natural abundance, one that is in tune with seasons and nature itself. It is an abundance relative to needs and desires, where contentment with the things already attained is fundamental to satisfaction with a life that appears simple, yet is described as rich and rewarding.

This highlights the importance of time and space for lifestyle migrants. Growing food, foraging, cooking from scratch and hunting all require ample time and the space in which to do them. Lifestyle migrants often speak of slowing down (Crawford 2015, p. 3), of needing 'time to watch a seed you planted unfurl' (Burden 2012, p. 67), to 'get off the merry-go-round and live a different kind of life' (Hetzl 2012, p. 15). On considering values and what is important, each tree-changer emphasises time and space as essential components of the new life. The availability of time not only affirms the lifestyle migrant's personal, altermodern solution to work related norms foisted on them through economic rationalisation (Pusey 2003, p. 89), it also offers an alternative to consumption norms and relieves some of the pressure and stress indicative of time-poor families in middle Australia (Pusey 2003, p. 105). De-commodifying time affects consumption by re-classifying what is 'free' time and what is 'work' time and how money is spent inside these concepts (Appadurai 1996, p. 79).

Physical space is important in terms of area in which to garden, hunt or forage, which are more constrained or compressed in city life, but also in the creation of a concept of 'home' which becomes a focus of and site of identity. Lifestyle migrant identity is created in the abstract and virtual world (Pink, 2012, p.23) but also in the physical, relational and historical ideas of place that are concerned with identity (Augé 1995, p. 81) These concepts of space and place are important to all lifestyle migrants (see especially Crawford, pp. 7-9; Burden 2012, p. 27). Anderson (2012) acknowledges his lack in this area when relating how his small backyard (despite his country location), prevents large-scale food growing and animal husbandry (2012, p. 15). In response, he obtains permission to hunt and fish on both public and private land (2012, p. 88). This opens up space for him and allows him to enjoy the commons and rural environment so essential to his preferred way of life. Contacting farmers for permission also enables him to further establish his identity and feeling of belonging within the wider community. For each of the people represented here, time, place and space are crucial to their lived experience, and in particular, their acquisition of that human essential, food.

This connection to food and its source becomes an identity creating project which presents the lifestyle migrant positively in media. Those engaging in these practices are conceptualised as concerned for the environment and their family's personal health, through the production of nourishing food (Anderson 2012; Crawford 2015; Wise 2014 etc). They are also seen to be participating in healthy outdoor activities that have substantial positive benefit both for themselves and for their children's educational experiences. It is depicted as a learning journey for adults, one which identifies the lifestyle migrant as hard-working and knowledgeable of what might be considered to be lost essentials in life, such as being more self-reliant or able to grow food or hunt for oneself and one's family. However, it can also shake newly developing ideas of identity. Burden relates her feelings when she is treated imperiously by a customer at her fruit stand. The customer sees her as a vegetable seller with dirty fingernails, rather than as she was in her previous, successful international career with money, status and influential connections (2012, p. 204). Despite her blossoming romantic relationship, greater personal happiness and contentment, Burden becomes aware of how negatively others might now see her and how different this view would be to that she had identified with previously. While it shakes her new image of herself, it does not produce doubt or the desire to return to her former life.

For Wise (2014) and Evans (*Gourmet farmer* 2009), food production and home cooking become a means to build or reinforce friendships and connections with family and community, thus similarly enhancing their sense of belonging. Wise prepares feasts with the abundance she gleans, inviting cooking school participants, journalists who drop in, family and others to partake (2014, p. 195). Those assisting with garden chores during times of ill-health (Wise 2014, p. 335) are rewarded with feasts of home-grown produce. Similarly, Evans (*Gourmet farmer* 2009) hosts a dinner party at his Fat Pig Farm using food he has grown or prepared to thank the people who have helped him in some way or taught him how to set up the farm. Food is a way to share experiences, build friendships and enhance connection to those around them. This creates both a sense of identity and belonging in the local community through the expression of an altermodern lifestyle. It also has identity and status enhancing qualities when friends from the city are invited to share the bounty and experience the success of the lifestyle migrant's transition. In *Country style*, where many stories are told of moving from the city, the focus is on inviting these city friends to the country property for long lunches (Nette King 2013, p. 36) or weekends. Here, country hospitality is demonstrated in

meals set overlooking fields, on outdoor tables, and with time and leisure predominant (Nette King May 2013, photographed by Cohen, p. 35).

## **Conclusion**

Predominant Anglo-Australian ideals of the country inform social imaginaries that act to shape myths of rural life which are then depicted as truths in the symbolic spaces created in contemporary Australian discourse. Readers engage with myths of escape from the city, rural abundance and authenticity, while willingly suspending disbelief to imaginatively explore these idealised myths without regard to an unwanted and intruding reality. They choose, and have the privilege to choose, to experience the refuge and sanctuary of the discursive place to experience the sense of a shared community of similar privilege and leisure. Issues of relevance to country life, such as drought, suicide, loneliness and isolation, are minimised or excluded in favour of this romanticised paradigm. Nothing is said about the displaced original inhabitants. There becomes a shared conspiracy whereby current lifestyle migrants, authors or editors promote idealisations while navigating reality just enough to negotiate their own successful transition or the continuance of mythic portrayals, a notion that encourages replication of both the lifestyle as well as the media itself. Potential lifestyle migrants are encouraged to embrace country living as an act of becoming through the appeal of an imagined, bucolic myth, notwithstanding its lack of reality.

Each of the lifestyle migrants depicted live a contradictory life where they advocate escape from norms, creativity, individual solutions and independence, while they are concurrently living in and engaging with neo-liberal values, mainstream culture and normative societal values. The popular blogs, book deals and the writing inherent in these perpetuate widespread, culturally established myths and comforting idealisations of a nostalgic and romanticised rural way of living that reinforce dominant ideologies and interests. Readers willingly engage with the medium despite these contradictions, losing sight of them and the medium itself in the narrative storytelling, to satisfy their own needs for refuge, community, shared experience and identity exploration as well as the imaginative stretching of habitus.

However, lifestyle migration is also presented as an altermodern response to economic rationalisation that is cognitively rational. It results in greater individual power over economic circumstances for the adaptable and creative lifestyle migrants depicted in these media sources as exemplary success stories. It enables those who can adopt the flexibility required in late modern life to overcome challenges such as urban affordability, economic imperatives



to work longer and harder, and create a new style of life that is more considered and reflective of the values embraced by lifestyle migrants depicted here. It becomes a considered alternative to normative lifestyles and enables lived experience to match articulated values around day-to-day life choices such as child-rearing and time commodification. This results in outcomes better aligned with personal values, expressing personal authenticity and individual identity with greater clarity. All of these ideas reflect the privilege lifestyle migrants experience through their ability to act in accordance with their desires.

This chapter has explained how lifestyle migration is conceptualised in selected Australian media. It shows how social imaginaries depicting ideas of a rural idyll reflect prevalent and well-established themes of authenticity, rural abundance and a desire to escape the city. These themes share united values which are upheld in the media reviewed here as desirable within a modern lifestyle, and are prevalent in other cultural discourses. As noted in the literature, social imaginaries are powerful constructs within contemporary society (Halfacree 2014), and the new ways and new technologies that they are shared and disseminated through enable more people to engage with them. The following chapter, Chapter 4: Influencing the move, looks at how these conceptualisations influence the decision to move and so reveals just how powerful these constructs can be in the decision-making process.

## **Chapter 4: Influencing the move**

I stumbled out of the dark cinema and into the bright sunshine, reluctantly blinking my way back to the real world before I was jostled by people on the street yet again. It was the early 1980s and Tom Burlinson and Sigrid Thornton were starring in *The man from Snowy River* (1982). Although my feet were now taking me back to the train station for the ride home to the suburbs, really, I was in the Snowy Mountains, my head full of horses and hills, shaded verandas and *Für Elise*. I felt reluctant to re-join my ordinary suburban life, but it was not just the romance of the story that made me feel that way. It was the idea of being free, of pursuing a dream, of standing up for myself and fighting for equality of class and gender, for fairness. An imagined world in which I could be independent yet still belong, part of the land, part of the world around me, but still me. For me, it was all wrapped up in the Australian landscape, rather than the city I was walking through.

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter examined how lifestyle migration is discursively constructed in popular Australia media and, in so doing, revealed that a desire for authenticity – to live in line with one's values – is an important theme for many lifestyle migrants (Osbaldiston 2012a & b) which, in turn, is associated with a desire to escape from the city and live more abundantly (Wallis 2017). This abundance is not necessarily material or consumer-oriented, but rather is associated with time, space and beliefs. Furthermore, these conceptualisations are embedded in historic and current positions including class, gender, ethnicity, privilege and power, as well as structures of globalisation, neo-liberalism, colonisation and consumerism. Also within these structures are social imaginaries which promulgate ideas about the countryside that creates a social reality in which people then make decisions. In fact, 'imaginaries play a predominant role in envisioning... green pastures' (Salazar 2011 p. 577). This chapter asks how these social imaginaries influence the decision to relocate to the country, by exploring how these contextual settings work with the imagination both in the self and in broader social imaginaries to present the rural as a valued 'good' worth seeking. By looking at the lived experience from a phenomenological and materialistic point of view, it is possible to crystallise some of the meanings, the structures of power and the social realities that influence people to make decisions to move to the country in a layered and contextual way. Chapter 5 follows this analysis by asking how conceptualisations impact the lived experience *after* relocation, while Chapter 6 examines how these interactions with place affect identity.

Given the phenomenological nature of the study, I relied upon the conversations of the participants to guide the discussion. Some were much more comfortable sharing their experiences and textual habits with me, and this meant that some people offered more detail for analysis than others. This variance forms part of the context and lived experience of this project. In addition, participants mentioned numerous texts which were different from the established lifestyle migration texts analysed in Chapter 3. By placing the texts within cultural life and context, while asking how they, and the social imaginaries displayed within them, are engaged by this particular group of lifestyle migrants, the question becomes what impact the texts 'have on social practice, [and] what types of cultural experiences are in practice associated with seeing it?' (Couldry 2000, p. 68). This allows articulation of 'the connections between culture and power' (Couldry 2000, p. 68) that are essential to cultural studies and an examination of the flows of meanings that inform cultures. It also suggests that the social imaginaries illustrated or understood in the flow of meanings related to texts are traced and visible in the texts (Hartley 2002, p.75), and so have an essential and crucial place in understanding these meanings. The text disseminates the meanings and values that are associated with them by readers and viewers. This produces a decentring of the text resulting in greater focus on culture and the people creating that culture. The meanings and values that operate as social imaginaries are then not confined to particular texts but are widespread throughout a range of cultural artefacts. The participants in this study did demonstrate their engagement with a wide range of materials. Despite this, it was still apparent that the longing to live an authentic life while escaping the city remained influential motivating factors for their relocation, and the above contexts were also important.

As noted earlier, many of the lifestyle migrants in this study originally came from Britain, Ireland and Europe before settling in Stanthorpe. Australia has a long history of immigration from these countries, dating back over two hundred years. The lifestyle migrants in the study came to Australia at different times and for very different reasons. Faye arrived as an adult on a university research project and stayed when she met and married her husband. Diane visited as a tourist and when the pre-existing relationship she had with an Australian became serious, she decided to move here. Rae arrived in Australia as a child and moved to Stanthorpe as a married woman, and Bob was a 'Ten Pound Pom', arriving after the Second World War. Natalie came on a working holiday visa and is now in a long-term relationship, although she is unsure of whether she would stay in Australia permanently. All of these participants had lived in other parts of Australia before choosing to move to Stanthorpe. For

many skilled migrants to Australia, lifestyle and climate are strong attractions (Khoo, Graham and McDonald 2010, p. 564), but clearly relationships also played a part for this study's participants.

### **Authenticity, myths and imaginaries**

It quickly became apparent to me as I interviewed the lifestyle migrants in this project that the quest for authenticity is a motivating factor for relocations to rural locations. Authenticity is a socially constructed concept relying on the evaluation (Vannini & Williams 2009) of both good and goods. It 'refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar' (Vannini & Williams 2009, p. 3). This makes it is an ever-changing concept rather than a set ideal. Instead, what is authentic changes within cultural settings and over time, and it can also indicate status or be used for social control. Authenticity is significant in terms of culture, self and society (Vannini & Williams 2009, p. 3), but lifestyle migrants also engage with 'place as a toolkit to capture authenticity' (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 9). Authenticity for lifestyle migrants often consists of ideals such as abundance, creativity, personal fulfilment and a sense of self, the ability to connect with nature and find belonging in place, to live differently from the mainstream, and yet still have and enjoy material goods large and small. It becomes clear, then, that authenticity for lifestyle migrants is often sought and expressed in terms of place, culture and the self (Osbaldiston 2012a and 2012b). For British migrants relocating to France, rural life was perceived to be where they would be able to 'find authentic living and would be able to be themselves' (Benson 2014, p. 137). With authenticity as a master motive (Weigert 2009), place and material culture are used as an aesthetic backdrop (Vannini & Burgess 2009) to signify and enhance authenticity. They are also used as objects through which the authentic self is expressed in personal narratives of the self. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the desire for and pursuit of authenticity in lifestyle migration is not a new finding, and has been well documented in the literature (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; Osbaldiston 2010b; Benson 2012; Osbaldiston 2012b). However, what is discussed here is how notions of authenticity are formed or created for lifestyle migrants in culturally positioned discourse before they move, and how these influence the potential lifestyle migrant. The desire for authenticity, often achieved through escape to the country, is intertwined with flows of meaning and ideals in multiple and complex ways, so that each relates to the other and are only separated in this discussion for heuristic purposes.

These interconnected flows of meaning were apparent in my conversations with Rae. I was sitting in a coffee shop with her (Rae, 9 August 2016), discussing why she and her family had moved to Stanthorpe some years earlier. She had just outlined how she and some other residents had experienced a major success in acquiring over a million dollars in government funding for a program benefitting women in the local community. She asked me if I had read the book *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)). Surprised, I vaguely brought back recollections of the book from the dim corners of memory, as I had read it some years previously. She explained further: 'I love that book. I read it when I was a teenager and I love that book. I feel like that's what Stanthorpe's like.' (Rae, 9 August 2016).

Going into further detail, it became clear that Rae related to the female heroine and the positive impact that her fictional actions had on the small town she lived in in the Australian outback. The book's character, in trying to make her tiny outback town more like Alice Springs, which had shops and jobs for local people, started small businesses to create jobs that would attract and retain women in the outback area. Doing this meant that they did not have to move away for work or an improved lifestyle and could remain where they were, marry and have children (Twomey 2006). Rae, married and with a young child of her own when they moved to Stanthorpe for her own husband's work, found this important in her own life too. Rae mentioned how she had decided more than a decade earlier that she wanted to live in a small town so that she could be 'a big fish in a small pond' (9 August 2016) and have a major, positive impact on the people around her, albeit in a different way to the book's main character. She had decided on Stanthorpe with this goal in mind, when she and her husband chose where to settle from several towns in which there were jobs open to him. Rae related to the book's protagonist, and her subsequent actions demonstrated that discourse provided 'the terms in which we think of ourselves and the world, and according to which we act...we are certainly powerfully shaped and positioned by discourses' (Sayer, 2011, p. 115). Coming from a well-educated and privileged background, Rae used her class position to reproduce ideas about how to live, not in terms of material goods demonstrating status (which she quite consciously rejected), but by improving the lives of people around her through the acquisition of better public facilities for a segment of the Stanthorpe community. Class concerns are not simply about level of income but are also demonstrated as 'what is good in terms of ways of life, practices, objects, behaviours and types of character that people see as desirable' (Sayer, 2005, pp. 2-3). In this way, Rae used the power that was available to her to do what she thought would be good for the community. It was not easy; she and her partners in the

funding acquisition were regarded as 'mad' (Rae, 9 August 2016) within the community at the beginning of their years-long campaign. There was a belief that the project would be ignored at high levels and that they were wasting their time. Once the funding was in place, however, the community quickly responded positively and enthusiastically adopted the results of their hard work.

Rae felt that she belonged enough in Stanthorpe to play an important and influential role, and to assert her ideas for change and development within the community. Although not a resident of long duration, she felt that her ideas had a place in the community, an idea that played out as true. She rationalised her actions through the text, as what she was doing in Stanthorpe was similar to what the female heroine did in *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)); this provided what she thought was a good model for her to act in a new community. Continuing a tradition of social improvement that was started in early settlement days (Offord et al 2015, p. 20), Rae framed the prospect of betterment within socially accepted practices and this resulted in success for her project (Offord et al 2015, p. 22). She was familiar with the morés of her society and her own English birth and childhood spent in England may have strengthened her ties with colonial-based understandings and practice, and enabled her to continue the practice. The novel Rae adopted so readily was written and is set in an era when Australia's population was inhabited overwhelmingly by people of Anglo-Celtic descent (Dixson 1999), and is shaped by an imperialist philosophy (Lammers 1977). Neville Shute, the book's author, was an Englishman who moved to Australia following a successful and financially lucrative career owning and running an aircraft construction firm during the Second World War. These facts position the book in a discursive world of colonial attitudes shaped by imperialist thought, one that experiences and relishes strong ties to England and a sense that British ways are normative and unquestionable.

Influencing Shute, and shared through his prose, were Australian local and national identities which were 'excessively inwardly-turned as well as imperial, partly because the Britons who formed them were transplanted excessively – to many heartbreakingly – far from home' (Dixson 1999, p. 26). It remains that 'popular culture figures the old identity, our Britishness reshaped, as authentic, desirable and alive' (Dixson, 1999, p. 36). This idea might be changing over time and with ongoing immigration (Lammers 1977), but it remains influential. For Rae, then, authenticity is tied up in her own history of being born in England and migrating to Australia as a child; being a white, heterosexual young woman like the protagonist; and similarly occupying a position of privilege which gave her the education, time and means to

pursue a passion to help develop Stanthorpe's services. While much discussion has focussed on the novel's depiction of the Japanese and its love story, it is also a novel that reveals prevailing ideas of white womanhood and settling an 'empty' land (Twomey 2006; Martin, Mead & Trigger, 2014), factors which appeared to be part of Rae's decision-making process too. Indeed, Rae never questioned her role in specifically choosing Stanthorpe to fulfil her ideas, never questioned her right to belong or that she had the authority to act on behalf of the town's residents. Similarly, she did not question the importance of focusing government attention and taxpayer funds on mainstream values of childbearing and reproduction. All of these ideas were just accepted by Rae as right and proper. For Rae, authentic values are embedded in her engagement with the imaginaries of a colonial hegemony flowing through discourse such as *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)).

Viv and Barry are a little older than some of the other participants, and both are retired. They share a house but live independently, with active individual interests and hobbies that reflect their values and desire to live authentic lives. Both relish their strong ties to Britain. Barry had grown up in the English countryside before arriving in Australia as a young man. He describes a childhood enjoyed largely outdoors, and he wanted to return to that type of life in his retirement. Barry's view of authenticity, then, is to recapture a past in a new country on the other side of the world. These ideas of authenticity are socially constructed (Cohen 1988) using cultural artefacts that do not actually replicate the 'authentic' reality of his childhood, but instead enable him to negotiate a satisfactory approximation through material surroundings and daily activities that help him to feel less alienated from modern society (Cohen 1988, p. 376). For Barry, the freedom of being able to go where he wanted, do what he wanted, explore nature and the world around him were an escape after an adult life of work and responsibility. By constructing his own idea of authenticity he can decide just how acceptable the results are (Cohen 1988). The outdoors was a refuge for him from the unhappy time he experienced at school while a child, and as an adult, it still offered peace and tranquillity from the pace and demands of urban life, so he is satisfied. Although 'there is really little escape from the rhythms of industrial production' (Appadurai 1996, p. 80), Barry found freedom in a rural retirement, where unfettered time and space allowed him to live as he pleased and live out the social imaginaries he engaged with. While living in a rented unit in Brisbane, magazines like *Grassroots* were a discursive escape, representing a hope for a different future for him (Barry, 26 August 2016). The magazine, depicting life on the land with a clear self-reliant theme, has an inspirational tone yet is written by reader/contributors, rather than by

possibly city-based journalists removed from first-hand experience. This adds to its down-to-earth, 'advice from a neighbour' tone. Following his move to Stanthorpe, however, Barry stopped buying it because now 'we're doing it' (Viv 26 August 2016). The texts had provided a way for them to see how life could be carried out in the country, and now they could go ahead and live it. The texts served to reinforce and validate the habitus they already engaged with, and which he sought to live more fully by moving to the country.

Viv's parents had owned a property in Stanthorpe many years previously, and, following visits as a young woman, she had 'always wanted to live here' (Viv, 26 August 2016). Barry, appreciating Stanthorpe's climate and slow pace, was happy to join her. Like Barry, Viv says that her 'English heritage comes out in me because I love England and everything English' (13 September 2016). She had spent a large part of her childhood in New Guinea and boarding schools in Australia, which are often modelled on English style schools, but had not ever lived in Britain. There is a mixture in both Viv and Barry's early years and personal histories of nostalgic reminiscences of actual and imagined childhoods, coupled with the desire to live a life more in line with their values and ideals. Their early years, shaped by the same British hegemony described above, influenced their habitus to make them feel comfortable in the country. Early, formative years are particularly important to habitus (Sayer, 2005, p. 25), creating norms around how to live that are firmly rooted. Viv and Barry consume media including shows set in the English countryside like *All creatures great and small* (1978-1990) and *Heartbeat* (1992-2010), as well as magazines such as *This England* and *The people's friend*, and also enjoy trips to Britain informed by social imaginaries and tourism brochures. These forms of media create an imagined nostalgia 'for things that never were' (Appadurai 1996, p. 77), for the vision of the authentic life they have created. They helped Viv to make meaning in her life by sharing an idea of what life could be like and showing her how it could be lived in practice. While Barry left England more than forty years ago, and Viv had never lived there, British-oriented discursive worlds still nurture their habitus. They

create experiences of duration, passage, and loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals...this imagined nostalgia thus inverts the temporal logic of fantasy...and creates much deeper wants than simple envy, imitation, or greed could by themselves invite (Appadurai 1996, p. 77).



