

Young Australian Accountants as ‘Gold Collar’ Migrants:

Class, Professional Socialisation and the Life Course,

By Carina Louise Hart

BBus (Accounting), University of Technology Sydney

BSocSci (Sociology, Gender Studies), Macquarie University

Student number: 43157823

A thesis presented to Macquarie University in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree Master of Research (MRes).

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Arts

Macquarie University

Sydney, Australia

Date Submitted: 11th December 2017

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	V
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
GLOBAL MOBILITY OF PROFESSIONALS AND ‘SKILLED’ WORKERS	1
THE GLOBAL ACCOUNTING INDUSTRY	2
LIFE COURSE	3
<i>The transition to adulthood</i>	<i>6</i>
CLASS: WEALTH, STATUS AND POWER.....	9
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	11
METHODS	13
RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS	13
PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS.....	14
INTERVIEWS.....	15
USING BOTH SKYPE AND FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS.....	16
THE INTERVIEWER AS THE INSIDER	17
DATA ANALYSIS.....	19
FROM UNIVERSITY EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT AT THE B4: IMPACT OF CLASSED SOCIALISATION ON CAREER CHOICES	21
CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTING STUDENTS.....	21
REASONS FOR SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE B4	26

<i>Recruitment practices of the B4.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Career planning of accounting students.....</i>	<i>34</i>
CONCLUSION	36
EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONAL SOCIALISATION AND THE DECISION TO MIGRATE.	37
PROFESSIONAL SOCIALISATION INSIDE THE B4: LESSONS IN PROFESSIONALISM, EFFICIENCY AND DELAYED GRATIFICATION.....	37
<i>Work life balance.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Time budgeting and time consciousness: building a web of control.</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Deferred compensation</i>	<i>43</i>
CONSIDERING MIGRATION AND MIGRATION PATHWAYS	45
<i>Migration as professional reward for time invested in early career.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Attractiveness and accessibility of London as a destination.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Life course issues</i>	<i>52</i>
CONCLUSIONS.....	54
INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY IN LONDON	56
INTRODUCTION	56
TRANSITIONS INTO THE LONDON LABOUR MARKET	57
ATTITUDES TO WORK.....	60
LONDON AS HOLIDAY VERSES STRATEGIC CAREER MOVE.....	62
NARRATIVES ABOUT THE FUTURE.....	66
<i>Return migration</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Benefits and costs of precarious employment: contracting.....</i>	<i>68</i>

<i>Discussion: Life course, habitus, class and international mobility London work</i>	<i>70</i>
CONCLUSION	71
CONCLUSION	73
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS.....	76
APPENDIX B: B4 HIERARCHY ROLE DESCRIPTIONS	77
APPENDIX C: LETTER OF ETHICS APPROVAL	78
REFERENCES:.....	81

Abstract

In the developing field focusing on young, highly-skilled migrants, much research continues to focus on individuals whose migration is facilitated through intra-corporate transfers (ICT) rather than those who self-initiate. This study asks, how do young elite professionals engage with international labour mobility as self-initiated migrants, and how is this labour migration intertwined with their life course plans and practice? Drawing on semi-structured interviews with young Australian accountants who have recently worked for a year or more in London, this thesis investigates how the socialisation of young accountants throughout university and graduate employment at top global firms influences the role that migration plays in individual's life plans. I argue that migration timing, attitudes and experiences of these professionals are significantly informed by their class backgrounds and socialisation at elite firms. Interviewees conceptualised their migration as a two-year holiday whilst simultaneously emphasising personal and career ambitions, using cost-benefit language to justify past and future life decisions. These findings highlight the ways in which formal and informal corporate training provides graduates with future advantages such as accelerated careers and access to overseas job markets, whilst informing their professional identities, attitudes to work and approach to life course planning long after leaving graduate employment.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself. I have complied with the terms of the Human Research Ethics Committee approval reference number 5201600834(R).

(Signed)  _____

Date: 12/12/2017

Carina Louise Hart

Acknowledgements

To my supervisor Kumiko, you have been more helpful and understanding than I think I ever deserved. Your dedication to excellence is inspiring and I hope to one day be half as good in my work. Thank you for guiding me through this year.

To my partner Sean, your calm presence by my side this year has helped me feel safe and loved. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for that. Also, thank you for putting up with, and not complaining (too) much about the mess that I made of our apartment this year. Paper and books everywhere and no room anywhere on the table to eat. I promise, we are back to regularly scheduled levels of mess tomorrow... or maybe next week...

To my family and friends, Emily, Carmen, Leanne, dad, and all the girls from pole who gave me something outside of thesis to look forward to – thank you.

To my fellow Mres students – current and former especially: Lara, Taylah, Bec, Rachel, Cooper – we made it!! Haha thanks for all the memes, the insightful discussions and all the cheese and wine we drank throughout the last two years. Phew, okay. What's next?

To my former colleagues and interview participants who are the only reason this research was even possible this year. Thank you for your time, your contacts and your stories. You are a fascinating bunch and I wish you all the luck in the world with your lives to come.

And finally, ...

To my mum, Martina Gleeson.

Thank you for the support you have provided my entire life but especially these last six years. I know it's a cliché but you have always believed in me even at my lowest low and I cannot thank you enough for that. I also know that it was a personal challenge for you all those years ago when I quit my job without even the concept of a plan for the future – haha now that you have read my thesis you're even telling me why! But even then, you took one look at me and, thinking of my future happiness, you got right down to business sewing the parachute for my jump off the cliff. I love you. And you deserve the world.

Introduction and Literature Review

In 2011, I was a newly minted accounting graduate about to embark on my first 'grown up' career as an auditor in one of the *Big Four* (B4) global accounting firms.¹ Fast forward five years and, while no longer an accountant, I began to notice that my Facebook feed was filled with images of my old colleagues in their new lives; of sunsets leaving work, no longer over the Sydney Harbour Bridge but over Tower Bridge in the heart of London. And I wondered, what is going on here? So, began the research process that would eventually lead to the production of this thesis. Broadly speaking, it investigates how the socialisation of young accountants throughout university and graduate employment at top global firms influences the role that migration plays in individuals' life plans.

The migration of young Australians to the UK is not a new phenomenon. The UK and Ireland represent the most popular destination for Australian emigrants and returnees (24%), with 20 percent residing in the city of London alone (Fullilove & Flutter 2004: 16). However, the last 2 decades have seen a significant shift in the demographic composition of these migrants as well as an almost doubling of their raw numbers (Crawford 2009). Gone are the stereotypical backpacking Australians who supplement their travel budget with stints behind the bar. Nowadays, young Australians are known as *gold collar migrants* (GCMs) (Fullilove & Flutter 2004: 21) – a class of highly skilled professional migrants with significant work experience but not yet at the peak of their careers (Crawford 2009).

Global mobility of professionals and 'skilled' workers

The study of labour migration in the context of globalization is a large and ever growing field. However, migrants privileged by citizenship, class or race - such as those investigated in this study - are still largely ignored by mainstream migration research (Koser and Salt, 1997; Kunz, 2016). The mobility of skilled professionals is said to

¹ The B4 consist of: Deloitte (Deloitte Touche Tomhatsu), KPMG, EY (Ernest and Young) and PwC (Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

“resemble the neoliberal structures regulating the flow of goods and finance” (Lavenex 2006: 50), tending towards liberalization and multilateralism in contrast to broader state control of other forms of international migration. Yet even these forms of mobility are controlled through either multi-national companies (MNCs) or treaties that are not equally implemented across all regions. For example, migration into the UK is very tightly controlled for non-EU nationals (in rhetoric at least) because such routes represent the only (semi)permanent migration route over which the government has any control (Metcalf, 2016).

Furthermore, there does not exist a single ‘class’ of individuals whose experiences typify a homogenous experience of ‘skilled migration’. This thesis borrows the terminology used by Fullilove and Flutter (2004) to distinguish between and situate the research participants within a hierarchy of three types of skilled migrant: ‘elites’, ‘GCMs’ and ‘other professionals’. In this hierarchy, elites are defined as the apex; highly paid individuals at the peak of their careers in significant international positions - such as CEOs and CFOs – who are unlikely to return to their country of origin. GCMs are defined as consisting of individuals below the elites; individuals who are highly educated professional, often between the ages of 25-40, employed in managerial positions and who earn a relatively high income. They argue that these individuals are empowered by the visibility of potential international opportunities to develop their skills and experience on the international stage but are more likely than elites to plan to return to their country of origin (Fullilove & Flutter 2004: 21). The final level in the hierarchy consists of ‘other professionals’, this includes highly educated migrants working in other occupations such as nursing and teaching where there is less earning capacity or perceived occupational benefit for international experience. I argue that the young accountants described in this thesis are most accurately categorized here as GCMs. This is due to the combination of their income, post-graduate education, profession, career stage and managerial level positions whilst employed overseas.

The global accounting industry

The global accounting industry is currently dominated by the B4. Research conducted on the workings of these firms has suggested that the B4 represent a

semiautonomous *field* (Bourdieu, 2011) in the sense that globally, B4 firms share a common professional culture such that they are “more like each other across different cultures than one might imagine” (Carter and Spence, 2014). This is especially true across English speaking countries (Australia, Canada, UK, USA and New Zealand) (Carter and Spence, 2014; Spence and Carter, 2014; Spence et al., 2016). Within these firms, expatriation – including the expatriation of recently professionally certified accountants – is used as a strategic mechanism of knowledge transfer between nodes in the global network (Beaverstock, 1991; Beaverstock et al., 2017) and thus, the possibility and feasibility of an international career is normalised for their employees (see chapters three and four).

It is notable that studies that explicitly investigate the international migration patterns of professional accountants reinforce a narrative of ‘core verses periphery’; of a hierarchy of global cities that exist within professional migration research. Participants consistently express the desire to gain experience in cities such as London and New York (see for example Hanlon 1999 and Rahim 2014), citing career progression and technical skills development that is only possible in “the financial hub[s] of the world” (Rahim 2014). However, Hanlon (1999) argues that such rhetoric is more reflective of social and symbolic norms within the industry than the actual development of technical skills and that individuals who express a willingness to appropriate such norms are viewed positively for their ambition.

Life course

As a concept, the life course refers to the age-graded, socially embedded sequence of roles that connect the phases of life. As a paradigm, the life course refers to an imaginative framework comprised of a set of interrelated presuppositions, concepts and methods that are used to study these age-graded, socially embedded roles. (Mortimer and Shanahan, 2003: xi)

According to the life course paradigm, “no period of life can be understood in isolation from people’s prior experiences, as well as their aspirations for the future” (Mortimer and Shanahan, 2003: xi). These relationships, roles and responsibilities are

embedded in social institutions and history (both personal and collective) and thus emphasise a *contextualist perspective* that focuses on the “implications of social pathways in historical time and place for human development and ageing” (Elder et al., 2003: 4). Of particular note for our purposes is the concept of ‘normative timetables’ which prescribe the ‘correct’ ages for life course transitions including entry into higher education and employment (Neugarten and Datan, 1973 in Elder et al., 2003) and so these social norms direct and give meaning to individual’s decision making processes and life trajectories.

Our understanding of the life course in its normative (or Fordist) sense developed in the period post World War Two to the 1970s (Blatterer, 2007b). It typically sees the life course split into three stages: childhood, adulthood and old age, or, education, work and retirement (Blatterer, 2007b; Settersten Jr, 2003). The assumption is that individuals will follow a progressive linear trajectory from one stage to the next, that is, from education to work to retirement, with no backward movements. An individual’s transition to adulthood is recognised upon the achievement of certain objective markers such as full-time employment, marriage, parenthood and home-ownership (Blatterer, 2007b: 14). This normative life course is characterised by stability such that, in the realm of work for example, one would expect there to be “plannable career paths with predictable milestones along the way, and a known destination: retirement” (Blatterer, 2007b: 14). It is important to recognise though, that even during the period post World War Two to the 1970s when the standardised life course was arguably at its height, that the model only ‘accurately’ represented the experiences of “white, heterosexual, middle-class males” (Blatterer, 2007b: 15).

Since the 1970s researchers have recognised that this once standardised trajectory of the life course can no longer be taken for granted (Settersten Jr, 2003). The life course has not escaped the processes of *detraditionalisation* and *structural fragmentation* that characterise post-modern society (Beck, 1992; Beck, 2002; Settersten Jr, 2003). For example, rapid technological change has made life long education a necessity especially in an age when lifetime employment can no longer be taken for granted (Settersten Jr, 2003) and typical life course transitions that once occurred in relative synchronicity, from school to work and from the parental home to family

formation have been decoupled, disordered and occur over a longer period of time (Dannefer, 2003; Farrugia, 2013). However, despite these changes, research suggests that:

The standard biography is losing empirical validity for many individuals... [but] a complete undoing of the tripartite life path is not occurring... the simultaneity of plural, asynchronous, and fragmented biographies becomes a normalised part of the “continuum” of life while, paradoxically, old standards remain ideal evaluative benchmarks (Blatterer, 2007b: 45).

For example, in late modernity, labour markets which are generally characterised by casualization and deregulated work, where individuals can expect to be employed in multiple organisations and even multiple careers over the course of their lifetimes, the standard benchmark for labour market success remains the attainment of fulltime employment in a secure career (Blatterer, 2007b). Furthermore, young adults are reluctant to characterise themselves as ‘fully adult’ until they achieve the normative markers of adulthood (Kato, 2013).

Furthermore, “institutions themselves often no longer provide temporal securities and thus make the long-term projection of biographies more difficult” (Blatterer, 2007b: 44). Individual’s biographies are couched in a ‘do-it-yourself’ or ‘choice biography’ rhetoric in which the cultural ideal is the development of a ‘life of one’s own’ and the risks inherent in transition between stages are borne by the individual (Beck, 1992; Beck, 2002; Blatterer, 2007a). The result of this shift sees changes to modern identities and subjectivities to cope with these risks which take the form of reflexivity:

“In modernity, everyone is compelled to view themselves as an individual, and organise their lives actively in order to survive conditions of rapid social change... social processes become experienced as personal biographical events which must be dealt with through the active cultivation of a life” (Farrugia, 2013: 681).

Farrugia (2013) argues that in the post-modern world the reflexive practices, or more specifically, the social conditions which have the potential to lead to reflexivity and the varying impacts that this has on individuals with access to various levels of capital,

are one of the ways that inequalities operate and are reproduced in current times. That is, that although class no longer forms a structural basis for collective class identities, it “continues to shape the goals, expectations and orientations of young people”.

The transition to adulthood

The economic and social changes of the recent past have meant that the markers indicating a transition from adolescence to adulthood either are absent or have become individualised and have thus lost the social significance they once held (Blatterer: 49)

The life course stage of ‘youth’ or ‘young adulthood’ is normatively marked by experiences of leaving home, finishing school, starting and/or finishing higher education, starting full time employment (and assuming such employment is stable), getting married/ partnering and starting a family/ first child (see for example Kley and Mulder, 2010). But more than this, “it is the relational aspects of an individual’s life that determine their current life stage and allow distinctions to be made between stages” (Lauer and Wong, 2010: 1055). The period is typically characterized as a time of ‘freedom’, for example, freedom from the bonds of the family of birth (a particularly western-centric phenomenon, see for example Roos, 2016: for contra example) and towards the development of career and new bonds with families of choice (yet freedom in the present from the responsibilities that come with such partnerships).

According to Kley (2011), individuals in the phase of young adulthood place more emphasis on ‘pursuing one’s own interests’ and ‘opportunities for better careers’ (verses opportunities for family life) than they do in any other phase. It is not theoretically treated as an age bounded category but rather might be understood as a ‘subjective condition’ (Kato, 2013) consisting of those who consider themselves (or are considered by others) to be in a preparatory life stage before fully crossing over into ‘adulthood’. However, in practice research that is intended to focus on this stage tends to default to age based classifications in which ‘youth’ is bounded somewhere within the period of 18-35 or more strictly between the ages of 18-30. In doing so it might be argued that researchers ignore the period of ‘youth’ as described by people who typically fall outside

of these normative age brackets. For Example, in Kato's (2013) research, participants self-assessment of their own life-stage and behaviour in the form of continuous postponement of life planning, found that for some individuals their experience of 'youth' continued into their 40s.

International mobility and (young) adulthood

Whilst recent years have seen an increase in research on skilled migration, very little attention has been paid to the intersection of this phenomena with the life course. Furthermore, the little research that has explicitly investigated the skilled-migration-life-course nexus has so far tended to focus on student mobility (for example see Amit, 2011), working holiday practices (Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Kato, 2013) or the east-west mobility of young professionals (Roos, 2016).

Research into migration and mobility throughout the life course suggest that "rates of geographical mobility vary greatly and fairly predictably, across the life course" (Plane and Jurjevich, 2009: 4) seeing younger adults typically moving to larger mega-metropolitan areas before moving again from larger to medium metropolitan areas at the mid-career stage. Where migration is considered as a three-phase model consisting of 'considering', 'planning' and 'realizing' migration, the anticipation of life course events has been found to be particularly relevant to the 'considering' and 'planning' phases whereas the realization of the move is more likely to be impacted by considerations of social, financial and psychological resources (Kley and Mulder, 2010). Kley and Mulder (2010) argue that perceived opportunities for better career results are present in individuals of all life stages considering or planning migration, but were the strongest predictor of this behaviour only for young adults without children.

