Utes, blokes, school and the arts: 
A critical investigation of gendered rural youth identity construction

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the memory of my father David Croft and his sister Patricia. Dad’s passion for reading and fascination with the power of words to create new worlds and Pat’s dedication to academic publication flavoured the cocktail of my habitus.
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Certificate of Authorship

I Lindy Croft-Piggin hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted to the award of any other degree or diploma at the Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that the thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the University Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.*

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All photographs were taken with permission.  
No photographs were taken in the site of “Paterson”.

Ethics, Approval

The Ethics in human Resources Committee Charles Sturt University granted ethics approval for this project on the 28th of July 2003. The approval protocol number is 03/139.
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May our rich conversations continue for many years to come.
Abstract

In this ethnographic study of youth culture in an isolated rural community in Western New South Wales, Australia, a boys’ education project provides the context for exploring the construction of multiple masculinities and femininities in a rural site.

Youth culture is examined in the fields of practice of: the school, the boys’ education project, youth microcultures, football and a girls’ affinity group from a small outlying town. The cultural, social and symbolic capital transacted in social, material and discursive space is explored to reveal a dynamic process of identities construction. The local rural youth identities are demonstrated to be informed by signs and symbols gathered from global and local sources. The marks of beach culture and street culture identified in this isolated inland rural Australian setting attest to the potency of forces beyond the boundaries of this small community to penetrate the identity constructed there.

The impact of gender education policies and practices on the boys’ project initiated in the town also signals the sensitivity of local social organisations to State, national and global decisions. The boys’ education project explored in this study is one of many projects initiated at a time of “moral panic about boys”. In this study the strategies applied by the initiating school in its concern for the gender identity of boys are explored in the context of contested and changing gender education policies in New South Wales schools. The capacity of the chosen strategies to bring positive change to the dominant masculinity and their potential impact on local youth femininities is explored.

The identity play of the young people in what appeared to be a culturally homogenous rural school community emerges from this study as a practice characterised by diversity and responsive flexibility. The gender differentiated nature of these diverse identities attests to the enduring power of the overarching field of gender.

Through the theories of Pierre Bourdieu the characteristics of the identity play of these rural young people is examined to reveal responsiveness to change and flexibility within constraints. The boys’ education project initiated by the local high school which focused on arts activities was demonstrated to support a youth microculture called the Skeggs which identified with cosmopolitan imagery of the street and the beach. The once dominant rural youth identity of the Frigger, which identified with stock handling, polo playing and horsemanship, is demonstrated to be in decline in this site.

The segregated but reciprocal nature of gender roles within these youth microcultures raises questions about the issue of dominance and subordination in these groups. Girls provide the informed gaze for the performance of the physical exploits which act as masculine identity markers in this context. Bourdieu’s emphasis on the importance of symbolic power elevates the significance of the feminine role, problematising a universal binary of dominance and subordination.
Preamble

The long kitchen table in our farmhouse looks out across paddocks of grain. The land has been worked by our family since 1851. The kitchen table has been the meeting place for family, friends, neighbours, agents and bankers in wet years, bumper years and dry years. Through the recent long grinding drought it has supported my laptop as I laboured over the writing of this thesis. I look up from its weathered surface to see evidence of over a hundred years of labour and planning.

From the table I see ring barked skeletons standing erect among rows of recently planted trees. Old post and rail fences contrast with star pickets, cyclone wire and ring-lock as fencelines shift to accommodate new methods of irrigation paddock management. Agricultural practices have marked this land and its inhabitants. This type of environment is the foundation of the rural culture I have endeavoured to document in this study.

Between the crop and the house paddock is a stand of kangaroo grass. My husband Tony is developing it as a seed crop to meet a growing demand for native seed for the regeneration of damaged environments. Kangaroo grass is one of the native grasses being explored as a new source of protein better suited to cultivation in this arid climate. It illustrates my family’s changing relationship with the land. It stands as a constant reminder to me of changing values, practices and cultures in the rural setting.
At the western end of the kangaroo grass paddock is a series of experimental plots of native grasses, one of many sites of data collection on our farm. I have watched CSIRO scientists carefully counting plants in a plot recording the variable responses to rates of chemical application. I have watched our agronomist measuring moisture profiles to determine the conditions which best favour growth. I have helped to monitor the progress of different varieties of native grass under dryland conditions to determine varieties that are most drought tolerant. I have walked with my husband as he ‘sweeps’ the wheat crop with an insect net to count the predators and insects present in the site to determine the balance.

Most visitors to our farm will only see value in the sheep, wheat, barley, canola, lupins and lucerne which spread out in a patchwork of paddocks across the farm. The grasses that cling to the neglected corners of pasture paddocks and the native vegetation along the sides of the roads and in managed regeneration sites are often invisible. This viewpoint is an ‘old culture’ way of seeing this land. A current perspective would consider all of the seeds that have germinated and thrive here; kangaroo grass, red grass, wallaby grass and spear grasses, not just the monocultures that have become dominant because they have been given preferential treatment, but the survivors that may hold the keys to future sources of food and medicine. It is also becoming increasingly clear that a healthy mixture of vegetation fosters a balanced biodiversity including birds and spiders to manage insect infestation, minimising the need for chemical intervention.

My sister-in-law Jose is a botanist. She spends many hours painstakingly gathering, describing, identifying and recording plant varieties in the dry sclerophyll forest around our house. The qualitative data gathered in my study, like Jose’s plant collection, needs to be sorted and relationships between identities noted and described. Like plants, people also thrive or struggle under different conditions. Just as farmers are beginning to recognise the importance of examining the unique nature of each of the paddocks in their farm, with soil sampling and moisture monitoring, educators are also becoming curious about the diversity they are dealing with in their classrooms. They want to be better informed about the habitats that support the development of the young people in their care. In an attempt to inform this process this study aims to shed some light on the rich variety of options evident in youth identity play and the impact of these identities on knowledge construction.
As I take the long drive from the farm to the rural township that is the focus of this study, I am encouraged to think that it is possible to identify a range of identities in this rural site and to describe the features that favour their development using similar strategies to the agronomists. Instead of insects I sweep up conversations. Instead of moisture levels I measure signs and symbols.

One of the goals of this study is to look beyond the dominant cultures to identify identities that may be marginal or less visible. This ethnographic study aims to record the human diversity of a rural town. As I take the long and dusty drive west to the site of this investigation I acknowledge that my view of this site is slightly obscured by my own reflection in the window. The preconceptions I have formed in my own rural location and through my reading of the research literature may at times distort my vision but I will endeavour to minimise this impact. In this study the voices of the participants record the favoured forms of masculinity and femininity, as well as the less visible forms to produce a picture of the impact of educational programs and the isolated rural habitat on the identities constructed by the young people of the town I call Paterson.
Chapter 1. Front gates paddocks and fields

In chapter 1 the concerns of this study are outlined. The township of Paterson is introduced as a unique rural setting. A concern for the role of geographic sites and social history in the construction of the identities of groups and individuals is raised. The material qualities present in the setting of Paterson, as they are revealed in the ABS statistics and study data, are briefly outlined as the participants’ perceptions of this place are introduced. Some of the issues of gender, social structure and schooling are foreshadowed. The structure of the study is outlined and its intended goals established.

1.1. Overview of this study

In this study a particular group of people in an isolated rural town is examined and their stories gathered. The study concerns a school site of interest to rural educators because of the boys’ education program supported over a number of years there. It is an ethnography that comprises many stories from the school and community leaders who initiated the Boys’ Education Project, stories from boys and girls who did not participate in this project and boys who did. There are stories from community members, who may have observed the initiative in progress and some who were unaware of it. Through these stories a picture emerges of a rural community actively concerned about the identity constructions of its young people. The young people in this isolated, apparently homogenous rural centre emerge as a diverse group actively engaged in constructing resilient identities for flexible futures.

Through this ethnographic enquiry into the characteristics of youth identities in a particular rural site, four major areas of inquiry are investigated by asking the following questions:

1. What are the significant identity practices for young people in this community?

   • What must they do to be considered legitimate members of local youth cultures? What is the nature and significance of the symbolic capitals being sought in the youth cultures of this community? Who or what do they define themselves against?
2. What are the power relations within youth cultures in this site?
   - What space of positions is available to these young people? What are they competing over? What are the structures or stances that provide status to these young people?

3. What are the forces at work upon identities construction processes in this site?
   - What are the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations of these young people? What are the internal influences on this culture: local, historical, material, discursive and social?

4. What is the position of the youth culture in relation to dominant (institutional) fields of power and gender?
   - What evidence is there of dominant and subordinated positions between boys and boys, girls and girls and boys and girls?

Through the analysis of the data gathered in this site the identity material available to a particular group of rural young people is examined in the context of the fields of practice of: the school, a boys’ education project, youth microcultures, football and a girls’ affinity group from a small outlying town. The strategies initiated by the High School and taken up by the community to address perceived needs in the gender identities of the boys are examined. The youth and community perceptions of the role and impact of the boys’ education strategies are investigated. The implications of this impact on the formation of rural youth subjectivities is explored in the context of young people who are preparing for a future in either, or both, the city and the bush. In this study, youth microcultures characterised by signifying music and embodied identities, expressed through physical exploits are identified. A range of masculinities and femininities is observed in the relational identities of the girls and boys.