For Viv and Barry, the imagined world in British discourse is an ideal that represents what an authentic life should look like, yet it also embodies the loss of the old or imagined way of life. The yearnings they experience for this way of life are deeply felt. Indeed, Britain's colonisation of Australia remains a strong and meaningful legacy of ties for them, both in social imaginaries, external structures and in their personal habitus. These ties place them within normative, hegemonic cultures in Australia, which allows them to live in the mainstream and feel as though they fit in and belong within Australian culture, as constructions based on English ways are strongly apparent in Australian ways of life, where 'they have become naturalised or "common-sense" ways of thinking about the world' (Meyers 2004, p. 135).

The way Diane decided on and settled in Stanthorpe was very different to these narratives of returning to the habitus and situating oneself in a field similar to that personally experienced or imagined childhood or of nostalgic reminiscences. Having grown up in 'a totally urban background' (26 August 2016), she had worked for 25 years in finance in the city of London (26 August 2016) and, like Hilary Burden, author of *A story of seven summers* (2012), wanted to make a change before retirement proper, to live more authentically. She states:

We were looking for somewhere that gave us enough room to pursue a more rural lifestyle, particularly in terms of a more honest lifestyle. It sounds a bit hippy and I'm not really a hippy, but I wanted, and my husband wanted, a more sustainable lifestyle...I was fed up with the finance industry and we just really wanted something different, that was just a more honest lifestyle (Diane, 26 August 2016).

This is a similar attitude to British migrants to France, who also sought a more authentic life, albeit in rural France (Benson 2014, p. 137). Although Diane's childhood had been very urban, her parents had moved from London to rural Norfolk when she was 18 and at university. 'Actually', she states, 'their position was quite similar to our position today; they lived in a small village, miles from town' (Diane, 26 August 2016). Despite never living in Norfolk herself, Diane and her parents had watched shows such as *The good life* (1975-1977), which were on television when she was growing up. Now growing most of her own vegetables, keeping hens and bees, Diane is living the sort of life depicted in the series. However, as O'Reilly states,

It is not altogether clear why rurality is important for the British middle class, or how these ideas have become embodied, how they have shaped the habitus or where they came from. Certainly, environmental arguments have been growing over recent

decades, and with that, even subconsciously, there is a search for quality, purity and getting back to nature (2014, p. 223).

The discursive framing of ideas of community and place provides the imaginative space in which to explore these ideas of rurality, see how they fit, and create or reinforce values for lifestyle migrants before any actual move. In Diane's case, while she did not form a childhood habitus of life in the countryside, she was 'discursively influenced, selectively and fallibly' (Sayer, 2005, p.33), by her parents, by the perceived failings of life in the city, and by the media solutions to these failings, such as television shows like *The good life* (1975-1977). The use of imagination to think about a different way of life, even if one is situated in the city, then expands the habitus around these values and ideas of the rural as a good internally. Some discourses about a rural idyll exist throughout much of Western writing and extend back many thousands of years (see Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology for more on this). This enables one to see the structural patterns which emerge in a more distant, external way to those in the internal habitus (Sayer, 2005). While it was not a particularly logical path for Diane to live in a small regional town, she chose it because she was able to live in line with the values she had learned through discourse from the time she was a small child. She responded to the values in her habitus and in the social imaginaries she engaged with.

Stanthorpe's climate, which makes it possible to grow temperate climate fruits, grapes and vegetables, was also a specific reason for Diane to move there (26 August 2016) and influenced how she could live in line with the values she held of growing her own food. Arriving from England, she took a job in a plant nursery during her short stint in Brisbane before she and her husband decided to settle permanently in Stanthorpe. In Brisbane she learned about sub-tropical gardens, which were very different to what she was familiar with in England; tropical gardening was well outside her habitus of English allotment gardening. Climate has been shown to influence place-identification (Knez 2005), and for Diane, its similarity to the temperate climate in England that she experienced as a child as well its efficaciousness for growing the types of vegetables she was interested in served to reinforce her place identity in the Stanthorpe area and gave her a sense of belonging that was missing from Brisbane's sub-tropical climate. Living authentically for Diane meant growing food of the type she was familiar with in England, and achieving this value meant living in a place with a climate like Stanthorpe's. She continues:

And then I realised that we could live here and it was actually a compromise so I actually chose this place on the grounds of the climatology on the Bureau's site...we realised that we liked Queensland, didn't want to leave Queensland but I wanted somewhere cooler than Brisbane so we ended up here. And love it (Diane, 26 August 2016).

Familiarity of the gardening situation in England was etched in her habitus but was challenged by the new country, which required new knowledge of the climate in the Southern Hemisphere. An English desire for, and love of gardens is well documented (Mirmohamadi 2004), and '[t]his notion that Englishness, and indeed England, can be transplanted across space, through the garden, is central to our understanding of the colonising dimension of gardens' (Mirmohamadi 2004, p. 215). Decisions about where to garden are 'not made in a vacuum. They are culturally mediated' (Seddon, 1997, p. 176), and this cultural mediation often transplants the values of the old ways to the new landscape. While Stanthorpe is regarded as a good place to grow crops, it is because of transplanted Anglo ideas of what is good or not that makes it so. Its favoured climate and soil actually means that it is 'slightly more amenable to pursuing generally inappropriate goals than the rest of the country' (Seddon, 1997, p. 182). Diane has brought her British cultural framework to Australia and chose one of the places in Australia where that framework would most likely be successful and enable her to live in line with her vision of an authentic life.

Stanthorpe's climate was also a deciding factor for Kate, as well as family and better work-life balance. These are all valued in the authentic life and authenticity can be seen 'as a motive and a source of motivation for the self' (Vannini & Williams 2009, p. 7). After her husband's brother and his wife moved from Rockhampton, where both couples lived, to Stanthorpe, Kate and her partner came for a visit at Easter, 'and we loved it and loved the climate and we'd moved by October of that year. I think we had plans that we were going but we didn't know where and we found where' (9 August 2016). It wasn't that they had great desires to grow vegetables, and she describes her veggie garden as a weed patch, but the climate was pleasant for daily life. It was helpful to them when relocating that they had family that they could stay with while they looked for a house of their own; they continue to be very close, sharing child-minding and meals frequently. Kate and her husband had lived in the centre of Rockhampton and he worked long hours, so part of the escape also involved finding a situation that was 'slower paced, a bit more relaxed. That's good' (Kate, 9 August 2016). She goes on to mention that her husband enjoys the quieter lifestyle and more relaxed business

schedule now. Desire for a life closer to their values gave them the motivation to move to experience these values at play in their lives. In this sense, authenticity is a master motive, whereby the desire to achieve meaning in and for the self-motivates the individual to actions which develop intrinsic identity (Weigert, 2009). It 'is a call for personal freedom' (Weigert 2009, p. 39) asserted in action and consumption.

For Kate (9 August 2016), actual country life is nothing like the social imaginaries she engaged with. She watched the television series *McLeod's Daughters* (2001-2009), a show about two sisters running a large outback property by themselves. The series was successful both in Australia and overseas, eventually running to 224 episodes, and a contributing factor to its popularity was its 'aesthetisation of iconic Australian landscapes and lifestyle' (Ward and O'Regan 2011, p. 34). I ask Kate if her life here is anything like that, and she laughs:

No! No! No! I envisaged moving here that we'd be able to sit out on the back deck of a night having a nice glass of wine, watching the sunset go down. Yeah, we pull in during winter, we leave when it's dark, we come home when it's dark and it's a mad rush to try and get dinner ready and eaten and into bed ready to start the next day. Nothing like I envisaged life was going to be. But that's good, because I can still enjoy reading books and watch *McLeod's Daughters* (2001-2009) and keep them there as that fantasy of what I'd like it to be like in the country [laughter] (Kate, 9 August 2016).

Kate valued the ideals she had seen in the television series, and wanted to replicate them in her own life as she sought a more authentic way to live, but this was challenged by the insistence of reality. To reconcile the difference between her desired authentic life and her actual life, Kate separates reality from the social imaginaries depicted in the discourse she engages with, so that she can experience the pleasure of immersion and escape within the latter while still coping with and living in the former. For her, the discourse is pleasurable and engaging, but 'is imagined as a spatial and temporal retreat' (Hopkins 1998, p. 78) from daily life. When engaging with the rural depictions in the television show, she employs a 'willing suspension of disbelief' (Hopkins 1998, p. 65) in the show's cultural landscapes to enable the reality of life to continue to exist, even if she may not be living as authentically as she would have liked. There is still a distance between the ideals existing in her habitus and the realities she lives on a daily basis, which she justifies by seeing them as fantasy and real worlds.

As I drive down the crunching gravel driveway of a vineyard south of Stanthorpe, it is clear that the vines passing my windows are tended lovingly. This is a landscape nurtured for its

beauty as well as its ability to produce the wine produced by the couple who live here. Brian, who owns the vineyard along with his wife Christine, are a mature couple who had enough money to 'make choices' (15 July 2016). Financially, they didn't have to work anymore, but years of travelling had left them without purpose:

The trouble with that [travelling] was that after a while you want to do something more with your life and we still love to go travelling, but without a purpose or time limit, after a few years it starts to become less interesting so you need to change. I think there's a need for constant change (Christine, 15 July 2016).

Additionally, Brian had been trained as an agronomist, and had always loved the countryside, so that when the opportunity presented itself, he 'wanted to get back to the land' (15 July 2016). Growing grapes is a shared creative outlet: 'To me it's the highlight of the year, to watch the bud burst and watch the flower and the bunches of grapes. I often say to people it's like having 7000 pregnant daughters out there!' (Christine, 15 July 2016). Working in the vineyard is something that they describe as meditative, as well as satisfying. Authenticity for this couple is derived from the beauty of their surroundings, the rural idyll, connection with nature and the community around them. Again there are similarities in motivations with British migrants to France (Benson 2014), even though Brian and Christine aren't British but rather are Australian. Permanent, full-time residents, with the largest of all the properties of the people I interviewed, they have a different relationship to the land than the other participants as it produces an important source of income and is fundamental to their business. They are not dreaming unrealistic dreams in a romantic vision of a rural idyll, although they do have plans for improvements and renovations. For the interview, we sit in a beautiful cellar door/gift shop/bar and coffee space which they constructed, with huge glass windows overlooking the vines and dam, with the open fire blazing. The building, of stone and timber, glass and corrugated iron, looks as though it belongs to the land, rising out of in in harmony and cohesiveness.

When asked about whether television shows or magazines about the country, such as *Country style*, *Escape to the country*, *River cottage* and *Gourmet farmer* influenced their move, they are adamant in their rejection of this idea. Laughing at the suggestion, Brian states:

They are a total anathema to me. I basically want to vomit when I see those TV shows. They're not real. It's total bullshit made for the people who sit there in cities

and say 'Oh, I'd love to do that' and they never do it and never will but it makes them warm and fuzzy.' (Brian 15 July 2016).

When I ask about magazines they might read, Christine waves at the coffee table, where local glossy publications are displayed, each promoting the beauty and abundance of the Stanthorpe area. '[D]on't take any notice of these, they're sent to us for nothing, for tourists. I've never been a reader of country magazines.' (Christine, 15 July 2016). Apparently, the images contained within them are not fit for residents like themselves, only for tourists. While she does not object to the TV shows her husband dislikes so much, it remains clear that the myths perpetuated and signified in much rural discourse have little impact on them. Christine and Brian do not engage in 'willing suspension of disbelief' (Hopkins 1998, p. 78), and this collapses the narrative of these shows for the couple.

Digging deeper into what social imaginaries might have impact for them, I asked Christine about her vineyard's website, for which she writes the copy. She immediately replied: 'You've got to tell the story of the dreams because most people have a dream about something like this so you've got to have that dream happening' (Christine, 15 July 2016). Christine clearly understands the significance of imaginaries for her business and that '[m]arketers eagerly rely on them to represent and sell ideas...' (Salazar & Graburn 2014, p. 1). Christine is aware of the myths abounding in rural discourse, but she prefers to be on the creating side rather than the consuming side. Her website and related newsletter do not sell measurable concepts like 'award winning wine', but something less tangible: the romance of a vineyard. She relates how she puts together the newsletter to send to interested parties, and it does not sell wine at all. Instead, it is a chatty, informative piece more along the lines of a family missive written at Christmas to tell all the relatives of the year's goings-on, with Brian often the subject of humorous tales. She finds that people want to feel that they belong in their vineyard family, that they are part of the pruning and harvest and wine-making, and that this is a big part of what makes their business model successful despite competition on price by large, commercial scale wineries. Despite her declared lack of interest in media discourse, Christine has a clear idea about the importance and usefulness of social imaginaries, and particularly rural myths, in creating and disseminating dreams that sell. She understands the pull of authenticity revealed in these texts, and she understands that they reflect and share meanings that impact on the tourism she needs for her business (Salazar 2011 pp. 576-7). Discourses and social imaginaries are still significant motivators for the couple and their

business, compelling them to certain choices and not others. They just operate in different ways for them.

There is a sense that the vineyard is a satisfying and pleasurable occupation, and that it offers Brian authenticity. He states: 'we have people who treat this like their clubhouse and we sit around and drink really great wine at the end of the day and we might try something that's coming up for next year and they bring antipasto plates and it's nice' (Brian, 15 July 2016). These values motivate them daily. They both work very hard, but there are other compensations tied to authentic values, such as companionship, the four seasons and the beauty of the property. Christine particularly wanted four seasons, a consideration which influenced which places they looked at. The desire for four seasons reflects the cultural value of a European way of life, where the changing seasons mark cultural points such as crop growing, harvest, winter rest and spring sowing. Christine's time living in France while attending university may have helped to create this imaginary and habitus for her. Offering a sense of stability as time moves on, seasonality marks changes in a comforting and reassuring way. Similarly, social imaginaries around the value of grape growing for wine in a European tradition, possible in Stanthorpe because of its climate and soil, also influenced Brian and Christine before they bought their vineyard. Their vines needed the particular climate of Stanthorpe for their project to be successful and to enable them to live the life they dreamed about.

While Christine and Brian clearly enjoy the success they experience in their rural life, Lucy and Bert's dialogue is less positive. Bert and Lucy have two houses, one in Brisbane and the other just outside Stanthorpe, and this presents some challenges for them. Lucy's father had dreams of building his own place and had bought *Owner builder* magazine 'religiously when we were growing up' (Lucy, 16 July 2016), passing on stacks to his daughter and her husband. When they first bought their Stanthorpe property, there were drawings on the back of envelopes, dreams of huge barns and 'castle-like buildings' (Lucy, 16 July 2016), eventually constrained by lack of funds and time. For Lucy and her family, though, 'these magazines...they're selling the dream...I think that there are some things that are fundamental to us that [are in] the dream that those magazines sell. I think the big thing is the dream for self-sufficiency...and that's been exciting' (Lucy 16 July 2016). For Lucy, self-sufficiency describes a more authentic life, but it is hard to realise when moving back and forth between two houses. They mention the television series *Seachange* (1998-2000), saying '[w]e used to sit and talk about tree change' (Lucy, 16 July 2016) and 'we both grew up with parents

who watched *The good life* (1975-1977)'. They quickly move on to listing magazines they read, including ones that had inspired their move, like *Country style*, *Earth garden*, and *Grassroots*. It is clear that the magazines and television shows are chosen for what they offer those aspiring to a life on the land, and they are a source of inspiration about this. This imaginary is connected to the land, to community, to home and family, culminating in a self-sufficiency that is a distant dream symbolised by jam-making and nurturing fruit trees. In contrast to these ideas and dreams, Lucy and Bert talk about financial windfalls to be made from buying and renovating houses, and mention retirement plans funded by their home's capital gains. In all of this talk, however, there is an underlying search to live by the values and ideals that make up an authentic life for them.

It appears hard for Lucy and Bert to achieve this authenticity, however, as their longing for self-sufficiency and simple desires to make jam operate within a consumerist, neo-liberal structure where full-time work is necessary and financial independence is a goal to be worked for throughout an entire lifetime. At the same time, time constraints brought about by full-time work preclude self-sufficiency. This couple do not live all week in Stanthorpe, but instead bought their Stanthorpe house as an investment and to enjoy on weekends. They want to live in Stanthorpe for 'a better way of life' but work constricts this to a part-time possibility. They would move to Stanthorpe 'in a heartbeat, if we had jobs we could come to, we'd be here. But they don't exist, not the sort of jobs we do' (Lucy, 16 July 2016). They each have a good education, and their jobs are financially rewarding, so it is true that nothing similar would be available to them in Stanthorpe. That they can hold jobs requiring high-level skills and education reflects their comfortable, middle-class position of relative power and privilege. Indeed, they bought their investment house because 'ten years ago, we felt we had too much income and we weren't investing enough' (Lucy, 16 July 2016): a happy place to be. However, they talk about being divided between the two communities, with 'a foot in each camp' (Lucy, 16 July 2016). The things they need are always at the other house, and going away for the weekend means swapping

not just place but your whole aspirations, like when you're here you find you're around different things and you have different aspirations and inspirations and then you go back and I can't do any of that...you're enjoying city life and you get into that and then you're in a different place and it's like how do you match these two lives? (Bert, 16 July 2016).



The desire for authenticity that influenced their decision to purchase their country property conflict with the neo-liberal structures that they live in and with, and no resolution is in sight until retirement. This is a conflict between structure and agency, and while agency 'implies an ability to choose to do things...[it] gives no indication of why we should want to' (Sayer, 2011, p. 140). Why would a young couple want to buy a second house three hours' drive from a house in a good suburb and that they own and which is convenient to satisfying work? Benson notes, '[a]s a quest for personal authenticity, the migrants' desires were of an existential nature' (2014, p. 151), and not easily swayed, even against pragmatic and financial concerns. Habitus, formed in early years through the wider social imaginaries in discourse and from dreams shared by parents, created the rural as a good to be valued. To live a life close to these values, the couple buy the second house, ostensibly as an investment, but without perhaps understanding the conflicts that it would then place them in. Instead, they drive back and forth, trying to belong to two communities while holding onto the dreams they find in the social imaginaries they engage with. For Lucy and Bert, it seems that retirement is when these two worlds will be merged, and their ideals will eventually be realised in their internal habitus.

While several of the lifestyle migrants discussed above had moved to Stanthorpe when a job came available, they were primarily acting on typical lifestyle motivations such as the search for a 'better way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009) or a more authentic life, lived more closely aligned with the values that motivate them. For them, enjoying the picturesque setting or the climate or the lack of people or the open space appealed to them. Like these people, Natalie also followed a job offer to Stanthorpe, but her adaptation was less enthusiastic. Originally from Ireland and describing herself as 'a city girl at heart' (Natalie, 29 September 2016), she never felt that she fit in in Australia, let alone the small town where her new job was located. The better way of life she experienced in Stanthorpe was the wonderful, career-building job she worked in, but its permanence was ultimately limited by the next career move she made. As I speak to her, she outlines her plans for the next couple of months, as she takes up a new job in Brisbane and moves to West End, an inner-city suburb of Brisbane. Authenticity for Natalie was not embedded in a rural ideal, but rather a city-based lifestyle. While appreciating the opportunities her current position had opened for her, she discusses the lack of career path for her and her partner, the dearth of young people, the early shop closings, the continual pointing out of her differences in dress and her noticeable Irish accent. There were no dreams of a rural idyll in her habitus, and she does not engage with social imaginaries of the rural

(Hopkins, 1998). Her field of choice is city-based, and the capitals she uses are also more oriented to city activity and field. Natalie's move back to Brisbane seemed like a logical next step for her. While Christine and Brian do not engage in rural imaginaries in discourse either, they are still influenced by rural social imaginaries and employ them for their business, while Natalie operates in a completely different realm of imaginaries, ones based on the city.

It would not be as easy for Faye to backtrack as it is for Natalie, if she ever wanted to. Married to an Australian and with a small child, Faye originally left Italy for a university-funded research trip through central Australia, where she documented Indigenous art. Having lived in Mexico, Germany and Canada, Faye then applied for a two-year working visa to Australia, which required her to find a rural employment sponsor. She found a sponsor in Stanthorpe, and shortly after, she met her husband, and they soon had a child together. The better way of life she sought in Stanthorpe was that of a married mother of a small child, but Faye is still very oriented toward the creative arts and is frustrated by the lack of opportunities for cultural immersion in the small Australian town. Simply, she has found that Australia's distance from other developed nations is greater than the actual geographical space would suggest, highlighting the truth in Benson and Osbaldiston's work that 'the messy reality of experience may mean that expectations of a better way of life are not met' (2014, p. 16). She expresses social imaginaries of rich cultural traditions that are tied to rural Italy and a European lifestyle in ways that distance and low population levels would make impossible in Australia. The things that she values in an authentic life, such as European culture and festivals, are unavailable to her in Stanthorpe, and she is unable to fulfil her vision of what an authentic life should be like. While Stanthorpe has a large Italian population, many of whom own and work fruit and vegetable farms, Faye did not speak of ties to anyone in this group of people, nor did she indicate any sense of belonging within that community. She did not share an interest in their livelihoods, and her work and marriage to an Australian meant that the friends she mentioned were of Anglo-Saxon origin.