Amit (2011) is critical of the 'extension of youth' thesis which is prevalent in much literature on youth mobility, especially within discussions surrounding forms of contemporary youth mobility. Amit argues that such representations of 'youth' depict it as conceptually pliable whilst simultaneously locking the concept of 'adulthood' into the unquestioned normative attainment of particular roles and statuses. Nevertheless, Amit's participants describe their youthful mobility as a temporary reprieve from social

and career expectations, as something that must be done ‘before I settle down’ and as something that is only possible when they are young and unfettered. Instead Amit argues that their mobility arises “not from an embrace of uncertainty and mobility but from a persisting belief in a modernist, linear life course” (2011: 80). As previously mentioned these beliefs persist despite research noting that such uncertainty and mobility are inescapable throughout the life course in a ‘post traditional cosmopolitan world’ (p80).

This phenomenon is also prevalent in literature on young New Zealanders on working holidays to the UK who describe such OE’s as ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunities (Mason 2002) and French free movers in London, who although still relatively close to home and with no concrete plans to return to France, are reluctant to ‘settle down’ in the sense of buying property or ‘being a couple’ as that is something that they don’t envision doing until they return. Thus they find themselves in a kind of limbo in terms of age and lifestyle and as a result, over time the city itself becomes less satisfactory for them (Favell 2006).

Youth mobility as a form of escape is in keeping with other research on youth migration. For example, Jilwah (2015) investigated the experiences of young Canadian TESL (English as a Second Language) teachers and professionals living and working in Japan and found that participants described one of the key benefits of moving to Japan as being the chance to live free from typical ‘adult’ or life course escalator expectations such as getting a job, marriage, children and investing in the housing market. However, such respite is not an end in itself, such ‘freedom’ allowed them to multitask, to use this time to explore their cultural identity, experiment with potential careers and broaden their understandings of the world beyond ‘home’. Yet such liberties were still foreshadowed by impermanence, an awareness that the experiment was temporary and at some point it would be time to settle down and, in all likelihood, return ‘home’. It was, however, also this impermanence that allowed them to conceptualise the decision to go abroad – to leave behind their family and friends – as a worthwhile experience.

Like Amit, Jilwah is critical of a life course paradigm that can be characterised only as an in-between phase, arguing that “seeing youth as merely a liminal period renders the complex experiences of youth as trivial or meaningless in comparison to other phases

in the life course. Dispelling agency in this way posits that certain life phases should be or simply are more profound than others, which is no less than false.” (2015: 32)

In contrast, Roos’ (2017) Indian ICTs of similar ages who are working in the European information communication and technology sector do not conceptualise their experience as a reprieve from social expectations but rather as a transitional phase in their career trajectory which also acts as a symbolic resource signalling their economic and professional success. Yet they also communicate an awareness that Europe is perceived as a major travel destination compared to English speaking countries in which career is thought of as the main focus. Rather, this phase of their careers as professionals, multitasks in the sense that it is lucrative in financial but also, and arguably more importantly, symbolic social capital. Not only are they able to see the world, but to do so at their employer’s expense, Nevertheless, the temporal dimension of this period, of such experiences, remains. Whilst labour mobility might be experienced throughout all stages of the life course, it is not equally welcome. Roos highlights the costs that are also involved such as geographic distance from family and notes that in her study, overseas assignments are usually sought after by those up to 35 years of age, and more specifically, that once they are married with children they are more reluctant to travel. Furthermore, not only is this development recognised by their employers, but actively factored into managers’ business planning and staff rotations.

Class: wealth, status and power

The concept of class and its pervasive influence on individuals’ life course experiences and expectations is the final key theoretical element of this research. As such, it is necessary to clarify how this concept is used and understood in this thesis.

Research suggests that class continues to fundamentally structure Australian society influencing individuals’ and families’ access to education, healthcare and employment (Carl et al 2012). To a certain extent, one’s class status is reflective of their economic standing – income and wealth - in society and is thus, “fundamentally related to positions and relations forged in the workplace” (Eidlin 2015: 56). Whilst class mobility is possible, research further suggests that most individuals will remain in the same class

as that of their parents (Carl et al 2012: 37). Whilst arguably the easiest to categorise, economic factors represent only one dimension of class. Other dimensions which are no less important (if less visible or easily classified) are *power* or *cultural privilege* that is, “the ability to carry out your will and impose it on others” (Carl et al 2012: 40), and *prestige*, that is, “the level of esteem associated with our status and social standing” (Carl et al 2012: 40). Whilst theoretically distinguishable, in practice the three dimensions of class overlap to a considerable degree. For example, those whose profession provides them with a relatively high level of income are also likely to gain prestige and power from this same source.

Thus, when classifying individuals into class categories, particularly in the early chapters of this thesis before participants have begun their professional employment, I borrow the definitions of ‘Middle-class’ and ‘Working-class’ children from Lareau (2011):

Middle-class children are those who live in households in which at least one parent is employed in a position that either entails substantial managerial authority or that centrally draws upon highly complex, educationally certified (i.e., college-level) skills... Working-class children are those who live in households in which neither parent is employed in a middle-class position. (365)

This definition distinguishes between class boundaries based primarily on occupational categories/rankings and uses the family rather than the individual as the unit of analysis.

Beyond the classification of individuals based on economic/professional rankings, the phenomenon of class is addressed in this thesis through the theoretical framework of Bourdieu. Specifically, the interactions and development of individuals’ *habitus* and *capital* within specific *cultural fields* (i.e. middle-class subjectivities and professionalism in B4 firms) which are theoretical drivers of individuals’ subjectivities and thus contribute to class reproduction through their perception of opportunities and decisions made throughout the life course.

Bourdieu argues that to explain a social phenomenon it is necessary to understand the social field, history and accumulation of capital in which it is negotiated

(Bourdieu, 2011: 81). The field is a metaphor for a bounded space of shared understandings, institutions, rules and conventions; it is the shared values in these fields that provide a site for the recognition and validation of an individual's various forms of capital. It is a site in which "groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field and how capital is to be distributed" (Webb et al., 2002: xi).

Bourdieu (2011) identifies three forms of capital: *economic* (i.e. money and property), *social* (i.e. networks of social connections and obligations) and *cultural* (i.e. education, knowledge and skills). The classification of cultural capital is further split into three types: *embodied* ("long lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 2011: 82)), *objectified* (cultural goods: books, pictures, art) and *institutionalised* (formalised academic qualifications that guarantee certain properties) (Bourdieu, 2011).

For Bourdieu, class is not limited to groups with shared class consciousness or similar economic station but is instead an analytical construct that artificially groups individuals or *agents* together based on their relative position in three dimensions: their total volume of capital, their composition of capital and the evolution (trajectory) of their volume and composition of capital (Bourdieu, 1987). Classes in this sense are likely to share a similar world-view including interests, values and interpretations on how best to negotiate the various stages of the life course.

Research questions

This project aims to examine the phenomenon self-initiated migration of young Australian accounting professionals to the city of London. It asks, how do young Australian professional accountants engage with international migration? More specifically:

1. What migration pathways do they use and why?
2. How is this migration informed and enabled by their class status including social and cultural capital and professional habitus?
3. How do they characterise their mobility and what does it mean for them in terms of their life course plans and practice?

By answering these questions, this thesis will contribute to the emerging field of literature that addresses the intersecting issues of self-initiated skilled and/or privileged migration and the life course. It will investigate the relationship between mobility and temporal understandings of life course and career projects. Furthermore, by focusing on the experiences of individuals from a single profession and with similar early career professional experiences, this thesis will be able to develop a deeper understanding of any potential strategic uses of migration as part of individuals' greater life course and career trajectories.

Methods

My research uses qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews with young Australian accountants who have recently worked for a year or more in London, to investigate how the socialisation of young accountants throughout university and graduate employment at top global firms influences the role that migration plays in individual's life plans. The following chapter discusses the processes, challenges and theoretical decisions made in the process of completing this research. I start by describing how participants were recruited, followed by outlining and discussing relevant participant characteristics including B4 working background, gender and class considerations. This is followed by a discussion on the use of semi-structured retrospective interviews as a method of investigation, outlining areas of focus for the interviews and of the relative merits and challenges of using both Skype and face-to-face interviews. The final sections address my own insider status as an ex-graduate auditor at one of the B4 firms and the process of data analysis.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited through a combination of my pre-existing professional network (discussed in more detail below), snowball sampling and the use of social networking sites: LinkedIn and Facebook. This included posting a recruitment ad to my Facebook wall and a private Facebook group dedicated to Australian and New Zealand Chartered Accountants (CA's) living and working in London as well as sending private messages to ex-colleagues and potential participants they suggested. Criteria for participation in the study included:

- Participants migrated to London within the last 5 years
- Migration occurred between the ages of 25-35
- Prior to migrating participants had to have completed their CA qualification in Australia
- Early career history working in one of the B4 accounting firms in Australia
- Lived and worked (or currently working) in their professional occupation in London for a period of at least 12 months

- Self-initiated their migration.

Due to the project's focus on participant's work and employment history, all leads who were not already part of my existing network were first approached via their professional profiles on LinkedIn where their profiles acted as a corroborating data source for their work history and job descriptions.

In 2011 I was employed as a graduate analyst in the Assurance and Advisory (audit) division of the Sydney offices of one of the B4. As an ex-B4 graduate, many of my former colleagues have worked, or are currently working in London and using their professional background in accounting and professional services to enable their international mobility. Mobilizing these pre-existing networks was the most successful recruitment strategy employed, with half of participants successfully recruited through these networks and the remainder through snowballing of contacts who shared the Facebook post. However, even with the assistance of personal networks, recruitment of this population proved particularly difficult. The population studied underwent significant changes as a direct result of these recruitment challenges such that a comparison group of Intra-corporate transfer migrants were excluded from the final study.

Participant characteristics

In total six interviews were conducted between June and August 2017; two over Skype with individuals still currently in London and four face-to-face interviews with individuals who had returned to Australia. Details of the final participants are identified in appendix A.

Ideally, participants would be purposively selected to ensure a range of migration and work experiences as well as an equal gender balance. Previous studies have suggested women are more likely to self-initiate migration rather than use ICT structures (Suutari and Brewster, 2000). However, gender was also flagged as important to life course issues, especially due to the age of the participants for whom family planning was likely to play at least some role in their visions of future selves. The difficulties in recruitment above meant that final participants included only two females.

The decision to limit the study to participants with a history working in one of the 'B4' professional service firms is also worth discussing. Whilst self-initiated migration is unlikely to be limited to qualified accountants with a history working in one of the B4 firms, very few firms outside of the B4 are large enough to have the infrastructure set up to support ICTs. Therefore, it can be presumed that participants from smaller firms are, by default, more likely to self-initiate their migration where ICT is not an option. As one of the aims of this study was to investigate why individuals might choose to self-initiate migration when there were other institutional options available to them, limiting the study to participants with a history working in the B4 was necessary so that participants could be asked why they chose to use the migration method that they did.

Finally, it is also worth discussing the impact of class on participant selection and findings. Existing research suggests that this type of migration is typically a distinctly middle class phenomenon, especially where highly skilled service professionals such as accountants are concerned as these are typically middle class occupations in the first place (Carter and Spence, 2014; Favell, 2011; Rahim, 2014). Furthermore, the method of recruitment is likely to mean that participants are from a similar class background to the researcher. To account for this in the research findings, specific interview questions were designed elicit information about participants class background. This included areas such as participant's parent's education/occupation, whether participants received support (financial or otherwise) of their higher education and participant's own educational history. Findings confirmed the middle-class backgrounds of these participants (see chapter four for a full discussion). Furthermore, while comparison based on ethnic backgrounds merits further investigation, the sample size in this study did not allow for selection on this basis.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the research method as they are particularly useful tools for accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005). While interviewing is limited in its ability to enable the researcher to 'see through others' eyes' compared to other methods such as participant observation, the interview is not only appropriate but necessary for

this project's collection of participants' own reflections on their experience - as it is their reconstruction and verbal communication of their version of events that allows us to answer what this period means for them and in what ways is this experience intertwined with their life course plans and practice (Bryman, 2015: 492-497).

However, retrospective interviews have been criticised for their reliance upon participants typically inaccurate memories of past historical events and thought processes (Punch, 2005). This has been in part a pragmatic decision due to the time limitations placed on the research project which makes a longitudinal approach unfeasible, but it is also appropriate for the research purpose as the use of retrospective interviews will act as a demonstration of the life course as reflexive action in practice (Bickman, 2008: 555).

Interview questions were structured around three main areas of focus. Participants were asked to discuss their education and work history prior to migration including when and why they decided to pursue a career in accounting and employment in a B4 firm; the migration process and experience including reflections upon when and why they decided to move to London, why they did so using the means that they did and what this mobility means for them; and their visions for the future, predicting where they imagine themselves in 5-10 years time, and what significance they imagine that this period living in London will have on their future selves. Each of these sections consisted of questions designed to understand the basic structure and demographics of their experience as well as more theoretically driven questions designed to investigate issues such as their decision-making processes, experiences and visions for the future.

Using both Skype and face-to-face interviews

As mentioned previously, interviews were conducted using Skype and face-to-face. Where geographically possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, some of the participants continue to reside overseas, and were thus interviewed and audio recorded over Skype. Skype interviews are unique in that they exhibit a combination of the positive and negative features of both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews (Bryman, 2015: 492). Like telephone interviews, Skype interviews are limited by potential technology problems such as familiarity with the software, access

to high-speed internet and fluctuations in the quality of connection (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Hamilton and Bowers, 2006). Familiarity with Skype and access to internet was not an issue for participants in this project, many of whom regularly use such means to contact family and friends in Australia. Fluctuations in the quality of calls were noted, and in one instance required that the conclusion of an interview be conducted using audio only. This was, however, minimally invasive and did not impact on the flow of the interview.

The most challenging aspect of conducting Skype interviews versus their face-to-face counterparts was getting individuals to commit to a meeting time or to turn up at the agreed time. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) note similar challenges using Skype interviews in their research, suggesting that the disconnect of online interviews, lack of eye-contact with interviewer and the risk of being publicly caught out in their absenteeism might explain the lesser commitment shown by such participants. In this instance, I would suggest that there are too many potential variables that might explain this lack of commitment, other than the method of interview participation - including the busy lifestyles led by these individuals while they are in London including long working hours, busy social lives and frequent intra-European travels - to confirm or reject Deakin and Wakefield's observations. Overall, Skype interviews allowed for easier access to a larger number of research participants than would have been possible otherwise, given geographical and time restrictions. Evidence suggests that little, if any, capacity for developing rapport is forgone when using Skype interviews when compared with face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2015: 492) and I would concur with this evidence given my experiences in this study.

The Interviewer as the Insider

As a former accountant at a B4 firm, I was bestowed with a certain 'insider' status in the eyes of the participants. This brought both a benefit and a challenge for this research project. As previously mentioned, in March of 2011, I was employed as a graduate in the Sydney offices of one of the B4 professional service firms as part of the same cohort as many of the participants of this study. The wish to learn more about what was underscoring their move to London in the years since we worked together inspired

this research project. As a cohort, we were encouraged to socialise and to develop our business networks starting with each other. Furthermore, one of the touted benefits of working at such a large firm was that we would have ready-made study and support groups for CA assessments and professional life. In my specialty, in particular – audit – came work ethic expectations of minimum unpaid overtime requirements especially in the ‘busy seasons’ to which we were socialised into conforming (Buchheit et al., 2016; Carter and Spence, 2014). It was explicitly understood that ‘outsiders’, family, partners and friends, were unlikely to understand the need for such dedication and long work hours and so we should turn to each other for support and understanding resulting from our shared experiences. Whilst I left the program within the first twelve months, these bonds of shared early employment experience remained. This was a benefit in the sense that it has made recruitment of participants and development of trust between researcher and participant relatively easier.

One challenge experienced, both during data collection and analysis, was that whilst interviewing participants about their early industry experience, I noticed a tendency for them to cut corners in their descriptions, assuming that I knew things because of my shared professional experience. For example, they took for granted my knowledge about the clauses that come with B4 companies’ payment of CA tuition and examination fees (and how this would impact their decisions about when to leave the company). As an insider, I was well placed to notice when such details were being assumed and would ask for clarification when this occurred. The challenge arises when attempting to determine whether participant’s assumptions extended past technical knowledge of the accounting profession and into the realm of their personal experience. To overcome this, when I sensed that this was occurring or when participant’s responses were sounding formulaic I endeavoured to push further and if necessary challenge their reasoning so that they were forced to explain their point of view at a very basic level. In addition, I had to check myself throughout the interviews and analysis to try to ensure that I was not making assumptions about their statements by filling in the gaps with my own biases. As Ohnuki-Tierney observes in the field of anthropology, “if non-native anthropologists have difficulty in avoiding the superimposition of their own cultural categories and meanings, native anthropologists have the task of somehow ‘distancing’

themselves both intellectually and emotively” (1984: 584). This was not always easy to do, either during the interviews or in the analysis of the data. To combat my assumptions, I continuously returned to the interview data, contextualising statements and where necessary emailing participants for follow up clarification.

Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed following the framework set out by Bazeley (2009). Bazeley encourages qualitative researchers aim beyond the mere identification of themes and reliance upon quotations and thick description in their analysis, to ensure that researchers link themes to form a coordinated picture or explanatory model of their research problem. This process is text heavy, following four steps: describe, compare, relate, repeat and encourages the use of using writing as a thinking tool. “As you describe, compare and relate for each element with an enquiring mind and an eye for evidence, your picture will become increasingly complex and your theory or thesis will develop, building on the foundation you have laid. Your analysis, then, will come together around an integrating idea, with arguments to support it drawn from across your complete (interim) analyses” (Bazeley, 2009: 10). Furthermore, elements of the interviews were analysed through a critical discourse analysis framework (Jacobs, 2006). That is, rather than treat the interviewees’ responses as expert testimony, their responses were read from a perspective that searches for the underlying ideologies, the strategies for dominance and power that participants are replicating or resisting – consciously or unconsciously.

A key limitation of the methods employed in this project results from the nine-month time limit set for the research course. This limited the options for developing longer-term relationships to see how participants’ decisions and contradictions in ‘future selves’ changed over time. For example: one participant, Sam, discussed how he did not (for the moment) imagine moving back to Australia. At the time, he was focused on a career transition, breaking into a new industry with his new employment less formally focussed on his accounting background. He would stay in London, or go wherever this new path takes him. Yet, at a later stage of the interview, when reflecting on his relationship, he admitted that his partner’s visa would soon run out and he would likely

return to Australia with her. Sam, however, did not appear to find this contradiction in future selves to be problematic and only time will tell how these future selves are resolved. As this example shows, one-off interviews are only able to capture the migration experiences of interviewees at a single point in time which may, or may not, accurately represent their overall experience which is dynamic over the course of their mobility. One argument to mitigate this challenge would be to only interview participants who had already returned to Australia. However, not all young Australian accountants who migrate to London return and purposefully excluding the experiences of those who stay would, I argue, ignore a key and potentially enlightening aspect of this phenomenon.

This chapter has described and discussed the research methods, considerations and challenges encountered during the process of completing this study. The findings of these semi-structured interviews are split into the following three main chapters. These chapters are divided into roughly chronological sections which demonstrate that the migration process of these interviewees begins long before they ever apply for a UK visa. Chapter three focuses on the period from leaving school to applying for graduate employment positions. Chapter four discusses their experiences working in the B4 through to their motivations for and decision to migrate. Chapter five analyses the migrants period of mobility in London and visions for the future. Throughout each of these findings chapters, particular attention is paid to analysis of class and life course factors which influence the participants' experience of migration. Finally, chapter six summarises the key research findings, addresses research limitations and makes suggestions for future research.

From University Education to Employment at the B4: Impact of Classed Socialisation on Career Choices

This chapter focuses on participants' transition from education to graduate employment. I examine the key role played by the middle-class status of these individuals in shaping their values surrounding career and life course progression, and its influence on their choice of university degree and places of graduate employment. Accounting is perceived as a 'safe' degree to pursue due to its obvious applicability to the workforce (i.e. to become an accountant). In particular, the B4 are seen as offering a 'safe' transition into the labour market due to the firms' size, reputation and a sense of future opportunities that they offer.

Below, I begin by focusing on the transition to university, why participants chose to study accounting and the strong influence that parents, parents' class backgrounds and parents' social networks had on this decision. This is followed by a section which focuses on participants' transition to the labour market, specifically the journey that leads them to accepting graduate positions in the B4. My findings show that participants and their parents continue to hold onto a modernist belief in the linear life course and career progression, and are anxious to maintain their class position. They see the stability of a career in a professional field such as accounting as an obvious means of achieving this. I argue that it is during these life stages - higher education and entry into the labour market - that participants began the socialisation process that would eventually see them develop their B4 professional identities with 'globally-minded' outlooks.

Characteristics of university accounting students

Each participant in this study shared a similar higher education and early professional career history. Participants were more likely to have attended high school at non-government (private or faith based) schools than government (public) schools and attended university in the greater Sydney region. Participants mostly attended universities in Sydney and some in the surrounding region. They completed Bachelors of Commerce or Business majoring in accounting and/or finance with one participant also completing a second degree in Applied Finance. Their university education was then

followed by graduate employment at one of the B4 global accounting and professional service firms, beginning in February or March of the year following completion of their studies. It is through their employment with these firms that participants developed their early careers and professional identities whilst also completing their professional qualifications to be admitted into the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ).

Decisions about what to study at university were made strategically by all participants. Key factors of concern included issues of career security, the influence of family and friends and the feasibility of acceptance into their preferred courses based on predicted results of their Higher School Certificate. The following two quotes demonstrate the complex issues under consideration. Evelyn enjoyed history in high school. However, when it came to choosing a university degree, she didn't see a legitimate career path in that area. She noted that:

Look I, I could lie to you and say [accounting] was a burning passion but it wasn't... In your last year of school when 17-18 years old and you're suddenly being told that you have to make decisions for the rest of your life, umm, which realistically – what 18-year-old knows what they want to do with their life?! (...) So, by the end of school I really enjoyed history but my fairly pragmatic self – and incredibly pragmatic father – was like 'oh well you could do history and then your basic options are to become a history teacher or keep studying for the rest of your life'. So, it was kind of that or - hey! You're doing commerce and seem to be good at that and alright with numbers and there was a bit of – whatever you do in your life it's not a bad idea to be able to understand your own, you know your own accounts, your own tax. That's kind of a good grounding for whatever you end up doing. So, I sort of went, yeah okay, accounting, let's do that!

Matthew, who changed degrees after his first semester at university, also provided a similar account of his motivations for changing specialty:

I realised that I didn't know where it [specialisation in e-business] would lead. I couldn't see a realistic job or career path at the end of it. So, I spoke to a family

friend who was about 3 years older than me and had been studying accounting and what he said [regarding the usefulness of an accounting degree] made sense for lack of an alternative plan.

It is clear through these quotes that participants of this study emphasized the importance of job security and more specifically a predictable career path at the time of university entrance. The visibility of the accountant's career path was consistently compared to career trajectories in other industries or professions such as law, finance, IT and science; areas of study at which many of them excelled in school and would have otherwise been interested in continuing to study further.

The parents were a main source of career guidance for the participants. Interview data reflected that they strongly encouraged a pursuit of stable employment as the basis of educational choices, and explicitly instructed their children not to 'waste time' on degrees without clear job prospects, highlighting the pressure the participants were under to make a smooth transition from education to employment. It is therefore important to outline the parents' backgrounds in more detail.

The parents of the interviewees came from a range of mostly middle-class occupations. Fathers' occupations included: a school principal, two accountants, a pharmacist, a warehouse storeman and a dentist. Mothers' occupations included: two nurses, a librarian, a legal secretary/book keeper and two stay-at-home mothers. As key influences on their study choices, participants also noted the influence of uncles who were lawyers, family friends who were partners in various B4 firms as well as cousins and family friends who were three to five years older than them and following accounting related career paths. If such sources of information were not readily available, such as was the case with Luke whose first-generation migrant parents were the warehouse storeman and legal secretary, then this absence was explicitly noted.

These findings highlight the importance of highly engaged parents who can mobilise their social capital on children's educational and career choices. Lareau (2011) argues that parental intervention into children's academic decisions is all part of a middle-class cultural practice of *concerted cultivation*. Concerted cultivation is a style of

parenting in which parents actively intervene in their children's lives to foster their talents such that they might increase their children's chances of future 'success'. She states that "worried about how their children might get ahead, middle-class parents are increasingly determined to make sure that their children are not excluded from any opportunity that might eventually contribute to their advancement" (2011: 5). This extends to their influence on their children's college/university choices (287).

Other professions such as law and medicine might also meet the desires middle class parents had for their children's futures. However, in addition to its pragmatic appeal, accounting was perceived to be a relatively feasible profession as measured by the scores necessary for university admission to the course. For example, Alison reflected that many of her friends pursued degrees in law:

Law was always for the kids who got 98-99 like that's just what you did [if you got that mark] – you do law. [Accounting was] I guess the rung below. So just some context, I got 93 in my HSC so solid but not - you know - 'law.'

Braden expressed a similar sentiment when discussing his university choices:

I guess I was a bit limited in what I could get into as well. I wasn't the top of – I ended up getting about 86 [out of 100] but that was a surprise, I was expecting to get lower. So I wasn't – at the time I thought I was going to get mid 70s so there was no point aiming towards something like law or medicine or something like that.

Here again, participants' awareness of the institutional technicalities surrounding university admissions belies their middle-class status (Lareau, 2011: 288) and assists them in making higher education decisions. All but one of the participants had one, or even two parents who had been to university and thus had personal experience with the higher education system. In addition to this experience, they also had access to further information through their social networks.

Therefore, the accounting profession was seen, at least in this initial stage, as a career of stability and practicality rather than a career of passion. It was, "the degree you

might do if you're not sure what you want to do... a generally broad degree that's not going to be detrimental" (Sam). Such emphasis is consistent with the findings of Chia, Koh and Pragasam (2008), for whom the career motivators of accounting students in Australia are primarily 'job security', 'recognition of expertise' and 'search for meaning' (personal fulfilment). Accountancy as a career is an attractive option in the minds of many young adults (Jeacle, 2008).

'Accountancy is the language of business' has not become a cliché without good reason and membership of a professional accounting body infers a fluency in that language. Graduates are not ignorant of the status and credibility invested in such membership. Nor are they oblivious to the potential job security associated with accountancy. (Jeacle, 2008: 1316).

In many instances, participants' discussion of their early career verged on the apologetic, because they were embarrassed about their lack of vocational passion. The sentiments below express the well documented stigma associated with being an accountant (See for example, Beard, 1994; Jeacle, 2008), a stigma which paints accounting as a bland and dreary profession peopled by socially stunted misfits.

I really fell into accounting. (Braden)

I guess accounting just kind of came to me quite easily, logically, umm and I guess... *I don't think I ever made a conscious decision*, but it just kind of turned out like that. (Sam)

I probably wasn't too... when at university, didn't really enjoy accounting. Umm but I did a major in accounting and finance because that just seemed to be the right thing to do... I would say, first of all, *I never planned to be an accountant*. (Luke)

Their embarrassment seemed to indicate their belief in two normative expectations about post-modern identity: (1) that passion at work is an undeniably positive phenomenon (Kostamo et al., 2017) and that young-adults must complete the developmental process of 'finding the meaningful life' through work (and relationships)

in order to achieve future success and happiness (Mayseless and Keren, 2014); and, (2) that to make conscious, active decisions about one's future is the expression of one's free will and embodies the cultural ideal that we should all lead 'self-fashioned lives' (Blatterer, 2007b: 47-48). Instead of following their passions, their journey so far had been fundamentally guided by the classed expectations of their parents who recognised the risks involved in a world of increasingly deregulated and casualised workforce. A degree in accounting was considered to ensure a smooth transition from university to secure full-time employment. This was considered an important part of the ideal of the linear life course.

The rest of this chapter will focus on the employment choices of interviewees and the ways in which they are informed by the recruitment practices and process at B4 accounting firms. I will identify the reasons that accounting graduates seek employment in the B4, the traits that the B4 seek in the recruitment process, and examine the role that the B4 play in the professional and life course strategy of participants.

Reasons for seeking graduate employment in the B4

The search for job security, a key reason for the decision to study accounting at university, was also a major motivator for seeking graduate employment within the B4. Participants were coming to the end of their degrees and believed that it was time to search for the 'real' job and career that their degrees had promised them. For example, when asked what appealed to him about working at the B4, Matthew replied, "There was no appeal, I just wanted to get a job." Evelyn expressed a similar sentiment exclaiming it was because, "They were willing to pay me!" The participants were anxious to secure full-time employment and start working straight after graduating from university, even if they suspected that work at the B4 would be unfulfilling. Many participants remembered being aware on some level that there was a 'difference' between B4 and mid-tier firms, but only vaguely at the time. The main attraction of B4 was their size, reputation and associated opportunities. Their main aim was to obtain the CA qualifications, which loomed as a hurdle to be overcome, limiting individuals' vision of future career possibilities (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001). To achieve this aim, B4 were the most obvious—unquestioned even—choice. For Alison, the choice of B4 was:

“about having the name on my CV, it was the CA, getting support to do that and potential secondment opportunities... I didn’t think too far ahead, I think I was more just like, two-year horizon, and I think at that time I was just thinking CA.”

Meanwhile for Sam, it was:

“Probably just the fact that they were the B4 and the opportunities that that would then have within the organisation. Whether that be different service lines or just bigger clients and networking. I think it was the fact that they are – you know – the large entity factor was a big thing... was I thinking about my next job at the point of applying? I don’t think I had that much foresight. It was ‘I know they are a good organisation’ umm ‘this is my next step’ That's as far as I could really think.”

Formal training – particularly the combination of financial, intangible and cohort support to complete the CA -- was perhaps the one consistent, concrete appeal identified by participants prior to their graduation. Evelyn notes that:

The bigger firms had proper training programs and took a lot of new people in and you got all the training together and they were a bit patient with you... They were used to it [supporting new grads]. They had a whole plan for us and knew what to expect [of our abilities].

What the literature and my descriptions of participants’ recruitment into B4 firms so far does not tell, is the overwhelming impact of participants’ social capital on their employment outcomes. Every one of my participants relied on their parents, parent’s friends and/or social networks at some stage in their search for graduate employment. For Sam, this meant his family friend and mentor informing him that he should seek out a vacationer position for the summer following his penultimate year. For Alison, this meant her father gaining knowledge of cadetships and summer internships offered through his friend who worked as a partner at a B4 firm. Braden also indicated the influence of a family friend who was a partner at a B4 firm. Luke’s connection was through an ex-girlfriend’s brother who was also applying for B4 graduate positions. For Evelyn, it was a contact currently working at a B4 firm who used the firm’s official employee referral

route to get her access to a graduate position even though applications for that year's graduate intake had long since closed. Essentially, these social contacts played one of two roles. They provided knowledge to participants of the timing of B4 applications - which is usually long before most university students are thinking about graduate employment. Alternatively, they relied upon contacts working within the firms to massage application deadlines. This supports Lareau's findings that parents of both middle and working-class families seek to assist their children in the transition into the labour market. However, "the jobs parents could help their children get differed. The kinds of connections they could make on their children's behalf were shaped by parents' social networks, which were in turn shaped by their class position" (Lareau, 2011: 280) and informal knowledge of institutional systems (such as timing of graduate applications). Essentially interviewees mobilised their social capital and the social capital of their parents to increase their chances of making a smooth transition from education into the labour market.

It is worth noting that, beyond completing the CA qualifications, the participants' pursuit of 'future opportunities', stability and status tended to be amorphous demonstrating the power of these classed values. Interviewees merely accepted that the profession of accounting was a viable pathway for achieving and demonstrating life course 'success' which was enough to motivate them take actions in the present towards achieving these goals (Hardgrove et al., 2015). This demonstrates one of the ways in which these subjects internalised and reproduced neoliberal discourses of self-development (Yoon, 2014). That is, their middle-class habitus had taught them that society rewards individuals who demonstrate values of ambition, self-determination and continuous self-improvement (Yoon, 2014). Furthermore, interviewees mobilised these open possibilities as a means of 'managing uncertainty through the evasion of failure' (Frändberg, 2015), that is, as a means of managing the pressures that come with the risks and uncertainties of the post-modern life course and postponing the time when they would have to risk failure. Failure in this sense is measured through meeting the classed expectations of smooth life course transitions, particularly with regards to the transition into the workforce.

Recruitment practices of the B4

The B4 are major recruiters of accounting graduates in Australia, employing up to a quarter of graduates from some major metropolitan Universities (Cheng et al., 2009). Graduate placement offers for these firms are usually administered approximately 12 months prior to employment commencement, whilst prospective graduates are beginning their final year of undergraduate university coursework (Parry and Jackling, 2015). For many, a graduate position is the result of successful completion of work experience in the form of paid vacation internships over the preceding summer, with up to 90 percent of students who undertake such internships receiving graduate job offers contingent upon the completion of their degrees (Cheng et al., 2009). Recruitment, either for paid internships or direct entry into graduate positions, typically involves multiple stages including: initial screening for base recruitment criteria (grades, extracurricular activities etc.), personality and behavioural tests, assessment of applications and shortlisting of applicants, in-house observation of a series of activities designed to test generic skills (such as team-work, communication, interpersonal skills), and interviews with senior staff (partners and/or managers) (Parry and Jackling, 2015).

Three out of the six participants of this study gained paid work experience with B4 firms in the summer following their penultimate year of study. For Alison and Sam, these placements resulted in their acceptance of early graduate placement offers for after the completion of their final year of study. For Matthew, the work experience led to a career reconsideration and a second university degree, although he eventually returned to accounting and gained graduate employment at another B4. All other participants applied directly for graduate positions.

Focus on 'cultural fit'

In the recruitment process, recruiters and senior personnel seek graduates who demonstrate both technical skills (in the form of GPA) and a 'cultural fit' with the organisation. Surveys of employers and HR representatives have found that relevant part time work (internships, cadetships etc), academic performance and – to a limited extent – social or extracurricular activities are significant factors associated with undergraduate

accounting students obtaining job offers prior to graduation (Cheng et al., 2009). Furthermore, researchers argue that “employers place greater emphasis on candidates who are not only academically superior, but are also able to obtain relevant, practical work experience while maintaining study–life balance,” (Cheng et al., 2009: 343), because an applicants’ ability to deal with the workload and other pressures of employment is considered key to success at these firms.