The findings in this study inform social theory and educational policy and practice in a number of ways. The social, discursive and physical space of a rural site are examined to reveal the nature of the social, cultural and symbolic capital transacted as rural youth identities are iteratively constructed. The findings which arise from the examination of these fields may inform the theory, policy and practice of educators concerned with youth identity constructions in the context of gender, rurality and the arts.
1.1.1. Investigating Identity

When Barack Obama began to tell his life story in *Dreams from My Father* he reflected upon the idea of identity. He published his story believing in part that it might help others to share his belief that identity was neither fixed, nor static:

> I went to work with the belief that the story of my family, and my efforts to understand that story, might speak in some way to … the fluid state of identity – the leaps through time, the collision of cultures – that mark our modern life (Obama, 2004, p. vii).

This idea of a fluid identity challenges the Enlightenment conceptualisation of the identity as the essential, fixed nature of the self. Feminist theorists have been particularly alert to the danger of conceptualising the identity in this way. Critics of de Beauvoir claim that she identified humanism with western masculinity. They claim that in taking:

> An existentialist reading of the subject as an autonomously constituting being who at any moment is free to create herself anew... de Beauvoir mistook as universal what was actually a masculinist ideology of emancipation (Dietz, 2002, p. 96).

Freudian psychoanalytic theorists further complicated this image of the self constituting essential subject, by introducing the idea of the self acting at the mercy of drives buried within the unconscious (Freud, 1933). This theory raised questions about the ‘free’ agency of the subject. These theories fail to take into account the social context of identity formation and they fix the subject into an essential singular form. As Obama has pointed out, in the 21st century we are more aware of the plurality of identities required to navigate our complex global world. Identity appears to be a fluid rather than a fixed concept.

Some postmodern literary critics claim that the idea of the fluid identity is not a new one. They cite evidence in the eighteenth century novel *Tristram Shandy* of a hero in search of a coherent sense of personal identity concluding that:

> Tristram could be thought to be a precursor of post modern identity, which is also characterized by 'difference’ and does not exist on its own, but only in contradistinction to other identities within a web of relationships. The self is defined – and defines – its self only through those external relationships, since they are continuously changing so is the self (Klein, 1996, p. 128).

This emphasis on the place of relationships, or society in identity formation separates it from the enlightenment idea of “the transcendent subject (existing before and beyond the social realm)” (Gutterman, 1994, p. 219). Gutterman attributes the move
away from seeing identity as the pre-existing essential quality of an individual towards a theory of culturally constructed identities to Nietzsche’s observation that:

There is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; the ‘doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 45)

Some theorists see this constituting “deed” as social structures; others see it as cultural discourses. Nietzsche has thrown the spotlight on social practices, but it is not clear which social practices are instrumental in constituting identities.

For some theorists identities are seen as neither stable nor fixed. The essence of the cultural theorists’ position on identity is well explained by Hall who suggests that:

Identity becomes ‘a moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically not biologically defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self’. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identities are continuously being shifted around (Hall 1992 cited in Vasta & Castles, 1996, p. 277).

Hall’s conception of identity supports Obama’s sense of its “fluid” nature, but he also introduces the idea of identity being plural as well as shifting. For Barack Obama, a young, ambitious, Afro-American, his identity search took him through minefields of race, culture and inequity. Despite the differences, Obama’s observation of the masculinity identity options available to him and his sensitivity to the press of popular culture resonates with the identity journeys of the rural young men in this study:

I was living out a caricature of black male adolescence, itself a caricature of swaggering American manhood. Yet at the time when boys aren’t supposed to want to follow their fathers' tired footsteps, when the imperatives of harvest or work in the factory aren’t supposed to dictate identity, so that how to live is bought off the rack or found in magazines, the principal difference between me and most of the man-boys around me - the surfers, the football player, the would-be rock-and-roll guitarists - resides in the limited number of options at my disposal. Each of us chose a costume, armor against uncertainty (Obama, 2004, p. 80).

Obama equates identity with knowledge of “how to live”. He identifies the options of images generated by previous generations, parents or popular culture. He points out that these options are not equitably distributed and emphasises the potency of the choices made. He speaks of choices within constraint.

Australian Rural young people are enabled and constrained in their identity choices by a representation of history which celebrates physical endurance, mateship and
cultural tensions between “the city and the bush”. To explore the development of identities in an isolated rural context we need a theory which acknowledges the agency of individuals actively engaged in the construction of fluid multiple possibilities but also recognises the forces at work to limit this freedom. The concept of choice within constraint, agency within confines, is elaborated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. His ideas will be called on in this study to inform our understandings of rural youth identity constructions.

Bourdieu’s ideas will be explored in chapters 2 and 5 to develop an identity theory which acknowledges the press of social structures and cultural discourses on the development of a sense of self, as well as material considerations like skin colour and geographic location. This theory is offered as a support to the exploration of the rural youth identities elaborated in this study. In the ethnography to be presented here the nature of ‘youth identities’, ‘rural identities’ and ‘gendered identities’ in the community under investigation are discussed. Despite the homogenous appearance of this group of people the stories presented here illustrate the differential reach of history and heritage and the opportunities for the development of diverse cultures in this rural site.

The participants in this study live in an isolated rural setting which may inform the way that they represent themselves to society. But they are also alert to conditions from beyond their local setting which may inform the development of distinguishing features of selves at odds with the local culture. Through this ethnographic study the “conditions, character, or distinguishing features” (Delbridge & Bernard, 1988) of the young participants in this study will be described. The ways that they choose to represent themselves to each other and to others will be examined and the impact of an education program on these identity constructions explored. The marks made on the representations of self by the isolated setting and external influences of this particular rural world are investigated in this process.

1.1.2 Clancy of the Overflow

Young people growing up in Australian rural towns grow up in a context which celebrates and often romanticises the masculinist physical outdoors life of “the bush”. The rural idyll is characterised by freedom, open space and connection with the natural world of animals and landscape. This freedom is amplified by contrasting it with the constraints of life in the city. The idyllic rural world is populated by strong and independent men whose life rhythms are dictated by the seasons, not social
institutions. Australian poets like A.B. Paterson provide rural young people with potent images of the masculinist rural idyll in contrast to the constraining, degraded identities of the city:

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.
And I somehow rather fancy that I’d like to change with Clancy,
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal
But I doubt he’d suit the office, Clancy, of The Overflow.

Andrew Barton ‘Banjo’ Paterson 1889

Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world but its Western culture has always celebrated the natural landscape, the “sunlit plains” and “open spaces”. In A.B. Paterson’s classic poem *Clancy of the Overflow* (Paterson, 1889), “Clancy” exists in a world quite removed from the constraints of “the office”. The air that he breathes is free of the “foetid”, “foulness” of the city. He moves at a slower pace, taking time to relate to the natural world around him. The comparison of life in the Australian bush with life in the city preoccupies much of Australia’s early art and literature and continues to resonate today. But the nature of rural life and city life has dramatically changed since Clancy headed off “down the Cooper”.

For the first two centuries of European settlement in Australia it was possible to make a living from the land through hard work and pioneering endurance. The strength of the early wool industry meant that the colonies of Australia rode to prosperity “on the sheep’s back”. Minerals and agriculture provided wealth and employment for a growing population. A. B. Paterson recorded and celebrated the qualities that he saw as characteristic and common to the non-urban Australian culture of the late 1800s. The dry plains of south-west NSW were settled in the same years that Paterson began representing Australian culture to the world. The rural community that is the focus of the current study developed around a river crossing on those plains in the same years. Paterson’s celebration of a masculinist outdoors life which is disdainful of “the cashbook and the journal” of the “townsfolk” furnish this location with enduring images of identity values, but the 21st century has seen dramatic shifts in national and international economies. It would be difficult for Clancy to pay his bills today with his earnings as a drover. Rural towns are rapidly shrinking as rural employment opportunities vanish. The Australian rural social landscape has been under increasing pressure in this new century. Climate change is
impacting on life and economic practices (Flannery, 2005), labour markets are shifting, engaging more women in the workforce and providing fewer low skilled masculinised jobs (Little, 2003). Traditional gender identities that have underpinned the success and survival of the “family farm” for a long time are being challenged and transformed (Little & Panelli, 2003). Young people in rural locations face the challenge of locating identity markers that are sympathetic to their historical roots but resilient to these changing times.

Educators, parents and rural young people planning life paths have responded in a variety of ways to the challenges of this new century. This study focuses on a community which saw these changing times as particularly threatening to their rural young men. It provides a unique rural context for examining gendered youth identity constructions as it explores the practices, structures, power relations and influences of a particular group of rural young people.

1.1.3 Rural youth identities

In his struggle to support the development of a “sense of wholeness” in the Chicago Afro-American community Barack Obama concluded that identity “would have to arise from something more fine than bloodlines we'd inherited” (2004, p. 204). He believed that it would have to find root in the personal stories of people. He shifted his focus to “all the messy, contradictory details of our experience” (2004, p. 204). The personal accounts of the residents of a small rural town are the focus of this ethnographic study, from these personal accounts it is possible to infer a picture of the way ‘the social’ is constructed in this particular rural setting. An explicit illustration of the “messy, contradictory detail” of this story may be found in the image of the railway rolling stock that rattles up to the grain silos across the Riverina with its wheat trucks emblazoned with urban graffiti. This image is one picture of the exchange of youth identity markers which occurs between Australian urban and rural cultures.
Like the wheat trucks, rural young people are marked by the images that they meet in the city and from the city. These images, like the graffiti on the rolling stock, resonate differently in a rural setting, and act as pointers to an urban youth culture. They provide symbolic connection between the non-rural and rural youth cultures, demonstrating that cultural boundaries need not be geographically bounded. Like the wheat trains, rural young people who adopt the signs and symbols of urban cultures bring something new and slightly incongruous to rural places. It is important to note that the flow of signs and symbols of culture is not one-way traffic. The urban ‘ute’
culture\(^1\), which apes the ways of the country cowboy, speaks to the flow of imagery back to the city from the country. The potency of this culture is demonstrated each year by the Deniliquin “Ute muster”, an annual celebration in western New South Wales which features the gathering of thousands of utility trucks and draws hundreds of young drivers out of the suburbs of Melbourne and around the country. The focus of this study, however, is a particular group of rural young people, who are constructing identities in a rapidly changing world that is rich in material for the representation of diverse selves. This study of a boys’ education strategy acknowledges the ebb and flow of cultural signs and symbols and examines identities constructed in a particular time and place in rural western NSW.