### **Seeking authenticity through escape and adventure**

That 'escapism or adventure is... undoubtedly related to the quest for a better life or self-authenticity' (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 7) is clear, although ideas of escape 'deserve further unpacking through both historical and cultural analysis' (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014, p. 6). Feeling alienated in late modern society (MacCannell 1989), individuals begin their quest for authenticity to create a life of value and escape from the meaninglessness of the world around them. Notions of escape are offered in tourism discourses as well as national

social imaginaries, and these, along with physical places attracting tourists influence lifestyle migrant imaginaries through their position as external structures (O'Reilly 2014), where they are situated as goods to be aspired to that can then be acted upon by lifestyle migrants. At its heart, tourism is a search for difference from the everyday life of the potential tourist, a difference that is imagined to be found in other places and eras (MacCannell 1989), and a difference that is hoped will ameliorate the sense of meaninglessness in the late modern world. While the desire for authenticity is a motivator (Weigert 2009), those in positions of privilege also 'move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly attractive' (Bauman 1998, p. 92). These late-modern consumers 'are sensation-seekers and collectors of experiences' (Bauman 1998, p. 94), for whom adventure and escape are an attractive, obtainable part of life. In this way, adventure becomes part of the collection of experiences that make up the authentic life of value that is found in escape from meaninglessness in modern society.

Several of the lifestyle migrants I spoke to indicated their desire for adventure as a fundamental part of their move, a finding that has been documented before (Ragusa 2010; Benson 2016, p. 7). In fact, Benson notes that the British lifestyle migrants she studied who moved to France 'invariably presented migration as an adventure' (Benson 2016, p. 7). Similarly to these studies, several Stanthorpe migrants, also mentioned a desire to get out of the city and live a more rural and authentic life, growing vegetables or participating in rural pursuits. Diane expressed both a desire to escape from her city life and to move somewhere she could live more authentically in the account above. She had visited her now husband, an Australian she had known while they were both younger and living in Britain, as she toured the world following a break up with a former partner. They got together and spent a couple of years going back and forth between Australia and England. When it became clear that a more settled arrangement was needed, she said, 'well, it's now or never, we have to make a decision. He [her partner, now husband] didn't want to live in England again and I was up for an adventure so we moved...' (26 August 2016). The desire for an adventure was a prerequisite that allowed her to view the move across tens of thousands of kilometres positively. Discourse influences habitus, and guided by her habitus and early formative years which engaged with rural discourses that promoted the rural as a good, Diane has continued to choose social imaginaries which position adventure as a value to be prized and sought after. These have created imaginative spaces where escape to places depicted as adventurous are tinged with glimpses of authentic visions of life to be found there (O'Reilly

2014, p. 221). Diane's move was a continuation of her desire for adventure and migration for love (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). Even some years after her move, it is no surprise that Diane describes her favourite book as *Moby Dick* (1851 (2008)), an adventurous tale about a shipboard quest to revenge a white whale who severed the leg of the main protagonist.

Rae also spoke of being 'ready for an adventure' (9 August 2016) when her boyfriend, now husband, told her that he was moving to Queensland from South Australia as part of his work training program. Moving to Stanthorpe was not a given, as she states, 'I think I was thinking years ago of maybe of going up to the Northern Territory or somewhere to do a relieving job for my bit of adventure but I never really got serious about looking into it' (Rae, 9 August 2016). In the end, she 'was very happy to come; it was an adventure. I wanted to do something different...' (Rae, 9 August 2016). The idea of it being rural was important, as 'moving to the city didn't really appeal to me' (Rae, 12 September 2016). She had been living in the suburbs of Adelaide but recalled happy times as a child riding her pony in the Adelaide Hills, and she wanted this life for her children too. These opportunities for childhood adventures have been noted as desirable traits in rural life (Trussell 2009, p. 441). Adventure for Rae worked as a combination of re-creating fond memories of childhood while embarking on a life away from the city. The various structures surrounding her husband and his occupation, along with her internal desire for action, combined happily in a rural outcome. It is interesting that for Rae, as well as for Diane, adventure and marriage combined, with lifestyle migration the result. Only a small percentage of tree-changers are single (Ragusa, 2010) while the majority are families. In many rural places, 'the rural is understood as a site of lesbian and gay absence, where sexual difference is policed, silenced and invisible' (Gorman-Murray, Waite & Gibson 2012, p. 71), and this notion revealed itself in the heterosexuality of the participants of this study.

Barry summed up his ideas about adventure a little differently from his perspective well into retirement: 'People who move to the country, they've had an adventurous life. I don't think boring people come to the country' (13 September 2016). From his own rural situation, Barry clearly identifies with being adventurous and that this is a good to be valued. His history exemplifies an adventurous nature and an ability to adapt to uncertain times, a new country and different places. He describes his childhood in terms of adventure:

If I wasn't there, my parents were like, he's gone out, he'll come back. It was so relaxed in those days. You couldn't do that now. You're worried about stranger

danger... but then kids got on with being kids, climbing trees, falling out of trees, finding holes to crawl in and crawl out of again, finding birds nest, just adventure, life was an adventure, it really was (Barry, 13 September 2016).

Viv, with whom he shares a house, also identifies with being adventurous, and perhaps with being a little radical saying:

I've got no money, but we've done a lot! My Mum and Dad were both the black sheep of their various families and I suppose that's where I got it from...I know we got fed up with the heat and the traffic and I lived on a street where I couldn't even hear the TV in my front room' (Viv, 13 September 2016).

For both of them, childhood memories and memories of parents living their lives combined with the desire to escape the perceived disadvantages of the city for a more rural experience. There are clear differences here with the imaginaries which engage Faye and Natalie, which do not depict the same rural idyll that Barry and Viv see. But adventurousness for Viv is also related to stepping outside the bounds, of transgressing family expectations and morés. Her parents were 'black sheep' and she adopts this as a badge of pride in her own identity narrative. There is no sense of shame or regret in her being adventurous or radical, just a sense that this sets her apart from the norm, the boring, the usual. However, despite this self-proclaimed radicalness, she is a widely respected member of her community, volunteers in several council run organisations and lives an outwardly normative, even ordinary, retired life.

Being able to become part of the community was important in Barry's move to Stanthorpe, part of the values he held in relation to an authentic lifestyle where he belonged. While he had originally found a six-month contract position in nearby Warwick, when that ran out the Australian Government Social Security organisation, Centrelink, explained to him that because he was near retirement age, he could choose to volunteer with local groups and receive unemployment assistance that way, rather than trying to find a job. He accepted this opportunity, and it meant that a wide range of contacts opened up to him, strengthening and developing his ties with the community as a result, and leading to satisfying volunteer positions he continues to hold more than a decade after his move. He sums it up: 'it's not knowing anybody and you get involved and now ten years later I'm [still doing it]. I had no ambition toward it but you just dive in and suddenly you're doing something and you're reasonably good at it' (Barry, 13 September 2016). These ties enhance his sense of belonging and purpose, where belonging is an ongoing project requiring emotional

commitment that when converted into capital, legitimises the move to the new location (Benson 2016, p. 6).

This sense of being able to fit into a receiving community is also important to Rae and her ideals of authentic living, belonging and identity. For her, Stanthorpe 'ticks all the boxes: big enough that you don't know everyone but small enough that you know most people and it's quite vibrant, there's always something going on' (9 August 2016). As she expands on this, a sense of the pragmatism of their choice comes into the conversation. She speaks of her husband being able to choose from a district in the north of Queensland, or one in the south. The northern district would probably have meant Mt. Isa, and they both decided against that because of lead contamination, which was a problem given their plans to raise a family. This assessment indicates the importance of place amenity within a lifestyle migration decision-making process. In weighing the pros of living in Stanthorpe, she continues:

It wasn't ridiculously small, like 150 people or something. It was a decent distance from the Brisbane airport, like it wasn't a seven-hour drive. Little bit of a tourist town, so there were always people around, people coming into the town. More alive. More coffee shops. There's always something going on. Every single weekend, if you want to do something, there's something going on. Actually, for a country town, we're spoilt for places to go and eat. We've got amazing places to eat. We should be very grateful (Rae, 12 September 2016).

As Andrew Sayer (2011) states, reason is involved in weighing the values, feelings and emotions that moving raises. These decisions are not taken without thought to the consequences, to personal comfort and convenience and to future possibilities, such as children who may be harmed by lead poisoning. There might have been romance in Rae's youthful desire to create change in a small Australian town, but pragmatism and reason were also at play in deciding where to let this play out.

Stanthorpe's liveliness and amenity were also factors when Diane and her husband were still deciding where to settle. They came to Stanthorpe to look around and were attracted to the influence of Italian migrants many years earlier that is evident in the town. For Diane, 'the Italians are marvellous, and the food's great, and not to mention the wine. What's not to like?' (Diane, 26 August 2016). In addition, the crops, first grown by Italian farmers, such as stone fruits, apples and vegetables, all need to be picked, and the backpackers now brought in to do this through the backpacker visa scheme added an extra cultural dimension of diversity and

tolerance within the community that was appealing to the internationally oriented, global minded couple (Diane, 26 August 2016). Globalisation and the multiculturalism that it had brought to Stanthorpe had positive benefits for the couple, as it transformed Stanthorpe's field into one that was more familiar to them, that coincided more with the social imaginaries with which they were familiar. As Stella Maile and David Griffiths found in their study of Britons moving to Berlin, the pull of social imaginaries, nostalgic reminiscences of childhood and familiar places has a significance which motivates the migrant, recognition of which enhances understandings of their imaginings of place (Maile & Griffiths, 2012).

For some, though, even if the community is accepting and welcoming, barriers persist. Natalie, who had been welcomed warmly and appreciated the Stanthorpe community, still identified as being more of a city girl and found it difficult to adjust to the limited opening hours of the businesses around her, the lack of services and the comments about her differences in accent and dress. One of the biggest hurdles, though, was simply that 'it was really hard to meet people my own age here. Like really difficult' (Natalie, 29 September 2016). The fact that many rural young people move away for university or jobs and don't return for many years, if ever (Hugo, Feist & Tan, 2013), means that those who are there find friend-making opportunities limited. For Natalie, it was a big factor in her eventual decision to move back to Brisbane when she got a new job there. She was unable to find belonging in the rural place because of the lack of people and places in the town with whom and where she could connect emotionally to generate the capital required to belong (Benson 2016).

### **Origins, imaginaries and belonging**

As discussed earlier, almost half of the lifestyle migrants that I interviewed were originally from Europe: three of the 12 participants were born in England, one in Ireland and one in Italy. Of these one (Faye) had lived in several different countries, while the others moved directly from their homeland to Australia. Having grown up in different countries, these lifestyle migrants had experienced some variations in the social imaginaries they participated in and adopted within their own habitus. Despite this, the myths and constructions found in films, books, tourism advertisements and other texts about Australia share many strategies as they present their ideas of authenticity, escape from the city and abundance that are so important to lifestyle migrants. These include the seductive images and compelling narratives that are used to represent, share and/or market dreams of the country to a wide audience (Salazar 2012, p. 865). After all, the urge to visit a new place is not inherent or 'natural', but rather, is socially constructed through the creation of desire (Urry 1995, p. 212). Through a 'circuit of

culture' model, meanings are created and shared dynamically (DuGay et al, cited in Salazar 2012, p. 866), and are embedded in an imaginative world shaped by its cultural context (Reijnders 2016, p. 674). These compelling narratives happen somewhere, in a place that supports the story, and that place becomes meaningful to the reader or viewer, who often expresses a subsequent desire to visit that place (Reijnders 2016). Additionally, the stories adopted in this way have a special, beloved place in memory where they become a symbolic environment that influences identity (Reijnders 2016). The Australian landscape has a long history of informing crucial aspects of the Australian national identity through art and literature and more recently has been represented to signify paradise and adventure (Waitt 1997). Images used in tourism representations include wide open spaces, blue skies, exotic animals, Anglo-Celtic bushmen and farmers, sunsets, rain-forests and beaches, leading to this international Australian image of paradise and wilderness (Waitt 1997). Rather than embracing multi-cultural representations, many images depicting Australia overseas have embraced 'a national identity invented by nineteenth century neo-colonial artists, journalists and painters, informed by their attitudes towards nature, gender, ethnicity, and indigenous peoples. Colonial and patriarchal relations are reinforced...' (Waitt 1997, p. 58). These ideas are remarkably globalised (Forsey & Low, 2014, p. 160) and are shared through the 'circuit of culture' (Du Gay et al, cited in Salazar 2012, p. 866). They are all embedded in place and evoke a sense of Australia as a distinctive place whose shared stories promise a positive, life-changing experience (Frost 2010), both for tourists and for potential lifestyle migrants.

Of the five international lifestyle migrants, three expressed concerns about challenges they experienced in adapting to or finding belonging in Australian culture and ways of life. The other two never mentioned cultural differences as a challenge or concern, but one of these (Rae) arrived as a young child, and the other (Bob) was male and had arrived many decades previously. The concerns that were raised by the other participants were related to Australian attitudes to gender roles and expectations as well as cultural conversational variances (Diane 26 August 2016); Australians' propensity to make comments which highlighted differences in accent and appearances (Natalie 29 September 2016); and concerns about differing cultural attitudes to the female body, professional relationships and neo-liberal approaches to the arts (Faye 30 September 2016). With British discourse narrating 'the good life' through themes of 'community and relationality, nature and landscape, escape and adventure, creativity and enterprise' (Thomas 2008, p. 686), prevailing imaginaries are remarkably similar. Indeed, globalised distribution has resulted in many forms of discourse being shared throughout the



world, while Australia's close ties to Britain and the British hegemonic constructions operating within Australian social imaginaries mean that the discourses share similar worldviews.

Natalie, from Ireland, had discussed cultural differences, but was more amenable to Australian urban life. Faye, however, was from Italy rather than Britain, and it was she who expressed the most difficulty with Australian rural life.

The conversations with participants revealed that the most significant indicator of whether a person would adapt well to life in a small, rural town such as Stanthorpe was whether or not they ascribed to the idea of the rural idyll within social imaginaries, at least in principle if not personally (see for example, Christine's conversation about sharing the idea of the dream for others to enjoy). While Diane (26 August 2016) mentioned difficulties with some aspects of Australian culture, she was fully engaged with rural social imaginaries, was happy in Stanthorpe and had no desire to move. On the other hand, Faye (30 September 2016) and Natalie (29 September 2016) expressed frustration with the smallness of the town and its limitations and it was clear that the social imaginaries they engaged with were not those of the rural idyll. Natalie was more interested in career progression, friends, social outlets and retail choices, while Faye lamented the lack of cultural opportunities and outlets. This made it difficult for them to accept small-town life and to find fulfilment in the experiences available to them in Stanthorpe.

These narratives reveal how the ongoing dimension of the migration process can be personally challenging, even disappointing, to some migrants. When relational and financial ties are involved, it becomes extremely difficult to make a new decision to leave the unsatisfactory location (Salazar 2014), leaving the migrant in an unhappy situation. These individuals cannot find the fulfilment they seek and cannot become who they want to be when living in the rural field with their established habitus and with their current social imaginaries. Their agency is limited and the structures that surround them seem to have a tight grasp over their options.

### **Reflection and conclusion**

Sometime when I was a small child, my parents thought they might like to move to the country. We looked at houses on weekend after weekend. They talked about the merits of each property endlessly – this one had enough land that we could have sheep, but that one had a nicer house and a better kitchen. One house had bold horse wallpaper in the living room, and I do not think my mother could get rid of that fast enough in her imaginings. I was

given books to read from the library about the country, stories like *Flambards* (Peyton 1967), *My side of the mountain* (George, 1959), and Thelwell cartoons about fat little ponies eating flowerbeds. At night, we watched episodes of *All creatures great and small* (1978-1990) and falling asleep I would imagine my own chickens and a little vegetable garden with lettuce growing in neat rows.

We never did move when I was a child, but I could not get out of the city fast enough as an adult. When I was talking to the people in this study, I could relate to their dreams and ideas, and I knew the stories, television shows and magazines that they mentioned. This was my dream too, just like them. And just like them, the actual experience had been different to the books, sometimes as good, sometimes better, and occasionally pretty average. If I was asked why I moved, I could easily say it was for the cheaper house prices, or that I liked the space, or any number of pragmatic reasons that make sense to people who ask. But really, I would have to go back to the hours I spent as a child lying on the floor of my bedroom, getting lost in stories of freedom and rolling hills and green grass to really understand my motivation. How can suburbs compare to that?

The stories I imagined with these cultural discourses were remarkably similar to those in the texts analysed in Chapter 3, and in those stories told to me by the lifestyle migrants I spoke to. This chapter has looked at how discursive representations of place, including the themes of escape, abundance and authenticity, as well as broader and more general rural discourses, influence the decision to relocate for lifestyle migrants. Each of the participants highlighted texts which were important to them and which they enjoyed relating to. These were then examined within the context of the lifestyle migrant's cultural life to see more clearly the structures which impact on agency and the choices people make. This made it possible to see how the texts directly affected social practice, habitus, and social imaginaries, and also revealed connections between culture and power that were central to lifestyle migration decision making, including structures such as globalisation. Conversations with the lifestyle migrants helped to crystallise the meanings that the texts held for them, and also for me. I found that Australian social imaginaries of a rural idyll are often shared globally, particularly with people of British or European origin. Indeed, they have an immense influence on both the decision to move and contentedness with the life after the move. Chapter 5: 'The phenomenological outcomes of social imaginaries and discursive conceptualisations for lifestyle migrants' builds on this discussion to consider how discourse affected the lived experience of lifestyle migrants *following* relocation.

## **Chapter 5: The phenomenological outcomes of social imaginaries and discursive conceptualisations for lifestyle migrants**

It was the tomatoes that did it. We had enjoyed lovely spring rains and I planted a packet of heirloom tomato seeds, all of which popped up and developed strongly into lush green plants. Over the course of the summer, little yellow flowers slowly transformed into tiny green balls which then became ripe, plump tomatoes. It was beautiful. We marvelled at how prolific they were, how we could save and store them for the coming winter, how we would never have to buy tomatoes again. We felt a little smug about how green-thumbed we were. It was just like the books said, just like we had hoped.

Then came the nightmare. There were tomatoes everywhere. We diced them, we made bruschetta, we made tomato sauce. We made chutney, we dried them in the oven and put them in oil. We made pizza sauce and froze it. We made tomato juice, tomato soup. We did everything you can possibly think of doing with tomatoes and we gave away bags and bags, and still they kept coming. It was like a conveyor belt of tomatoes and we could not keep up. My joints started aching, I had constant headaches and there was a rash on my cheekbone and I wondered if it was caused by eating too many tomatoes. Finally, one day the entire island bench was covered with baskets of tomatoes yet again and I had had enough. I could not even make lunch, let alone find time to work if I was to do more tomato processing. This idea of an abundant rural life filled with home grown veggies had become crazy. Growing a few tomato plants had taken over our lives and it just was not worth it any more.

I thought I had the upper hand when I dumped them into the compost heap, exhausted and overcome. The following spring every single seed in those dozens of tomatoes seemed to sprout in the rich compost, as if they were evil little monsters intent on taking over the world. I took a couple and planted them in the garden beds, thinking I could manage a couple of plants. But this spring was hot and dry, with westerly winds scorching the soft leaves and shrivelling them to nothingness. We had no tomatoes at all that summer. Then again, I no longer had constant headaches either.

It was the tomatoes that woke me up to the myth of the rural idyll presented in books and magazines. That the rural is just like anything else in life, with good and bad and up and down and gluts and famines. I happen to like this life, but it is just a life, not a bucolic dream. And it is not really like the books said at all. Well, except maybe a little bit, like the beautiful sunrises and the spider-web on the wire fence dotted with dew, and the sound of cows eating grass as

they amble past my window on a summer day. Just not the bit about how wonderful tomatoes are.

## **Introduction**

Where the previous chapter explored how discursive conceptualisations influenced the decision to move, this chapter seeks to build understanding of how these ideas then impact on the lived experience following relocation. As has been noted before, lifestyle migration is an ongoing experience that continues to influence and impact participants long after the initial move (Benson & Osbaldiston 2014). In this process, lifestyle migrants invariably engage with numerous and changing forms of discourse. These texts enable readers to imagine new ways of living, and in so doing, expand the boundaries of their habitus and explore new ways to live. This chapter examines the wide range of texts that are consumed by the participants and enable them to create satisfying lived experiences, such as escape from the everyday and a sense of difference in their lives (Salazar & Graburn 2014 p. 4). It explores how the social imaginaries depicted in discourse impact the lived experience of the lifestyle migrants in the study through adoption of new ideas in their habitus. In a very phenomenological way, it also reflects the individual conversations I had with of each of the participants. Some people were very open and forthcoming, while others were constrained by time or perhaps a wariness towards being interviewed.

For many lifestyle migrants, the discourses they discussed were chosen to reinforce, rather than unsettle, their worldview, while supporting existing ideas held within their habitus and their field. This meant that those whose habitus was not already in some way permeated by rural social imaginaries prior to a move encountered some difficulties living the rural reality. Discussions also showed that the relationship that lifestyle migrants have with media usually changes as they live the adopted life and move from dreams to reality, so that new lives meant ongoing altered relationships with cultural texts.