Research demonstrates that cultural fit is the most important quality in the later stages of the recruitment process. This is both because graduate applicants who survive initial recruitment rounds are assumed to possess the required technical skills, and because the firms consider these skills easier to teach than to create a cultural fit (Ming Chia, 2005; Parry and Jackling, 2015; Rivera, 2012).

But what exactly is meant by ‘cultural fit’? Braden explained this succinctly when he suggests that, “It seemed to just be if they liked you, that is, they wanted to be able to work with you.” When seeking ‘people like us’, recruiters are aware that they might be seen as engaging in discriminatory hiring practices, which goes against their public image as employers who value cultural diversity (Parry and Jackling, 2015). Parry and Jackling critique that “notions of cultural diversity disguise recruitment strategies that result in homogeneity” (Parry and Jackling, 2015: 516). Similarly, Rivera (2012) argues that, “In essence, firms sought surface-level (i.e., demographic) diversity in applicant pools but deep-level (i.e., cultural) homogeneity in new hires” (1009).

Two interpretations of cultural fit in professional service firms emerge from the literature. The first is the *commercialism logic* which argues that cultural fit is used in the recruiting process primarily as a benchmark for one’s ability to manage client-firm relationships. This is valued in the accounting industry due to a shift towards commercialism that has occurred over the last two decades (Parry and Jackling, 2015). That is, it is imperative for firms to recruit cultural chameleons. Essentially, they are looking for individuals whose pre-existing habitus and understanding of norms and conventions in the business world will meet the needs of the firm as well as of their external clients. Thus, cultural fit can be judged based on variables such as behaviour, dress, external display of ambition and language skills. What counts as a cultural fit varies

between different firms, and is malleable over time within a single firm, as the composition of clients and their specific needs change. The second interpretation of cultural fit uses a logic of 'maximising social cohesion' within the firm. Human resources personnel and senior management rationalise the recruiting of individuals who are culturally similar to themselves because it makes work more enjoyable, not because it makes the firm more productive (Rivera, 2012). They believe that having similar personal interests, leisure pursuits and life experiences makes interpersonal contact easier and increases the chances that employees will enjoy each other's company.

Whilst it is likely that both the commercialism logic and the maximising social cohesion logic play a role in graduate recruitment, it is this second logic that participants in this study were more likely to notice and comment upon directly. Referring to the whole recruitment process, including interviews but also written tests and group observation, Luke likened the process to a matchmaking service:

I enjoyed the comradery that you build in an audit environment and working in large teams of very like-minded people with similar backgrounds, similar experiences, similar education. I mean they do all the psychometric testing for you, so they only hire very specific like-minded people for the most part I believe. And that's why I reckon so many people end up [romantically] coupling up and even marrying their co-workers – including myself... I have no doubt that the algorithms they use to categorise and decide ultimately who to hire plays some role in people generally getting along in these environments – and they *need* to have people getting along. Because you're spending 10 or 12 hours in rooms, mostly without windows, so you're in the trenches with these people doing work that people [non-auditors] don't appreciate and so you do build close bonds with the people you work with. [emphasis added]

Without explicitly saying so, firms are selecting graduates based on their class characteristics and their ability to reflect an embryonic version of the B4 habitus (see discussion in chapter four) back to recruiters. Individuals from middle class backgrounds have already been socialised into internalising values such as team work and a drive for career success and are thus more likely to succeed in this recruitment environment

Lareau 2011). This recruitment process also represents the start of the early career accountants' socialisation process (continued in chapter four) (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998).

Sales pitches: work as fun and international opportunities

To appeal to these middle-class graduate jobseekers, B4 firms must first overcome the stigma associated with their profession and industry (see 'sales pitches'). Large accounting firms as well as professional bodies such as the CA ANZ actively try to mitigate the boring accountant stereotype in their graduate recruitment material (Jeacle, 2008). This is achieved using two interconnecting sales pitches; by framing accounting work as fun and by emphasising future international possibilities.

Firms highlight the youthfulness of their workforce and the opportunities this offers graduates to make new friends, the fun activities such as charity events and sporting teams supported by the firm and the diverse interests of existing staff members outside of work. Professional associations make similar attempts at recasting the stereotype by emphasising fun social activities. Associations created promotional material with accompanying pictures and videos showing accountants snorkelling, playing golf or doing other exciting activities (Jeacle, 2008). According to Jeacle, "The message is an obvious one: you would not be an isolated nerd left at home with a calculator, you will be surrounded by a host of playmates" (2008: 1304).

Expectations created by promotional material were not always met in the interviewees' experiences. For example, Braden reported being shocked with the gap between the expectations and the reality of working at a B4 firm:

"[T]hey sell you stuff... the national induction [held early in the year at a hotel for all new graduates in Australia] and stuff, they tell you all the good things. I think I was led to believe they'd be very supportive, for example, if you were playing or wanted to play sport. I imagined you'd get there and everyone would be going off to play sport in the evening. But I was one of the very few who played sport and I was quite surprised when I actually started that it was like that. Because they

really promoted the work-life balance in the marketing department, and then you get there and realise it's not like that at all."

Some participants, such as Alison, had a more modest aim of making the most out of a 'boring job':

"[T]here is not much passion, you can't get excited [about accounting], there are some people who can... I didn't hate subjects at uni like some people, it was more just the lifestyle that, if I got through it I could get career progression and a decent salary. I think I was always of the opinion, even at uni, that I would try and find somewhere I enjoyed working, and find parts [of a job] I like... I think I always knew I could try to massage my career and make it enjoyable for me.

Firms encourage and hire graduates based in part on their participation in extra-curricular activities (Cheng et al., 2009; Rivera, 2012) whilst emphasising a fun image of their work environment. This contrasts with the culture of overwork and labour exploitation at B4 firms reported by the participants, as chapter four will discuss in detail.

In order to attract suitable graduate employees, firms also promote opportunities to work abroad, including international secondments. For example, the following excerpt is taken from the top of the CA ANZ webpage summary about "Where a CA could lead you":

Want to work anywhere in the world? The CA designation could be your passport to an international career

Want to be in demand by top companies? Improve your chances of being hunted by top employers throughout your career

Want to be globally recognised? Join one of the globe's top ten leading accounting bodies and connect to a 1,000,000 strong global knowledge network (CAANZ, 2017)

Two of the three key points highlighted by the CA ANZ make explicit reference to the global possibilities available to members, equating an 'international career' with

ambition and success. Whether they represent the reality of working in B4 firms, both the rhetoric within the 'work as fun' and the 'international opportunities' frames are also part of these accounting students' early professional socialisation. Specifically, they teach future graduates about key firm and profession values, that is, that they must display an enthusiasm for their work (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001) and a mentality of globally minded professionals (Jeacle, 2008). Furthermore, such rhetoric appeals to students who, through their habitus already hold mobility aspirations, thus attracting them into the profession. Research suggests that such predispositions are typical of middle-classed individuals in developed countries, for whom mobility is assumed to be a right rather than a privilege (Skrbis et al., 2013).

Career planning of accounting students

Participants looked back on their transition from education to employment, and reported that, back then, they did not yet know what they wanted to be 'when I grow up'. Conscious of the risk of unwittingly and prematurely 'closing the door' in case they changed careers later, they considered large organisations less risky. For example, Sam reflects on why he wanted to work as a graduate at a B4 firm. He says:

[W]hen you're younger you don't really know what jobs or roles there are out there... I enjoyed my time working as a vacationer and so it just seemed like a logical choice and something already 'in the bag' I guess... it probably was just the fact that they were the B4 and the opportunities that I would have within the organisation, whether that be different service lines [tax, audit, consulting etc] or bigger clients and networking, I think the large entity factor was a big thing... I don't think I had that much foresight, I wasn't thinking about my next job at that point. It was: 'I know [firm A] is a good organisation', 'this is my next step', that's as far as I could really – *Delay the decision. Delay the real-life decisions – yes.*
[emphasis added]

Similarly for Evelyn, the appeal of firm A was that:

I didn't want to fall into a 9-5 number crunching job. So, the idea of audit – of being able to go out to different places and see different industries, that really

appealed. *I suppose you could look at it as another way of putting off the decision of where I wanted to specialise.* [emphasis added]

These quotes in combination with those at the beginning of this chapter in which participants describe themselves as ‘falling into’ accounting, demonstrate one of the ways that participants attempted to reconcile the pressures they felt to conform to the norms of the (modern) middle-class linear life course with the neoliberal (post-modern) social values of self-determination and self-improvement. To meet the parental and class expectations of their life course trajectories, participants felt pressured to make a smooth and immediate transition from education to the workplace (Lareau, 2011). However, to meet the normative neoliberal expectations of the post-modern choice biography, participants’ identity required that they demonstrate active choices, a ‘self-determined’ plan for their future careers (Beck, 1992).

According to Blatterer (2007b), new adults of today have been taught by the contemporary imagination, that their futures hold unlimited options. This includes the possibility of upwards social mobility but also a risk of downwards social mobility. He argues that when faced with these infinite options and risks, individuals frame the future as ‘open’ as a means of legitimating the postponement of ultimate life choices (2007b: 49). While participants did not feel that they were permitted to delay the beginning of full-time employment, they sought other means of living up to their post-modern life course values. One means of achieving this was to frame their transition to work as a decision delayed rather than a decision foregone. However, to maintain the sense of ‘openness’ required to legitimise such delays, the employment sought must have sufficient future potential to minimise as much as possible the number of future career paths foregone because of the delay. Thus, participants’ two, potentially contradictory narratives, were resolved and participants could follow a path of least resistance and economic surety to meet their classed life course expectations whilst at the same time maintaining their post-modern life course values for freedom and self-determination.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the decisions made by the research participants in their transition into higher education and the labour market beyond. The middle-class status of these individuals plays a key role in shaping their values surrounding career and life course progression which in turn reflect in their choices of university degrees and places of graduate employment. Participants and their parents perceive accounting as a 'safe' degree to pursue due to the visible career trajectory that follows. The B4 are seen as offering a 'safe' transition into the labour market due to the firm's size, reputation and sense of future opportunities that they offer. Participants and their parents did not question the need to make a transition from university graduation to graduate employment without delay. A smooth transition into a stable occupation was idealised as a means of mitigating the risks inherent in the post-modern world. Participants' ability to demonstrate their middle-class habitus was key to achieving this goal in the B4 professional field where a focus on 'cultural fit' underpinned a search for individuals who already fit this mould. Furthermore, participants demonstrated that they maintained life course beliefs and values in line with both modernist and post-modernist discourses on the life course, and framed their entry into B4 firms as a means of delaying the decisions required of their post-modern choice biographies whilst also meeting the transition to work deadlines of their modern linear life course expectations.

In the next chapter I will discuss the continuing development of participants' middle-class, B4 habitus through their early career experiences of the socialisation processes of B4 firms. I will then demonstrate how this and other life course and class factors influence the international mobility practices of these individuals.

Early Career Professional Socialisation and the decision to Migrate.

This chapter focuses on the period from the participants' experience and socialisation in the B4 to their decisions to migrate. I examine the development of these individuals' professional identities in the field of the B4 and the role this plays in their decisions to, and timing of, migration. Throughout their time in the B4, international mobility and the lifestyle that goes with it is depicted as a form of deferred compensation for all the personal sacrifices made by *early career accountants* (ECAs).

Below, we begin by focusing on professional socialisation inside the B4, the impact of issues such as work-life balance, time budgeting and deferred compensation on the ECAs developing understanding of what it means to be 'professional' in the labour force. The next section then focuses on the period of considering migration. My findings indicate that individuals characterise their mobility as a professional reward for their dedication to professionalism in their early careers, that London is attractive for the lifestyle opportunities that it offers and that participants again continue to maintain their beliefs in a linear life course where international mobility represents a significant stage.

Professional socialisation inside the B4: lessons in professionalism, efficiency and delayed gratification.

Once accounting graduates have been offered and accepted a position in one of the B4 accounting firms, participants discuss their careers as entering a period of relative predictability. The expectation of these firms is that graduates will work full time whilst the firm supports them financially through the process of attaining their Chartered Accountants (CA) qualifications. This involves the completion of five Graduate Diploma of CA modules and 3 years (full time equivalent) employment in a relevant accounting role with an approved training employer (CAANZ, 2017).

During these early years, graduates receive regular performance reviews, raises and promotions in title. Specific role titles differ slightly between the B4, however, the typical roles and internal hierarchy, particularly for early-career auditors are quite consistent and within these firms. For a detailed description of ECA roles see appendix B.

The years from graduate to senior in this table represent what I describe as the ECA period. For now, there are three key issues of note:

1. Transitions within the hierarchy occur within a standardised time-frame with only a small amount of performance based variation (assuming individuals pass all their CA exams);
2. From as early as the analyst level, ECAs are gaining people management experience; and,
3. Until the level of manager, the bulk of an ECA's work is performed at client offices in small teams with minimal supervision from supervisors at the manager level and above.

The role of manager is also included in this table as this represents a key transition position for B4 accountants generally, as well as for the participants in this study. At the manager level the ECAs' performance within the firm transitions from being measured against their individual utilization targets (e.g. billable hours) to overall project budgeting (Ladva and Andrew, 2014). It has been argued within the literature that this change signals a destabilization in an ECA's professional identity; transitioning from a focus on technical ability to one focused on entrepreneurial mindedness (Kornberger et al., 2011). Spence and Carter (2014) have demonstrated that senior employees in B4 firms embody institutional logics into their professional habitus and a *commercial-professional logic*² is valued above a *technical-professional logic*.³ My interviews suggest that to some extent this hierarchy is understood and demonstrated by employees even during the ECA stages.

² Commercial-professional logic is defined as "privilege[ing] client interests and revenue generation over the interests of the wider public. Technical expertise is subordinated here to the maintenance of good client relationships and expanding service provision." (Spence and Carter 2014: 948)

³ Technical-professional logic is defined by the belief that accountants should "make decisions and perform their work without undue client or extra-professional influence and with serving the public interest as their foremost objective" (Spence and Carter 2014: 948)

However, it is generally accepted that most accountants do not intend to stay in public accounting firms long term. Rather, they use these firms as a means by which to launch or accelerate their careers (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998; Padgett et al., 2005). Literature suggests that there are two key exit points for accountants employed by the B4 – shortly after completing their CA or after successfully attaining the position of manager (Kornberger et al., 2011). This is consistent with the exit points of participants in this study. This period of time - between entering the firm and completing CA - has been likened to a ‘professional finishing school’ (Ladva and Andrew 2014) limiting the young accountant’s vision of future career development (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001: 116). It is a time in which young accountants undergo a process of socialisation, developing their professional identity and what it means to *be* and to *appear* professional (See for example, Almer et al., 2005; Anderson-Gough et al., 2001; Carter and Spence, 2014; Costas and Grey, 2014; Grey, 1998; Kornberger et al., 2011; Ladva and Andrew, 2014; Lupu and Empson, 2015; Spence and Carter, 2014; Spence et al., 2016).

For Luke, whose two younger brothers had very different careers to himself, the early career management institutionalised within the firm was one of the key benefits of an early career in the B4. He noted that, in the beginning, career progression was not something he and his peers had to consciously consider:

All I had to do was go to work, at the end of the year they gave me a performance review, a title change and a salary increase. And then after a couple of years you learn what managing your career is... things just progress – that's the way those firms work. You don't know what to expect when you first get there and you just go through the paces; you get on the conveyor belt or the treadmill and you start running.

However, he could only recognise such benefits with hindsight: more specifically, after reflecting on the contrasting experiences of his brothers and coming to the realisation that such progression and institutional support is not typical in all industries.

Whilst not something that is discussed explicitly by senior or junior staff, within a short period those graduates who excel ‘learn the rules’ and start ‘playing the game.’ Luke adds that:

... you get quite accustomed to that at [firm B]. I am a competitive person - extremely competitive - so having performance reviews, being rated against peers, plays right up to my strengths... I thrived in that environment and progressed quite quickly – for someone who hated accounting! Because *I realised that it wasn't about accounting at all – it was people management. Managing people, managing stakeholders, managing clients, managing relationships – managing up was definitely one of my strong suits.* And the sooner you learn to manage up in your career the better. If you can't manage up, you could be the best person at your job in the world but you will go nowhere fast... But no one tells you that directly. [emphasis added]

Kornberger et al (2011) argue that promotion to manager involves a destabilisation of the foundation built during ECA years, signalling the transition to new business priorities (KPIs) where “performing, playing games and politicking” are the new focus of the game (Kornberger et al., 2011: 514). However, Luke demonstrates that even before their performances are officially measured in this manner, ECAs recognise the importance of such politicking behaviour and have begun internalising the B4 culture which prioritises commercial-professional logic.

Whilst there has been much research in recent decades on the professional socialisation process of early career accountants, the following sections will focus specifically on three key areas that this study found to have particularly profound ongoing impacts on a participant’s mobility and plans. These include: work life balance, the impact of *time budgeting* and *time consciousness*, and the particularly pervasive concept in B4 firms, *delayed compensation*.