1.2. A Town called Paterson

The name of the iconic 19\(^{th}\) century Australian poet, Paterson, has been chosen to represent the little town at the centre of this rural community study. It is a small township area, with a population of approximately 2,500 people at the 2006 census (ABS 2006 Census Tables http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au).

It should be noted that the size of the community has had implications for the reporting of this study. Given that the study deals with the sensitive issue of identity and contested views about gender education, every effort has been made to protect the identity of the community as well as the residents in the community here called Paterson. To this end, the ABS data provided in this section of the thesis includes the collector districts that surround Paterson to provide a picture of the various trends in this general location while protecting the anonymity of the community. This combined data provides a useful illustration of the features of Paterson without disclosing its particular location. Confidentiality is protected while the distinctive characteristics are revealed.

There is also an issue in protecting the identities of individuals within the community of Paterson. For ease of reading each participant cited in this study has a pseudonym, which is provided to enable personalities and gender to be visible and traceable. Their general age is noted and an identifying number affixed which indicates the place of that data in the chronology of the interviews. Where a dialogue with the researcher is included the researcher is identified by the initials LCP.

\(^{1}\) NOTE: A glossary of colloquial Australian terms is included as Appendix 3.
1.2.1 Historical Values and Attitudes

Histories of Paterson represent it as a place that is proud of its past. A romanticised account of its early settlement written in the 1950s notes the fertility of the land, the beauty of its vegetation and wildlife and the courage of its pioneers.

Early in 1843, the tired bullocks and cumbersome creaking wagons bearing the first supplies and equipment for the new settlement lumbered across the Eastern portion of [Paterson]. As these teams moved slowly along the edge of the plain bordering the forest, numerous kangaroos straightened to attention and gazed curiously at this amazing sight (T. R. McConnell, 1951 p. 12).

There have been several histories of Paterson written since the 1950s. Some carefully researched records of the large stations of the Paterson district celebrate the ingenuity and endurance of the pioneers. They concentrate on the achievements of the agricultural workers who are identified as masculine and ignore the presence of any indigenous or non-European populations.

Heritage newspapers, reprinted in 2001 by the local historical society as part of the celebration of the Centenary of Federation, provide a picture of the issues that have concerned this district over the years. Football features as a perennial interest. A photograph of the 1922 Premiers attests to this importance, the accompanying article exclaims that the celebratory banquet enjoyed by the team at the Royal Hotel was “perfection itself”. In these papers there are also many references to crop yields and stock prices and excited accounts of innovative agricultural machinery. A 1989 football club publication includes one reference to an Aboriginal player and it hosts news of the ladies netball competition which takes almost equal space to the football.

In early publications the women of Paterson are represented as heroic bush nurses or tireless workers in the Temperance League. Local histories of Paterson contribution to the war efforts also pay tribute to the role of local women which was considerable. More recent publications acknowledge the increasing leadership responsibilities carried by women in the Paterson district, especially in the area of volunteer group management.

The lauding of sport, a passion for agricultural production and the gendered division of society have a long history in Paterson. Local publications have long articulated a concern for the rural seasons, isolation exacerbated by poor road conditions and masculinist survival skills, which include alcohol consumption. This is demonstrated
by the following account from a Paterson Historical Society’s journal (9 August 1906):

There is a tremor of excitement in the air as the time of shearing approaches, as our little hamlet is being invaded by strange faces. Here the old traveller of the road with his worldly possessions on his back which he drops in the main street and gazes at it lovingly and then his fickle fancies stray from matilda to the pub in anticipation of a long drink. As he surveys the half empty glass and proceeds to have it filled he makes enquiries about the distance to the nearest shed and also to the length of the cut.

Straggling after him come two new chums, “matilda” looks as though she has been imbibing but such is not the case she has had the skilful handling that the regular roadster gives to his swag. His billy etc. are new like themselves. They swing their billy as professionally as they can and try to look as unconcerned as if they were doing the block at midday in a pair of patent leather shoes in lieu of doing ten miles a day on our lovely roads in a pair of Hugh Thompson watertights. Another species of the genus homo is ‘Jonnie’ sent from the city as a bookkeeper at some outback station. Here we have a man of some importance who carries no matildas, he only carries airs which he proceeds to exhibit for the enlightenment of the boarders wherever he may have the bad fortune for them to be putting up for the night. We will watch for his return as he may carry matildas back and under strange influence he may be more of a man when he next proceeds through town (E. McConnell, Alexander, & Hird, 1996, p. 9).

Written a century ago in the township of Paterson this story illustrates a perennial concern with strangers, road conditions, alcohol, isolation and masculinity. Most newcomers carry their bedding and belongings tied up in a bundle, or swag referred to as “Matilda”. This bundle is often their only companion and its condition is appraised by the experienced observer to judge the standing and status of the visitor. The disdainful eye cast upon the city slicker is much more intense than the amused critical eye turned upon the newly arrived immigrant with his drunken ‘swag’.

Mistrust of book learning and cultured “airs” underwrite the wry observations of this rural journalist and the capacity for rural life to turn the city slicker into “more of a man” is stated with great surety. His transformation into “more of a man” will be signalled by the fact that he carries his belongings in a “matilda” on his own back instead of a trunk which is carted by others. The traces of these attitudes expressed by current Paterson locals may be evidence of the durability of the “feel of the game” (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 14) of life developed in the localised field of practice that is an Australian small country town.
**1.2.2 Paterson: as a rural idyll**

Paterson is characterised by its residents as a safe nurturing environment. They compare it to other rural places identifying it as safer and better suited to the needs of young families. According to a teacher who had recently arrived:

> They find it a very safe environment and this is the environment they want to bring their kids up in ... [T]his is a safe place. This is a really good environment to grow up in. They might have a whinge, but all of the kids agree that this is a good place to grow up in. ... people do know it’s a nice safe place to live but we do have to go elsewhere if we want to provide stuff for our kids. And they do it ...

> If you get a really nice environment where the kids feel safe, you have a happy place. Your kids can walk the street with their mates and not feel scared. When I lived in Maitland or Yass, there was no way that I would let them go anywhere without ringing every ten minutes to find out if they got there. I guarantee the parents around here don’t do that (Elizabeth, 50s, 064).

Even the young people who complained at the lack of leisure facilities in the town noted that they felt very safe and secure here. The tourist brochure’s claims of friendliness are supported by the customary wave from every passing vehicle and a firm “G’day” from any passerby. Participants of all ages in this study characterise Paterson as a very safe place, and a great place to bring up children. This is consistent with the literature that finds the notion of safety as central to constructions of rurality (Kraak & Kenway, 2002; Little & Morris, 2005; Panelli, 2002). The primary aged children in the current study tended to characterise the city as a hostile setting in contrast to their place of peace and freedom:

> It’s better than the city because it’s not noisy and you can have more pets and you can ride your bike anywhere, you can drive a car (Ebony, 11yrs, 037).

> Because your Mum lets you walk down the street to get hot chips for dinner. That doesn't usually happen in the city because you could get mugged and stuff like that... There is more freedom in the country. I ride a bike when I visit my friends (Keith, 8yrs, 034).

> It is smaller than the city. You can just do stuff. You can drive and all that. There is not as many people. It is way safer. It is just good. There is good shops in town there is a surf shop, a newsagents, there is basically everything you need (Syd, 11yrs, 038).

> It is clearly important to these young people to be able to drive, or ride independently. This is associated with the qualities of both independence and mechanical mastery which are highly valued in this community.

Mobility in a district that is characterised by long distances between
settlements is a key issue. Transport was listed as the first concern of the *Rural and Remote Youth Issues* report on the Choices and Chances conference (Croce, 1993). The intrinsic worth of all things agriculture is also a given in many conversations:

Jonathon: (7) Melbourne is bigger.
Esther: (7) It wouldn't be as quiet. There is more planes and more buildings.
Jonathon: You could run around all night chasing burglars and stuff.
Esther: There would be basically more everything.
Jonathon: We have got more crops!
Esther: Yeah, we've got more farming stuff (031).

Students from the high school also contrasted the safe open space of Paterson with the perceived crowds and constraints of the city:

Just the freedom to go out at night and walk to a mate’s house, at that time of night you can walk over to a mate’s house and you’ve got just about no worries. You’ve got no worries. What you can do, I do 120 kilometre bike rides just around towns and that. I just go for a ride if I feel like it. I don’t have to worry about cars. There might be three or four that I pass in the day, in 120 Ks. It is not that you would not be free in a city it is just that everyone knows everyone and you walk everywhere and be safe. Like I’ve had friends in Melbourne that have been mugged and stuff. You get fresh air and it’s free from smog and stuff (John, 16yrs, 050).

Adults in the community similarly characterise Paterson as clean and safe:

It is friendly. The country air. The sporting. I think it is easy to get into sporting things. I think it is better for kids to be growing up in the country. I don't think there is a worry of safety issues with them walking home from school. That is not to say that there may be undesirables around, but you sort of don't have the same worry with people who have come from the city and the sort of people they might come in contact with. Just the friendliness. We live on farms and the kids have got plenty of room to ride their motor bike and do all those sorts of things (Rozzie, 45 yrs, 061).