## **Discursive constructions and the lived experience: rural imaginaries from diverse sources**

The way Kate related to and interacted with discourse changed during her eight years of residency in Stanthorpe, revealing a dual tension between her discursively situated images of rural life and the reality of it, as well as between her personal use of technology and media and her hand-crafted children's clothes. She did not seem to be entirely enthralled by living in the country as we sat in her shop in the main street of town, although she accepted it and seemed content. She mentioned how she liked the relaxed way of life, but she countered that

by saying that she was not bothered by where she lived and that it was really her husband who preferred the lifestyle in Stanthorpe (9 August 2016). Her shop was only a few months old when I spoke to her, and inside was comfortable and bright, with various discourses setting the tone for the social imaginaries in play. Kate was clearly comfortable with the latest technology and its accoutrements. The Olympics were streaming on a tablet on the front counter while in front of us was a laptop, which she used to download patterns that she would print off and tape together to make children's clothes and other sewn items which she would then sell. Even the patchwork fabrics in demand in the store look modern, with bright colours and edgy fabrics and designs (9 August 2016). Kate did not automatically adopt social imaginaries that favoured country themed projects just because she lived in a rural situation; there were no country quilts or homewares here. Kate's work reminded me of Susan Luckman's observation that, "[w]hat emerges here is a picture of complexity and negotiation, albeit undertaken with an eye to business and personal pragmatism...this is far from the Romantic stereotype of the isolated and out-of-touch rural artist' (2012, p. 119). While there has long been a city-based idealisation about the simplicity of rural life and a corresponding ambivalence toward any technology within it (Marx 1964 (2000)), rural residents have adopted and adapted technology with alacrity (Luckman 2012; Gilbert, Karahalios & Sandvig 2010; Collins & Wellman 2010), and Kate was no exception. Adopting technology enables her, and others like her, to meet their unique needs within the rural way of life (Collins & Wellman 2010). However, despite her immersion in the modern world within a small country town, Kate also enjoyed escaping to a very different discursive world, where simplicity and a rejection of technology seemed to be an antidote for the pressure of daily life.

Once she had experienced the reality of rural life on a daily basis, Kate began to view media differently. It changed into being an escape from her reality in the country rather than as a dream of a rural idyll. As Appadurai notes, '[t]hose who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who choose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of [media discourse]' (1996, p. 6). She vaguely recalled the television show *Seachange* (1998-2000), but it was not particularly interesting to her. She never bothered with *Country style* magazine. However, she and her husband watched *McLeod's daughter's* (2001-2009) with enthusiasm, recalling how they had dreamed their life in the country might be based on images portrayed in the series (see Chapter 4). While this had not panned out in real life due to their commute into Stanthorpe from a small town half an hour away and their long hours at work, Kate still engaged with and accepted the social imaginaries the show

presented. Even though her daily routine was 'nothing like I envisaged life was going to be', she immediately added, '[b]ut that's good, because I can still enjoy reading books and watch *McLeod's daughters* and keep them there as that fantasy of what I'd like it to be in the country! [laughter]' (Kate 9 August 2016). For Kate, reality and fantasy were able to co-exist in her daily life. In addition, she entered other discursive worlds to reinforce her ongoing life in the country.

When I asked her what books she read, she mentioned '[a]ll sorts of different things. I like a lot of the Amish novels, the American Amish novels, because they do a lot about quilting, so I read a lot of those' (9 August 2016). These novels are often set in contemporary times, but involve characters who live in Amish communities, mostly in rural parts of the United States. They present social imaginaries of a traditional world distant from modern, mainstream life, one which is supposedly simpler and more 'authentic'. Often written by evangelical Christian (rather than Amish) writers, their depiction of Amish life can sometimes be inaccurately portrayed through a Christian paradigm (Weaver-Zercher 2013). Despite this, they have become immensely popular, enjoying phenomenal growth and profitability as a book sector since 2007 (Weaver-Zercher 2013). Kate continues:

Yeah, even Janette Oke, she's a Christian novelist, and I read some of her books as well and they're more period oriented rather than country but I've always seen them as sort of similar in that you're on a farm, on a property and growing that for yourself as well as for commercial (Kate 9 August 2016).

Hoping that Kate will expand on this even further, I ask her about the values in the books, and how they do not sound like they are about sex, drugs and rock and roll. She replies, laughing:

No, no, nothing like that, they're very safe books! It just seems like they're simple worlds, they're not heavy in technologies and everything else that I guess even living in here you're got technology everywhere... (9 August 2016).

This clarifies how these books play a role in giving her a pathway to a simpler world, one that is very different to her own, technology reliant life. Kate enjoys this simple world and finds it an antidote to her own modern life; it also serves to reinforce her own habitus and values. It's not just the books that are safe for Kate, though:

At a time of profound change in the material tangibility of production, and in a society swamped with mass-manufactured goods, the handmade offers a reprise, an

alternative and an access to a world where technology takes the form of simple tools, and objects are understood as “safe” and nostalgic (Luckman 2013, p. 254).

It appears, then, that Kate’s desire for ‘safe’ works both within the dichotomy of her technologically-inclined business and her handcraft, as well as with the busy reality of her rural life and the ‘safe’ discursive rural world she is entertained by. She escapes both in a discursive capacity and in her chosen occupation, while still accepting structural ties to technology, virtual worlds and reality. The discourses provide a model for her to combine the various aspects of her life. It allows her to expand her habitus boundaries while staying within her strongly held values and the structural constraints of her life.

Realising that I needed to understand the appeal that these books held for Kate, I borrowed several from the local library and read them. In each, a sense of belonging and community is apparent, and these factors are clearly a huge part of the appeal of an Amish life in a modern world where ties to community are often eroded (Bauman 2001). The country-based social imaginaries of Amish life are idealised and promoted in the books, a strange act for evangelical Christian writers, whose own doctrines actually lie at odds with Amish doctrines (Weaver-Zercher 2013). For adults, the all-important bonds with Amish community can be transgressed and ties broken through specific actions, including sex outside marriage, adopting ‘English’ dress and rejecting the community’s values. For Kate, who spoke of not being fully accepted into Stanthorpe friendship circles (9 August 2016), the books revealed a world where acceptance into the regional communities they advocated for was acquired through adoption of clearly stated Amish tenets, not on looks or years spent living in a particular place or attendance at schools in the community. The texts clearly spelled out ways to belong that were in line with Kate’s own ideals and longing for acceptance. Additionally, as her own life revolved around family, quilting and church, each of which Kate mentioned were highly valued in her rural area, these novels provide a source of validation for these values. As engagement with physical creative crafts such as quilting draws people ‘toward the natural and communal world and away from the hyperreal and hyperactive’ (Weaver-Zercher 2013, p. 144), the books not only validate Kate’s way of life but also provide an antidote to the stresses of continual connectivity that she experiences in her daily routine. In addition, they operate to express concern about the direction that contemporary culture is taking and provide an alternative to it (Weaver-Zercher 2013).

While social imaginaries within contemporary mainstream media now accept and even promote the idea of careers for women, Amish romance fiction works on the premise that women should instead have limited autonomy within a patriarchal family and community structure and that maintaining these structures must always come first, before a career or independent action. This social imaginary of gendered domesticity appeared to be harmonious with Kate's family values, revealed by her comments about how she might close her shop early to pick up her daughter, or open late because it took longer than usual to get to day-care, yet how her husband was supportive of her shop (Kate 9 August 2016). She never mentioned that he would take their daughter to day-care or that he would leave work early to pick her up; these seemed to be her responsibilities. It seemed that his job always took priority over hers, and that she agreed with and accepted this. These novels allowed her to see other women doing that and engaging with this discursively meant that she could feel that she fitted the pattern of expectations for women depicted in the texts. While 'the identity categories at the centre of women's and men's lives are fashioned through our involvement with, and subjection to, cultural and linguistic codes' (Elliott 2014, p. 126), Kate did not seem to want to explore other possibilities or dis-identify with these structures in any way. She was content to allow the novels work with her own paradigms to 'make sense of identity by telling stories about our experience, shared understanding, sense of communal belonging and so forth' (Elliott 2014, p. 130), within the structures presented by the novels. If Kate were to challenge these values, she might find that it would lead to a rift that would alter the very heart of her current life. Accepting the values in these books, then, means keeping her current life 'safe' within the values and contexts of the Stanthorpe community. These social imaginaries reinforced her own habitus and her daily lived experience.

While it would seem at first glance that Kate's business is a purely capitalist enterprise, the way she subordinates it to her family commitments and the importance of her personal values and aesthetic choices within its operation position it in an altermodern space. Michelle Crawford, also a mother of small children, works in a similar way with her blog and small business in *A table in the orchard* (2015). The women use their work as an alternative way to earn income instead of, for example, seeking a full-time job where hours would be set and autonomy more limited. The social imaginaries in discourses in books like Amish fiction reinforce and validate this subordination for Kate, while Crawford mentions re-creating an Enid Blyton style childhood for her children (2015, p. 3). Demands of family life with a small child subordinate Kate's business's role in her life, and this enables her to fulfil her gendered



roles as child-carer while not worrying that arriving late or leaving early will threaten her livelihood in a significant way. As she puts it, 'we close early...and they [the community] understands...you can just put up that "family matters" sign and they understand' (Kate, 9 August 2016). In this, she is resisting capitalism, suiting it to her means and taming it to her own ends. The gendered nature of the business, selling fabrics and making clothes and quilts, mean that customers tend to be women who may be in a similar position to Kate's, with young children who need to be cared for, and this further reinforces Kate's relationship with these social imaginaries. This may mean that there is a degree of empathy among her customers for her family-oriented approach. Additionally, the business supports the 'new domesticity' (Padilla Carroll 2016) of an altermodern lifestyle while increasing her structural power and financial independence, both of which are promoted through discourse such as *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009).

Although Kate's favoured television show, *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009), depicts adult sisters running their inherited property in a manner at opposition with patriarchal values, there are many instances in it where gendered practice is crucially influenced by normative male hegemony. *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009) portrays male hegemony as normative, although the sisters work to disrupt it where they can. The series' narratives highlight just how much of an exception autonomous women are in rural Australia, and how many of the men in the show work hard to assert their hegemony and belief in their superiority to maintain domination or positions of power within the rural, fictional community. For the characters in this series, being unmarried meant that they were 'unprotected' and could be taken advantage of both in business and personally by those men interested in doing this. This is a strong and pervasive social imaginary and is reinforced in Amish fiction as well. It highlights how being married is considered a normative state in the Australian rural community and that marriage provides both a sense of belonging and wider acceptance, in a similar way to the Amish novels Kate reads, where marriage, children and home-making are depicted as the pinnacle of a woman's achievements and lead to respect and acceptance.

Every one of the women with children, including Rae, Lucy, Kate and Faye, and also Tania, whose children were no longer at home but about whom she often spoke, accepted that their husband's careers were more important than their own. They did not question this when shared in discourses or their social imaginaries. Their conversations made it clear that they felt their role was to raise their children and perhaps work part-time as long as it suited the needs of their family, and so these social imaginaries impacted their lived experience on a

daily basis. As these matters were spoken of as unquestioned truths and were so widely accepted among the participants, it became apparent that Kate's values of patriarchal hierarchy and her gendered practice were common in the Stanthorpe community, even among those who may not have been religious, and that living in Stanthorpe enabled and supported these ideas. This is also true of the wider rural Australian society, as well as its depiction in discourse (Dempsey 1992; Crawford 2015). As Ken Dempsey said,

[T]he gender system is one of the most powerful structures of the Smalltown [his descriptor for a small town in rural Victoria where his research was focused] community and one which draws much of its power from the hierarchical character of gender relations in the wider society. It is a system of male superordination and female subordination... (1992, p. 3).

Although Dempsey's research is now several decades old, his findings were still relevant to the Stanthorpe environment in 2016. He continues:

[T]here are two major axes to men's domination and control... The first axis is men's superior power, especially material power, and the economic dependence of women that results. The second axis is an ideology of gender which defines men and their activities as superior and women and their activities as inferior. This ideology legitimates men making paid work a central life interest and women treating home-making and child-rearing as central life interests (Finch 1983). Bryson points out that the maintenance of men's domination of women, which is called patriarchy, depends in large measure on men using their ideological hegemony to define their own roles as economic and women's as non-economic (1984:114-15). Much of men's success on this direction derives from their longstanding ability to gain acceptance of their typifications of themselves as *the* providers and of women as *the* homemakers and child-rearers; the latter are, of course, defined as non-economic roles (1992, p. 4; italics in original).

This gendered practice was very apparent in the Stanthorpe cultural landscape and prevalent social imaginaries: it was understood by all of the women with children to whom I spoke. Those with young children were strongly impacted, while Tania, whose children were young adults, was still demonstrating gendered practice by supporting and facilitating her husband's leisure activities (Dempsey 1992, p. 3). Viv's companion, Bob, made a point while we were chatting that Viv no longer made bread in the bread machine for him, an omission with which

he was clearly disappointed (13 September 2016). It did not seem to occur to him that it would be perfectly possible for him to do it himself and might prevent continuing friction in the relationship.

Christine and Brian appeared to operate in a more equal way, where both considered each other as partners in their work and spoke of taking turns throughout their marriage to achieve personal goals in life; they operated in a more equal social imaginary. Natalie and Diane also had a more autonomous and independent approach, with their own career and activities of central importance to the construction of their lives and identities, unusual in communities where it is expected that women are wives and mothers, not professional or childless (Little & Austin 1996). While they both had partners, neither had children and both assumed that their interests and activities were of equal importance with their partner's in their relationships.

When I asked Natalie if she would have moved to Stanthorpe to follow her partner's career, she adamantly replied in the negative. Natalie stated that her career was important to her, and that she 'couldn't have just moved here [for her partner's work] or I couldn't have moved here and had kids and just stayed home like some women do' (29 September 2016). This is another way that she separated her values from those of the community and illustrates the differing social imaginaries she lived in. Rather than adopting the values espoused in the social imaginaries of her new community, Natalie retained the values of the social imaginaries she brought with her.

Sitting in a pub with an open fire warming the room, Barry and his companion Viv spoke about rural discourses that originated far from Australia, while being profoundly influential to their rural Australian life. The way they live appears to be a model of the sort of lives they read about in the magazines *The people's friend* and *This England*, where retirees fill their days with home-life, hobbies and interests, friends and domestic pursuits. Barry and Viv describe their pattern of days to me, summing up with 'it works. It's a laid-back lifestyle, really laid back' (Barry 26 August 2016). Their days are structured with pleasant commitments—volunteering, lunches out, shopping in Warwick, meeting friends—all enjoyed at a relaxed pace and with nothing stressful or so crucial that it could not be altered or postponed in the event of illness or emergencies. As discussed in the previous chapter, theirs is a textual field dominated by mainstream hegemonic, colonial values and ideals which align well with their world-views and backgrounds. This outlook also works well in the Stanthorpe community, where settler values are strong and many traditions are retained from colonial beginnings (see Offord et al 2015 for more discussion on this). These social imaginaries are demonstrated in the publications such

as *This England* that they tend to read. While their 'decision to become a lifestyle migrant may well be individual... it is partially structured by socially shared imaginaries' (Salazar 2014, p. 133). These social imaginaries helped to create an image for them of what an ideal retirement should look like, and then gave them discursive examples which they could follow in their day-to-day life. While these magazines were created and depict scenes thousands of kilometres away, Viv and Barry discussed how close they were to English culture, including how they had had their DNA tested and Viv was delighted to find that she was 'more English' than Barry, who was born there (13 September 2016). Not actually living in England did not seem to hinder them from living the sort of idealised English retirement within an Australian context. The texts validate their lifestyle, stage of life and place in the world, while giving them the opportunity to feel as though they are part of a discursive community of like-minded folks, where place is virtual and cultural rather than physical. As Salazar found, instead of 'changing attitudes and values...the migratory move helps to strengthen the attitudes and values [they]... had before they left (2014, p. 132). In other words, they retained and even reinforced their individual habitus through their relocation process.

Barry had 'always intended to come back to the country' (26 August 2016) and this was an important part of the discourses he engaged with. I asked him if the reality of moving to the country had lived up to his expectations. He responded 'I think basically in many ways it's better than I thought it would be. No, I don't think there's any downside at all' (26 August 2016). He did not have to separate fantasy and real worlds in the same way that Kate did, as he was able to reconcile the social imaginaries in the discourses he read with his phenomenological experiences. While many retirees who move at the start of their retirement eventually return to their originating point, or find that they are not satisfied in their destination (Salazar 2014; Shigehiro, Whitchurch, Miao, Kurtz & Park 2009), Barry and Viv were able to successfully adapt to life in Stanthorpe. They found ways to adjust to not working for income and not having social ties in a work context, while also developing a retirement lifestyle that they stated was satisfactory to them both (van Solinge & Henkens 2008) including making new friends and connections. Volunteering was an important part of their life and mention of it was scattered through their conversations. The discourses they read validated and reinforced these aspects of their lives. In addition, the familiarity of life in Stanthorpe – Viv had visited her parents there, and Bob found it similar to England – meant that they experienced a level of psychological comfort in their physical surrounds (Zajonc 1968), as well as their discursive and social imaginary environment. The look of the agricultural lands, the way of life in

Stanthorpe, were not too dissimilar from those promulgated in the discourse that they engaged with.

### **Connecting to the community and creating identity through children, work or creative projects**

Rae, who was so influenced by discourse as to spend years working for the grant discussed in the previous chapter, had also been able to pursue creative projects that she researched online, many of which were connected to her children and her desires to live an outdoors life. In many ways, her hands-on approach echoed the actions of the heroine in the book she loved and mentioned often, *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)). It was clear that her idea of an authentic life meant completing physical projects that demonstrated her creativity as well as her ability to look after her children. The first project was a chicken house, which she built using scrap lumber.

I built stuff since I moved here, small stuff. I really wanted to have chickens and I researched what I wanted in a chook shed and I built it. I finished it about two weeks before my last child was born. I used to build it at night in the shed. I'd put my other two to bed and my husband would come out and say "It's nine o'clock, stop hammering!" So I'd have to do all the quiet stuff after that. That's why I was at the tip shop all the time. And while I was building it, the kids used to climb in it so I thought I'd build a cubby after that. I'm pretty proud of it. It's actually a very similar design to the chook shed. Well, I just made a bigger chook shed. It's still a work in progress of course (Rae 9 August 2016).

Building timber structures is not something that is typically depicted as a female activity in rural discourse (see, for example, Crawford 2015; Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015). Rae was asserting independent thinking and autonomy through the constructions, although she remained within 'acceptable' societal concerns because she was doing it for her children. She could have asked for help, or she could have paid for someone to build the cubby or the chook house for her, so the fact that she did it herself indicated that she enjoyed the idea of doing it and was happy to take it on. Although it was not necessarily a stereotypically female activity, taking a hands-on approach is definitely part of the social imaginaries in the discourse she engaged with, and so it was important to her to be skilled enough to take on projects such as these. The discourse she read, and particularly stories about the main protagonist in *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)), shared images of strong and capable women, qualities she wanted to manifest herself. She researched the projects before she started, so was

involved in the shared ideas, social imaginaries and discourses of others, all of which reinforced and supported her own ideas and habitus. These social imaginaries included ideas about idyllic childhoods spent outdoors in active play (see Crawford 2015), where children could make-believe and play outside with freedom. They also reflected shared commitments to the environment and a simple way of life espoused by many living altermodern lifestyles. Her conversation demonstrated that she felt capable, strong and able to learn about (as well as complete) an entirely new project, despite her pregnancy and childcare responsibilities, emphasising the empowering nature of her 'new domesticity' (Padilla Carroll 2016). It gave her something to be proud of as an individual achievement and also gave her a way to create an identity for herself that was individual and unique to her, a form of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

Rae also found belonging in her community in other ways that were more similar to the women in the discourses she engages with. She found that having her children and being a mother meant that she could make friends in the community through her children. Many of her friends have children of similar ages, so they have that in common, and she also volunteers at her children's school, factors which produce satisfying ties to the community and help her to feel like she belongs. Rae also works part-time and that adds to her community connections. The protagonist in *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)) and Helen in *All creatures great and small* (1978-1990) connect with their respective communities in the same ways, as does Michelle Crawford (2015) and Rohan Anderson (2012), so these are common ways to make inroads into friendship groups. I ask Rae if she would have been able to have the sort of life she has if she lived in a city, and her reply is quick and assured, 'No, oh, gosh that just sounds awful! I can't imagine' (Rae 9 August 2016). Some might have considered her odd to be growing vegetables and to be wearing a 'uniform' of black pants and shirt when she is financially comfortable, although both of these have become more mainstream pursuits in recent years (see, for example Capomolla & Pember 2012 and [http://www.slate.com/blogs/normal/2016/10/19/uniform\\_fashion\\_is\\_the\\_best\\_approach\\_to\\_dressing\\_yourself.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/normal/2016/10/19/uniform_fashion_is_the_best_approach_to_dressing_yourself.html)), among other examples). Regardless, Rae's adoption of discursively and societally situated female attributes, such as looking after children and cooking (Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015, p. 139), meant that Rae could find similarities to other women. Leisure time in rural areas is different to that in cities (Trussell & Shaw 2009), and Rae was able to make the most of the freedoms country living afforded her. Mainstream media images of women in cities preclude these activities to a great extent, where leisure time is spent on activities often

available only in cities. Rae, then, is able to pursue her passions because of where she lives, and the freedoms that this location affords her both physically and in the material written about it. She does not feel obligated to uphold social traditions or stereotypes common to women in positions of privilege and so can indulge in her own dreams and ideas of how life should be lived, leading to personal contentment and satisfaction. However, Rae generally still lives within the traditional values supported in the rural community.