Work life balance

As alluded to in chapter four, there is a significant disconnect between the rosy picture of the accounting industry, particularly B4 firms, as painted by graduate

recruitment material, and the realities of work-life in these organisations. Excessive working hours are the norm, especially during *busy seasons*⁴ (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998; Coffey, 1994; Ladva and Andrew, 2014; Lupu, 2012) with interviewees citing regular working weeks of 60-70 hours towards the end of their tenure in the B4s. Literature suggests that a slow process of acclimatisation to these working expectations is all part of the early career accountant's socialisation process (Lupu and Empson, 2015). To begin with, busy seasons with extended working hours alternate with relatively lax seasons, making it easier for junior accountants to adjust to overwork. However, with time and as they climb the corporate ladder, this seasonality is replaced by sustained overwork (Lupu, 2012). Eventually, the frenetic pace and long hours expected in professional service firms become so normalised that individuals take it for granted that this way of working is necessary for success; "though the rhythm is imposed from the outside, it is internalized by the professionals and it fuels the general movement of the cohorts." (Ladva and Andrew, 2014; Lupu, 2012: 359). By the end of the ECA period, if or when they leave the B4, they are shocked to discover that these working expectations are not standard for all professionals.

Despite this reputation for long work hours, B4 firms are regularly listed in employer or workplace of the year lists; recognised for flexible work initiatives aimed at enabling better WLB for employees, premium graduate programs and gender equality and inclusion initiatives.⁵ This disconnect is perhaps explained by recent research which

⁴ 'Busy season' for Australian auditors refers to July/September for clients with June end of financial years and January-March for clients with December end of financial years. It is a period marked by tight deadlines and the expectation that employees work extended minimum daily hours.

⁵ The following websites are examples of awards B4 companies have been awarded or shortlisted for: Deloitte were finalists in the 2016 Australian HR Awards in the categories 'Employer of choice (1000+ employees)' and 'Best graduate development program' <http://www.hrwards.com.au/index.php/finalists/2016-finalists>; EY were recognised in the AHRI Awards as the winner of the Michael Kirby award for LGBTI inclusion <https://www.ahri.com.au/awards/ahri-awards/hall-of-fame/2016-winners>; KPMG is recognised as an employer of choice by the workplace gender equality agency <https://home.kpmg.com/au/en/home/about/performance.html>; and PwC was ranked number one in LinkedIn's Top Companies List under the category 'companies Australian workers want to work for'

suggests that in B4 firms, accountants are likely to be aware of organisational support for alternative working arrangements whilst simultaneously rejecting the viability of such arrangements for remaining effective at their job (Buchheit et al., 2016).

Time budgeting and time consciousness: building a web of control.

Ladva and Andrew (2014) demonstrate how the management accounting practice of *time budgeting* is inherent to service firms and along with dominant discourses of *efficiency* and *career* they form a 'web of control' in these firms. This web sustains a long-hours culture despite almost unanimous employee dissatisfaction with the practice and desire for greater WLB. Time budgeting practices are made visible through employee timesheets, teaching new recruits that not all time is equal. Cohorts are in constant competition with each other and an individual's utilisation figures (proportion of work time that is billable to a client) are used as a key performance indicators (KPI) of success. Boundaries between work and leisure time are rigid to the extent that work has minimum requirements but flexible to the extent that it is acceptable for work to impinge on personal time (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001). Uncompensated overtime is expected in two forms: billable work and the donation of personal leisure time to participate in firm socialising activities (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001; Ladva and Andrew, 2014). Thus, the life aspect of WLB is subordinated to the work function. It is through these processes that young accountants develop "generalised expectations that professional behaviour requires significant overtime" (Ladva and Andrew, 2014: 641) and that "you will always work more than you are paid for" (Ladva and Andrew, 2014: 641). However, it is not always beneficial to record the extent to which overtime (chargeable or not) is being worked. This is where time budgeting practices and utilisation figures come into conflict with the efficiency discourse.

The efficiency discourse recognises the politics of time inherent in B4 organisations; that is, that young accountants are informally encouraged to underreport their time worked (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001; Ladva and Andrew, 2014). Underreporting chargeable time creates the appearance that projects are meeting budgets, which is beneficial for managers, directors, partners and profit margins. This

<http://www.afr.com/leadership/workplace/pricewaterhousecoopers-ranks-first-in-top-companies-australians-want-to-work-for-20170516-gw66ys#>

also assists young professionals to appear 'efficient' – a key feature of their developing professional identity. However, what results is an environment in which there is no means to measure what 'true' efficiency is, which in turn becomes an "anxiety inducing, deeply challenging exercise in socialisation" (Ladva and Andrew, 2014: 645). The 'web of control' is particularly strong as it cannot be traced to any one source of power: instead it is internalised and reproduced by ECAs who use it to secure their identity (Ladva and Andrew, 2014)

Finally, the project of the career through a strategic life-plan is a powerful driver of behaviour among early-career accountants (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001; Ladva and Andrew, 2014). One's career is the tangible expression of an individual's ambition and dedication to excellence. These features become central to the ECA's identity and are used as a measure of an ECA's future potential inside and outside the firm (Ladva and Andrew, 2014). Time spent completing the CA, 'paying their dues' working in the B4 firms and earning the brand recognition on their future résumés becomes a part of their project of the self, the benefits of which are such that their exploitation during this period is rendered tolerable.

Deferred compensation

A key feature of the socialisation of ECAs is the concept of *deferred compensation*⁶ (Malos and Campion, 1995). Life in the B4 is perceived by early career accountants as a time of 'paying your dues'. This is reflected in remuneration which is generally lower than professionals at their level of experience could expect outside the firm – especially once they have been admitted into the CA ANZ. Researchers suggest that the reason ECAs put up with these pay levels is because they recognise the value reflected in investing in their futures through deferred compensation (Almer et al., 2005).

Deferred compensation has many forms, including accelerated careers, increased future income capacity and the prestige that comes with the CA accreditation and B4

⁶ "Deferred compensation describes the expectation that current compensation may be lower than market, with the understanding that a higher salary may be paid in the future, perhaps when the employee is admitted to the firm partnership or because the employee moves to a higher-paying industry job" (Almer et al., 2005; page 11)

name on their résumé. However, the most obvious and immediate compensation for participants in this study was the promise of international mobility. As discussed in chapter four, international mobility is a key feature of the graduate recruitment campaigns for both professional accounting bodies and the B4. International mobility grants young accountants an almost guaranteed employment abroad in a position at an income level which allows access to the social and travel opportunities which they desire (discussed in detail in chapter 5).

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, within the B4, global mobility has become a normalised occupational strategy of firms for knowledge transfer. More specifically, one to two year international secondments of newly qualified accounting staff have been part of the institutionalised migration strategies of the B4 since at least 1991 (Beaverstock, 1991; Beaverstock, 1996). What this means for my participants is that, from the time they were first employed as graduates, the international potential of their occupation has been highly visible. They witnessed many senior colleagues at the manager level and above who had moved to the Sydney offices from abroad on secondment. Alternatively, those who were originally based in Sydney frequently moved to various locations around the globe. An even greater number of accountants self-initiated their mobility in a similar fashion to my participants.

In conclusion, so far this chapter has outlined the key processes involved in the development of what I term the 'B4 habitus'. To summarise, the key assumptions of this habitus are:

- Prioritisation of the commercial-professional logic including a focus on meeting budgets (profits) and focus on meeting the needs of the client (Spence and Carter, 2014);
- Normalisation of excessive work hours including uncompensated overtime as demonstration of commitment to and effectiveness in position (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001; Lupu and Empson, 2015);
- Normalised attitude of life as subordinate to work (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998; Anderson-Gough et al., 2001)

- Internalised time-consciousness and future orientation which also encourages the acceptance of deferred compensation (Ladva and Andrew, 2014);
- Efficiency discourses (Ladva and Andrew, 2014);
- Valorisation of aggressive ambition through a demonstrated project of career (Grey, 1998; Ladva and Andrew, 2014);
- Outward display of enthusiasm for all of the above (Coffey, 1994).

When participants talk about what it means to have the B4 name on their résumé, it is this embodied capital that they are communicating; this is what it means to 'be professional' at these firms. Of course, once these early career accountants have completed their CAs, they are faced with a limited amount of time in which they can access the relatively risk free, low investment migration pathways most commonly accessed for the move to London. The rest of this chapter will focus on this process of initiating migration.

Considering Migration and Migration Pathways

The career-migration trajectories of the participants in this study followed a predictable pattern. Participants generally attained 4-6 years of work experience in Australia, reaching the age of 25-28 years before migration. As discussed earlier, soon after commencing graduate employment in a B4 firm, they began studying for their CA which was typically completed 3-3.5 years after commencing employment. Participants did not consider leaving the firm before they had completed this qualification, in large part because of the financial penalties (up to \$4000) of doing so, Sam explains as follows:

I had sort of figured out that audit wasn't for me long term... but I stayed until qualified because... When you start doing your CA with the B4, they obviously sponsor you through that but they have a clause saying that if you don't complete it then you must pay back the sponsorship. It's different for every firm but it's generally about \$2000-4000.

But ECAs also stayed until the end of their CA because the attainment of this accreditation provides international recognition and transferability of their skills and experience. That is, their employment prospects in London were significantly improved.

In this study, three of the six participants – Sam, Matthew and Evelyn - left their firm almost as soon as they had completed their CA; they worked in the B4 on average for 4 years. Sam spent a year working at an ex-client's firms before moving to London whilst Matthew moved straight to London from the B4. Evelyn similarly moved to London directly from the B4, however, this was following a domestic secondment period working on a project at one of firm A's clients. All of those who continued in the B4 to the manager or assistant manager level (four of six) migrated directly to the UK immediately upon leaving their firm; on average, they spent 6 years working before departure.

All participants indicated that international mobility had been a part of their life plans for some time, with this idea planted at home, high school, university or the B4. As such, they tended to describe their reasons for migration as simply the realisation of these long-held ambitions without recognising how these ambitions had been shaped by external factors. I thus argue that social and structural factors, specifically class and professional socialisation as discussed earlier in this chapter play a key role in the mobility of these young accountants. Participants could each point to role models, social capital, in the form of close family members, friends and co-workers, who had previously or were currently undertaking similar London experiences. This is in addition to the significant institutional focus on international mobility as a benefit of the accounting profession by professional accounting bodies and B4 recruiters in their early professional lives (See chapter three). All of these factors contribute to an environment in which migration, particularly impermanent migration, is perceived as an option that is both feasible and desirable.

Migration as professional reward for time invested in early career

As discussed briefly in earlier in this chapter, the prospect of global mobility is perceived by many in the B4 as a form of deferred compensation. After a period of 4-6 years of post-university labour force participation at firms with unrelenting long-hours

cultures and internal competition, this period of early adulthood, study and work has involved much sacrifice in the form of private time and comparatively low wages. Individuals justified these sacrifices with the belief that they would be compensated in the future.

The catalyst for activating their migration plans stemmed from a sense that something 'needed to change' or that their careers were getting too predictable and they needed to 'push' themselves more or to "get out of the comfort zone" (Sam). As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the early careers of these individuals were accelerated; marked by constant challenge (CA exams and long working hours) and regular promotions including pay increases, although still below market rates. When this career development plateaued, participants were less willing to continue making sacrifices for the firms and looked for 'the next step.' Braden described his experience as follows:

I was just getting snowed under with work, I was working every weekend. All of these small jobs were dragging on and just never finished... It wasn't rewarding anymore so I just said, "Nup! I have had enough of this!" It was probably about September then, and I made the decision I was going to move in March...

Participants appear to have made a calculated, rational choice; they have assessed their inputs (effort, time, stress) against their compensation (income and the additional deferred compensation they are likely to accumulate by staying) and have judged the resulting equation to be unsatisfactory (Almer et al., 2005). Furthermore, firms actively recognise that this is a time when such calculations are more likely to take place and attempt to mitigate their losses by offering individuals alternative options apart from resigning. One of the options offered at firm B was a 'career break'. An officially recognised 12 month leave without pay arrangement offered to many employees at the post CA level. Career breaks of this type were very common and seemed to inspire a certain amount of goodwill towards the firm. Alison reflects that:

When I look back on it, it is a pretty amazing thing to offer. They were dime-a-dozen after CA and people usually used it as a stepping stone to resignation. They

kind of know that the bulk of their workforce is in their 20s and they're going to travel. So rather than resigning, why not give them the option to do some travel and come back?!

Migration was just one of the options possible for making the 'change' that participants desired. It was one that they felt entitled to experience as they had already 'paid their dues' in their time at the B4 and now was the time to cash in the international mobility cheque. For the individuals interviewed there was almost no choice. The decision was 'obvious', it was time to go to London.

Why choose not to migrate using ICT?

Another mechanism offered by B4 firms which recognises and attempts to mitigate the losses of recently qualified accounting personnel is the international intra-corporate transfer (ICT). Beaverstock (1991; 2017) argues that ICTs – including 2-4 year secondments of recently qualified accounting personnel – are a common and persistent feature of multinational accounting firms' employment strategies, representing the most efficient way for firms to circulate knowledge between international offices. However, this form of migration is tightly controlled and whilst individuals can request a transfer, ultimately it is up to the firm to determine the details including destination and length of stay (Beaverstock, 1991). Theoretically secondments are ideal as they mitigate many of the risks involved with migration including: finding employment, organising visas and covering some of the costs of migration. Furthermore, research has suggested that individuals, if denied the opportunity for an ICT by their firm, are likely to switch firms for another chance (Beaverstock, 1991). Therefore, considering ICTs were an available option – at least in theory – for my participants, an important question is, why did they choose to self-initiate their mobility instead?

My findings suggest that actually, many of these accountants, under the right circumstances, would prefer to self-initiate their migration. Whilst almost every participant at some stage considered migrating to London via ICT they ultimately decided against it. For Braden, this was primarily an issue of timing:

At the time, I planned to go via secondment, but then the GFC happened. They were a lot harder to come by and so this wasn't really an option... then you had to be under 31 to get the [T5] visa. I was 28-29 then so I thought, 'If I don't do it now I may never get the opportunity, I've just got to go now!'

However, in hindsight he was glad that circumstances turned out this way:

I think I wanted to do a secondment because I thought it would be easier to meet people though [firm B]. But then you're doing long hours, working weekends and your lifestyle is going to be the same as it was in Sydney. I definitely wouldn't have enjoyed it as much had I done a secondment... often [secondees] don't even work in London. [They're] working in Birmingham Monday to Friday kind of thing...

These issues were also reflected in the other interviewees' statements. They wanted to migrate and in making this decision they had to think about why they wanted to migrate. Literature suggests that the B4 constitute a distinct professional institutional space in which the habitus of successful employees is remarkably similar across national borders (Spence et al., 2016). They were essentially burnt out at work and recognised that they needed a change, so why would they move within the B4 to another part of the world where the work expectations would remain the same? As Luke acknowledges, "I didn't want to ruin 2 years in London... I didn't want to work as hard as I was working [in Australia]. I wanted to go over there and enjoy myself for two years." An ICT would not be able to offer them the lifestyle that they were anticipating for their time overseas (see chapter 5).

However, these attitudes to migration were also dominated by money – 'for it is a truth universally acknowledged that, ' Australian accountants with B4 experience who work on contracts in London get paid a lot of money. Braden acknowledges that the reality of this statement varies with the exchange rate which during his London period was not ideal. However, even during times of a relatively strong Australian dollar, when participants moved to London they spoke of essentially doubling their B4 income. This was due to multiple structural factors. Matthew breaks it down in the following way:

I probably doubled my salary instantly. You would expect to get a bump in salary from leaving [firm A] but it's more than that. In part it's because you're contracting over there so you set yourself up as a company and there are tax benefits to that. And in addition, London pays about 10% more [than Sydney] and contractors get about 25% more than that. But then you don't get sick or holiday leave.

However, in choosing not to use the ICT route, participants' mobility was in many ways dictated by structural factors such as UK migration policies and by their continued belief in a typical career progression model and was thus felt to be beyond their individual control. These issues will be discussed in the rest of this chapter.

Attractiveness and accessibility of London as a destination

Participants moved to London between April 2011 and May 2016. This follows the introduction of the points or tier based system of migration to the UK, and was during the recovery period after the global financial crisis and prior to the Brexit vote. Such structural factors inevitably influence the risks and effort involved in pursuing international mobility to London and would therefore be expected to impact on migrants' framing of this life period. They used one of two migration pathways to enter the UK and gain access to the local labour market. Four of the six participants migrated on the Tier 5 (youth mobility scheme) visa, formerly classified as the 'working holidaymaker' category. In theory, these four could also have attempted to migrate using a T2 (General) visa, but this would require them to gain employment with a licenced sponsor before moving to the UK. The remaining two – Sam and Evelyn – could migrate to the UK on British passports through British citizenship by descent.⁷

The Tier 5 visa allows citizens of certain countries (including Australia) between the ages of 18-30 who can prove a minimum amount in savings¹ to live and work (except as a professional sportsperson or doctor in training) in the UK for a period of up to two

⁷ British citizenship by descent is awarded to individuals born outside of the UK to a parent who holds British citizenship other than by descent. I.e. individuals who hold this form of citizenship are unable to pass it down to their offspring.

years. This is a once in a lifetime visa in the sense that an individual cannot apply for it a second time nor extend their stay after it expires, nor is the time spent in the UK on this visa eligible to be counted towards the residency requirements for Indefinite Leave to Remain (permanent residency) visa should they wish to remain in the future. The very existence of this visa, allowing for extended mobility and employment possibilities with a relatively low cost of entry (in terms of both risk and cost of the visa) to an English-speaking country, made London an attractive destination.