The centrality of sport to the values of the community is stressed. This issue will be taken up in a later chapter. Rozzie goes on to illustrate the quality of mutual support provided by the “friendliness” referred to by others. She has two children at primary School and travels into town each day from an outlying property to work in the town.

I don’t know that they really miss out on anything because does it really matter if you don’t see the latest movie? Does it really matter if you don’t …You go to Melbourne and you think ‘You don’t know anyone in a block of flats. At least if something goes wrong you can call on your neighbours. I often get phone calls ‘can you stop and pick up such and such’. I’m the local messenger person. Or ‘We’ve run out of sugar can you put some in my mail box?’ we’ve got good neighbours (Rozzie, 45 yrs, 061).
A focus group of Year 12 students declared their firm desire to get out of “this hole” as quickly as they could, but a closer investigation of their feelings about their hometown revealed pride and loyalty. A newly arrived teacher noted this perception that Paterson was a good place to raise a family:

I was talking to a kid the other day and he said he was going to uni. I said, ‘Oh to escape from [Paterson].’ And he said, ‘Yeah for now because it’s not good for our age but it’s a great place to raise kids.’ So I can see him coming back. Yet he’s one of the people who have moved in because of his dad’s job. It’s really interesting that they have the view of, ‘this is a great place to bring up a family. This is a safe place. This is a really good environment to grow up in’. They might have a whinge, but all of the kids agree that this is a good place to grow up in (Elizabeth 50s, 064).

This claim was restated by many participants. It appears that most of these young people must plan to leave their home town, for a period of time at least, to secure employment or further education but there appears to be a strong pull to return. Two boys from Year Nine seem to be critical of the “type of kid” that would wish to escape from Paterson:

Seth: (15) Yeah, because most kids think it’s a hole. [Paterson] was built on a swamp.
Mark: (15) Yeah, usually if you’re the kind of person who goes out every weekend, doesn’t care about school, has a girl friend.
Seth: Yeah, you reckon this place is pretty much worthless and you want to get away (099).

The boys characterise the person who would be dissatisfied with life in Paterson as a rebel. They imply that the town is meeting the needs of the conservative or conforming student. The senior students are close to the stage when they will have to make a decision about leaving the town. A group of Year 11 girls modified the position presented by the Year 9 boys:

Danielle: (17) Most city people think we are all going to grow up into farmers or something. But a lot of us move to the city anyway.
Sally: (16) They just want to get out of here.
Serena: (16) Yes, most of them do but a lot of them come back. They get to the city and they realise that country life is better.
Danielle: A lot of them go to the city to get their qualifications and then they come back because now they’ve got something to do here.
Serena: A lot of people say ‘yes I am definitely getting out of here as soon as I can’. But they never end up doing it. If they get an opportunity they end up doing something.
Sally: I definitely want to come back here and have a life here. It’s a lot better than the city life, because I have grown up in the city life. It is a better surrounding for kids.

Serena: Yes I would grow my kids up in a country town.

Sally: I would definitely grow my kids up in a country town.

Danielle: I would, I don’t want to go to a capital city but I don’t want to stay here either (119).

One of the local girls felt so strongly about the benefits of living in this little community that she entered an ABC radio competition to write about it. She sums up sentiments common to many of the participants of this study:

For a seventeen-year-old girl, living in rural NSW couldn’t be any better. I don’t have a large mall; I don’t have a local cinema (unless you count odd screenings in the football sheds); there is no public transport; there are no museums, art galleries or regular theatre productions less than two hours away. I only have access to a small range of sporting activities and I have to drive two or three hours to enjoy or experience ten-pin bowling or ice skating.

But if I had the choice I wouldn’t live anywhere else because what I have gained from living in rural Australia far outweighed what my urban peers will ever have.

Living on the land has given me respect. Respect for Mother Nature and how quickly she can change her mind and respect for my fellow inhabitants …

… yes our small rural schools face some disadvantages but our school has caring and personal atmosphere not possible in larger centres or cities. Also important to me is the safe and protective environment I have been able to build around me. When I go out I feel safe …

So to anyone who thinks that because I live in the bush I am isolated, underprivileged or behind the times I would just like to say that because I live in the bush I am privileged, safe and the world is at my fingertips and thanks to broadband satellite I also have faster internet connection!! (ABC Radio, 2003)

This position echoes Rye’s findings in his Norwegian study of *Rural youth images of the rural*.

The results indicate that the majority of rural youth keep a view of the countryside that is in accordance with the “rural idyll/rural dull” concepts—these two images of the rural being complementary rather than contradictory (2006, p. 1).

Adults and youths alike have noted that the “dullness” of the rural place is both a cost and a benefit. The impact of this on youth identities will be investigated further in chapters 6 and 7.

### 1.2.3 Social space & physical place

The local Tourist Association magazine claims that:
This is a place of rugged beauty, of vibrant earthy colours bathed in the warmth of the country sunshine. Every face is a friendly one. Every day is a good one (Paterson Tourism, 2003, p. 3)

The words “rugged” and “earthy” hint at the harshness of this environment. In summer the temperatures can reach into the 40°C and in winter can hover around zero. Despite these extremes both work and play tend to be demanding outdoors physical activities. There is a strong emphasis on sport and physical strength. Physical and psychological isolation is also an issue. There is no public transport and it is a twelve hour drive to the state capital. It is closer however to the capital of a neighbouring state. Cross-border anomalies plague many sectors of this community. One state is responsible for health, education, local government, the legal system and roads, while the other provides newspapers, TV news and telephone codes and football code.

The local shire community directory of 2002/2003 lists a wide range of support services which include:

- four aged care facilities
- seventeen fire Brigades
- seven local papers
- three local radio transmitters
- seven clubs and
- 51 community groups

These services support the population of Paterson. The ratio of fire brigades and other services to population attests to a sparsely spread community. The population centres are very small but they are spread over such wide distances that services like newspapers and aged care have been duplicated. Each little community has its own identity with its own paper and community activities.

### 1.2.4 Clubs & Social Organisations

The ‘Aussie Rules’ football teams that used to represent each small community in the district are gradually amalgamating as the population drops but several teams still compete for a hotly contested trophy. The wealth of sporting clubs illustrate the dominance of the sporting culture in this district. These include:

- Polocrosse
- Trotting Club
- Racing Club
- Pony Club
- Fishing Clubs
- Shooting
- Basketball
- Carpet Bowls
Cricket Golf
Little Athletics Squash
Tennis Swimming

These clubs regularly organise festivals involving music and dance but they do little to service the needs of the school age members of the community. Tourist information statistics reveal that 33 percent of the supporters of the country music festival were aged between 40 and 60 years and 67 percent were in the 60 plus age group. The jazz festival catered for the 35 to 50s age group and only the football club caters for “mixed ages”. Young people have occasionally organised for bands to visit the district and on rare occasions the pubs, which are the focal point of the young people’s socialising, will provide live entertainment.

1.2.5 The Paterson Workplace

The young people of Paterson who are the focus of the current study are engaged in identity constructions in a very particular time and place. Although they have many challenges and opportunities in common with other young people this group is keenly aware of the imperative for them to leave their hometown in order to further their education or to find employment. The patterns observed in Paterson are not unique. According to the research literature Australia’s rural communities have been finding it increasingly difficult to attract and hold young people:

Over the last two decades there has been a steady decline in youth migration to Australian rural communities. Generally, inland agricultural communities are the most seriously impacted by this trend. Coupled with high rates of youth out-migration, many rural communities face difficulties in attracting young people to fill skilled job vacancies and apprentice positions. Declining youth in-migration also has social consequences, effectively reducing the capacity of rural communities to replenish their skill base and social networks (A. Davies, 2008).

According to Argent and Walmsley the “rates of youth loss from rural regions have increased over the past twenty years” (Argent & Walmsley, 2008). Young people were more likely to search out capital cities than the rest of the population and "most inland areas still continue to experience heavy losses of local youth " (Argent & Walmsley, 2008).

Data from the districts surrounding Paterson exemplify this population gap. Figure 1.2a illustrates the trend for the young people in the Paterson district to leave the community. The population dip between 15 and 35-year-olds illustrated in Figure
1.2a indicates the extent of the drain of young people from the Paterson community. A sense of the level of the problem can be seen by comparing the trend in the Paterson graph with the state average figures presented as Figure 1.2b.

**Figure 1.2a** Population of study district (ABS 2001, Paterson data, grouped collector districts).

**Figure 1.2b** Comparative state population figures (ABS 2001)
It appears that despite their affection for and loyalty to their rural roots, these young people know that their futures are likely to be furnished with ideas and images from larger economic centres.

For those who remain the history and traditions of Paterson are rooted in the agricultural industry. Agriculture has always been the biggest employer in this community. The dominance of agricultural activity over all other employment fields is demonstrated by figure 1.3. Its industries include timber, horticulture, dairy production, grains and meat including sheep, pigs and cattle. The other sources of employment found in the district include retail and service industries.