Of those who did not have children in the household, Viv and Natalie found connections through work and community groups, Brian and Christine through their work, and Barry through his volunteer work, while Diane was active in Landcare and also worked part-time. Kate, with a young daughter at home, connected to her husband's family and through her shop. Tania had initially made friends through her children but now worked full-time and had many friends in Stanthorpe. While those who had children were quick to point out that it was through them that they found friends, Natalie pointed out that she would not have been able to attend all of the evening volunteer activities that she found so valuable to her sense of belonging if she had had to stay at home to care for children. For Natalie, then, children would have made connecting more difficult (29 September 2016). Even so, it is evident in both discourses and in the lived experience that each of the participants related to me that children, volunteer groups and working are the preferred ways to get to know people within a new community, regardless of age or gender.

Tania, who had lived in several towns in Queensland before moving permanently to Stanthorpe more than 20 years previously, stayed home with her two children while they were young (Tania 26 August 2016). This was a choice that validated Little and Austin's argument that:

the rural idyll is instrumental in shaping and sustaining patriarchal gender relations and that it incorporates, both consciously and unconsciously, strong expectations concerning aspects of household strategy and gender roles (1996, p. 102).

While staying at home with the children might have been a choice that Tania and her husband made as individuals exercising agency, the structures were in place to encourage them to make this choice, and particularly so because of their location in the rural community where these values were even stronger (Little & Panelli 2003). Gendered practice in Stanthorpe both promotes and defines women predominately through their relationships, as wives and mothers, and this gendered practice is revealed and reinforced in popular rural discourses as

well (for example, Crawford 2015; Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015, p. 139). Making the choice to stay at home with her children enabled Tania to live well within the normative paradigms of her community as she embraced domesticity and 'housewifery' (Padilla Carroll 2016). Staying at home with the children meant that Tania experienced isolation and loneliness when she was new to the community, until she could make friends and connections through her children's playgroup. While her husband immediately had in-built social relations through his work, Tania noted that this was not available to her. However, Tania seemed happy with her choices and to live a life that worked with social expectations about motherhood in the country. The 'aspects of the rural idyll [which] operate in support of traditional gender relations, prioritising women's mothering role and fostering their centrality within the community' (Little & Austin 1996, p. 110), suited Tania. As part of this role, Tania used to make her own jam, chutney and bread, but she stopped doing so when her children grew up and left for university. These interests emphasise her position as home-centred, nurturing her family while her husband was the breadwinner, and are common leisure activities for many rural women and altermodern lifestyle participants. They help to create the sort of story-book childhoods that Michelle Crawford (2015) specifically outlines as desirable for her own family. While things have changed since her children moved away (Tania 22 August 2016), Tania continues her supportive, facilitating role. These days, her husband is a competitive athlete and she follows him to various competitions around the state, often involving a weekend away from home. This continues Tania's role as a nurturer who supports male activity as a priority, while maintaining traditional values within the family structure (Little 2003).

Continuing our conversation about the impact of discourse, Tania downplays rural imaginaries in her current life:

If you're living on a station somewhere, in the outback, it's probably more like *McLeod's daughters* but [in Stanthorpe] we're really close to the city and we've got jobs and my husband is an athlete as well and we're always going away to different things...Which we never did when the kids were at home but it comes to a point in your life where you just get to do what you want (22 August 2016).

For Tania, while she and her husband are still working and healthy but with independent children who do not need financial support, later middle age is a time of freedom. While she would not want to move anywhere else (22 August 2016), she now works full-time and is engaged in a wider world, embracing a different social imaginary than the ones she embraced



as a young mother. It is interesting that, although she continues to support her husband's activities over her own interests, she describes their life after children as 'you just get to do what you want'. Clearly, continuing her supportive, nurturing role is what she wants and is an important part of her habitus.

Although Diane states that she had not been influenced by magazines and television shows to move to the country from the United Kingdom (26 August 2016), she still changed her entire life from a childhood and career in London to a life on 40 acres just outside Stanthorpe where she keeps bees and grows vegetables. She did this because she and her husband wanted a more sustainable lifestyle, one that was more connected to food sources and was more 'honest' (Diane 26 August 2016). As Appadurai (1996) notes, it would be unusual for her plans to have been entirely unconnected to discursive imaginaries. It is likely that these ideals and values arose, consciously or unconsciously, from watching television shows she mentioned, including *The good life* (1975-1977), when she was young. Now the social imaginaries and ideals depicted in this type of show are the same ones she is living in her new life. She reads *Earth garden* and *Grassroots* when people donate piles to her and, as noted in Chapter 4, she happily devours books including *Moby Dick* (Melville 1851 (2008)). Since moving to Australia, she set out to learn about how to garden in Australia, first taking a job at a plant nursery in Brisbane, and now through membership of the local organic Landcare group, where values of sustainability and care for the land are prominent. Her membership provides a way for her to be an advocate for nature, while subtly criticising the 'domination and exploitation of nature by men' (Bock 2006, p. 282). Diane's previous career, in finance in London, was one in which success is often defined in terms of wealth acquisition, and is also a male dominated field. Diane specifically rejected values of wealth creation as she worked her allotment in England and chose to move to Stanthorpe, and continues to choose to adopt ideas which express a resistance to male dominated fields like agriculture and finance. Her success and independence as a career woman who decided not to have children may make her reluctant to admit to being influenced by outside values, but it is clear that she lives her life in a very specific way, framed by positive rural social imaginaries that were not inherent in her previous working life. It is an altermodern lifestyle that privileges sustainability and the rural over wealth acquisition and the urban. Working in the plant nursery and in the Landcare group ties her to people who share those ideals and allow her to learn in a hands-on way while socialising with others, so that she shares these imaginaries in pleasant and sociable ways.

Inherent in this, however, is a certain irony that her current way of life was made possible by the secure financial position provided by her previous way of life.

Initial attractions to an area, such as natural beauty and open spaces (Lokocz et al. 2011, p. 74), continue to be important after the move. Additionally, new residents of shorter duration, such as Diane, tend to be 'more interested in engaging in land-protection strategies, even on their own land' (Lokocz et al. 2011, p. 74). This enables them to protect the environment into which they have bought and reinforces the values they identify with, increasing their attachment to place and the social imaginaries that brought them to that place. The attractiveness of a landscape has been shown to be a factor conducive to the development of stronger place attachment during residency (Larson et al 2013, p. 232), and many of the participants described Stanthorpe in these terms (Diane 16 August 2016; Christine & Brian 15 July 2016; Bert & Lucy 16 July 2016; Rae, 9 August 2016; Viv & Barry 13 September 2016). Given Diane's childhood exposure to *The good life* (1975-1977), where she originally saw people aiming to develop self-sustainability in the English climate, the similarity of Stanthorpe's climate was important to her developing familiarity which, in turn, increased her sense of belonging following her move. Where *The good life* (1975-1977) was set in a suburb, Diane and her husband's desire for escape from the city led them to an attractive landscape where they could develop a sense of place and still served to reinforce the values evident in the discourse.

Diane's decision not to have children presented challenges with some aspects of her life in rural Australia (Diane 26 August 2016), given how important it is in rural social imaginaries. She was not able to make friends with other mothers through her children, and she also found it unsettling that, after being asked if she was married, she was then asked whether she had children. As she states, 'where I come from, that's a rude question...you wait until you're told, just because it might be a choice or not' (Diane 26 August 2016). Rural communities, as has been discussed, focus on the role of women as mothers and nurturers (Little & Austin 1996; Bock 2006) and women who are different from the norm or who may question widely accepted views can find themselves marginalised, even among other women (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002). This can apply to queer women, single mothers and widows (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002), just as it can apply to women without children. As Diane states, 'the whole child-focused thing excludes me quite often' (26 August 2016).

The other major difficulty that Diane outlined is 'the level of sexism' (26 August 2016) in Australia. In social situations, this works in two ways, where

men won't look me in the eye when they're talking to me. It's not that they're looking anywhere else either, but they won't actually have a conversation with me because I'm not worth having a conversation with, I don't know. I scare them? (26 August 2016).

A financially independent, childless woman who questions farming practice is outside normative expectations for Stanthorpe, where women like Rae, Tania and Kate, who have children and raise or raised them as full-time mothers, are the norm. Rural social imaginaries do not accommodate these possibilities well. In response, Diane often chose to ignore sexist occurrences, as she found it too exhausting to fight the fight everyday (Diane 26 August 2016). Instead, she managed it by shrugging it off, by accepting that it might be to her advantage to ignore it (Ahmed 2017, pp. 35-36).

The second difficulty that she shared was with women in social settings, where Diane confides, 'I'm kind of shunted off with the women and they want to talk about their babies and these days, because of my age, their grandchildren, and I have nothing to contribute to the conversation really' (26 August 2016). This emphasises Warner-Smith & Brown's idea that 'physical isolation here serves as a metaphor for other forms of isolation' (2002, p. 53), where rural women live in contrast to urbanites through their conservative, traditional values and the entrenched cultural expectations, which are difficult to shift. Even though Diane would have liked to talk to a wide range of people, prevailing social practice prevented her from doing so.

### **Competing lifestyles, competing imaginaries**

The previous chapter touched on how reality infringed disappointingly on the social imaginaries that had led Bert and Lucy to buy their house near Stanthorpe. Ten years previously, they had felt that they were not investing enough and decided to buy a second house as a retirement plan, and they were excited about the discourses that validated and shared their dreams when they bought their house. Now, after ten years of not having any spare cash with which to make their dreams happen, Bert sounded wistful. He recalls 'the plan was that this would go up in capital value and it didn't...People who still make about what I do...their house there is very comfortable, they have a lot of free income to do things with' (Bert 16 July 2016). They could have spent their extra cash in paying down their city mortgage and making their life more comfortable, but the dream of living in the country was strong.

These social imaginaries, which had originally inspired them were still influential, but the reality of their situation had tempered their dreams somewhat. The couple still engage actively with much lifestyle migration media and list magazines that they read, including *Earth garden* and *Grassroots* ('Lucy's more the lower end hippy type', says Bert (16 July 2016)). Then they mention *Vogue living*, but note that it is bought for their city home. Referencing the 'hippy' magazines, they add:

... these magazines make it out, they're selling the dream, that really isn't accessible to anyone that's working with money. That's the one big thing that I picked up, that you need to be full time to build these unique, beautiful homes and give it a go yourself. We will build here, but I don't think it's going to be us doing it, as much as I thought (Lucy 16 July 2016).

It is clear that they still ascribe to the social imaginaries depicted in the magazines, but that now they realise that their dreams will have to be constrained by the difficulties of living nearly three hours away from their week-day base. It is difficult to impossible for them to live an altermodern lifestyle fully in these circumstances. As mentioned, dividing time between the two communities and finances between two mortgages, Bert and Lucy have little money and time to pursue the dreams that brought them to Stanthorpe in the first place. Lucy tries to reconcile the problem by saying:

Yeah, but that's alright, because we also have the long game where I could see myself old and content. I can sit on the deck and drink wine on my investment, and if you can do that with your share portfolio, let me know. It was my one come-back with my mentor at that stage. It was an extravagant purchase, because what we've got as a mortgage now we could probably live in the high side of Sherwood [a suburb of Brisbane] in a wonderful character home and we'd be more comfortable (Lucy 16 July 2016).

There seems to be no logical reason for Bert and Lucy to hold on to their country house, but the dream remains strong enough that even ten years on, there is no discussion of selling. As Andrew Sayer notes, 'our values are not merely ventriloquized by social discourse' (2011, p. 27), but they are connected to 'well-being and ill-being and they refer to something which is not merely their product' (2011, p. 33). This is an existential need for Lucy and Bert, and is an important part of their individual habitus. They rationalise their emotional desire to own a house in the country by calling it an investment, and even though it is clear that their narrative

is influenced by the dreams of their parents and the discursively shared dreams of authors and television shows, their feeling of well-being is enhanced by country-home ownership, making the sacrifices worthwhile.

For Natalie, who had moved to Stanthorpe for a career opportunity and did not ascribe to conceptualisations of rural idylls and rural social imaginaries, life in Stanthorpe always felt somewhat disconnected (29 September 2016). She is different from the other lifestyle migrants in this study, and her reasons for moving to Stanthorpe, while it was still for a 'better way of life,' emphasised the job that she took up as the lifestyle she wanted to pursue rather than the desirability of living in the town itself. For Natalie, the better life she sought involved a job that she would not have been able to get following the challenging economics of the financial crisis in Ireland. This is different to those who saw in Stanthorpe a better life related to space, rurality, escape, abundance and the possibility of living more authentically. Rather, Natalie described Stanthorpe as a 'transient area where you come to, to start off your career' (29 September 2016). This is different to most people's experience, that youth move away for their careers (Tania and Rae both mentioned this, for example). However, Natalie had made friends with other young people who arrived for work at the local newspaper, but they ended up being transitory friendships that were subject to rupture as each subsequently moved away as job offers were made away from town. Despite making an effort to meet people and work with local community groups, Natalie was not able to make lasting connections or find satisfaction in the pursuits available to her in the country. She had no great desire to disrupt her late modern lifestyle with altermodern alternatives; she had no desire to permeate or extend her habitus with new, rural based ideas. After staying for three years for her job, which was a tremendous opportunity and a career builder for her, Natalie eventually decided to return to the city. As noted above, this was not a change of heart but rather a return to preferred and familiar ways (Salazar 2014), and there is no sense in Natalie's decision that she felt failure or regret. It was more that she had come, worked at the opportunity she was given, and when the time was right, she was able to use that experience to lead her to a new city-based job that she hoped would be more fulfilling personally. Rural conceptualisations, emphasising motherhood and care-givers in country communities (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002), combined with the lack of single women as role models and work for her partner, acted as barriers to Natalie fitting in as they did not work with her own established habitus. This made her lived experience less fulfilling and welcoming than could be hoped and meant that the 'better life' of lifestyle migration for her remained city-based.

Although she is married with a child, Faye also found herself not fitting in. Like Natalie, she also was not engaged with social imaginaries of a positive rural idyll, but rather than feeling as though she did not have friends in Stanthorpe, for she did, she felt that she was unable to fulfil her need for creative stimulation and be engaged with her community in the creative arts (30 September 2016). She felt she was unable to live her values in an authentic way, because there was no avenue for this in Stanthorpe. Sitting in a café early one morning, she explained her situation to me:

I was talking to a friend who has lived in Tasmania for a long time, and even Tasmania offers you these things I was talking about, not just the local market with crocheted things, which are fine, but you can't get any sort of mental stimulus from the local market, it has to be interactive, something that you do as well. It has to be a collaboration; you can't be seeing things only. Or buying things. Buying! Yesterday afternoon, it was a beautiful day, my daughter said I don't want to go home so I said, let's go for a walk and said shall we go to the library, and the little park? And she said, oh, no, I like the Reject Shop. And I thought, how sad is that! And we went and we didn't buy anything but we went to the Reject Shop and then ended up meeting friends. But that's it, you eat, or you go to eateries and we're a café society or culture and that is the culture, the café. The little library, all Sunday closed, Saturday between 10 and 12, and what do you mean? They're open at six in Europe because you go before work and you read the paper and you hang out and there's a little area where you have coffee, and we live in the library and it closes after dinner because you know. That's winter time and in summer it's shorter because there's a writer's festival. The writing festival is free and you book a spot and you line up and you've got major writers that go to this and it has to be for free because culture is for everyone. It can't be that I go to Brisbane for the Writer's Festival, which I did a couple of years ago and to listen to one person, I paid \$65. That adds up. Or even for children, it's very limited (30 September 2016).

Faye did not seem to have been able to whole-heartedly embrace her life in Australia, and during our conversation mentioned barriers to her feeling as though she fitted in, as well as mentioning how Australia and Italy compared in various things, like government process and the role of government. While it has been noted that many lifestyle migrants reassess their values and reject aspects of their previous life (Benson & O'Reilly 2009), this was an ongoing and ambivalent process for Faye. At the heart of this, Faye seemed to be uncomfortable with

the neo-liberal emphasis in Australia's mainstream ideology, and with the continuing decline of government and non-government services in rural places (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002). Moreover, this position seems unlikely to improve for Faye. As Warner-Smith and Brown argue:

...rural Australian communities are experiencing the disadvantages of a national and international economic ideology which prioritises efficiency, technology and competitiveness within the global economy. Flowing from this change in focus, small rural towns are losing services, employment opportunities and infrastructure, with a resultant erosion of social capital. As our data show, these changes are impacting on women's lives and leisure opportunities. This is particularly significant given that the contribution of leisure to individual health and well-being is well documented. In the light of the connections between women's leisure and their physical and mental health, the current neo-liberal policy agenda has implications for the well-being of Australian rural women (2002, p. 53).

This is particularly pertinent for Faye. As a migrant to Australia as well as to Stanthorpe, Faye brought with her ideas and expectations in her personal social imaginaries that are not able to be satisfied in Australia under the current ideology. This structural challenge is a huge obstacle to her potential to feel as though she belongs. In addition, she had not grown up with the same ideas about the role of mothers in rural towns, so was unwilling or unable to ascribe to the notion of women as supporters of the community (Little & Austin 1996; Bock 2006), while upholding traditional patriarchal values. For example, Faye did not seem to find the same satisfaction in altermodern domestic pursuits such as cooking, making bread, jams or chutneys as some of her counterparts in Stanthorpe did; she yearned for the differing leisure activities available only to urban dwellers (Trussell & Shaw 2009). Where Rae found happiness in going to the tip shop, getting old bits of lumber and building cubby houses for her children, and Tania had baked bread and sewn clothes for her children, Faye wanted major galleries, art workshops, book festivals, all of which were generally beyond Stanthorpe's capability and resources. Barry and Viv were happy to spend time volunteering, but these options were not available for Faye, as she usually tried to get casual work if it was available and needed to care for her daughter as well. Faye was unable to find a role for herself in the prevailing rural social imaginaries and the fields within Stanthorpe, and her personal habitus did not expand to include and adopt rural values as her own.

In both her work life and social life, Faye found that some of the other Stanthorpe women were not accepting of her and constant cultural difficulties arose creating tension (Faye 30 September 2016). Faye found that her difference meant that she was not as welcomed into women's friendship circles, which in rural areas have been shown to be selective and based on similarities (Warner-Smith & Brown 2002). As Osbaldiston found, reality was different to the romantic image where 'country people are "imagined" to be friendly, warm and welcoming' (2014, p. 172). While her husband would move to Italy for her, it is hard for them to find jobs there, language is a barrier for him, and the expertise he has does not easily translate to Italy's employment market. Structural difficulties abounded, and when combined with her different discursive conceptualisations, Faye found herself entrenched in an unsatisfying and challenging situation.

### **Marketing imaginaries**

In contrast to the challenges Faye, Bert and Lucy encountered living with rural social imaginaries, Brian and Christine readily embraced and explicitly used rural idyll discourse, dreams and narratives to market their wine, even as they resisted adopting them personally. Their approach to the rural idyll was unique to them in this study. The only other research participant to own her own business was Kate, and while she may have been able to adopt the rural idyll as a business strategy, she chose instead to de-emphasise her rural location in her business, dis-identifying with place almost entirely.

Needing a business plan that would allow them to hold their own in a competitive market, Brian and Christine adopted an approach where people join their exclusive club that will close to new members once a certain number of members is reached. These people can come to the vineyard, enjoy tastings, chat with other members at exclusive events and buy wine. This program is marketed to Stanthorpe 'outsiders', rather than locals, and relationships are formed through the internet and then through repeat visits, rather than relying on passing traffic or transient visitors. This relationship to their customers, in a similar way to the cultural work that Luckman writes about,

defines the nature of the business: how it advertises and positions itself in the market, what kinds of products are made and, significantly in terms of cultural identity and politics, how "local character" is manifest... (Luckman 2012, p. 96).

As Christine declared, the idea of the rural idyll, and specifically the dream of owning a vineyard, is the main selling point for Christine and Barry's vineyard (15 July 2016). The rural



idyll and its saleability formulate the logics of their business. While not adopted within their own social imaginaries or habitus, they understand its power well enough to use it as a marketing tool. That this works for them relies on the continued desirability and acceptance of the notion of the rural idyll in a wide enough segment of the community to provide members for their business. An examination of place-marketing materials generated by southern Queensland marketing bodies demonstrates widespread adoption of the rural idyll as a selling point (see, for example, *Granite Belt wine country visitor's guide* n.d.; *Southern Queensland Country 2015/16 visitor's guide*), while rural discourse continues to propagate this theme (Crawford 2015; Anderson 2012; Burden 2012; *Gourmet Farmer* 2010-; *River Cottage Australia* 2013). While this makes their lived experience in Stanthorpe reliant on positive discursive representations of the rural in Australian media, it also does not appear to be at any real risk in the foreseeable future, given the embeddedness of this social imaginary. This highlights the enduring place that rural conceptualisations have in discourse, as well as their constancy and their utility for business (Salazar & Graburn 2014).

The business model fosters a personal, almost affective relationship with their customers, who, despite the fact that they are basically buying wine at these events, are actually buying belonging and a relationship with the rural idyll itself. This part of the model presents an alternative way of doing business consistent with altermodernity because it disrupts the capitalist imperative to maximise profit and changes the power relationship between them and their customers to one nearing friendship. Brian and Christine chose to limit their sales to their own wines thus limiting their profitability; they also chose to live in the country and work at a satisfying business rather than focus on profitability, factors which increase their altermodern credentials even as they market the rural idyll to their members.