London was also an attractive destination for these GCMs due to its status as the number one ranked global financial centre throughout their periods of mobility (Yaendle, 2017). This relative status of London – compared to Sydney – was implicitly understood by all participants and doubtless informed part of the appeal of London. Employment opportunities in the city were so embedded in the mythology of the ‘Australian accountant in London’ that participants only cited negative experiences rather than acknowledging employment opportunities as a reason for choosing London in the first place. For example, when Alison discussed the struggle for her and her partner to get jobs in upon arrival in London:

We were really stressed out! We had no money. We were supposed to be CA[s] – they were supposed to be knocking our door down trying to hire us and no one was calling!

Nevertheless, to restrict the appeal of London to its economic opportunities would be to do the experience of these GCMs a disservice. Many other factors informed the choice of London as a destination including its geographical proximity to Europe, language considerations, and the sense that the UK is ‘similar but different’. As Evelyn explains:

I never really considered working somewhere I didn’t speak the language... I knew I wanted to experience living in a different culture; I know it’s not a hugely different culture but there are many things that are different. Attitudes, slang, ways of doing things. Friday night drinks for example – not a big thing over here,

it's Thursday night drinks instead because a lot of people live outside of London and on Friday night they want to get home to their kids.

Conradson and Latham (2005b) also acknowledge this multidimensional appeal of London for GCMs. They argue in their research that young New Zealanders on their 'Overseas Experience' approach London not simply as an *Escalator Region*⁸ but as a "dynamic labour market that simultaneously offers the opportunity for travel, experimentation and a spectrum of cultural experiences." (2005b: 170) and furthermore, that their style of mobility "can be understood as part of a more general process of creative individualisation... in which self-development is achieved and explored in part through living abroad" (2005b: 163). This take on international mobility is one that is shared by my participants and will be analysed further in the following section and chapter 6.

Life course issues

The experiences of ECA's described in this chapter, specifically the transition to work and focus on the development of career, are consistent with normative markers of the life course period 'young adulthood' (Kley and Mulder, 2010). As discussed in chapter three, the transition from education to career was consistent with participant's class-based expectations. In the period between their transition to work and their decision to migrate to London, interviewees developed further institutional cultural capital by completing their professional qualifications. They also developed their embodied cultural capital in the form of their B4 habitus and, in so doing, developed a magnified sense of the post-modern life course values of self-determination and self-improvement. Furthermore, their language expresses a confidence in their agency, in their ability to

⁸ London and the South-East of England are known as an 'escalator region' (Fielding 1992; Conradson and Latham 2005b). Escalator regions are defined as areas which draw the migration of young people due to the "variety and quality of local employment opportunities" (Conradson and Latham 2005b: 162) which have the potential to accelerate the development of their careers (Fielding 1992).

make decisions about their future, that was not apparent at the end of their university studies.

As Wingens et al remind us “life course patterns emerge from the complex interrelations of societal structuring forces and biographical plans and actions in the historical course of time” (2011: 6). Throughout their challenging years in the B4, access to international mobility of a certain standard has been portrayed as one of the professional benefits of an early career dedicated to work as an accountant at the B4 . This is in addition to middle-class subjectivities which view youth mobility as a right and not a privilege (Beck, 2002) and their social capital which encourages mobility (Frändberg, 2015). But, as Inkson and Myers recognise in their research on youth migration, “the desire to travel may be deep rooted but the timing of travel often depends on short-term factors such as attitude to current job, and freedom from constraining relationships” (2003: 174). Attitudes to current jobs, in particular the sense that current jobs lacked the level of self-development opportunities which participants had come to demand of themselves, were a key driver in the timing of their mobility as was awareness of their age and the limited time left to access the kind of mobility they desired. Sam described his mobility timing as follows:

[Moving to London] was something that was always going to happen. The only question was the timing... I didn't want to do it before university and then straight after university I started at [firm A], you know, putting it off. And I guess it just became time... I needed to get out of my comfort zone back in Australia... everyone gets into a comfort zone. Which some people like but I guess I am a person who likes to continually challenge myself. And If I see that I am, you know, not progressing or not learning then that's something that makes me uncomfortable a bit... For me it was like, I knew where my life was going. Like it was basically like a linear progression. As in the only factor in progression – like career progression – was time. Just waiting, slogging it out – there was no real [pause] no real unknowns anymore.

And Evelyn displayed a similar dissatisfaction with the status quo:

I knew that I wanted a change. In Sydney, I had been working in the same company for 4.5 years. I'd been living in the same flat for 3 years, seeing the same people, doing the same things... I was like 'I am in my late 20s, if I don't do it now when am I going to do it?' [Evelyn]

Sam's description of the final catalyst of his mobility is telling. As is expected of individuals living in a post-modern world, he places great emphasis on his own individualised discomfort with his pre-migration plateau and desire to constantly challenge himself. He frames his decisions as individualised biographical orientations. As first raised in chapter one, and again in chapter three, underlying this rhetoric lies an appreciation of the post-modern life course as one that is individualised and self-fashioned (Beck, 2002; Blatterer, 2007b; Frändberg, 2015). Furthermore, his insistence on 'continually challenging' himself reveals his internalisation of the social values of self-determination and self-improvement. It also recognises the loss of classic markers of class such that continuous personal development – reflexivity - is a necessity for the maintenance of (middle) class status (Blatterer, 2007b) and migration is perceived as one means by which to achieve this outcome (Conradson and Latham, 2005; Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Conradson and Latham, 2007; Doherty et al., 2011; Favell, 2006; Frändberg, 2015; Haverig and Roberts, 2011; Inkson and Myers, 2003; Roos, 2016; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014; Yoon, 2014). If these privileged middle-class individuals are balancing on the narrow "conveyor belt leading to eventual success" (Farrugia, 2013: 688) then they are unsatisfied with the direction and pace of that conveyor belt and are seeking the 'temporary escape' button. This 'escape' is merely a diversion from their standard life course and career trajectories and a socially approved and governed one at that (Haverig and Roberts, 2011). In this narrative their migration is both a break from what they perceived as the pressures of home (aka normative life course expectations) *and* a long planned stage of their life course with its own norms and expectations (Frändberg, 2015; Haverig and Roberts, 2011).

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the period from induction into the B4 to the decision to migrate. It suggests that ECA's in B4 firms develop a habitus that is specific to the field

of B4 professional service firms. The decision to migrate is informed in part by this socialisation as its timing is structured by B4 internal hierarchies and the accounting professions' post graduate education structure. By choosing to migrate they plug into taken for granted notions, socially acceptable stories about youth mobility in the life course – specifically as a means of escape from the social and life course pressures of home. Chapter five will investigate participants' experience of the time in London, specifically on what their professional decisions overseas and visions of future selves tell us about how individuals perceive this experience as part of their greater life course.

International mobility in London

Introduction

Whilst much of the research discussed so far focusses on ECAs, interviews with my participants suggest that the professional identities developed during this life stage persist even after individuals have left the firms and country in which they were developed. The following chapter argues that these professional identities continue to inform migrants' identities and experience of work, however, the rules of professionalism are, to a certain extent, relaxed during the first 1-2 years living overseas. The following chapter focuses on the period of international mobility for these gold-collar migrants. It begins with a vignette of Luke's time which contains several important themes that will be unpicked and discussed throughout the chapter. These issues include: work-life balance, characterisations of London as a holiday versus a strategic career move, the challenges of contracting employment and the life course and class factors which influence interviewees' mobility.

Luke and his partner both worked as auditors in firm B. Luke was a manager when, at 28, they decided jointly to activate their plans to move to London. He reflects:

[Work-life balance in London] was definitely better than audit. But, I am a believer that if you're a hard worker then you're a hard worker and you can always find work to do. It's just whether you put your hand up to do it... So – did I work? – I definitely wasn't working as long hours as I was in Australia. [...]

The first role [in London]... they offered to make me permanent... [But] I realised that what I was doing... it was just a project management role which was great, generally interesting, but very niche and I thought that, *if I ever did come back [to Australia], I didn't know what I would tell people that I did for 2 years*. So, I moved to [new firm] and I just did a group finance manager role there... *I knew that if I ever wanted to come back [to Australia] I needed to have that on my CV*.

We both had opportunities to get sponsored in the roles that we had while we were over there but we had the two-year visa and *we decided that home was in Sydney...* Our families are in Sydney and *London is a 'young' city*. I mean London is great when you're on dual income no kids, but people who have kids don't live in London. They live in a commuter belt. They catch a train for 45 minutes every day... *We knew that we wanted to get married at some point and have kids.*

It was literally a *two-and-a-half-year holiday... it was surreal, it wasn't reality*. We needed a reality check, we needed to come back. And... I wanted to get back into the groove, *back on the [career] ladder a bit, back in a permanent role*. As a contractor, you don't get any of the performance management. There's no-one invested in your career – the more senior you get the harder it becomes to be a contractor because senior positions don't go to contractors... and to be honest, *by the end of it the weekends away weren't enjoyable. We had travelled too much*. We were coming back on a Sunday night thinking "I don't want to do another weekend away for another 2 months!" So, we realised that the novelty had worn off. [Emphasis added].

Transitions into the London labour market

As discussed in chapter four, the catalyst for the migration of GCMs to London was dissatisfaction with the status quo at work. The following section will start by describing the basic facts of migrants' employment in London. These findings will then be contextualised using existing research on labour migration and the status passages of highly skilled migrants.

The path to employment in London was identical for all participants in this study except Evelyn. Evelyn sought contract employment directly via an ex-colleague in Sydney. All other participants arrived in London - usually following a few months of travel to various destinations – and used contacts with ex-colleagues and friends to access accounting recruiters. Recruiters set up interviews with various organisations and typically, within a week or two, participants had signed an employment contract. Contract lengths were anywhere from 2 weeks to 12 months and it was common for

them to be extended – sometimes by up to a year. Usually though, contracts lasted at least 12 months so that participants worked on two major contracts over the course of their time in London. On average roles tended to be in large multinational firms or banks, in financial accounting roles. This was in part because these organisations use equivalent accounting standards to those in Australia. However, not all roles were strictly accounting based, for example, Luke’s first position was a project management role in a public-sector firm and Evelyn’s first role was in insurance remediation.

As discussed in chapter four, before migration, participants generally perceived their life courses as inevitably progressing in a linear fashion in the arenas of work and personal lives. Their transitions from education to work occurred ‘on time’ and their experience in the B4 had the potential to accelerate their progression through the career hierarchy. However, they were unsatisfied and resistant to this continued trajectory. As Amit has argued, in spite of evidence of the deinstitutionalisation of the modernist life course, many individuals and specifically young adults continue to behave in accordance with a belief in its continued relevance (2011: 80). In this narrative, international mobility is used as a temporary reprieve of life course expectations (Amit, 2011; Conradson and Latham, 2005; Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Conradson and Latham, 2007; Frändberg, 2015).

The transition to work as part of the migration process of skilled migrants represents a *multidimensional status passage* (Nohl et al., 2014). During this transition the migrant’s existing qualifications and educational degrees are re-evaluated in the receiving country, according to the criteria used by its labour market (Nohl et al 2014: 50). However, the rhetoric used by interviewees about their migration did not recognise these passages. In this sense, the participants in this study were particularly privileged because their:

- Mobility was enabled by T5 visas or British citizenship by descent, neither of which require governmental recognition of their status as skilled migrants;

- Educational qualifications (institutionalised cultural capital) through the CA ANZ were instantly internationally transferrable without devaluation; and,
- Work experience (institutionalised cultural capital) in the B4 was internationally recognised and highly regarded by employers and recruitment agents

This combination allowed them virtually unfettered, legal access to the local labour market – if only for a limited time - at or above their pre-migration levels.

However, even beyond issues of migration policy, the frictionless movement of skilled migrants across national borders is a myth and institutionalised cultural capital is not the only form of capital required to succeed in a new country or city (Favell, 2006; Leinonen, 2012). Other facilitators of mobility include economic capital, embodied cultural capital and social capital. Embodied cultural capital is particularly important to the employment prospects of highly skilled migrants - such as those in this study - who work in the private economy as managers and consultants (Nohl et al., 2014). In this too, interviewees were privileged by the relatively similar work cultures between Sydney and London as well as the popularity of B4 mobility to London which provided migrants with pre-existing networks of B4 colleagues and other expats.

Ethnicity can be another source of privilege or disadvantage for many skilled migrants (Kunz, 2016; Lehmann, 2014; Leinonen, 2012; Leonard, 2016). Research suggests that skilled workers in highly developed states who are interpreted as ‘non-white’ are more likely than their ‘white’ counterparts to experience racism and career stagnation (Helleiner, 2017; Leinonen, 2012). For example, researching young Pakistani accountants in London, Rahim (2014) observed that individuals’ technical knowledge granted them status but socialisation expectations limited their career success in the city. As far as ethnicity is concerned, all the participants in my research ‘pass as white’. They did not mention any struggles with race or ethnicity in either their work or personal lives whilst in London. The lack of such dialogue could indicate another area in which their status passages in London have been privileged, however, as mentioned in chapter two,

the data in this study did not allow for comparison of different ethnic groups among the Australian accountants and therefore any such conclusions can only be speculative.

The liminality of this initial status passage is key to interviewees' experiences of their time abroad.

“[M]igrants are widely dependent on the legal, social, and symbolic recognition of their cultural capital. At the same time, they are actively involved in negotiating the recognition and valorisation of their cultural capital during their status passage into the labour market” (Nohl et al 2014: 12).

Interviewees side-stepped this negotiation upon first entering the UK but if they intend to stay past the initial two years of their visa then this negotiation is delayed rather than avoided altogether. Research on other professional working holiday makers argues that this liminality contributes greatly to “focus their minds on maximising the experience of London” (Conradson and Latham, 2007: 242) (this discussion will be continued in the sections below).

This section has recognised that the multidimensional status passages of interviewees were privileged in all areas of their transition. Whilst they may not have consciously recognised this themselves, it is in the absence of such considerations by interviewees that belied their status as privileged migrants. This status allowed them, as indicated in Matthew's quote, to uncritically conceptualise their mobility as a 'risk free' opportunity.

Attitudes to work

As discussed in chapter four, those who are employed by the B4 develop a specific work ethic. Their definition of 'real work' and what it means to be professional are fundamentally shaped around the idea that they are and should be required to donate significant portions of their personal time to work; furthermore, that they will always, inevitably, work more than they are paid for. While overseas, participants unanimously reported working fewer hours with less stress and an overall better work-life balance than they had previously experienced in Sydney. However, as evidenced by

Luke at the beginning of this chapter, this attitude to work was always conditional. He was working less than the 50-60 hour weeks that were routine in the B4, but that didn't mean that he was satisfied with limiting his work to a 40-hour week. Furthermore, he and the other interviewees constantly examined their employment decisions through a future oriented lens, asking, 'How will this position, this work experience, be interpreted when I return to Australia?' This confirms that while the demands and pressures of professional 'success' are relaxed whilst overseas, they continue to exist in the social context of home (Frändberg, 2015).

Whilst in London, Alison drew parallels between Australian and local contractors, suggesting that their different attitudes to work stemmed from their B4 history.

Australians and New Zealanders have a really good rep [in London] as contractors because they 'work like a permanent employee'. British contractors put their pens down at 5pm and walk out whereas an Aussie will stay until the task is done – even if they're being paid a daily rate. I mean of course I am going to do that – it's not finished! Most of us come from B4 backgrounds so it's part of our training, we have had it ingrained in us. We are great value for money. Organizations get B4 trained, hard-working contractors who think it's odd that they might even consider leaving work before 6pm anyway.

This demonstrates the persistence of the B4 professional habitus - part of which sees unpaid overtime as reasonable overseas even in its relaxed state. Participant interviews suggest that the professional identities developed during their early careers persist even after individuals have left the field (i.e. firms and/or country) in which they were developed. While to a certain extent, overseas participants temporarily adapt their behaviour to suit the rules of the new field in which they are employed (Andreson and Walther, 2013), they also demonstrated that their understanding of what it means to 'be professional' remained remarkably stable.

Whilst continuing to inform their identity, the pressure to conform to these stringent rules of professionalism is relaxed to a certain extent whilst participants are in their first one to two years working overseas. Evelyn notes:

On a professional level, there is slightly less pressure to be trying to build a career over here because I know it's only temporary... Having said that there is still the thought in the back of my mind that what I do over here will impact my future.

Participants did work fewer hours per week than they did in Sydney and did report getting home by 6pm most nights. This is not to suggest that Londoners work fewer hours than Sydneysiders, but rather that the type of work that these interviewees were doing - contracting rather than permanent employment and in industry versus consulting firms – resulted in noticeably different WLB. In practice this meant that interviewees did not consider the work that they performed in London as 'real work' or their achievements as 'real career progression' as they did not meet the standards of 'professionalism' developed at their time in the B4.

Overall, what these attitudes to work in London demonstrate is that for interviewees the importance of career never fully diminished while overseas, and that the 'success' of their period of mobility was about more than 'just' career progression. This leads us to ask: how did interviewees frame their life overseas; was it best understood as a holiday or a strategic career move?

London as holiday verses strategic career move

Participants in this study routinely insisted that their time in London was an "extended holiday." This was despite their continued dedication to work and career as discussed in the previous section. I argue that the participants' insistence on characterising this period as a holiday is informed by three phenomena:

1. They maintain a better WLB in London than Sydney so they feel like they are on holiday;
2. The powerful normative control enforced by the historical cultural narrative informs the 'young antipodean experience in London'; and,
3. As discussed in 'attitudes to work', interviewees' B4 professional habitus, developed during their early career professional socialisation, does not

allow them to recognise the work they performed in London as meeting their high standards of 'professionalism' and/or 'career progression.'