![Figure 1.3 Occupational structures (ABS 1991-2001 data, Paterson grouped collector districts)](image-url)

The graph also illustrates the recent dramatic downturn in agricultural employment. At the time of gathering data for this ethnography, modest growth could be observed in most sectors of employment, but the number of people supported by the agricultural industry was in rapid decline. Yet, despite this downturn, agriculture continued to be the most significant employer in this district.
1.2.6 Gendered workplaces

A closer examination of employment reveals that the community of Paterson is divided by gender as well as by sector. These divides were very significant, as illustrated by Figure 1.4. Women are identified as dominating the professions and clerical or service roles while men are overwhelmingly occupied in management (this includes the management of the family farm). Those men not involved in management were identified with the highly masculinised roles of trade, labouring or transport. In 1991 there were more women occupied in labouring than in the professions but by 2001 this trend has reversed. There are very few women involved in the trades and even fewer in machinery operation and transport.

![Figure 1.4 Occupation structures by gender (ABS 2001 data, Paterson grouped collector districts)](image)

It is apparent that the gendered distribution within the workplace is not just a reflection of the sectors of industry within Paterson. It is also a reflection of the nature of the educational qualifications evident within these collector districts.
Figure 1.5 provides a graphic illustration of the qualification divide by gender. This phenomenon is further explored in Section 1.2.7 of this report, showing a preponderance of males in the workforce with TAFE qualifications, while the females have a much higher proportion with graduate qualifications.

![Bar graph showing qualification distribution by gender](image)

*Figure 1.5 A comparison of qualification by gender given as a percentage of workforce by gender (ABS 2001 data, Paterson grouped collector districts)*

The trend evident in Figure 1.5 is reflective of changing patterns of qualification in the Paterson district. These changes are illustrated in Figure 1.6 below which indicates through census data how qualifications for males and females in Paterson have changed over the period 1996 to 2006.
Figure 1.6 shows clearly the change over a ten year period in the educational attainments of males and females. In 1986 males had marginally more professional degrees than females, but by 1991 this was reversed as the number of females acquiring degrees continued to rise steeply, while males increased more gradually. Female achievement of Vocational Education qualifications also increased dramatically after 1996 but is still at a significantly lower level than that of males.

### 1.2.7 Gendered career choices in Paterson

ABS data was also examined at the school level. The data supports the perception within the community that many boys in this district are early school leavers and are less interested in the Higher School Certificate. In this regard, Section 1.2.5 has already pointed to the differences in qualification levels for boys and girls, but there is particular value in examining the data in terms of the level reached by both boys and girls within the secondary school system.

Figure 1.7a shows that Paterson is part of a district where 12 percent of the young men have left school before they are 15 and a further 28 percent leave at fifteen.
this district 40 percent of the under 24-year-old males have left school before attempting the Higher School Certificate programme compared to 23 percent of girls. The data indicated that 35 percent of girls continued their education to Year 12, compared to only 22 percent of the boys.

Figure 1.7a Highest level of schooling for males 15-24 years in the Paterson district (ABS 2002-2006 data, grouped collector districts)

Figure 1.7b Highest level of schooling for females 15-24 years in the Paterson district (ABS 2002-2006 data, grouped collector districts)
The ABS data for Paterson clearly shows differing pathways into education beyond school. These are illustrated in Figure 1.8 below.

*Figure 1.8a* Post secondary qualifications of males in Paterson district (ABS 2002-2006 data, grouped collector districts)

*Figure 1.8b* Post secondary qualifications of females in Paterson district. (ABS 2002-2006 data, grouped collector districts)

The exploration of school level data in Figure 1.7 reveals dramatic differences between boys and girls. Retention rates at secondary school are dramatically lower for boys than girls in Paterson, however, Figure 1.8a. demonstrates that men are continuing to gain qualifications beyond school with the majority in the form of vocational certificates. It appears that the boys are moving into the community and gaining qualifications to suit local employment. Girls on the other hand stay at
school much longer, and then go on to further study concentrating their efforts in academic pursuits and tertiary qualifications in preparation for professional careers.

Importantly, many rural boys are leaving school earlier than girls to pursue masculinist rural employment. The ABS data for young people does not demonstrate that these boys have consequently suffered any economic penalty compared to girls as a consequence of their narrow career choices and early school leaving. On the contrary Figures 1.9a and 1.9b show that although boys and girls who leave school early suffer a very similar unemployment rate (11%); for those in employment only seventeen percent of girls earned above $200 a week against 32 percent of boys. Eight percent of boys earned better than $400 a week against 3 percent of girls.

![Figure 1.9a Income levels for males aged 15-19 years in Paterson (ABS 2001 data, grouped collector districts)](image1)

![Figure 1.9b Income levels for females aged 15-19 years in Paterson (ABS 2001 data, grouped collector districts)](image2)
Ultimately the trends identified relate back to the employment sector choices of both girls and boys who stay in Paterson. The income and qualifications issues come together here. Figure 1.9a illustrates the point. It indicates that 64 percent of females in Paterson are engaged in employment in clerical, service and sales, Figure 1.9b with a high level of casualisation and poor promotion prospects. On the other hand, 30 percent of the boys are engaged in trades which offer long term prospects and competitive wages. A further 29 percent of males are engaged as labourers, an unskilled position that is better paid than most traditional feminised unskilled positions. Only two percent of girls between fifteen and nineteen years of age hold managerial and administrative positions, while eleven percent of the boys hold positions at this level.

Figure 1.10a Occupation of males 15-24 years in Paterson (ABS 2001 data, grouped collector districts)

Figure 1.10b Occupation of females (15-24 years) in Paterson (ABS 2001 data, grouped collector districts)
These gender differences are further emphasised by an examination of the unemployment data for Paterson. An exploration of the ABS data indicated that although the unemployment rate for fifteen to nineteen year olds is the same for girls and boys at eleven percent, there is a marked difference in the 20 to 24 year old group. Male unemployment was only six and a half percent but for females it has jumped to twelve and a half percent. This disparity is slightly improved for the 25 to 29 year old group with female unemployment down to seven and a half percent, while males are down to five percent. Partial explanations for these trends lie in out-migration of girls from Paterson and in the withdrawal of women from the workforce.

It is thus interesting that although there is no evidence from this data of current economic danger for these rural boys, concern for future employability was often cited as a reason for the need for special boys’ programs. The High School in Paterson explicitly references these perceptions as the rationale for the Paterson Boys’ program.

### 1.2.8 Population composition

One feature of the place of Paterson revealed by the ABS data is its homogenous, mono-cultural nature. The school noted that only one of the children at Paterson High School identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and there are very few students from a non-Anglo background. The ABS 2006 census indicated that the overwhelmingly dominant language spoken in the district is English with 4,530 speakers. The next largest number is 55 Italian speakers and then ten Chinese speakers. Most of these foreign language speakers were not resident in the Paterson township. Religious affiliation is similarly narrowly focused with no representatives of Islam, Judaism, or Hinduism, four other religions, nine Buddhists, 1,113 Catholics and 2,519 Protestants.

A new school teacher expressed a little discomfort with the narrowness of the resultant culture:

> It would be how a lot of communities were 20 years ago. They’re Anglo Saxon. It’s a real Anglo Saxon middle class environment (Elizabeth, 50s, 064).

Even though [Paterson] is inside a bit of a bubble, it is a beautiful place but it is pretty single cultural really. Mono-cultural if you like. Life revolves a lot around sport and a lot around a bit stereotypical at times with what they
think are clear guidelines about what they think should happen (Clark, 36yrs, 097).

The young people of Paterson expressed some apprehension about the narrowness of their culture:

Steve: (17) It is such a small community we basically grew up with each other.
Greg: (17) But it is not multicultural.
Steve: I don’t reckon culture is such a problem.
Greg: Maybe not but then we move away from here to do something and we don’t know how to deal with the cultural thing.
Steve: But it is good here. If I could do the things I’m interested in I would stay here.
Greg: The things I’m interested in here you could never start up (009).

The boys value the nurturing qualities of their community but they are aware of the constraints it will inevitably impose upon them. A community member joked about the mono-cultural setting of Paterson but considered that it advantaged the young people as it protected them from what she perceived to be a hostile outside world.

Oh yeah. Yes totally there’s no racism here whatsoever. There’s no other races! We live in a little Utopia here in [Paterson]. These kids here have no idea what it’s like outside in the real world you know. And you wonder whether that is a good thing or a bad thing because they’ve been sheltered for all that time and they have this happy little cabbage patch life until they have to go out and face the reality of life. Is that better or worse than being subjected to severe bullying and racism and you know, violence in schools at an early age. (Daisy, 43yrs, 093).

The community is conscious of its lack of cultural diversity but it counts this a small price to pay for insulation against the sort of tensions they witnessed in the race riots on Cronulla Beach south of Sydney in 2002. There is a consciousness of the need for a broader world view but the most important thing is that they feel safe and calm. A similar assessment was made of gender inequities observed in the culture:

Expectations are as they would have been twenty years ago. There is a very different expectation of girls to boys. Girls are there for boys. So very ‘fifties. And while I don’t see that as such a bad thing because it’s a very calm community and there are more nuclear families and extended families here that stay nuclear and extended, like there are not the single parent (although there are a few of those creeping in), but the majority of the children here have two parents, and two steady regular parents who have always been their parents, not the Johnny-you-know fly-by-nights, which is not the norm in any other school I’ve been at in the last ten years. That’s not the norm. That’s the exception to the rule (Elizabeth, 50s, 064).
1.2.9  Paterson High a focus for this study

The community of Paterson is served by a single high school, together with five state primary schools, one Catholic primary School and a Central school (a small school which combines both primary and secondary students) that was also active in the district. The schools are very small. Paterson High is one of the largest with a population ranging from 250 to 300 students.