Achieving this depends on social imaginaries and the use of imagination to conjure up possibilities of different ways of living, which expands the habitus. First, Barry and Christine had to imagine a life in the country that would work for a self-described 'city girl' (Christine 15 July 2016) and a man who 'never liked big cities' (Barry 15 July 2016). This they achieved through their choice of a four-season, attractive location that provides the reminiscences of the European life that Christine loved, combined with frequent trips back to capital cities to explore the cultural attractions that the city held for Christine. Second, the couple had to imagine a business model that would work for a small, boutique winery instead of using the other business models in place, which relied on volume and price. Structurally, they needed the funds to maintain the vineyard through years of no income, as well as the skills to manage

both the business side of it and the social imaginaries used in their marketing. This emphasises Osbaldiston's point that migration research should not 'separate the imagination, as an external impact, from practice... imagining is an embodied practice of transcending both physical and socio-cultural distance' (2014, p. 124). Both aspects of structure and agency combined to allow them to imagine and then act on a different life for their retirement.

### **Reflection and conclusion**

My sons do not really like the country, preferring instead to live in cities. It is the lack of high-speed internet, the long journey to get here (neither of them own cars and there is no public transport here), and the numerous inconveniences that apply to everyday life in the country. While I had grown up with books and stories that emphasised the positives of country life, they experienced a different kind of childhood, where fun was found in the wonders of the internet, including competitive video game playing and other pursuits needful of good connectivity.

While I can sit on the porch and appreciate the garden, the birds, the cattle grazing in the fields beyond the house, they bounce around, checking mobile phone connections, latency and ping, and wondering if there will ever be anything but satellite internet here. When I talk about how we have had several days of cloud and we are watching our solar power consumption, or that the rain has not come and the tanks are getting low, they make humorous comments about how wonderful it would be if someone could invent a way to supply electricity to everyone so they did not have to worry about that, and how it would be great if there was something like dams that could hold enough water so people could turn a tap on whenever they wanted.

And so we connect with different social imaginaries. The social imaginaries I have engaged with, grown up with and adopted, promulgate a country life that is rich, satisfying and abundant, but just like anything, these ideas are not static. As I have spent more years here, my ideas and ideals about rural life have become more realistic and grounded. I changed. The discursive representations that once drew me in no longer hold the same appeal. Some of the texts I read seem downright unrealistic (the idea of self-sufficiency, for example) or idealistic (the children will love it). I can appreciate the authors' enthusiasm for and the desire to live in the country, but I am also familiar with two-hour commutes to a good job, the reality of drought, what it feels like to drive an hour to emergency at the crack of dawn in a life-threatening situation. I still live here, but there are few media stories or television shows or

books that go beyond selling the dream of the rural idyll, towards an acceptance of the good and bad of rural life in a more realistic way, and that just treat it as a normal way to live. Country living does not have to be made to look glossy to still hold real appeal in things like housing affordability, peace and quiet, the ability to turn away from frenetic, neo-liberal values in favour of values based on the good. And yet, so much that is written about it feels like theme park imaginings as opposed to real life.

Discourse continues to impact the everyday experience of the lifestyle migrant long after the migration. It influences the expectations and way people choose to live, including incidental choices as well as large, life-altering ones. For the lifestyle migrants in this project, engagement with various discourses reinforced their world-views and outlooks, and tended to validate the decisions they had made as well as encourage them in those decisions. None of the participants were free from the influence of discourse, and it had huge effects on them that continued to have ramifications throughout their lives. For many, its impacts were unconscious, as the participants were so immersed in the social imaginaries within the discourse that they were unable to distinguish these ideas from their own. Many did not question the values espoused by various authors and were happy to simply absorb and integrate the ideas within the texts, finding within those virtual places belonging and validation. Chapter 6: Interactions with place and their impact on identity, expands on this further by discussing how interactions with place, both conceptual and physical, influence and affect identity.

## **Chapter 6: Interactions with place and their impact on identity**

Our house is entirely off-grid, and we have a solar system that provides us with all the electricity we need to power our laptops, microwave, vacuum and everything else that you would probably expect in an average contemporary home. However, there are limitations to the system so whenever we have tradesmen come to work on something, we have to tell them that we cannot power tools that use a high number of watts. Invariably, they will ask my husband questions about what they can do and whether they should bring a generator. He does not know the answers to these questions, so I answer. The tradesman will usually then ask another question, looking at my husband while he talks and I stand by. Again, I answer because I know my husband does not know about these things. The tradesman often looks back and forth at both of us at this point, unsure of why a woman is answering questions about inverters and wattage and power tools. It happens all the time, and I know that my being a woman changes the relationship that I have with the others in this place. Being female brings with it expectations that are shared by residents in this area about how a woman should act or even what she should know. When I do not fit those expectations, it creates distinctions, an Otherness that makes me feel set apart from the people here. I feel awkward and unsure even though it is my home and I have lived here for years. I wonder if I am doing something wrong and if I should go and bake some scones or something; behave how the other women here behave.

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines how participants' interactions with the places they inhabited, both virtual and physical, affected their identity. Place is not only a fundamental part of identity creation; identity itself is an emplaced phenomenon (Speller & Twigger-Ross 2009, p. 355). Place impacts identity in numerous ways, including through the discursive construction of place and the gendered subject positions within it. As established in Chapter 2, for example, the countryside is often romanticised in art and literature, including in the work of Henry Lawson, Tom Roberts and Hans Heysen. In these discourses, rural spaces are used to depict and convey ideas about adventure, mateship, bucolic landscapes, abundance, peace and tranquility, even when the reality may be less poetic. These constructions are an 'historically specific social and cultural construction' (Urry 1995, p. 175) with roots in Australia's colonial past; they are also gendered (Urry 1995). The patriarchal nature of rural society is an area which has received increasing attention in recent years (Bryant & Pini 2009; Donkersloot 2012; Driscoll 2014; Little 2006). Little, for example, argues that rural femininity is typically

constructed in terms of 'its genuine nature, lack of complication and "low maintenance" and rural women distanced from their urban counterparts not only by their love of country life and tolerance of a simpler existence but also by their clothes and appearance' (Little 2015, p. 116). Rural masculinities, in contrast, emphasise strength, social and familial power and dominance over the land (Little 2015, p. 112). Identity is inevitably (albeit to different degrees) affected by these discursive constructions, which as previous Chapters have demonstrated can play important roles in establishing expectations for lifestyle migrants both before and after their relocation.

This chapter examines precisely how these interactions with place impact identity for the lifestyle migrants of this project. The chapter begins with a discussion of how lifestyle migrants speak about themselves in relation to rural place where 'patriarchal gender relations are still fundamentally embedded in the creation of the rural idyll' (Little & Austin 1996, p. 103). The discussion shows how gender is used to uphold romantic visions of the rural idyll by encouraging women to adopt roles that confirm and legitimise power differences (Leach 2011, p. 133), which help to support the rural idyll at the same time as revealing the ideologies upon which it is based. It goes on to highlight how the impact of living in a new place is shared in socially situated identity creation through a discussion of how place as a social imaginary impacted the lifestyle migrant's identity in material ways, a discussion which emphasises personal observations and analysis. This is followed by a section on how lifestyle migrants considered themselves different from 'locals', and how this impacted their identity. Finally, I conclude with a personal reflection and observation that identity intersects with place through complex, performed interactions that are fluid and localised.

### **Identity: the 'city girl'/'country girl' in place**

One of the most frequent place and identity self-narratives among participants was the comment that they were a 'city girl' (Christine, 15 July 2016; Natalie, 29 September 2016), or a 'country girl' (Rae 4 August 2016). Identifying as a 'city girl' or a 'country girl' is one of the most obvious ways that geographical place is seen to impact identity, and it does this in a gendered manner. It highlights that place is central to personal identification, while also bringing with it the understanding that gender, as a social construction, is an intrinsic factor in this place identification (Lappegard Hauge 2007 p. 44). These descriptors also reflect a phenomenological experience of place as an insider or outsider (Garbutt 2011, p. 54).

Place identification describes unique attributes similar to social categories and enables the person to present a continuous identity in reference to place, whether it is as a current self or a past self (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996, p. 207). For Rae, being a country girl was both a past and present self, and enabled her to maintain a consistent sense of self. In Stanthorpe, Natalie's city girl attributes were congruent with her career-oriented work, but other aspects of place were not. This led to her taking an opportunity to move back to the city and reinforce her continuity of self and habitus. Christine, also a self-described city girl, chose frequent, multi-day trips to the city to maintain her continuity of city identification and personal distinctiveness in Stanthorpe. These trips back also reinforced her agency, and feelings of worth. For Christine, the moniker is connected to 'the city with all the art galleries and the theatre' (15 July 2016). For Natalie, positive associations with the city include bars and nightclubs, long opening hours and availability of a range of clothing stores and opportunities to develop a career (29 September 2016). Both Natalie and Christine identify with the structural attributes of the city, even as they were frustrated by the lack of them in their country locales. Natalie in particular, had not learned how to spend leisure-time in the country, and relied on these spaces to be entertained (see Driscoll 2014). These structural issues were hard to overcome without changes to her own internal habitus, a disruption to personal continuity.

While outlining these attractions within the city, Natalie also mentioned that she was 'a shocking cook' (29 September 2016), and that her country colleagues were happy to bring her freezer meals and baked goods and generally look after her, a consideration that she said she was going to miss on her move to the city. Identifying as a city girl while at the same time dis-identifying with home cooking seemed to emphasise her lack of attachment to mainstream mores of the rural, as she maintained her distinctiveness by not identifying with a long-standing country attribute. Rural social imaginaries, including the discourses in all of the texts in this study, use cooking and the ability to provide nurturing meals for the family as an important indicator of rural femininity (see Crawford 2015; Wise 2014; see also Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015, p. 139). This construction of rural femininity also demonstrates the intertwined nature of place as both a geographic and a cultural, gendered reality. Natalie experienced an Otherness associated with not wanting to cook or nurture children, such that she was treated differently, with the other women bringing her meals to re-heat at home. Rural femininities encompass an expectation that women will demonstrate a desire to have children and will want to cook and care for their family as their primary role in life. It also reveals how these values are important to the stability and continuation of the rural idyll. Traditionally, the

essential work generally associated with men in rural communities, such as shearing, harvesting, fencing and planting, was only achievable through the unpaid work provided by women in support of this work, including providing meals for workers and the running of the home.

As part of the rural abundance myth, production and preparation of food are important in rural social imaginaries (Wallis 2017). Cooking is depicted in rural discourse as an important and expected way to nurture the family and support the farm (Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015, p. 139; see also Crawford 2015). Several participants in this study indicated that they wanted to use specifically local produce to create nourishing meals (for example, Rae and Kate), and this became part of their feminine rural identity. These ideals are also prevalent in many texts about rural life (Anderson 2012 and 2015; Burden 2012; Crawford 2015; *Gourmet farmer* 2010-; *River Cottage Australia* 2013-2016; Wise 2014). Natalie's dis-identification with this was an indicator of her ambivalence to these mainstream constructions of rural femininity. These constructions are also classed, as having the ability to be the primary carer for children, having the time and money for creative cookery and buying local produce relies upon a privileged position to enable such nurturing activities. There is also a moral basis to such aspects as buying local produce implies a judgement made as to the suitability of commercial, industrialised farm production over the locally grown, farmer's market produce that is depicted and assumed to be more desirable (Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015).

Rae volunteered her identification with being a 'country girl at heart' (9 August 2016), a descriptor that enabled her to assert some insider status, even if she was not a resident of many generations like the 'real' locals. While she grew up mainly in towns, she had spent a lot of time outside riding her horse, 'with a friend, exploring the country' (9 August 2016), so she was familiar with and enjoyed country pastimes and leisure pursuits. This established continuity with her past and present selves. The 'country girl' phrase enables her to continue to identify with a happy and carefree past, while ignoring chronological age and its associations of negativity (Fealy, McNamara, Treacy & Lyons 2012, p. 85). She loved the freedom she experienced as a child, and it aligned with her interest in watching television series such as *All creatures great and small* (1978-1990), where similar ideas of youth, femininity and rural life are espoused and shared. In this television series, Helen, the main protagonist's wife, is depicted as a good cook and homemaker, considerate carer for those who are ill, and a nurturing mother, all while helping her husband's veterinary business both in the office and at various farm and surgery appointments. She fits into the clearly defined

gender roles expected of her as a wife and mother in the country (Leach 2011, p. 133), labels which are routinely de-eroticised in the rural space (Little 2006, p. 12). Helen is a country girl through-and-through, and this enables her to navigate daily life with ease and skill, while serving to reinforce the myth of the rural idyll and a place of nurturing and tranquillity. She can deal with country emergencies capably and with equanimity precisely because she is a country girl, with the right skills and localised knowledge. This is part of what makes her a desirable image for others, as they too wish to be seen as capable, and fit in with their community. Although this image of a home-based, family oriented woman appears to be at odds with other, more career minded media depictions of women as equal partners with men in various rural occupations (such as the much later *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009)), Stenbacka (2011) notes that career-oriented ideals are often questioned by the women themselves. Even considering differences relating to expectations and norms prevalent in a television series set in a society of nearly seventy years ago, Helen is extraordinarily comparable to the 'ideal' rural woman depicted in contemporary *Country living* (Keller, Lloyd & Bell 2015) magazines, and *A table in the orchard* (Crawford 2015). The country girl is a comfortable and well-established depiction of women in rural areas (Driscoll 2014), and Rae was happy to relate to it as her identity in contemporary Stanthorpe.

Jean Paget, the protagonist in *A town like Alice* (Shute 1950 (2009)), is also a strong and capable woman, and it not hard to see why self-described country girl Rae would enjoy reading her narrative. Both are feminine, yet independent, and neither disrupt the prevalent gendered meanings and practices in their rural places while still ensuring that they achieve their goals. Jean, on being told that she would inherit her uncle's estate but that it would be held in trust for her until she was thirty-five simply because she was a woman, laughed and defended her uncle's decision (Shute 1950 (2009), pp. 35-36). During this conversation with her solicitor, she states that she had always worked for her living, and that 'I've never thought that I'd do anything different unless I married, and that's only a different sort of work...' (Shute 1950 (2009), p. 30). For Paget, marriage was an exchange of one type of work for another. Rae seemed to live out similar expectations, working outside the home until she had children, when she reduced her paid-work hours to a small part of each week. She did not indicate any desire to work outside the home more than that, and it would have been difficult for her to do that because of her husband's work hours. His work was well-paid, it took priority in their daily life, and she seemed happy to stay predominately at home. For many of the women in this study, being a stay-at-home mother 'formed a welcome alternative to the rather frantic career-



oriented lives of “urban women” (Little 2015, p. 109). This was also true for Crawford (2015), who, with her husband, specifically chose a rural area to live in so that they could buy a house without having both partners work full-time. These choices represented the individualised, spatial specificity of the women’s lives and reflected choices that served both their needs and inclinations as well as those of their family and partner. That the choices may reduce their personal agency and increase their dependency appeared to be a willing trade-off for flexibility and everyday personal autonomy in the country.

Like Jean Paget, Rae is resourceful and capable and worked within the socially constructed norms and ideologies around gender to achieve what she wanted to achieve. She has abundant capitals available to her, and she uses them well. Where fictional Paget spoke in a self-deprecating way to the headman of a Malay village when she wanted her band of women prisoners to be allowed to stay there, she was indicating that she knew how to ‘play the game’ to get what she wanted (de Certeau 1988, p. 18) even as she was a relatively powerless prisoner of war. Crucial to this understanding was her time spent previously in Malaya, ensuring that she knew how to act and what to say when so situated. Similarly, Rae used ‘ways of operating’ (de Certeau 1988, p. 30) to get a grant of over a million dollars for women in the Stanthorpe community. Even though some people in the community thought they were ‘idiots’ (Rae, 9 August 2016), she persevered for the benefit of the women she lived among, whose lives were improved by her efforts. She also knew how to act because she had lived in Stanthorpe for some years. In meetings with officials where the grant Rae wanted for Stanthorpe was being discussed, she would raise points such as ‘how come rural women don’t deserve what Toowoomba’s got?’ (9 August 2016). The fictional country girl and the real-life country girl both employed tactics and gamesmanship within the structures of patriarchal society, in settings some sixty years apart, and these tactics were embedded in place. Each of the women demonstrated their personal agency and power within the confines of the contextual patriarchal society and found ways to ‘manipulate’ it to achieve their own ends. They were not powerless, but rather operated in nuanced and context-articulate ways that expressed their power within multi-dimensional worlds (Donkersloot 2012, p. 579). Their actions in the places they lived in helped to establish and strengthen their localised identity.

Each of the participants used the word ‘girl’ in the city girl/country girl phrases, even though they were all adult women, with two in middle age. This likely reflects cultural anxiety about ageing, at least in part, along with cultural privileging of youth (Fealy, McNamara, Treacy & Lyons 2012, p. 85; Mac an Ghail & Haywood 2007). It also reflects a desire for continuity of

past and present selves, where youth and ageing are more blurred and less definable. Connotations around being a country woman might include ideas of dowdiness, scone-cooking, apron-wearing frumpiness, whereas the idea of being a country girl recalls notions of carefree, wholesome purity that just happens to be connected to the abundance of the land and its inherent promise of fertility, factors valued in society in general and in the country in particular. In media depictions of rural life, ageing is downplayed or minimised, and it is not mentioned as part of the 'country chic femininity' that Keller, Lloyd and Bell describe (2015). The descriptor 'girl', with its inherent youthful femininity, also ascribes characteristics of childhood to these grown women, such as 'passivity, dependency and vulnerability' (Mac an Ghail & Haywood 2007), even though the women themselves would most likely dispute these conceptions as inaccurate reflections of their selves. Conversely, the concept of a city girl raises prospects of urban sophistication and important careers, before the weight of responsibility and children diminishes perceived freedoms associated with the city. Additionally, country girl or city girl are phrases that situate gender as a simplistic male/female binary, ignoring and rendering mute the gender blurring found in individuated cultures impacted by global change (Mac an Ghail & Haywood 2007). Instead, the phrase asserts female and male identification as unquestioned.

### **Performing identity in social, materialist and discursive place**

As shown in the city girl/country girl observations, people often identify themselves directly with place, particularly the geographic, physical place where they live, impacting their identity in the process (Lappegard Hauge 2007). The material aspects of daily life are objects used in identity creation within place as they communicate meanings that help to establish and build identity, particularly in new situations and where others do not know you. As Garbutt says,

[w]e find in the idea of local place a social site that has been made durable through inhabitation. This positions the idea of place in close connection with ideas such as home, dwelling, permanence, belonging, identity and order. On the other hand, if place is a social site made durable, then an alternative view of place is to focus on the specific practices of place-making. Consideration of the materiality of place-making alerts us to a number of key points. To begin with, places do not come into being solely from within a place, but through practices...(2011, p. 50).

This material approach 'extends place beyond what is possible with a phenomenological methodology' (Garbutt 2011, p. 60) to examine the practices of identity performance in

relation to place as a socially connected imaginary. It outlines how materiality is a form of discourse and is used by lifestyle migrants to perform and express their evolving identities within the socially connected imaginaries of their community. These identities were expressed in leisure activities, the dress they wore, the food they bought (and/or grew), and in the choice of materials and decoration for the homes they live in. As Pini, Little and Brandth (2015, p. 202) have stated, 'rural women's presentation of the body or adoption of fashionable clothing has received little interest from rural researchers...' This might also be extended to other material choices as well.

A little while before I was due to meet Natalie, I noticed a woman on the main street who looked unlike anyone else in town. She wore a black top with lace, and she had obviously put a lot of care into her ensemble. It was not until I later met Natalie that I realised it was her, on her lunch break. We began to talk about how she expresses her identity in Stanthorpe, and she immediately says, 'I can't shop here. Clothes, I go to Brissy' [Brisbane] (29 September 2016). I ask her if she can get things in nearby Warwick, but she responds, 'No, I head into the city. People in Stanthorpe comment a lot about what I wear'. I ask her whether she feels she stands out a bit:

Yeah, a small bit yeah, I just like really nice clothes so a lot of my discretionary income goes on clothes. And I like to, I don't look good today because I don't have any fake tan or makeup on today, but I'm usually a lot more dressed up. I put a lot of fake tan on because I'm really fair and I get my nails done and I have hair extensions if I want to go out or stuff. I come from a town where it's a big factor... Especially for [work events] I'll get really dressed up and nine times out of ten it will be said to me that I'm really dressed up. Or where did you get that or something (Natalie 29 September 2016).

The way Natalie presents herself expresses her identity and is a reflection of her values. It expresses her femininity, even though it is not a rural femininity that helps her to find belonging in her community. Instead, it creates distinctions between her and the others in her community, and they are not afraid of letting her know that she is different. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Natalie did not identify with being a lifestyle migrant in the same way as the other participants, for whom the country was part of their desire for a better way of life. Moving to the country for Natalie was an adjunct to the better way of life she imagined through the job she was offered in Stanthorpe, and rurality was not necessary or even desirable for her. This

difference in outlook, manifested in her attitudes and appearance, makes it challenging for her to express her identity in Stanthorpe and it reduces her feeling of belonging and of fitting in. Natalie was less invested in the place than in her identity, so she moved back to the city. This confirms Appadurai's idea that the link between the imagination and social life is 'increasingly a global and deterritorialized one' (1996, p. 55), where borders are permeable and can be passed through on the quest for becoming. Where other lifestyle migrants in the study share the link between imagination and social life as well, Natalie demonstrated this within the time period of the study by undertaking her move back to the city. This idea also illustrates a way in which women can demonstrate their own personal power by leaving the small town if they choose to – an option not available to all and in all circumstances, however (Dunkersloot 2012).