When asked about their time in London, interviewees immediately started talking about lifestyle and travel opportunities, about how much fun they had overseas and how they are so glad that they experienced this 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity. What they did not discuss (without prompting) was their employment and careers. Of all the participants in my study, Luke was probably the most aggressively career minded before, during and after migration. Yet, as exemplified by his quotes at the beginning of this chapter, even he insisted on characterising this period as a holiday. Like much of the research on young New Zealand migrants on their *Overseas Experience* (Conradson and Latham, 2005; Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Conradson and Latham, 2007; Haverig and Roberts, 2011; Inkson and Myers, 2003; Wilson et al., 2009), the focus of interviewees' discussion is on lifestyle, travel and personal growth. For example, when asked to describe his time in London, Sam highlighted all the places he had travelled so far:

I'm still travelling a lot. Last year I went away a lot on weekends but didn't do so many big trips. I've spent a week on a road trip through Scotland, and was in Italy for two weeks after finishing a contract. I've just returned from a week in Iceland and New York and I'm leaving for Croatia and maybe Greece in about a month.

The combination of travel focus and WLB (see 'attitudes to work' above) is what interviewees expect of a holiday. Williams and Hall agree, arguing that 'Overseas Experiences' typify a new form of mobility which "straddle[s] not just international boundaries but the worlds of work and leisure, and also of tourism and migration" (2002: 1).

However, the 'holiday' characterisation was not *just* about tourism. Research on the international mobility of young adults indicates that it is often used as a means of postponing or gaining temporary relief from the pressures of life course expectations (Frändberg, 2015; Roberts, 2007), as was the case for interviewees in this study. The relative release from life course pressures was a relief for interviewees whose early adulthood had been characterised by high pressure fields of excellence (e.g. B4 field, see

chapter four) and the pressure to be seen to progress smoothly and on time through the life course (see chapter three). Furthermore, participants felt entitled to this 'break' as it represented compensation for much of their early investment in their careers (see section on deferred compensation in chapter four).

In addition to travel and the relief from life course pressures, interviewees' holiday frame was also encouraged by their keen consciousness of time. Like a holiday – albeit an extended one – participants considered their time in London to be temporary. This awareness of time encouraged interviewees to focus on maximising their experiences. Braden describes the time as a 'party lifestyle' in part motivated by these time limits:

You act a bit younger than most people who are 29 here [Sydney]. They probably aren't partying as hard, whereas I was probably partying as hard as I ever have in those two years because **you're only there for two years – you've got to make the most of it!** [emphasis added]

And even Evelyn – who migrated using a British passport and is thus not legally limited by time – supports this thesis observing that:

There is always that feeling of 'I should do things while I am here because I won't always have the chance'...

Whilst this temporal attitude might, therefore, in part be structured by visa regulations, they don't explain them entirely. To make sense of this attitude we must turn to the powerful normative influence of the historical cultural narrative that is the 'young antipodean experience in London' for further understanding.

I argue that a significant contributor to the 'holiday' thesis, resides in the normalised cultural narratives that have developed throughout the long history of Australian and antipodean migrants relocating to the UK (Haverig and Roberts, 2011). As discussed in the introduction, the temporary migration of Australians to the UK is not a new phenomenon and over time discourses surrounding this temporary mobility have seen norms develop which "define a space of possible actions within which people are

enabled to act” (Haverig and Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 2007: 596), that is, the type of behaviour and experience which is ‘normal’ and ‘correct’ during this period. Expectations included:

- Prioritising travel (especially throughout Europe) (Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Conradson and Latham, 2007);
- Deemphasising adversities, in part enabled by the period’s temporal dimension (Conradson and Latham, 2007);
- Behaviour, including an emphasis on socialising and the ‘do and see everything while you can’ attitude discussed above; and,
- Improving oneself through international work experience and cosmopolitanism (Conradson and Latham, 2007).

Roberts suggests that:

As young adults many Australian working holiday makers frame the two-year overseas experience in terms of ‘getting travel out of your system’ so that you can return home and ‘get on with your life’ (2011: 37).

Participants did not question this overarching holiday narrative because, to them, it seems logical: since one travels when on holiday and, whilst in London, they are constantly travelling or planning their next trip. Rather, as Luke’s vignette suggests, the key question is what to do when one no longer wishes to travel. Because the popular Australian cultural script characterises youth migration to the UK as a temporary holiday, the diminishing desire to travel in general challenges the very legitimacy of their continued stay in London.

Finally, I suggest that the professional socialisation and middle-class habitus of these interviewees as discussed in chapters three and four further contribute to this holiday narrative. As David attests, this lifestyle – the work-life balance as well as the focus on travel and socialising - is not ‘real-life’ and interviewees are acutely aware that at some stage they must return to ‘real-life’. But until this day arrives, they are living a holiday. The work they perform, specifically the hours they are working and the absence

of measureable, linear career progression between contracts does not live up to their very specific standards of professionalism.

Like other research on the working holiday phenomenon, participants considered this period to be a normal life-stage (Conradson and Latham, 2007; Haverig and Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 2007; Wilson et al., 2009) where school is followed by university, then a period of establishing their professional career through work at a B4 firm, which is followed by the London period of travel, fun and self-development and finally by a return to Australia and period of 'settling down'. Although they continued to strategically manage their careers and professional reputations whilst working in London, Interviewees plugged into the normative narratives surrounding the London experience whilst also comparing their lifestyles to their early careers and socialised expectations of what it means to be a professional and characterised this period as a holiday rather than a strategic career move.

Narratives about the future

The following section begins by describing two common concerns of these migrants pertaining to their futures; return migration and the benefits and costs of prolonged contract work. Following these descriptions, I return to the primary focus of this thesis by analysing what these concerns say about the life course and class beliefs of these migrants.

Return migration

All participants in this study, including those who migrated using their British citizenship, considered London life to be temporary. At the time of interviews, four of the six participants had returned to Australia and this section focuses primarily on their reflections on the timing and motivations for their return.⁹ For those on the T5 visa,

⁹ The two participants who were still in London – Evelyn and Sam – were also the two who migrated using British passports, meaning that their time in London was unrestricted. However, at the time of interviewing they were also within their first 24 months working overseas. Whilst the future is uncertain, Sam spoke of the likelihood that he would follow his partner back to Australia when her 24-month visa expired and Evelyn

approaching the end of their two-year time-period marked a turning point in their mobility. For some, the expiry of their visas meant that they had no choice but to return to Australia but for others this was a catalyst for them to think critically about their futures. Of the four who have returned, three¹⁰ had at some stage in their migration been offered organizational sponsorship for a Tier 2 visa that would have allowed them to remain in the UK and provide the possibility of applying for permanent residency in the future. So, since they had the option of staying, why did they choose to return? Alison responds by saying:

I wanted to move onto the next stage. The expectation of the firm when they sponsor you is that you will stay on in that role or organization for at least two years – I just couldn't agree to that.

Throughout this section of the interview, Alison demonstrated that during the approach to the end of her visa her priorities shifted from enjoying the relative freedom from social and life course expectations that London provided to a renewed focus on her career. Inkson and Myers (2003) noted similar shifts towards the end of the working holiday for many of the professionals they studied. However, for Alison this shift was also informed in part by her desire to have children. She believed it was necessary to consolidate her career before making this transition to parenthood and identified the conditions attached to receiving a sponsored visa as hindering these goals.

Thus, participants who chose to return to Australia did so because of changing biographical orientations. As discussed in the previous section, interviewees characterised their initial two-years in London as an extended holiday. Furthermore, they emphasised travel so strongly during this period that the its absence called their continued mobility into question.

spoke of the importance of moving back to Sydney to be closer to her ageing parents, young nieces and nephews

¹⁰ Of these three, one was unable to proceed due to last minute hiring policy changes in the initial period following the Brexit vote.

Both issues demonstrate a returned urgency of interviewees' 'professional time consciousness' (discussed in chapter four). While this does not necessitate return migration, it did result in it for these participants. Returned professional time consciousness was exhibited by all¹¹ participants, regardless of visa status towards the end of the initial two-year period. If this period of travel was being used as a socially acceptable means of staving off passages to other life stages a little longer (Amit, 2011: 84), then participants remarks about careers and 'the next stage' indicate that the social acceptability of this narrative expires for young Australian accountants at around the 24 month mark. Favell (2006) notes that after a period of extended youth mobility, highly skilled French migrants begin questioning the long-term viability of their lifestyle in London, their resistance to 'settling down' before returning to France sees them fall out of sync with the life course norms around them and of their peers in their home country. To be out of sync with life course norms goes against everything my interviewees have worked so hard to achieve throughout their higher education and early careers. Therefore, it is through their persistent believe in the linear life course that we must understand their motivations for return migration.

Benefits and costs of precarious employment: contracting

Research on precarious employment suggests that individuals' satisfaction with contingent work is dependent upon the type of contingent work . Unlike at the lower end of the job market where precarious employment such as zero hours work contracts can have serious health consequences, in many cases, professionals in contracting positions show job satisfaction rates equivalent (or exceeding) their full time counterparts (2007). However, for the GCMs in this study, such satisfaction had an expiry date.

Contract employment presented participants with certain benefits and challenges during their time overseas, and in many ways, these factors informed their decisions to return when they did. Benefits included tax breaks and employment flexibility, including time off between contracts to travel, which added to the sense of the London experience

¹¹ Except Evelyn because she had only been overseas for 15 months at the time of interview.

as a reprieve from social and career expectations 'back home'. However, there were also significant draw-backs to contracting work including:

- No annual or sick leave;
- Insecurity, particularly with regards to career progression and periods of time between contracts when desperation for the next role could lead to making disadvantageous career decisions;
- Inability to plan long-term and;
- Lack of institutionally supported career progression.

As Braden indicates:

You might get paid well but you don't know when it's going to end and you can't be guaranteed that your next role is going to be a natural step up from your current one.

Interviewees believed that even assuming one can navigate the career ladder from within this contracting structure, the higher one climbs the fewer contracts are available and those that are, are more in demand. Thus, in the minds of these GCMs, the benefits of contracting work only outweighed the negatives in the short-term. Luke's extended quote at the beginning of this chapter echoes the thinking of many other participants who saw contract work with its high rate of pay and flexibility as ideally suited to the lifestyle that they wished to lead in the short-term in London but who recognised that this would not be the case were they to settle in London long-term or return to Australia.

In the long term GCMs wanted more; the futures they envisioned including families and mortgages, to their minds also required a return to a more traditional form of employment as they believed this would provide them with more career security and more promotion opportunities. This was also an important aspect of the maintenance of their identities as elite professionals, especially after their return to Australia. Furthermore, for those participants who have since returned to Australia (four of six), this outlook has not been challenged as they each managed to secure full-time,

permanent employment at a level at or exceeding their satisfaction within twelve months of their return.

Discussion: Life course, habitus, class and international mobility London work

I turn now to again reflect on the key theoretical concepts at the centre of this thesis; class and the life course. How do these privileged, young, middle-class professionals understand their subjectivities and how does this understanding tie into life course theories?

First, it is clear from the research presented that, like other studies have demonstrated, these highly skilled migrants perceive this particular version of international mobility as one which is only possible in the 'unfettered' and 'self-focused' life stage of young adulthood (Amit, 2011; Conradson and Latham, 2005; Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Conradson and Latham, 2007; Frändberg, 2015; Haverig and Roberts, 2011; Kato, 2013; Yoon, 2014). In his research on youth migration Amit argues that such attitudes could be explained by migrants continued belief in the traditional linear life course. The data in my interviews support this argument to the extent that interviewees believed that their eventual return to Australia would see them pick up again with their traditional linear life course complete with stable, permanent full time employment, career building and the potential for family formation. However, many of them also admitted that, if the opportunity arose within their (or their partners) career, that extended mobility would again be possible in the future. When they talked of their experience as being a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity, they were not referring to the extended mobility per se, but rather the specific version of extended mobility, the lifestyle that they led whilst in London.

Furthermore, despite a period of 'downtime' young Australian migrant accountants' identities continue to be defined by their prioritisation of career and professionalism as embodied in their B4 habitus. This habitus allowed them to conceive of, plan and execute a period of international mobility as both possible and valuable to their overall life course ambitions. As a means by which to develop their cultural capital and secure their status (Roos, 2016) their mobility is represented as both a break from

the life course expectations and pressures of home and habitus, and a legitimate stage of their life course. However, the period of social acceptability inherent in the London as escape narrative is strictly liminal (Favell, 2006), as Braden discusses:

I found it hard adjusting back to life in Sydney... maybe if I had left when I was 23 or 24, but I was 28 and none of my friends had kids when I left, and then by the time I came back about three or four of them did. So, the lifestyle was very different... But then I went back to London for a holiday a year after I left and I finally realised that my life wasn't there anymore... a lot of my Australian friends had also returned to Australia in that time. Whereas those who have stayed were living different – more permanent – lives. It just wouldn't be the same going back.

Beyond the initial 24 months, participants feel the call to 'return to real-life'. After this time whether they plan to stay overseas or move back to Australia the qualitative quintessentially 'young adulthood' aspects of their lifestyle change dramatically (Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Inkson and Myers, 2003). Age is a significant driver of this way of thinking. It continues to be a key organising principle of participants' perception of the life course, a tool used to measure their professional progression and thus their relative success in navigating its transitions and meeting the expectations of their B4 habitus.

It was, nevertheless, notable that in general, participants resisted discussing future-plans. Rather, they were more comfortable speaking in platitudes and generalities, focusing on the importance of 'flexibility' and seeing themselves as 'fluid' and 'taking opportunities as they come'. Again, this reflects the kind of reflexivity that is necessarily emblematic of post-modern discourses of the self (Beck, 1992).

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has focused on the period of mobility in London. Migrants were privileged and their expectations regarding their employability (i.e. the recognition of and transferability of their cultural capital) were largely met upon entry into the UK labour force in London. Their WLB in London was significantly improved

compared to their Sydney lives, however, their attitudes to work and professionalism – their B4 habitus – proved remarkably resilient during this time. Furthermore, the effect of the liminality of this period was two-fold: it permitted them to regard their time overseas as a holiday, whilst at the same time meaning that they were unable to ever fully escape the career and life course pressures of home and the future to which they intended to return. Thus, these future life course and career expectations, deeply informed by their class and re-enforced by their early career socialisation, played a key role in shaping their plans for, and experience of, international mobility. The next chapter will briefly review the research findings and suggest directions for future investigation.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, I will first return to and briefly summarise answers to the research questions posed at the end of chapter one. I will then discuss limitations of the research and suggest directions for further investigation.

In chapter one the following primary research question was posed: how do young Australian professional accountants engage with international migration? This was then broken down further into three sub questions:

1. What migration pathways do they use and why?
2. How is this migration informed and enabled by their class status including social and cultural capital and professional habitus?
3. How do they characterise their mobility and what does it mean for them in terms of their life course plans and practice?

Throughout the thesis I have argued that young Australian accountants' engagement with migration is fundamentally tied with their class status and professional occupations which inform their life course plans and perceptions. Long before they are consciously considering migration the cultural fields with which they engage encourage them to conceive of a period of migration in young adulthood as an action that is feasible, desirable and even admirable. This perception is then magnified by their time in the B4 where their desire for mobility develops into a sense of entitlement for mobility as the long-awaited returns on their delayed compensation.

They self-initiated their migration through the use of the T5 (youth mobility) visa or, where available, migrated on their British passports. They chose these migration routes as, due to their age at the time of migration, these options provided the easiest mechanisms for their labour migration whilst also providing them with opportunities to live the lifestyle which they desired whilst away. That is, a lifestyle that was relatively less career focused and relatively more travel and enjoyment focused than the one they had been leading in Sydney.

Once overseas a combination of factors, most of which can also be traced back to their class status - including their visa restrictions, cultural narratives regarding international mobility both of Australians to London and for individuals of their ages/life stages and B4 habitus - encouraged them to characterise the initial 24-month period of their mobility as an extended holiday. Thus, they conceptually distinguished this time from their otherwise linear life course narratives. Their reflections tell us that this period is characterised by a rhetoric of freedom from the 'real world' which is not reflected in their objective behaviour in all realms of life. By this I mean that such classifications are made by migrants about their linear life course and career expectations however, the migrants were never fully able to break away from the ties binding them to these 'real worlds.' Even whilst overseas their habitus continued to inform many of their employment decisions and was the eventual catalyst that, for many if not all, led to their emigration back to Australia.

By answering these questions, this thesis has contributed to the emerging field of literature that addresses the intersecting issues of self-initiated skilled and/or privileged migration and the life course. By focusing on the experiences of a small sample of individuals from a single profession with similar early career experiences it could develop a deeper understanding of the strategic relationship between individuals' mobility decisions and their temporal understanding of their life course and career projects. In the ongoing debate about the role of migration within the life course of young adults, this research suggests that participants' use of migration as a 'temporary break' from linear career paths does not necessitate the reframing of traditional modernist notions of legitimate careers. This lends support to earlier findings from researchers such as Amit (2011) who suggest that youth mobility arises "not from an embrace of uncertainty and mobility but from a persisting belief in a modernist, linear life course" (2011: 80).