Paterson High School buildings are typical 1970s architecture, set in gardens and playing fields. There is no graffiti and students’ bags lie unattended outside rooms during assemblies or practical lessons indicating a confidence in the security of their property. The canteen attendants chat comfortably with the students and the staff and student banter is peppered with nicknames and references of familiarity. During the summer months mixed groups of students lounge around the grass laughing and talking during the hour long lunch break and in winter, if they do not have access to the senior study they crowd around the heaters in the library. A large demountable classroom provides the school with a covered space for indoor assemblies, sport and examinations. So in terms of physical space the students are generally well serviced.

The executive staff of the high school is mostly male. The perception of the community is that the principal and deputy have come from “outside” of the town, whereas the core of the staff is local and long term. It was also noted that the staff is predominantly female (seventeen females and seven males). It has been very difficult for some years to attract and hold staff in the disciplines of music, visual art and sport but other areas have enjoyed a high level of stability.

Paterson High has three feeder primary schools. The largest one, known in this study as Manywarra, is an hour and a half away by bus and has a population of 500 people. Its principal industries are rice, sheep, cattle and pigs. Another feeder school is a town with a population of 100 which is 45 minutes away. This district predominantly services irrigation farming. The timber town on the other side of the river from Paterson also sends students to the high school. It has a population of 800.
The school magazine is a very professional production dominated by exuberant photos and student illustrations. It showcases a dynamic range of activities beyond the curriculum including:

- The Tournament of the Minds
- school production
- debs
- dance festivals
- the school dance
- Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day Breakfasts
- driver education
- debating
- public speaking
- bands
- a footy tipping competition with a miniature football with a club logo as the prize and
- school excursions included visits to the Grampians, the South Coast, Melbourne and Sydney.

For many years this school has explored a range of strategies in boys’ education. These culminated in a community supported Boys’ Education Project.

1.3. Masculinity & the Arts in Paterson

The Paterson Boys’ Education project of 1999 focused on the arts as a way of bringing about change in the masculine identities of the rural youth. This focus on the arts in a rural context is very surprising in the light of Arts Council research which found that rural men were the lowest valuers of the arts in Australia.

The research of Paul Costanoura which was commissioned by the Australia Council and published in Australians and the Arts (2000), points to a significant gender differential in the area of arts valuing. His research found that:

The most disaffected type of Australian in relation to the arts is likely to be the Australian-born father and son, living in outer suburbs of capital cities or in rural and regional Australia, with a low level of education (and) a relatively low income (Costanoura, 2000, p. 25).

Costanoura’s (2000) extensive research examined perceptions of the arts, attitudes to the arts and participation in the arts in every sector across the country. He identified significant contrasts between the perceptions of city dwellers and those from the rural sector. He particularly identified the issues of gender and income differential as very significant in the rural setting. He found that:
The national trend against men valuing the arts is magnified in the country… there is a 10% gap between men and women in the city in their inclination to place a high or fairly high value on the arts. However in the country, this gap rises to almost double that level - 18%. While 45% of city men and 55% of city women give the arts a high or fairly high value, only 41% of country men feel this way compared to 59% of country women (Costanoura, 2000, p. 162).

Differences in arts valuing related to income are also magnified in the country, indicating intersections between gender and class.

A larger gap exists between the inclination of lower income and higher-income people in the country to give the arts a high value than the difference in the city… outside of the capital cities, the well off are much more likely to feel positive about the arts than the less well off (Costanoura, 2000, p. 157).

If Paterson reflects Costanoura’s (2000) data then its women and high income earners should express the greatest interest in the arts. It is not clear what Costanoura’s (2000) participants understood by the term “the arts”. The term is unclear and the report concedes that there was consternation over its definition. The four art forms of dance, drama, visual art and music may be read in terms of popular culture or of the ‘high arts’. The Paterson Boys’ Programs included cartooning, movie making and physical theatre performances; these activities challenge a narrow interpretation of the term ‘the arts’. They move the Paterson program away from a ‘high art’ definition, affirming the place of popular cultural activities in youth culture development.

Drama was not high in the consciousness of these young people. Local amateur theatre was considered old fashioned. The local video shop was relatively new and held very limited stock. The nearest cinema was about an hour away and required someone to have a driver’s licence to get you there and cash to spend which is very difficult to earn in a small rural town. Television viewing was given a surprisingly low priority as they preferred to be outside either “hanging out” with their friends or involved in physical activities such as riding horses and bikes, swimming, hunting, skateboarding or playing sport. Students from the primary school were actively engaged in regular play production and public speaking but boys did not continue with this into high school:

I adjudicated the public speaking or debating and I noticed that there were no boys on the team and yet there were some very good debaters, boy debaters, who left to the high school. But none of them are taking it on when
they get to high school; I don’t understand that. And why wouldn’t they take arts, some of them are very, very good artistically (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).

The gender associations with the arts are a prominent preoccupation of the Paterson participants. Its boys’ programs engaged both visual and performing arts activities so they presumably challenged some preconceptions. One of the high school teachers observed that:

... I don’t know if you would say the local community are anti art, but they’re probably not pro art. I mean there certainly are various art groups around and so on but, I think a lot of people around actually appreciate art but don’t really know enough about it to really understand. It’s not low status; it’s not scorned either. Someone who is artistic is not necessarily scorned within the community but probably you wouldn’t find many people that sit around and discuss art with you (Stuart, 58 yrs, 090).

On the other hand when the education bureaucrat responsible for Paterson was asked how the arts fitted into the rural culture his reply was “Very minimally” (John, 60yrs 007). One of the parents from the high school was asked “to what extent does rural culture encourage boys to be involved in creativity?” and she replied:

They don't really. I don't think they support anybody, boys or females, in creative activity. I grew up in a rural household and my parents always said that it is nonsense. You know, well, that art is just a time wasting thing, it will never put food on your table. It might be pretty bad, it will never achieve anything. I think that is basically the whole position (Trish, 30s, 021).

By way of contrast to this position several of the young people cited music as one of the most important influences in their lives:

To me it’s been pretty much everything (Tony, 17yrs, 053).

Sue hoped it would be “enough” to rescue her son from the stigma of not being good at football:

Tom is quite talented with the guitar and he’s not good at football. So I hope it will be enough (Sue, 30s, 022).

Joy, a Year 10 student sums up the position on the different art forms:

To some people it [art] is more [important] but I don't reckon it plays a role at all really. I don't like that sort of thing. But music matters, yes. Everybody should be able to bop at a party when they have had a drink (Joy, 15yrs, 133).

Music was identified as an accepted local masculine identity marker. This positive identity was strongly contrasted with an acute gender anxiety associated with dance.
In its first few years the Paterson boys’ project did not focus on music, its activities in visual art, drama and dance actively challenged a culture which privileged sport over the arts.

The masculine identity constructed by the small rural community of Paterson has pioneering rural Australian roots. The construction and celebration of the ‘bushman’ style of masculinity cuts a deep vein through the history of Australian arts. The first play about Australia was written by citizen Gamas and performed in France in 1792 *Les Émigré aux Terre Australes, or Le Dernier Chapitre d’une Revolution*. Written less than four years after the Colony of NSW was initiated it is a comedy characterised by “a spirited disrespect for privilege, egalitarianism and religious iconoclasm” (Rees, 1973, p. 3).

It tells the story of a group of French émigré sent to the “end of the universe” to begin a new life. It concludes that “the only respectable person among the émigrés is Mathurin the labourer. He can earn his own living, cultivate the soil, and teach others to be useful” (Rees, 1973, p. 3). He is an independent thinking, free spirited physical man who uses his strength to tame the savage land (he kills a tiger with a pitch fork). Unlike his aristocratic companions he does not communicate with the women. Mathurin is the ancestor of Katherine Susannah Pritchard’s 1927 *Brumby Innes* (Pritchard, 1974) and Ray Lawler’s cane cutters Barney and Roo (1922), men whose sense of self is defined by physical achievements and their relationship with a harsh demanding land; men who are inarticulate and potentially brutish. He is a close cousin to the swaggering man in spurs looking down on the simpering businessmen he has just robbed in William Strutt’s 1889 oil painting *Bushrangers on the St Kilda Road* (Smith, 2001, plate 29).

The ruggedly independent bushman myth still lives on in Australia, one of the most urbanised countries on the planet. Paul Hogan’s *Crocodile Dundee* is a very successful manifestation in the film industry. The Gallipoli legend elaborates this particular masculinity by adding resourcefulness and skilled horsemanship to the descriptor. The man from Snowy River illustrates the archetype and has been celebrated in the visual arts, film and television and frequently surfaces as a icon of Australianness. Steve Irwin built on the myth to create an image of Australian masculinity which incorporated the fearlessly reckless physical outdoors man with that of the devoted father and passionate environmentalist. His memorial service
featured an all male choir and culminated in the packing of his outback road truck with a series of items that signified resourcefulness, physical endurance and carefree adventuring. The Australian bushman myth has a long history but a continued presence in Australian identity play.

This mythology is part of the ‘masculinity’ that the Paterson boys project is using the arts to challenge or elaborate. It seems that the “light horse” has been replaced by a ute and the battlefield by a football field but the masculinity bloodlines are fairly pure and, unlike their brothers and sisters in the city, for the Paterson youth the pioneer logic of this masculinity is still reinforced with an on-going struggle with the physical environment.

The isolation of Paterson, the homogenous nature of the community and the willingness of a group of community leaders to develop a program specifically to assist the local boys, provides a unique opportunity to examine a gender education program in a rural context. Rural masculinity has been explored in the literature through a number of lenses; the Paterson study provides a youthful perspective in the context of a specific site and historical time. The study gives a voice to 21st century rural youth negotiating their identities in an isolated rural place which has historically celebrated a masculinist, physical outdoors culture. It is an opportunity to observe the role of the “site” in the formation of identities and to acknowledge the considered agency of young people proud of their rural roots and responsive to the pull of the cosmopolitan.