In comparison to Natalie's choices, Kate, although she made frequent trips to Brisbane, was more connected to her country life and showed this by her continuing residency and in the clothes she brought back, which were similar to those worn by other women in her community. Her clothes did not create separation from her community in the same way that Natalie's did. This was the same for Diane, who bought a lot of her clothes while she was overseas visiting her mother. Their material choices, although they were also made at a distance from Stanthorpe, did not in themselves create more distance between them and their community and enabled them to feel more emplaced rather than less. They served to enhance distinctiveness in a positive, self-fulfilling way within the local community.

While rural spaces are more limited in their capacity to be used for self-performance and to be seen, in the way that urban spaces are used (Breward, 2004; Griffiths & Maille, 2014), they are still employed in this way. Lucy used our discussion of what people wore in Stanthorpe to show her identification with place: '[f]ashion is out the door here. If you're a true Stanthorpe person, you don't care about what you wear' (Lucy 16 July 2016). As we sit by her fireplace on this chilly winter day, she is wearing tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt with slippers to ward off the winter chill. Her statement appears to confirm 'local' ideas about what Natalie wears, whose dress does inhibit her ability to belong. However, it is at odds with the appearance of another participant, Christine, who takes great care with her appearance, wearing makeup, beautiful jewellery and a co-ordinated outfit for our discussion. The casualness of Lucy's outfit is a striking contrast. Does Lucy's observation hold? Is it reasonable to say that the vineyard owners are not 'true' Stanthorpe people? This is a difficult conclusion to make, because they have lived there for numerous years, are settled and respected and have friends and a

successful business in the town. Their conversation shows that they consider themselves to belong within the relational judgments of community. By many measures, they belong more than Lucy does, with her weekend visits and city-based income. Natalie, however, is different. She does not see herself as a Stanthorpe person, and does not want to either. Just like Christine, she wears what she wants, but in her case, it creates a distance for her in the community which does not appear for Christine. Christine's version of dressed up is less reliant on fashionable clothing and beauty aids such as fake tan and eyelashes, and this seems to make it more acceptable in a community where many women do not wear makeup on a regular basis. Perhaps, too, as an older woman and vineyard owner, Christine can occupy a place in the community where being dressed up is more acceptable, a part of what it means to be a landowner and business owner in a small community.

Christine belongs just the way she is, while Lucy works to fit in by adopting the sorts of clothes she thinks others wear in Stanthorpe. Lucy identifies with place through her use of non-fashion, just as Christine identifies with place through her engagement with dressed-up fashion that positions her as a property owner of status and privilege. When Lucy alters what she wears to fit in, it becomes clear that this is not the same as belonging, which is achieved without changing various components of the self; Lucy might fit in, but she does not seem to belong. Dress has spatial relevance, enabling wearers to 'ground where and when they are' (Kaiser 2012, p. 188) within their locality. The transitory nature of Lucy's life, in one community one day and in another the next, may induce her to want to find belonging by claiming sameness with the groups of Stanthorpe locals who also do not dress up; it creates a link with them for her. The ambiguous and tenuous space between 'subject positions' (Kaiser 2012, p. 192) is even more fraught when moving constantly between communities. Lucy has observed how some in Stanthorpe dress, adopts that in her habitus and uses it as a tool to belong through sameness. Her need to fit in is then revealed in the story of her dress.

Hobbies and leisure time activities are also an important way to establish identity within place. Rae's country life included her vegetable garden, and when she moved to Stanthorpe she 'got more into my veggie garden,' growing a lot in the summer months (9 August 2016). She also entered baking into the Stanthorpe show, taking great delight in using old family recipes to express her past and present selves. As discussed earlier, carpentry had also become a hobby for Rae, and she showed me lots of photos of the cubby house she built for her children using scrap lumber from the local mill, working after dinner until late into the night while her children were asleep. These activities helped to enhance her distinctiveness. These

skills were 'acceptable' ones to develop in this community, because they were for the good of her children and enhanced her nurturing role, while also fostering her distinctiveness. Similarly, Tania spoke proudly of her country style home and its large shady veranda and outdoor kitchen. Like Rae, she talked of making bread and jams and baking for her family. Tania and Rae used these pursuits to assert their identities as wives, mothers and country-minded women, in continuity with generations before them, as well as their sense of belonging in place. In a different way, Diane uses her participation in Landcare as an opportunity to get to know people in the community and explore her interest in growing her own vegetables. This enhances her own values in a distinctive way that sets her apart from some while forming bonds with others. The idea of the country coming through in these activities and leisure time hobbies shares Driscoll's idea that the aesthetic choices of country girls have 'a sense of the local, and of being placed' (2014, p. 31). The adopted realities of their country lives were practical and physical, and in them, they combined 'traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine work and clothes and attitudes' (Walter 1998, p. 2), to result in the creation of an identity that was more individual than the signposted lives of previous generations (Walter 1998). Despite these contemporary differences, Rae and Tania still lived well within the depictions of rural women demonstrated in the media discussed here. The places they inhabited were mainstream and hetero-normative, and the meanings embedded in these terms reflected their identities within their emplaced social lives.

Within the texts discussed in this thesis, place and identity were expressed through performances that involved a remarkably uniform style of material goods within the home that were intended to express the owner's authenticity. These included vintage pieces, reclaimed houses and furniture and the use of 'natural' looking finishes and materials like corrugated iron, wood, cotton and wool (see, for example, Anderson 2012, 2015; Crawford 2015; Imhoff 2012; Gripper 2012). While these have been touched on before in Chapter 3, it is worth noting that this communication resembles an emplaced 'jargon' that replicates authenticity more in its language rather than in the lived experience of the newly relocated daily life (Adorno 1973). While the message is one of individualism, the ubiquitousness of the same type and style of materials and discourses throughout lifestyle migration literature suggests that autonomy and independence of thought is more of a gesture to authenticity than it is in fact (Adorno 1973). These goods are supposed to set their owners apart from others as independent individuals, as they are meant to 'guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he [*sic*] is doing – bleating with the crowd – simply by virtue of his using those stereotypes to guarantee that one has

achieved it all himself [*sic*], as an unmistakably free person' (Adorno 1973, p. 18). The lifestyle migrant wants to express how individual their actions were in relocating, but the goods they use to express this identity belie this in their sameness.

Neither of the men involved in the study used the phrase 'country boy' (or man), but both had initiated their move to Stanthorpe and both stressed that they either wanted to 'get back to the land' (Brian, 15 July 2016) or return to a countryside similar to that of his childhood (Barry 26 August 2016). While neither man displayed the characteristics of a stereotypical bushman or rugged outdoorsman of nineteenth century legends, they each demonstrated rural masculinities that enabled them to navigate place and identity in particular ways.

Brian, the vineyard owner, quickly established certain facts about himself at the beginning of our discussion that represented emplaced masculinities. These invisibilities became visibilities that were 'aspects of masculinity actively constructed out of the materials of rural life to become cultural clothing that presents the man, baring and obscuring as it drapes his contours' (Campbell, Bell & Finney 2010, p. 5). Brian initially established himself as an agronomist and a business man, and went on to discuss a proud work ethic where he and his wife, Christine, did all of the work on the vineyard themselves. They then relayed facts that established them as financially secure and the creators of an astute business model and marketing plan that was designed to successfully establish them in their niche market. These were aspects that were important to his cultural identification within the town and by stating these up front, Brian enabled me to glimpse those aspects of his identity that he found important. One could almost surmise from these statements that Brian saw himself as a small-town patriarch (Campbell, Bell & Finney 2010), a leader because of his wealth and hard-work, but his next statements demonstrated a greater complexity than this.

Specifically, Brian also mentioned that he loves to cook and would discuss cooking with his city friends, even though he could not relate to their conversations about cooking shows on television. Cooking is traditionally a feminine practice in the country, but recent times have seen a shift to increasing male participation (see Anderson 2012 and 2015; *Gourmet farmer* 2010-; and *River Cottage Australia* 2013-2016, for example). This also reflects fluid relationships between gender and home (Walsh 2011). Wistfully, Brian also mentioned that one of the hobbies he enjoyed but no longer had time to do was pottery. Christine chimed in at this point, exclaiming how creative he is, and he also added during the discussion that he found growing the grapes for his wine to be a creative endeavour. In this dialogue, there are

many intersecting complexities that show that rural masculinities are fluid, multiple and individual (Sachs 2010). These identifiers highlight the dialogic nature of Brian's masculinities, where they are socially open and more broadly understood (Brandth & Haugen, 2005, p. 149). Rural masculinities are not necessarily about hypermasculinity or ruggedness, particularly when personal power can be established in other ways, such as having strong finances and the knowledge to make wine and make a living from it.

Both Brian and Barry wore clothes worn by many rural (and urban) men: jeans and a cotton shirt. Brian was a lot more casual in appearance than his wife, Christine, whose silver jewellery and black clothing belied her rural life and work in the fields. They explained their dressed-up status by saying that friends of theirs were arriving immediately after our meeting. Barry and Viv dressed at a similarly casual level, and we met in a local pub rather than in their home. The men's clothes were neat, clean and the shirts ironed, and they could have belonged to any man aged twenty to ninety living anywhere in Australia. Nothing in particular stood out about what they wore. In general, however, the creativity that both men expressed in their lives – cooking, pottery, growing grapes and creating wines for Brian, and some of the leisure activities described by Barry – were not expressed in their dress. Rural masculinity is expressed in terms of rural capabilities associated with the outdoors and being able to fix things, involving the need for men to be 'fit, strong and capable' (Bye 2009, p. 280). While rural masculinities are changing, these capabilities are still expressed more readily than creativity. Indeed, men have shown the need to express boundaries between masculinities and femininities when expressing identity (Bye 2009, p. 287), and these limit their choices in clothing.

Barry had moved to Stanthorpe on the cusp of retirement, and now, 12 years later, was older than all of the other participants. Although likely somewhere in his seventies, Barry still identified strongly with the volunteer work he was involved in, and relayed to me how he had recently won an award for his involvement. His conversation showed that this was important to him, and he enjoyed his active involvement in the community because of it. He also stated during our conversations that he had a gun licence and would shoot rabbits, that he looked after small livestock on their property and mowed the grass with his ride-on mower. His other interests included history, travel, reading about England and he also delighted in telling stories from his childhood and youth, about heavy horses and singing in Yorkshire pubs where the girls fell in love with him. These were aspects of masculinities that he most identified with. However, as his story about how Viv no longer made him bread (see Chapter 5) showed, he



also retained some ideas about masculinities that precluded his involvement in domestic duties. Barry had lived through extreme changes in his life, from a childhood just after the Second World War when heavy horses were still in use to an age where he had his DNA tested and Viv would search the internet for family ties. Barry may have experienced some challenges as a result of these changing social constructions around the practices of masculinity (Campbell, Bell & Finney 2010, p. 8). Barry did not overtly identify with masculinities that favoured fitness, strength or endurance and may never have, but he did still enact hegemonic, privileged masculinities in the house he shared with Viv. Chores were divided along gender lines, with Barry mowing the lawn and doing outdoor work, while Viv cooked and did work inside the house. In some ways, Barry's masculinities were more monological than Brian's, in that they were more conventional and expressed set gender expectations (Brandth & Haugen, 2005, p. 149). However, for the two men in this project, rural masculinities are 'rugged and wild at times, at other times nurturing, but always, in our imagination, natural and free' (Campbell, Bell & Finney 2010, p. 20). In many ways, they reinforce prevailing gender stereotypes of how men 'should' behave and dress.

#### **'Being local': identity and belonging in place**

Rae mentioned 'a sort of gentry' (9 August 2016) existing in Stanthorpe. In our second conversation, I asked her a bit more about this. She felt that 'there's a little bit of Stanthorpe royalty. There's Stanthorpe royalty and then there's the rest of us... Stanthorpe royalty have been here a long time and they all went to the same school...' (Rae 12 September 2016). 'Belonging is influenced by processes of mobility, identity and place' (Huot, Dodson & Laliberte Rudman 2014, p. 330) and is a personal feeling of being at home that is enhanced by social connections (Huot, Dodson & Laliberte Rudman 2014, p. 330). Rae has already asserted that she feels connected to place, so there is a sense in this statement that there are different ways of identifying with place, with time an important distinguishing factor in this. Viv, a resident of twelve years duration talks about this when she mentions that 'my Mum and Dad lived here so I have a few people that I know who were born and bred here' (Viv 26 August 2016), and later she adds 'the locals are very welcoming'. These statements show that she feels different from the locals, the ones who have been there all their lives. Similarly, Kate states that

people have grown up together and they've got their friend base and...it's very hard to come in to any of that because they're not out seeking to include anybody extra...if you're looking at friendships in a circular thing, you can come in a couple of layers but

you don't get down to the deep core of friendship groups if you've come in from outside (Kate 9 August 2016).

Lucy also mentions this, talking of 'locals' and 'imports' (Lucy 16 July 2016), and Brian, although they felt accepted, mentioned distinctions between him and Christine and the 'locals' who let them into their circles. These social constructions demonstrate social power related to identity, place and belonging (Massey 1994) that serve to include or exclude. Being local 'sets identity apart through place...[they] are bound, and bound together' (Garbutt 2011 p. 11) These statements and conversations reinforce Garbutt's understanding of the idea of local being:

"organised" around, and stabilised by, a sense of *autochthony*, as if local culture and identity is *born of the earth itself*... As Anglo-Celtic settlers occupy the hegemonic position in Australia...autochthony is a core principle for calculations of belonging for all who dwell in Australia. The status of the locals and the born-and-bred settler Australian as pre-eminently belonging in place depends on selectively forgetting settler migration while, paradoxically, maintaining a memory of first settlement. Remembering settler migration and reinstating a multi-sited settler identity is, therefore, an ethical imperative in order that settlers become "true" to themselves and others, as well as to the past, present and future (Garbutt 2011, pp. 4-5).

This idea reveals the displacement of the original inhabitants of Australia. It means that newcomers to a place can find belonging through their whiteness, even if they cannot become 'real' locals when measured against those who have been in a place for generations. Lifestyle migrants, who are predominately of a privileged Anglo-Celtic origin as this study has reinforced, can feel as though they fit in in some sense through their whiteness and their middle-classedness. However, it may not ever be possible for them to relate to place as a 'local' in the sense of those who have been there generations.

Noting that community means a group of people with a shared understanding (Bauman 2001), Brian (15 July 2016) talked about belonging and not belonging in a rural community like Stanthorpe. In his experience, being able to belong in a place was based on hard work and commitment; he inferred and understood that his belonging was relational and contingent on the approval of others:

Brisbane people who own cottages up here that they rent out, they are looked at as completely different. They're not part of the community. And it's very obvious but I

found it quite amusing. We live here and we do the work ourselves. And as long as you're committed and hard-working, the rest of the community who are committed and hard-working respect that (Brian, 15 July 2016).

This reflects one of Brian's beliefs about rural masculinities, which was congruent with widely held beliefs within the community – men should be hard-working, preferably with occupations on the land or connected to it. Rural masculinities do not encourage the delegation of hard labour to others, but take it on for themselves, encouraging individual strength and independence. Commitment to the work and to the community is important, as those who own cottages for rent by implication do not share these values.

This differs from Lucy's experience of belonging and identity. Her personal identity narrative places her firmly in the Stanthorpe community, even though she is a part-time resident who lives predominately elsewhere. In fact, she takes pains to point out features that create her belonging, such as knowing the shops that locals like her would not frequent, and how they raise prices for tourists (Lucy 16 July 2016). She gets involved in community activities, something that many lifestyle migrants have been noted to do (Benson 2014, p. 64). In these ways, Lucy performs a rural femininity within her community; she works to fit in, rather than belongs as a right. There is no indication in any of her conversation that she is anything but part of the community, and that this was a hard-won prize achieved through 'a really long slog to show that you're serious about moving here' (Lucy 16 July 2016). She selected this community and belonging to it 'can only be an achievement, attained (if at all) at the end of a long and tortuous labour...' (Bauman 2001, p. 14). This she has done, and now she feels entitled to claim the prize; she does this through her narrative. Brian goes on to relate to me a story about how, once the local business owners knew that he lived there permanently and did the vineyard work himself, they would immediately let him buy on account without credit checks or formal paperwork, with the comment 'we know where you live!' (Brian, 15 July 2016). There was no 'long slog' for him. It may be that Lucy has achieved a sense of belonging through ten years of property ownership and work in the community, or perhaps she still is not regarded as belonging by people who live in Stanthorpe permanently, with her presence forever discounted by these residents as something less than belonging. She might fit in, but she might never really belong. There appears to be no animosity between 'real locals' and newer residents, just a distance and a difference in ways of understanding that makes up community (Bauman 2001).

Faye found it much more difficult to relate to the people in her community and felt long-lasting barriers to her identification with place and subsequent belonging. She had worked sporadically in town, but had experienced friction in her work-place based on what, to her, were cultural differences. Her language demonstrated a sense of alienation and being 'out of place' (Huot, Dodson & Laliberte Rudman 2014, p. 331), in words such as 'I feel more at ease once I'm home [in Italy] and 'in Italy I'm fine, I'm just normal and here sometimes...for the way things are perceived, I can be [considered] rude' (Faye 30 September 2016). These comments from other Stanthorpe residents impacted her negatively and changed the way she perceived herself. They also prevented her from feeling comfortable with her past and present selves, as she was continually making comparisons between her homeland and Stanthorpe, and finding the comparisons lacking. Her personal agency was also limited as she was not able to make friends easily in the different cultural setting and she found it a challenge to find long-term work, relying instead on casual and temporary positions. Her own unique qualities, reflected in her educated, cultured and artistic inclinations, were not as valued in the wider Stanthorpe community and she found it difficult to find avenues to express these aspects of her Self in the country. This meant that she was less likely to find friendship groups and to find belonging. Faye found, as did the respondents in Benson's study (2014), that her 'subjective measures must be met by the willingness of the local population to accept them' (Benson 2014, p. 64). The spatial and social power relations within Stanthorpe defined who belonged and who did not, and left Faye feeling isolated.

### **Reflection and conclusion**

One of the things about living in the country without the electricity grid connection available is that you sometimes do not get enough sun to charge the batteries to power your house. In the absence of, say, wind generation, a petrol generator is necessary. We had to buy a new generator the other day, so we were in a store talking to the salesman. He was kind, knowledgeable and helpful, explaining to both my husband and me all the details about how it worked, how long it would run on a tank of petrol, how many watts it would produce and how that related to our solar system's battery charger. At one point, he pulled out the manual and looked at my husband and said that it was well worth reading. Then he paused, and turned to me and said, 'I'm talking to the wrong person, aren't I?'. Even though we had both been asking questions, fully engaged and participating in the conversation about our new generator, the man behind the counter assumed that my husband would not read the manual because he is a man, and that I would, because I am a woman. It seems that reading

manuals is like asking for directions when you are lost, and it is assumed that men will not do either. It does not matter whether it is true or not; what is notable is that just by standing in a particular place, gendered assumptions are made about you. In our rural world, expectations of masculine and feminine behaviour differ.

Lifestyle migration is an identity transforming process with long-lasting impacts on the individuals and families that participate. Identity is created in a world of contexts and structures, within which individuals navigate their identity and choose how to share this path with others through engagement with and deployment of material objects that 'connect the dots' (Kaiser 2012, p. 37) of their identity. It is situated in place, both social and physical, and it is in these places where material culture provides the forms with which to tell the story of the self and where identity is shared. Material culture is a socially viable and acceptable way with which to narrate a life story and generate indicators of self, values and status for the people and communities around them. The sheer abundance of objects available to individuals in this late modern age allow them to pick and choose those which represent their dreams, ideals, aspirations most readily, and then share them through discursive avenues to validate and reinforce their identity. Lifestyle migrants are not just operating in these social imaginaries, whether they believe in them or not. They are actually defining themselves in relation to them, and constructing their identities based on their relationship to the social imaginaries (see Hickey 2012).

Interactions with place have a profound impact on identity as they make people feel as though they belong or not, feel adequate or not. When residents do not think that they fit in, like Natalie and Faye, they assume that they are the one that is different or even perhaps at fault for not fitting in. Lifestyle migrants might rail against sexism or community attitudes or cultural differences, like Diane did, but understanding the entrenched nature of the structure that is constructed in the social setting, they realise that it is them who is most often obliged to accept it in an uneasy truce, behave in a way that separates them from the group (Ahmed 2017 p. 35) or leave. As Diane said, you cannot fight every fight, as it is exhausting and leaves you with few options in a small town (26 August 2016). If their interactions with other people in the town leave them feeling inadequate, they can experience a profound questioning of who they are as a person. If lifestyle migrants are happy and content in the places they inhabit, they tend to adopt and accept the values inherent in the social imaginaries prevalent in that space and use language that signifies belonging and acceptance (Huot, Dodson & Laliberte Rudman 2014, p. 331). This is a form of 'integration' that Lawson

(2017) talks about, where new residents negotiate their sense of self within a 'locally situated representation of the wider value system' (Lawson 2017, pp. 72-73).