There were a few key limitations of the research that are worth addressing, particularly those in relation to the composition of the participants. Size and time limits of the master thesis required that the participant sample be smaller than would have otherwise been the case had theoretical saturation been the aim. As a result, two key variables – participant ethnicity and gender - that the literature and interviews suggested might have been valuable avenues for investigation were unable to be adequately

addressed. As such, each of these issues would provide rich avenues for further research. Furthermore, although participants were recruited based on a 12-month minimum period on London, the findings suggest that there is a turning point in how the migration is experienced by the migrants, specifically a shift in priorities associated with life course expectations at closer to the 24-month mark. I would therefore suggest that future life course research in this area be focused on further investigating this change either through a comparative cohort analysis or longitudinal study designed to follow participants throughout their mobility to illuminate how and when these attitudes change. In addition to this, whilst the literature suggests that the majority of these migrants will return to Australia within a two to five-year period, inevitably some will settle permanently or move on to other countries. The inclusion of these individuals and the factors which result is also a fruitful avenue of investigation to pursue.

Appendix A: Participant characteristics

Name ¹²	Gender	Firm	Means of immigration (visa type)	Time-period overseas ¹³
Sam	Male	Firm A	British citizen by descent	January 2016 – present (1 year 6 months)
Luke	Male	Firm B	T5 working holiday	April 2011 – April 2013 (2 years)
Matthew	Male	Firm A	T5 working holiday	April 2015 – December 2016 1 year 9 months
Alison	Female	Firm B	T5 working holiday	April 2011 – April 2013 2 years
Braden	Male	Firm B	T5 working holiday	August 2011 -May 2013 1 year 10 months
Evelyn	Female	Firm A	British citizen by descent	May 2016 – present (1 year 2 months)

¹² All names indicated are pseudonyms.

¹³ For those participants who are still overseas, time recorded is the total period spent working overseas at the time of interviews, otherwise the total period spent working overseas is indicated.

Appendix B: B4 hierarchy role descriptions

Information in this table is has been based on interviewees' descriptions and was further corroborated afterwards by two of the original interviewees.

Position title	Basic role description	Typical time in role
Graduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry level role • Heavily supervised in all tasks • Begins CA • Majority of work completed on-site at clients, usually focused on one client at a time 	12 months
Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced to more of the complicated tasks in the audit. • More autonomy than graduates • Immediate contact for graduate's questions • Completes CA • Majority of work completed on-site at clients, usually focused on one client at a time 	2-3 years Only under exceptional circumstances, employees can be promoted above this level without completing CA.
Senior (or assistant manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully qualified CA • Manages a lot of the audit (on-site senior), providing instruction to those at the graduate or analyst level • Majority of work completed on-site at clients, starts to multitask between clients • Reviews the work of Graduate and Analyst 	2-3 years
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully qualified CA • Primary client contact • Usually juggling the audits of multiple clients at once • Majority of work completed at HQ or moving between different clients as needed • Manages the field team as well as internal reporting up to Director and Partner • Organises and liaises with other technical departments (e.g. Tax, Valuations, Quality Assurance) • Reviews the work of the entire team 	2-3 years

Appendix C: Letter of ethics approval

From: Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 4 January 2017 10:26:41 AM
To: Kumiko Kawashima
Cc: Arts Research Office
Subject: Final Approval - Issues Addressed - 5201600834(R)

Ethics Application Ref: (5201600834) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Kawashima,

Re: ('Young Australian professionals and the 'Overseas Experience' in London')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee.

Approval of the above application has been granted, effective (4/01/2017).

This email constitutes ethical approval only.

If you intend to conduct research out of Australia you may require extra insurance and/or local ethics approval. Please contact Maggie Feng, Tax and Insurance Officer from OFS Business Services, on x1683 to advise further.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Kumiko Kawashima
Ms Carina Hart

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 4th January 2018

Progress Report 2 Due: 4th January 2019

Progress Report 3 Due: 4th January 2020

Progress Report 4 Due: 4th January 2021

Final Report Due: 4th January 2022

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/resources

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz
Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee
Level 7, W6A Building
Macquarie University
Balaclava Rd
NSW 2109 Australia
Mianna.Lotz@mq.edu.au

References:

- Almer ED, Higgs JL and Hooks KL. (2005) 'A theoretical framework of the relationship between public accounting firms and their auditors' in *Behavioral Research in Accounting*. 17: 1-22.
- Amit V. (2011) 'Before I settle down': youth travel and enduring life course paradigms' in *Anthropologica* 53: 79-88.
- Anderson-Gough F, Grey C and Robson K. (1998) 'Work hard, play hard': an analysis of organizational aliche in two accountancy practices' in *Organization* 5: 565-592.
- Anderson-Gough F, Grey C and Robson K. (2001) 'Tests of time: organizational time-reckoning and the making of accountants in two multi-national accounting firms' in *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 26: 99-122.
- Andreson M and Walther M. (2013) 'Self-initiated repatriation at the interplay between Field, Capital, and Habitus: an analysis based on Bourdieu's theory of practice' in Andreson M, Walther M and Al Ariss A (eds) *Self-Initiated Expatriation: Individual, Organizational, and National Perspectives*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Bazeley P. (2009) 'Analysing qualitative data: more than 'identifying themes'' in *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research* 2: 6-22.
- Beard V. (1994) 'Popular culture and professional identity: accountants in the movies' in *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 19: 303-318.
- Beaverstock J. (1991) 'Skilled international migration: an analysis of the geography of international secondments within large accountancy firms' in *Environment & Planning A* 23: 1133- 1146.
- Beaverstock J. (1996) 'Lending Jobs to Global Cities: Skilled International Labour Migration, Investment Banking and the City of London' in *Urban studies*. 33: 1377-1394.
- Beaverstock J. (2017) 'The spatial mobility of corporate knowledge: expatriation, global talent, and the World City' in *Mobilities of Knowledge* 10: 488-246.
- Beck U. (1992) *Risk Society Towards a new modernity* (Vol 17). London: Sage publications.
- Beck U. (2002) *Individualization: institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences*. (Vol. 13). London: Sage publications.

- Bickman L. (2008) *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*. London: Sage publications.
- Blatterer H. (2007a) 'Adulthood: the contemporary redefinition of a social category' in *Sociological Research Online*, 12(4): 1-11.
- Blatterer H. (2007b) *Coming of age in times of uncertainty*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Bourdieu P. (1987) 'What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups' in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32: 1-17.
- Bourdieu P. (2011) 'The forms of capital (1986)', 81-93 in I. Szeman and T. Kaposy (eds), *Cultural theory: An anthology 1*.
- Bryman A. (2015) *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Buchheit S, Dalton DW, Harp NL, et al. (2016) 'A contemporary analysis of accounting professionals work-life balance' in *Accounting Horizons*: 30: 41-62.
- CAANZ. (2017) *Become a Difference Maker. Your path to becoming a Chartered Accountant*. Available at: <https://www.charteredaccountantsanz.com/become-a-member/why-ca/where-a-ca-could-lead-you>.
- Carl J, Baker S, Robards B, Scott J, Hillman W and Lawrence G. (2012) *Think Sociology*. Frenches Forrest: Pearson Australia.
- Carter C and Spence C. (2014) 'Being a successful professional: an exploration of who makes partner in the Big 4' in *Contemporary Accounting Research* 31: 949-981.
- Cheng M, Kang H, Roebuck P, et al. (2009) 'The Employment Landscape for Accounting Graduates and Work Experience Relevance' in *Australian Accounting Review* 19: 342-351.
- Chia YM, Koh HC and Pragasam J. (2008) 'An International Study of Career Drivers of Accounting Students in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong' in *Journal of Education and Work* 21: 41-60.
- Coffey AJ. (1994) 'Timing is Everything'; graduate accountants, time and organizational commitment' in *Sociology: the Journal of the British Sociological Association* 28: 943-956.

- Conradson D and Latham A. (2005a) 'Friendship, networks and transnationality in a world city: Antipodean transmigrants in London' in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31: 287-305.
- Conradson D and Latham A. (2005b) 'Escalator London? A case study of New Zealand tertiary educated migrants in a Global City' in *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 13: 159-172.
- Conradson D and Latham A. (2007) 'The affective possibilities of London: antipodean transnationals and the Overseas Experience' in *Mobilities*. 2: 231-254.
- Costas J and Grey C. (2014) 'The temporality of power and the power of temporality: imaginary future selves in professional service firms' in *Organization Studies* 35: 909-937.
- Dannefer D. (2003) 'Toward a global geography of the life course: challenges of late modernity for life course theory' in JT. Mortimer and MJ Shanahan (eds) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Deakin H and Wakefield K. (2014) 'Skype interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers' in *Qualitative Research* 14: 603-616.
- Doherty N, Dickmann M and Mills T. (2011) 'Exploring the motives of company-backed and self-initiated expatriates', 647-660 in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22: 595-611.
- Eidlin B. (2015) 'Class and work' in Edgell, S., Gottfried, H. and Granter, E. (Eds) *The Sage handbook of the sociology of work and employment*. London: Sage.
- Elder GH, Johnson MK and Crosnoe R. (2003) 'The emergence and development of life course theory', 3-19 in JT. Mortimer and MJ Shanahan (eds) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Farrugia D. (2013) 'Young people and structural inequality: beyond the middle ground' in *Journal of Youth Studies* 16: 679-693.
- Favell A. (2006) 'London as Eurocity: French free movers in the economic capital of Europe', 247-274 in MP. Smith and A. Favell (eds) *The Human Face of Global Mobility: International Highly Skilled Migration in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.
- Favell A. (2011) *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free movement and mobility in an integrating Europe*. Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.

- Fielding AJ. (1992) 'Migration and social mobility: South East England as an escalator region' in *Regional Studies* 26(1): 1-15.
- Frändberg L. (2015) 'Acceleration or avoidance? The role of temporary moves abroad in the transition to adulthood' in *Population, Space and Place* 21: 553-567.
- Grey C. (1998) 'On being a professional in a "Big Six" firm' in *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 23: 569-587.
- Hamilton RJ and Bowers BJ. (2006) 'Internet recruitment and e-mail interviews in qualitative studies' in *Qualitative Health Research* 16: 821-835.
- Hardgrove A, Rootham E and McDowell L. (2015) 'Possible selves in a precarious labour market: youth, imagined futures, and transitions to work in the UK' in *Geoforum* 60: 163-171.
- Haverig A and Roberts S. (2011) 'The New Zealand OE as governance through freedom: rethinking 'the apex of freedom'' in *Journal of Youth Studies* 14: 587-603.
- Helleiner J. (2017) 'Recruiting the "culturally compatible" migrant: Irish working holiday migration and white settler Canadianness' in *Ethnicities* 17: 299-319.
- Inkson K and Myers BA. (2003) 'The Big OE: self-directed travel and career development' in *Career Development International* 8: 170-181.
- Jacobs K. (2006) 'Discourse Analysis', 135-157 in M. Walter (ed) *Social research methods*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Jeacle I. (2008) 'Beyond the boring grey: tconstruction of the colourful accountant' in *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 19: 1296-1320.
- Kato E. (2013) 'Self-searching migrants: youth and adulthood, work and holiday in the lives of Japanese temporary residents in Canada and Australia' in *Asian Anthropology* 12: 20-34.
- Kley S. (2011) 'Explaining the stages of migration within a life-course framework' in *European Sociological Review* 27: 469-486.
- Kley S and Mulder C. (2010) 'Considering, planning, and realizing migration in early adulthood: the influence of life-course events and perceived opportunities on leaving the city in Germany' in *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 25: 73-94.

- Kornberger M, Justesen L and Mouritsen J. (2011) "'When you make manager, we put a big mountain in front of you": an ethnography of managers in a Big 4 Accounting Firm' in *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 36: 514-533.
- Koser K and Salt J. (1997) 'The geography of highly skilled international migration' in *Population, Space and Place* 3(4): 285-303.
- Kostamo T, Marttinen K and Launonen R. (2017) *Constructing a Research Program to Study Leadership and Passion at Work*. Helsinki: Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.
- Kunz S. (2016) 'Privileged mobilities: locating the expatriate in migration scholarship' in *Geography Compass* 10: 89-101.
- Ladva P and Andrew J. (2014) 'Weaving a web of control' in *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 27: 634-654.
- Lareau A. (2011) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Lauer SR and Wong Q. (2010) 'Transnationalism over the life course' in *Sociology Compass* 4(12): 1054-1062.
- Lehmann A. (2014) *Transnational lives in China: Expatriates in a globalizing city*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Leinonen J. (2012) "'Money is not everything and that's the bottom line': family ties in transatlantic elite migrations' in *Social Science History* 36: 243-268.
- Leonard P. (2016) *Expatriate identities in postcolonial organizations working whiteness*. New York: Routledge.
- Lupu I. (2012) 'Approved routes and alternative paths: the construction of women's careers in large accounting firms. Evidence from the French Big Four' in *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 23(4-5): 351-369.
- Lupu I and Empson L. (2015) 'Illusio and overwork: playing the game in the accounting field' in *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 28(8): 1310-1340.
- Malos SB and Campion MA. (1995) 'An options-based model of career mobility in professional service firms' in *Academy of Management review* 20(3): 611-644.
- Mayseless O and Keren E. (2014) 'Finding a meaningful life as a developmental task in Emerging Adulthood' in *Emerging Adulthood* 2(1): 63-73.

- Metcalf D. (2016) *Work Immigration and the Labour Market: Incorporating the Role of the Migration Advisory Committee*. London: MAC.
- Ming Chia Y. (2005) 'Job offers of multi-national accounting firms: the effects of emotional intelligence, extra- curricular activities, and academic performance' in *Accounting Education* 14(1): 75-93.
- Mortimer JT and Shanahan MJ. (2003) 'Preface', xi-xvi in JT. Mortimer and MJ Shanahan (eds) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Nohl A-M, Schittenhelm K, Schmidtke O and Weiss A. (2014) *Work in Transition: Cultural Capital and Highly Skilled Migrants' Passages Into the Labour Market*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ohnuki-Tierney E. (1984) "'Native" anthropologists' in *American Ethnologist* 11(3): 584-586.
- Padgett M, Gjerde KP, Hughes SB and Born CJ. (2005) 'The relationship between pre-employment expectations, experiences, and length of stay in Public Accounting' in *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 12(1): 82-102.
- Parry N and Jackling B. (2015) 'How do professional financial services firms understand their skill needs and organise their recruitment practices?' in *Accounting Education* 24(6): 514-538.
- Plane DA and Jurjevich JR. (2009) 'Ties that no longer bind? The patterns and repercussions of age-articulated migration' in *The Professional Geographer* 61(1): 4-20.
- Punch KF. (2005) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Rahim A. (2014) *Highly skilled international labour migration: a qualitative study of migrant Pakistani professionals in London's big four accounting firms*. (Doctoral dissertaion, University of Nottingham).
- Rivera LA. (2012) 'Hiring as cultural matching: the case of elite professional service firms' in *American Sociological Review* 77(6): 999-1022.
- Roberts R. (2007) *Sleeping in strangely familiar places: 'the Working Holiday' experience as represented by young Australian graduates in the United Kingdom*. CSAA, UniSA.

- Roberts R. (2011) 'Unfolding stories of skilled migrants' in *Social Alternatives* 30(2): 35-39.
- Roos H. (2016) 'The new economy as a gateway to leisure travelling: experiences of highly skilled Indian professionals in Europe' in *Leisure Studies* 36(2):192-202.
- Ryan L and Mulholland J. (2014) 'Trading places: French highly skilled migrants negotiating mobility and emplacement In London' in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40(4): 584-600.
- Settersten RA. (2003) 'Age structuring and the rhythm of the life course', 81-101 in JT. Mortimer and MJ Shanahan (eds) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Skrbis Z, Woodward I and Bean C. (2013) 'Seeds of cosmopolitan future? Young people and their aspirations for future mobility' in *Journal of Youth Studies* 17(5): 614-625.
- Spence C and Carter C. (2014) 'An exploration of the professional habitus in the Big 4 accounting firms' in *Work, Employment & Society* 28(6): 946-962.
- Spence C, Carter C, Belal A, Husillos J, Dambrin C, Archel P.(2016) 'Tracking habitus across a transnational professional field' in *Work, Employment & Society* 30(1): 3-20.
- Suutari V and Brewster C. (2000) 'Making their own way: international experience through self-initiated foreign assignments' in *Journal of World Business* 35(4): 417-436.
- Webb J, Schirato T and Danaher G. (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Williams AM and Hall CM. (2002) 'Tourism, migration, circulation and mobility', 1-52 in C.M. Hall and A.M. Williams (eds) *Tourism and Migration*. The GeoJournal Library, COL 65. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Wilson J, Fisher D and Moore K. (2009) 'The OE goes 'home': cultural aspects of a working holiday experience' in *Tourist Studies* 9(1): 3-21.
- Wingens M, de Valk H, Windzio M, Aybek C. (2011) 'The sociological life course approach and research on migration and integration', 1-26 in Wingens M, Windzio M, de Valk H, Aybek C (eds) *A Life-course Perspective on Migration and Integration*. London: Springer.

Yaendle M. (2017) *The Global Financial Centres Index 22*. London: Z/Yen China Development Institute

Yoon K. (2014) 'Transnational youth mobility in the neoliberal economy of experience' in *Journal of Youth Studies* 17(8): 1014-1028.