1.4. Culture and Gendered Identities in Paterson

Culture is not a unified whole ... even the culture within national boundaries exists as fragments loosely connected through experience and geography. Through the process of identity construction, people consciously and unconsciously select and move the fragments to new conceptual and physical locations, resulting in shifts in the cultural landscape (Freedman & Hernández, 1998, p. 2).

The Australian rural setting provides its people with a singular “geography” and set of “experiences” with which to form the “fragments” of their identities. Today’s rural youth negotiate this terrain armed with sophisticated technology and a powerful sense of the ‘other’ cultural options available to them in and beyond this country. The fragments of identities which they develop need to be durable within the “conceptual and physical locations” of both the paddock and the playground, the
bush and the city, the science lab and the footy field, open space and cyberspace.

Shifts in the cultural landscape, shape and are shaped by, shifts in the identities of both individuals and groups of rural young people. The way that young people represent themselves to the world and to themselves is affected by the histories and geographies of their experience. The feel for the way things are done which they develop through their shared rural experiences mark their appearance, language, values and attitudes, their way of doing things and their way of being.

In recent years geographers have made important contributions to the study of identity. One distinctive characteristic of this work has been an insistence on the importance of place in the construction of identities, including those based on gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and age (Keith & Pile, 1993: Bell & Valentine, 1996, cited in Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003).

The people and the geographic place referred to as the “Paterson community” provide the context for this examination of a youth culture. References to the “Paterson community” encompass a shared idea of a reified entity which provides security, surveillance, support, constraint, history and culture to these young people. Leipins (in Pini, 2003) explains that “geographies of community may be traced across both material and metaphoric spaces so that neither the tangible or imaginary aspects are forgotten” (Pini, 2003, p. 33).

The participants in this study shared a sense of community and place that influenced much of their conversation and was perceived as significant in the development of their shared and individual sense of self. Bourdieu (2000) claims that the “site” in which a culture is constructed, impacts on its constructions. His theorising of the development of group and individual identities includes a consideration of the impact of context. The site of Paterson is the context for this study. It has shaped and is shaped by the young people with whom we are in conversation.

Rural schools provide a valued focus for small communities. They are often seen as a vital link with the ‘outside world’ and a pathway for change for the next generation. This ‘change’ and connection with the ‘outside’ is not always welcomed in rural places. Schools can perform a balancing act, affirming and supporting the local culture while challenging young people to embrace challenge and change. In recent years the area of gender has provided a particularly unstable field for educators to navigate as the theories, policies and practices of gender in education have been in a state of flux. Since 1975 gender has surfaced as an area of key concern for educators.
In recent years antidiscrimination and gender equity strategies have been overshadowed by a “moral panic” over boys’ education which swept the western world at the beginning of this century.

Twenty first century educators are faced with a curriculum that is expanding faster than they can think and a society that demands that education be responsive to every shift in the social fabric. It is very difficult to work with confidence when every taken for granted idea must be “troubled” (Butler, 1990), questioned and re-examined to test its ‘fit’ with this new century. It can be very distressing for educators to have an idea that they believed to be settled and certain challenged in this way. Biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling did just that when she claimed in 1993 that the “two-sex system embedded in our society is not adequate to encompass the full spectrum of human sexuality” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, cited in Hussey, 2003). She claimed that the variety of genital formations found at birth required a five-sex system. Our twentieth century certainty that there are two biologically determined sexes in the human family has been unsettled as:

Both the International Athletic Foundation and the International Olympic Committee have discovered in the last decade that devising a foolproof scientific test to determine who is a man and who is a woman is extremely difficult (Kolata, 1992, cited in Hussey, 2003, p. 1).

If the biological sex of a person is no longer obvious or empirically demonstrable then what can we say about the socially determined gender? What are the implications for educators of this blurring of old certainties? Where does this leave boys’ education programs?

Feminists writing from a racial ethnic perspective, such as bell hooks (1984). and Patricia Collins (1989), have argued that it is incorrect to build research and feminist theory on a binary opposition of women and men when race and social class produce many categories of women and men that form hierarchical stratification systems in many societies. In that stratification system, race, class, and gender intersect to produce domination by upper-class white men and women and subordination of lower-class women and men of colour (cited in Hussey, 2003, p. 5). In her public address in Sydney June 2005 titled “Giving an account of oneself” Judith Butler explained that “You give an account of yourself as a subject in response to someone. We need the other to whom we address ourselves to tell us who we are” (Butler,

We perceive ourselves as continuously shifting and changing, from moment to moment in time and through differing contexts and spaces. Our own perception of achieving selfhood is a timeless, incomplete, and contextually bound process. Indeed, we are always becoming. This sense of becoming is not felt in the same way – and sometimes not felt at all – by our speaking partners, the others in our lives, and those less obviously connected to us. Others tend to view us from a particular moment in time and from a particular position. Our identity is captured, like a snapshot, and ‘refracted’ back to us through the visual lens or filter of the other. Bakhtin calls this receiving a sense of completeness or a fixed identity from the other. This momentary view of a self, refracted through the other, reflects one moment in time and one position in space, rather than a dynamic of becoming. Captured in the view of the other, our history and future is collapsed into a singular, static image embedded in the present moment (Vadeboncoeur & Stevens, 2005, p. 128).

In this study the identities of the young people are reduced to a “singular, static image embedded” in a place identified as Paterson in the year 2003. The place referred to will have changed since then just as the young people will have. This study is not a search for an ‘essential’, ‘true’ rural identity, rather it is an exploration of the identity texts that were observed to be taken up at that particular place over a particular period of time. These observations may then contribute to the development of an understanding of some of the elements acting upon young people in similar situations. This understanding may inform the practice of rural educators.

The group of young people under investigation are facing a world in the process of rapid change. The parents and educators of Paterson have focused their concern for the future on the education of the boys. The programs that they have put in place demonstrate their belief that school and community projects can change the way that these boys think about their identities. They also demonstrate a belief in a relationship between ‘culture’ with its many readings and gender identity formation. This community initiated its boys’ project at a time of resurgent interest in boys’ education. It was one of a wave of initiatives in Australian schools at the beginning of the new millennia. It used contested strategies in a contested field. It provides a unique setting for the exploration of perceptions of rural youth gender identities.
1.5. The structure of the study

This study investigates the identity play of the young people of Paterson as they embark on the journey described so eloquently by Obama, as a search for “armor against uncertainty” (Obama, 2004, p. 80). It calls on the theoretical framing of Bourdieu to try to understand some of the social forces at work in this setting. Obama has highlighted the fluid responsive nature of identity which can be revealed through “all the messy, contradictory details of our experience” (2004, p. 204). This ethnographic study focuses on the “messy, contradictory details” of the lives of the young people of the town called Paterson as they navigate the construction of their identities in an isolated Australian rural site at the beginning of the 21st century. It will include an exploration of literature on social theory, rural social research, gender in schools and youth subcultures as well as the stories of the young participants.

Following is an outline of the structure of the study.

In Chapter 1 the context for a boys’ education initiative has been outlined and the town of Paterson introduced. The role of geographic ‘place’ in identities construction is raised as a focal concern. The material qualities present in the setting of Paterson as evidenced in the ABS statistics and study data are briefly outlined and the perceptions of the participants apparent in social and semantic space introduced.

The “thinking tools” of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1989, 1993b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) are introduced in Chapter 2 as a basis for the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The application of Bourdieu’s “thinking tools” of field, habitus and capital are proposed for the investigation of the data gathered and these ideas are modified by an exploration of Lingard and Rawolle’s (2004) concept of cross-field effects.

In Chapter 3 the ethnographic research methodology used in this study will be outlined. A grounded method of data gathering is used to focus on the voices of the young people in one small school community. A critical ethnographic examination of this data aims to develop a picture of the characteristics of this dynamic field.

In Chapter 4 the rural context of this study comes into focus with an examination of the literature of culture, gender and identities within the rural context. The
The hypermasculinist nature of rural culture is investigated in international rural literature and the implications of this culture in the Australian context is explored.

In Chapter 5 the boys’ education strategies of Paterson are contextualised by an exploration of the literature on gender education theory and policies, in the NSW education setting. The literature records a series of shifts in theoretical emphasis and consequent policy directions. Chapter 5 traces the shift from the affirmative action initiatives for girls informed by the radical feminist theories of the 1970s to gender equity policies informed by liberal feminism at the turn of the century. The Paterson boys’ strategies occurred at a time of reaction to programs which were perceived to emphasise the needs of girls. The House of Representatives Enquiry into Boys’ education in 2000 preceded a movement away from gender equity policies, replacing them with “Boys’ education” and “Girls’ education” strategies.

In Chapter 6 the ethnographic data of this study is presented. The young people’s habitual ways of behaving evident in the fields of the school, the home and the sporting arena are described. The nature of the cultural and social capital available to young people in the site of Paterson High School is illustrated in physical, social and semantic space. The nature of symbolic capital apparent in these fields is noted. The chapter begins with a focus on the boys’ education program which was initiated in the school around the year 2000. It outlines the history of the initiative and documents the responses to it. It explores artistic products developed in the project in terms of the resources they provide in gender identity elaboration and canvases responses to the initiative.