This chapter explored the way that interactions with place impact the identity of people moving to the country. It showed how place is gendered, and that this gendering is crucial to place identifications. It also discussed how rural masculinities and femininities impact the relationships individuals have with place and so affect their identity. Place and identity were also considered in concepts of the similarly gendered city girl or country girl, and through material choices such as leisure activities and personal dress. The participants tended to gravitate towards situations where they could establish individual distinctiveness and maintain their personal continuity through their choices and activities in the new place and then share this through their self-narratives. Where these aspects were threatened or unsettled, either through recurring comments about appearance or gendered, biased or otherwise sexist remarks, the individual had to choose whether to fight the structures of the community, accept it, or take the option to leave for a place where they are more likely to fit in and develop their identifying attributes. The participants expressed their own sense of belonging in a continuum that ranged from not belonging to 'being a local'. Most considered that they belonged, or at least fitted in, but spoke of locals as being different from themselves, acknowledging that they would probably never reach that status. The following chapter, Chapter 7, summarises the discussion of each of the chapters while stating the significance of the findings and their implications for current and future research.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

In my little valley, our closest neighbour has just started building a house on the 60 acres they bought last year. Just past him and his wife, another family is surreptitiously renovating an old farm building into a liveable house. They have not involved the council in their project, because permits are expensive and red-tape irritating, but the arrival of four huge water tanks and some solar panels might alert diligent authorities to the project. Going up the hill, ex-dairy farmer and long-term resident Jack has just had a stroke, and we see a Blue Care car taking the gravel road up to visit him and his wife to help with care. They are facing a long battle with rehabilitation and he is not able to do any physical work himself any more, which is hard when the farm they live on is a large one. It used to support their whole family, as did all the other dairy farms previously in the district. On the far side, a big brand-new house has just been built, and we have not met those neighbours; perhaps they have not moved in yet. Over the road, a huge acreage is going to weed, the fences regularly letting cattle escape, and its owners, who grew up around here, are getting too old to fix them. Another older couple has just sold up, and they will be moving soon.

We are a mixed bunch, and those of us of working age are newcomers to the area. One guy used to shoot wild dogs for a living, until the council lowered the bounty and it was not worth it any more. One used to drive a courier van until she was laid off. Another is a builder, and he loves driving his little red tractor to check the fences after he gets home from work. My husband works in Brisbane, and I am writing this thesis.

This snippet of life in my valley encapsulates many of the themes explored in this thesis. We share the dream, to live on the land and harvest its abundance, continuing a way of life that has been part of white settler experience for generations, both here and back in originating nations in the UK and Europe. Some of us are 'locals', some of us have only been here a short time and may never be considered local. We have in common a dream of a rural idyll that is shared by many, across cities and the countryside alike. Life in the country may not be what we dreamed it was, but for most of us, the dream has not died. There is no money in dairy farming, and any jobs we have are generally carried out far from home. We adjust. Most of us are just trying escape the pressures of the city and live how we want to in this pleasant place.

### **The phenomenological and discursive practice of place**

This thesis has explored the role of textual representation of place for lifestyle migrants, using Stanthorpe, Queensland, as a site for a case study. The project asked how lifestyle migration is conceptualised in Australian discourse, how these thematised constructions and social imaginaries influence the decision to relocate and the lived experience following relocation, as well as examining how interactions with place affect identity. It showed how lifestyle migration is depicted in romantic and stereotypical ways in discourse, involving themes of authenticity, rural abundance and escape from the city, themes which are prevalent in a wide range of influential cultural discourses. The romance of the rural was important to lifestyle migrants who were contented in their decision to move, and these social imaginaries remained an important, if evolving part of their lives following relocation while they created and reinforced new identities in the new area. The research has shown how place, inhabited in both a virtual and physical sense, is integral to identity creation, rather than being a backdrop, and that identity is shared through forms of material culture.

This research used a cultural studies approach influenced by sociological theory to examine the phenomenological and discursive practice of place. As cultural studies descended from the humanities, the thesis explores hermeneutical understandings based on experience that reflect personal, subjective meanings and understandings; this was a guiding principle of the project. It engaged with phenomenology as a way to understand the everyday, lived experience of lifestyle migrants through conversations. To fully capture the unexplored, sometimes unspoken and unheard imaginings of lifestyle migrants, this approach integrated discourse analysis, cultural analysis and analysis of individual experiences spoken during interviews. Previous studies in lifestyle migration have defined and theorised the phenomenon, but the framework of this culturally situated study highlights the usefulness of this different methodological approach for research into lifestyle migration.

This approach includes the examination of the material culture and social imaginaries of the migrants involved to uncover the culturally grounded imaginings that are so crucial to the development of identity and the understanding of place in its virtual as well as physical senses. It also includes researcher reflections that form part of the narrative as a dialogue and a method. Accepting that subject and object could not satisfactorily be separated, the researcher reflections form part of the research narrative and further explore the ideas being discussed. Using this framework, it was shown that lifestyle migration is crucially influenced by diverse discourses, and that these discourses continue to shape and be shaped by lifestyle



migrants in ongoing, identity building and place-situated interactions following their move. In doing so, this research has extended the work of other lifestyle migration researchers by expanding on understandings of the role that culturally embedded social imaginaries and imagination have on potential lifestyle migrants. While some migrants did not acknowledge or could not perhaps even see the role that discourse played in their lives, it inevitably had a decisive and impactful position to play in subsequent decision making. Although previous research noted that discourse was central to ideas of rural life (McManus & Connell 2011, p. 21), this research has determined what these conceptions are and how they influence possible lifestyle migrants both before and after a move. It showed how a wide range of discourses influence people, and it highlighted how discourse is a fundamental part of the lifestyle migrant journey, starting long before the idea of moving is considered, and continuing long after relocation. This new understanding integrated the importance of place and material culture in the lives of the participants and authors as well as the researcher in the study. Many of these concerns are emerging areas of study within lifestyle migration research.

### **Lifestyle migration in discourse**

Lifestyle migration is a popular subject for contemporary books and magazines, although there has not been a previous study of the lifestyle texts selected and the narratives they disseminate. Moving to the country for a better life is depicted in this discourse (see: *A story of seven summers* (Burden 2012); *A table in the orchard* (Crawford 2015); *A year on the farm* (Wise 2014); *Gourmet farmer* (Season 1, 2010); *River cottage* (Season 1, 2013); *The simple life* (Hetzl 2014); *Whole larder love* (Anderson 2012), as well as selected articles from *Country style*), as a way to escape the city and enjoy rural abundance while living more 'authentically'. Escaping is an opportunity to 'live the dream' in a new field, a rural idyll, and as an alternative to suburban lifestyles it is held in high esteem in contemporary Australian life. The dream is important to stretching the imagination in habitus and creating a new vision of how life could be to the potential lifestyle migrant, which helps to build identity and to find fulfilment in actualizing the dream. Lifestyle migrants use the capitals they have available to them in their relatively privileged lives to inhabit the new field in a way that is satisfactory to them. This theorisation enables researchers to understand the process of how discourse influences the potential lifestyle migrant and shows how critical it is to the life-changing process.

Abundance is central to the dream of escape, and obviously no-one chooses to move to a life of meagre poverty. Abundance, however, is not seen in textual representations of lifestyle

migration in terms of purchased wealth so much as the enjoyment of time, space and the commons, although this is not to discount the obvious privilege that lifestyle migrants experience. Textual depictions of rural life, if they choose to include issues such as drought, crop failure or other adversities, romanticise them or emphasise the resilience or flexibility of the rural protagonists in overcoming adversity. More often, however, stories of deprivation and hardship are downplayed or ignored. Creativity is depicted as part of the escape, where open spaces offer space to create and reflect, as well as the opportunity to slow down and recover from illness or the unrelenting demands of modern life. Lifestyle migrants represented in the discourse studied were glad of the opportunity to slow down and take the time needed to recover from illness or to explore their creativity (see: *A story of seven summers* (Burden 2012); *A table in the orchard* (Crawford 2015); *A year on the farm* (Wise 2014); *Gourmet farmer* (Season 1, 2010); *River cottage* (Season 1, 2013); *The simple life* (Hetzel 2014); *Whole larder love* (Anderson 2012), as well as selected articles from *Country style*). The natural pleasures of the country are set up in opposition to consumer-driven lifestyles of the city. They emphasise time and space as a way to connect to the natural world in a more authentic manner than a life in the city allows.

These two factors – abundance and escape – are part of the quest for authenticity that is so widely documented among lifestyle migrants. This desire for authenticity has impacts on identity creation as it influences material culture choices and lifestyle decisions. Authenticity has connections to nostalgia and links to family and the land. Although the desire for authenticity has been noted in many studies (see Osbaldiston 2011; 2012a and b, for example), little has been said of its connections to material culture.

Chapter 3: Discourse analysis, has enabled this study to view lifestyle migration through a paradigm of social imaginaries, material culture and virtual as well as physical spaces. This has created new understandings of how lifestyle migrants make decisions regarding their move, even when they would not necessarily acknowledge or recognise these influences in a typical interview setting. Meanings that were understood but not overtly discussed in both texts and participant discussions were crystalized and shared throughout the thesis, leading to a greater understanding of the influence of discourse on the lifestyle migrant decision-making process and lived experience (see Chapters 4 and 5). The themes in the cultural discourses influencing lifestyle migrants, including escape from the city, abundance and the desire for authenticity, create strong pulls which draw lifestyle migrants to the new way of life. Following their move to the new location, their relationship with discourses changes, as they learn that

the reality of their lives differs from that depicted in the texts and discourses with which they engage. In Chapter 6: Place, both virtual and physical place was considered, and was linked to identity creation through discussion of the city girl/country girl descriptors, material culture and leisure activities as well as the concept of 'being local'. The significance and implications of these issues are discussed below.

### **The influence of discursive constructions and social imaginaries on the decision to relocate**

Examination of cultural texts enables values and meanings that are embedded in social imaginaries to be revealed and understood as part of the influencing process. Lifestyle migrants sought greater authenticity through escape from the city and adventure, as well as through living a more abundant life. As is to be expected, a diverse range of discourses influence people throughout their lives and in their decision making. The texts that lifestyle migrants discussed as influential or important to them were wide-ranging in terms of subject matter, content and style, from classic books such as *Moby Dick* (Melville 1851 (2008)) to contemporary television series such as *McLeod's daughters* (2001-2009). Some texts were mentioned by several people, such as *The good life* (1975-1977), which was interesting given that the series is relatively dated now. However, it speaks to a particular desire to live subversively while yet living within the system (de Certeau 1988). Each of the texts that were mentioned by the participants spoke to the central themes of a desire for authenticity, which was achieved through escape and adventure, and rural abundance.

Just as the texts revealed how lifestyle migrant authors desired to live a life in line with their values, so too did lifestyle migrants emphasise their desire to live authentically in the discussions. While some quests for authenticity were shared, such as a desire to eat local food or support local business, or raise children with their mother staying at home, many were unique to an individual or couple, such as a yearning to improve the services available to a community, or to be involved in Landcare. Discourses reflected values associated with the legacy of colonisation and the patriarchy; 'shoulds' about the way families need to operate, how men and women should act, how children should be raised, how food should be grown, bought, cooked and eaten. Femininities, masculinities, gender roles and sexism became important to a fuller understanding of rural social imaginaries and led to a discussion about these issues within the rural space. Femininities and masculinities provided a way to conceptualise multiple and fluid intersections with place and identity. Anglo-Celtic and patriarchal ideas were hegemonic in both discourse and in the lives of the lifestyle migrants I

spoke to, and there was little evidence that either were being questioned in a fundamental way. These values were reflected in decisions made, the way lifestyle migrants lived and the material culture they adopted. This study showed that lifestyle migrants choose and employ material culture to share and enhance identities. As a result, the study demonstrated that these values are deeply felt and ingrained ideas which are well-entrenched within rural culture, a continuing legacy that shows no sign of dissipating at this time.

Discourse provided the lifestyle migrants in the study to glimpse into a different future, and this enabled them to feel confident enough to take the initiative and relocate. It showed an exemplar, a model life that was subsequently put into practice in varying areas such as ways to live or the climate one chose to live in. Several lifestyle migrants actively rejected the idea that they were influenced by textual representations, but then demonstrated their relevance through their choices and ideas. Once happily settled in their new home, lifestyle migrants wanted to think that they were living the dream of the rural idyll, and they were happy to continue to promulgate this myth. During discussions, some difficulties were raised, such as the level of services available and the practicalities of life in a society with a hegemonic neo-liberal ideology, but for those who were accepting of the rural social imaginaries, these difficulties were not insurmountable. For those who did not engage with rural social imaginaries, the difficulties presented real challenges that, for some, could not be overcome. As a result, this study showed that personal acceptance of relevant social imaginaries prevalent in rural life was crucial to the success of a move to the country, an idea that had not been explored in lifestyle migration literature in this way before.

### **The impact of discursive constructions and social imaginaries on the lived experience of lifestyle migrants**

As lifestyle migrants experienced life in the country for themselves, their relationship to discursive depictions of rural life changed, with several describing it as a fantasy world that had little relevance to their day-to-day lives. These types of statements indicate a reluctance to allow the discourse to impact their personal habitus. This fantasy world they describe may or may not be of personal importance to an individual, but they were all aware of it and operated within its structures. None questioned the imaginaries in a serious way, revealing an understanding that even the partial truths of an established myth held weight in the overall social imaginary. Some were happy to keep rural social imaginaries within a fantasy world of entertainment (Kate), while some used it to market their business (Brian & Christine). Those who didn't accept it tended to speak less contentedly about their overall move to the country

and indicated a dissatisfaction with field (Natalie and Faye). This shows both the ubiquitousness of social imaginaries and their widespread understanding within a society, but also reveals how adoption of the values and ideas espoused within them is an indicator of the success or otherwise of a relocation to the country. Despite their importance, social imaginaries have been downplayed in most previous lifestyle migration literature (see O'Reilly 2014 as well as her current study in Asia for exceptions to this), a point this study has sought to rectify.

Patriarchal values were widely accepted and espoused during discussions, and few rejected them. Labour divisions within the household were clearly adopted along gender lines, and work for women with children was often considered an optional pathway rather than a right or a desirable achievement important to independence and personal growth. This has changed less than one would expect in the nearly thirty years since the Dempsey study (1992). In fact, women described how their role as a homemaker and child-raiser enabled them to provide a secure, even ideal, family environment and childhood for those they were responsible for. They seemed glad to be able to stay at home. While those who wanted to work often had to create their own jobs, such as Crawford did with her blog and photography, and Rae did with her community service, these were run as a secondary pursuit after family duties. Although many did not question patriarchal values, sexism was also seen to be an issue, with one participant (Diane) concerned that it was difficult to have conversations with men in a social setting as they often seemed uncomfortable, and that social groups tended to form, separating discussion along gender lines that emphasised a male hegemony. That gender lines are strongly delineated in rural society has implications for those in minority cultures who may wish to settle in rural Australia, as the divisions experienced in gendered experiences of country life may also impact the potentially more challenging acceptance of visibly different minority groups. Their views and values may not be accepted readily in a society that is focused on white, male, patriarchal ideas.

The legacy of colonisation, widely depicted in discourse and influential to the move, remained a strongly influencing structural legacy for established lifestyle migrants. Its influence was felt in continued acceptance of patriarchal values and conservative and normative ideologies, as was the case for lifestyle migrants within the discourse and in the discourse mentioned as influential prior to moving. In addition, its presence was strongly felt in the material culture and ideas of place that were shared and espoused by lifestyle migrants. This explains the often homogenous nature of rural life and it would be worthwhile studying the impact on rural social

imaginaries of government sponsored minority groups relocated to regional areas in further research.

Children, work and creative projects were seen to be a way to connect to the community and assert social identity, although those without children found themselves excluded in some circles. Family was important to all lifestyle migrants in varying degrees and this aligns with the values espoused in most rural social imaginaries. The down-side of this, however, is that if a person did not have children, these social imaginaries then served to exclude the individual from the mainstream. This is one way that social imaginaries can be seen to be Othering devices even for those who accept them. There is little room for individual differences in the homogenous nature of rural social imaginaries.

Discourse impacted ways to live and care for the land, with one lifestyle migrant (Diane) actively involved in Landcare projects as well as home vegetable growing and bee-keeping. As these aspects of her life were completely foreign to her city childhood, their adoption has been understood to be through the permeation of habitus through discursive influences, resulting in a newly imagined way to live. This explains the role of discourse for individuals in adopting new ideas and lives.

Two lifestyle migrants (Bert and Lucy) found it difficult to fully realise their rural dream when compelled by existing structures to remain in their city jobs. This impacted what they were able to achieve as part of that dream, and so limited their ability to live in line with their values and actualise their dream. One lifestyle migrant did not and had never ascribed to rural imaginaries and returned to the city after a few years in Stanthorpe (Natalie). This choice enabled her to reinforce her stated identity as a city girl, so fulfilling her identity journey in a positive way. Another found it difficult to accept the differing imaginaries of rural Australia and struggled with current neo-liberal ideologies (Faye). She remained in a state of ambivalence that had not been resolved satisfactorily at the end of the fieldwork. It would be interesting for a further study to follow up the long-term consequences of non-adoption or ambivalent adoption of rural social imaginaries to establish if or how these situations might be resolved for lifestyle migrants in constraining structural positions.

One couple (Brian and Christine) engaged with imaginaries and rural discourse to create narratives of the rural idyll for their own business that, as a result, fostered their business plan and profitability. This highlights the durability of rural discourse and its efficacy for marketing plans. While this has been touched on in some previous work (see Hopkins 1996, for

example), there are many further insights that could be uncovered in this area that would be beneficial to the regional development of rural areas.

### **Identity and place interactions**

Place shapes identity through ongoing interactions. Place for this study is not only a physical realm, but also exists in virtual worlds including discourse and texts, where people 'live' and ideas are shaped and shared. Concepts such as habitus and the self, agency, distinctiveness and continuity guided the discussion of place and identity. Lifestyle migrants often defined themselves in terms of place, such as being a city girl or a country girl. These narratives reflected their values and as a result, what they considered to be an authentic life for them. For those who were happy to engage with rural social imaginaries, the idea of being a country girl became shorthand for a slew of ideas about what the country means and how life should be lived there. It was spoken of in a positive way, just as those who spoke of being a city girl used that phrase positively. The country girl phrase encapsulates notions of femininity, fresh-faced goodness and wholesome values which represent popular images of womanhood in rural areas. The city girl phrase connotes ideas of sophistication and worldliness. Both are strongly emplaced concepts.

Identity is also formed through interactions with social imaginaries, which, along with habitus, is a theoretical space within which the imagination does the hard work of choosing elements which contribute to identity formation. These elements consist of the clothes people wear, the food they eat, the houses they live in and the material goods with which they surround themselves. This material culture influences transactions with place, and is chosen to help create individual identities within a culture. The clothes lifestyle migrants wore were affected by where they lived, and many felt that it was important to reflect their Self in their dress, such as wearing hand-made jumpers or track pants and slippers which reflected their down-to-earth sentiments, or making sure that they looked co-ordinated and well-dressed when they went into town. Some lifestyle migrants found it necessary to travel long distances to find the clothes they wanted to wear to reflect who they were, and doing this impacted on their ability to fit in with the local community and have the time to meet other people. Place and material culture are an integral part of identity, rather than a background against which identity is separate, and engaging with these concepts creates a framework through which to understand lifestyle migration. It highlights how important it is not to simply understand the lived experience through the spoken or written word but also through the objects with which citizens surround themselves.

The concept of 'being local' was also discussed, and was understood as a displacing concept that erased the settlement of the original inhabitants of this land while replacing them with a false view of white settlers who enjoyed autochthony. Measured against this, lifestyle migrants could belong in their adopted community to a degree, but they also acknowledged distinctions based on their length of residency. These distinctions impacted their feelings of belonging.

Each of these factors – identification with place, identification with emplaced social imaginaries and localness – were important to the creation of identity within place. The study showed that place impacts identity just as individuals impact place, and as a result, identities are shaped in relation to place.

### **Contributions and opportunities for further research**

This project has highlighted areas of new understanding of lifestyle migration in relation to femininities, masculinities, place and identity. It has emphasised the importance of continuing study in rural issues within the field of cultural studies. Through its engagement with phenomenology, it demonstrated the continuing value in understanding lived experience along with discourse analysis. This study used an extended version of media practice theory that included what people did and said in relation to social imaginaries as well as media texts, and this proved to be a useful extension that developed understandings further. This was key to this project as it enabled the use of themes within cultural discourses and social imaginaries to be understood in relation to the people engaged with them.

The project has revealed many pathways for future research in this area. While the current work was necessarily delimited to discussion of contemporary Australian discourse, researching a wider range of discourse, and particularly discourses that are not in favour of rural living would deepen and enrich understanding further. It also showed that the discourses that were influential were wide-ranging in scope, and future research could identify common themes prevalent in the seemingly disparate choices. There was also a reliance on the participants to remember influential discourse as being of importance, but the possibility of omissions and misremembering influences could have been lowered through the taking of life histories, which also would have generated deeper richness in the phenomenological interpretations of this projects. Again, time constraints prevented this approach but further research could add to this understanding.

As some regional areas face population changes which have implications for regional planning, services and infrastructure, this study indicates ways for local governments to create



marketing that uses new understandings about discourse and rural social imaginaries to attract residents to their area, while still maintaining a realistic approach to place marketing. This can inform ideas about regional marketing plans and content useful for both tourism and development planning bodies, and is another opportunity for further work.

The roles of class, gender and community as well as sexism are important topics and could benefit from additional research. These areas became increasingly important as the study progressed and as texts, discussions and researcher reflections all highlighted areas of interest and concern, this is clearly an area which needs further exploration, particularly within rural communities.

While the case study focused on a small town in southern Queensland, much of the new knowledge generated by this study is applicable to a wider rural and regional area, both within Australia and for other former colonies as well, including New Zealand and Canada. Some is also applicable to Great Britain, as many Australian social imaginaries and hegemonic ideas originate there. As a result, the usefulness of the research is wide ranging, geographically and methodologically, and can be used for furthering ideas of place in other areas.

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