The conversations of the young people in Chapter 6 of this study reveal a number of powerful fields of practice within which they developed their unique identities. In this study Bourdieu’s concept of fields of practice, elaborated in Chapter 2, are drawn on to explore the nature of these contexts. The interaction of the stakes and practices within the fields are examined as Bourdieu’s ideas are elaborated with Lingard and Rawolle’s (2004) concept of cross-field effects. Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and habitus, also introduced in Chapter 2, are drawn upon in this investigation as they provide useful “thinking tools” for analysing the nature of the identity forming resources available to these young people.

As well as exploring the nature and characteristics of the social laws at work among the young people of this rural community, the thinking around and response to the
strategies put in place to impact on boys’ education will be examined. This ethnographic community study will examine a range of documentation and the artworks produced in the boys’ program, as well as data gathered through observation of community meetings, school meetings, teacher interviews and conversations with the students and the wider adult community.

The exploration of the social context for this program includes a focus on the young people from a township we will call Manywarra, with a population of 500, and an hour and a half drive away from Paterson on the school bus. These young people elaborate on the resources available to them in their identities production. The girls are particularly outspoken in their agentic claims to the status of “shemales”. In this chapter some of the marks of difference which these girls claim with reference to the young people of the town of Paterson in the gendered identities that they have chosen to take up are outlined.

Finally this examination of a particular group of young people surfaces peer micro cultural groups called Friggers and Skeggs. The Friggers are identified with rural iconography and the Skeggs are identified with urban imagery. These microcultures provide valuable identity reference points for the young people of Paterson which they move between as they navigate their identity play. These will be examined through an exploration of the symbolic capital available to these groups. The associated social and cultural capital will also be speculated upon.

The Paterson boys’ education program, particularly the project referred to as PBP, and the identity play of the Friggers and Skeggs observed in the site of Paterson are discussed in Chapter 7 in the context of youth subculture, gender and rural social research literature. It will be examined through the thinking tools of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly the ideas of capital, habitus and fields as they are manifested in the material, social and discursive spaces of Paterson.

In the final chapter the implications of the findings of this study will be explored. Consideration of the limitations of this exploration and reflection upon the areas that warrant further research will conclude the study.
Chapter 2. Fielding theoretical questions

The township of Paterson, the focus of this ethnographic study, was introduced in the first chapter highlighting some of the key concerns of this study. In this, the second chapter, the theoretical framework which will be applied in this study is elaborated. Bourdieu’s “thinking tools” of “fields, habitus and capital” (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984a, 1989, 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) are proposed as devices for the examination of the practices observed in this investigation. These ideas are elaborated and adapted by consideration of the theory of cross-field effects (Lingard, Taylor, & Rawolle, 2005). A qualitative research methodology to be used in this study is also informed by the theoretical positioning of Bourdieu and will be elaborated in the following chapter. Bourdieu’s key ideas are introduced here in a brief overview of his extensive literature.

2.1 Pierre Bourdieu

In the social, physical and discursive spaces of the site of Paterson, identities are negotiated and renegotiated in the context of diverse fields of practice. The young people of Paterson are developing identities that are shaped by material and institutional forces and discourses of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, ability, age, rurality, globalisation and many other fields of practice. Their rural context is subject to rapid change, pressuring them to include flexibility in their identity constructs. The many voices that are available to them through multimedia and technology offer a diversity of identity possibilities not available to previous generations. Institutional decisions about funding of educational and health programs also challenge their identity options, particularly as they impact on the Paterson boys’ arts project. In this study the multiplicity of rural youth identities taken up by these young people are explored. In what appears at first to be a relatively homogenous community the forces at work to differentiate these young people are noted, observing that some are referred to as “elite” and others “at risk”. The practices of particular individuals in this community are examined while remaining sensitive to the impact of the institutional structures beyond it.

According to Calhoun, Li Puma, and Postone (1993), Pierre Bourdieu offers “thinking tools” for considering both social structures and local practices. They claim that:
Bourdieu treats social life as a mutually constituting interaction of structures, dispositions, and actions whereby social structures and embodied (therefore situated) knowledge of those structures produce enduring orientations to action which, in turn, are constitutive of social structures. Hence, these orientations are at once ‘structuring structures’ and ‘structured structures’; they shape and are shaped by social practice.

(Calhoun, Li Puma, & Postone, 1993, p. 4).

Bourdieu’s ideas are particularly useful for this ethnography because of the situated nature of the culture under examination. Bourdieu’s work provides this study with a language to describe the games of social interaction in Paterson, acknowledging the interface of these games with the social structures around them.

In Bourdieu’s (1989) terms, the young people of Paterson are struggling to acquire diverse kinds of assets which will endow them with social power. They are active agents in the mission to acquire and display capital assets. These assets which are responsible for determining the differences between groups and individuals are not simply economic assets; although they are referred to as capital, Bourdieu broadens the term to refer to a range of resources whose value is negotiated in the fields of play.

### 2.2 Capital

Bourdieu (1989) uses the metaphor of a card game to illuminate the social process of differentiation which occurs through the negotiation of social resources. He refers to this as capital:

resources which are or may become active, effective, like aces in the game of cards, in the competition for the appropriation of scarce goods of which the social universe is the site. According to my empirical investigations, these fundamental powers are economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital, which are the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1986a). Thus agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess and, in the second dimension according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the total volume of their assets (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17).

According to Bourdieu (1984a), the relative status of the agents in a field is directly determined by the nature and volume of the capital they have acquired. In his study *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*, he discusses social status in...
reference to class. The micro cultural social groups of Paterson may not be social classes but the mechanisms of group differentiation are profitably highlighted here.

The primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the actually usable resources and powers — economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital. The distribution of the different classes (and class fractions) thus runs from those who are best provided with both economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in both respects (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 114).

This excerpt emphasises the potency of the “volume” of capital held by the individual or group, the previous quotation includes the significance of the type of capital: cultural, social, economic, or symbolic. Capital is the coinage of social interaction. It is a flexible commodity whose value is being constantly renegotiated. The metaphor of the market place replaces the game as the process for negotiating value is explored.

So a capital can exist and function as such, and bring in profits, only on a certain market: There are individual producers … who offer their products, and then the judgments of all of the actors come into play and a market price emerges (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 81).

According to the theory of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Wauquant, & Farage, 1994) within particular social contexts the young people of Paterson are engaged in not only negotiating the value of the capital they hold but also, where necessary, exchanging one type of capital for another “the conversion rate between one sort of capital and another is fought over at all times and is therefore subject to endless fluctuations” (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 246).

The context becomes a critical factor in determining the capital which may be most valuable in particular situations.

In certain games (in the intellectual field, for example, in order to win a literary prize or the esteem of one's peers), economic capital is inoperative. To become operational it has to undergo a transmutation. That's the functioning, for example, of the social work that makes it possible to transmute economic capital—always at the root in the last analysis—into nobility (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 33)

Bourdieu’s claim here that economic capital always appears as the root of social struggles may not be sustained in the context of youth culture. He appears to interpret the desire for social capital as a means to an economic end; in the example he gives this may well be the case, but for young people the intrinsic value of social capital may not be linked to an economic advantage. Cultural capital may also carry intrinsic
worth which is not rooted in economic capital. Bourdieu’s economistic bent may not be a concern of this study; nonetheless the concept of transmutable capital remains a useful one.

As social capital is an important feature of youth identities construction, this study is particularly concerned with identifying the nature of the social capital exchanged in the site of Paterson. Moving beyond Bourdieu, social theorists have proposed the idea of a number of types of social capital:

Uphoff (2000) refers to groups and various types of networks that contribute to cooperation as structural social capital as opposed to cognitive social capital that includes norms, values attitudes and beliefs. Membership in groups can be referred to as institutional structural social capital whereas informal networks to which the household or individual belongs can be referred to as private structural social capital (Godquin & Quisumbing, 2008).

In order to develop an ethnography which encompasses all of the dimensions of the youth culture of Paterson this study will endeavour to consider both the formal and informal “groups” and “networks” which contribute to the establishment of “norms, values and attitudes” and structural cooperative groups in this rural setting. It will consider both institutional structural social capital and private social capital.

In this study, the symbolic capital which is traded in the fields of practice that make up the social site of Paterson is observed as an indicator of the cultural and social capital that is sought and legitimised in each field of practice. The nature of the capital revealed in each field is examined in relation to the dispositions of the young people who are developing there. Bourdieu’s concept of the “habitus”, or “feel of the game” of life (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 14) provides a focus for an examination of the youth identities occurring in the site of Paterson.

2.2.1 Symbolic Power

Boys’ education initiatives are concerned with the behaviours that are identified with the group of young people classified as ‘boys’. Bourdieu claims that symbolic power is required to achieve change in a social group like this. In Social Space and Symbolic Power (1989) he refers to the process of constituting groups as “world making”. He explains that social change is achieved through the mechanisms of group formation, “to change the world, one has to change the ways of world making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).
This process is achieved through “symbolic power, whose form par excellence is the power to make groups” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

Symbolic power and the mechanism for achieving social change in Paterson should be evident within the structure of its groups. It should be made visible through the symbolic capital being traded in this site as:

Symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

The symbolic capital exchanged by the young people of Paterson will indicate the type of “world making” that is taking place in this site. In this thesis the nature of the groups which constitute the rural youth cultures of Paterson are explored, the cultural capital that is valued in these groups by those of “social authority is examined.

### 2.3 Fields of Social Practice

The young people of Paterson are in possession of a number of “species” of capitals and competencies. According to Bourdieu power and influence (or even existence) within a group is dependent on the acquiring of capital that is recognised by that group. Bourdieu refers to the setting for trading and negotiating of the worth of an individual’s assets, the market or the game, as a “field”.

The value of the species of capital (e.g. knowledge of Greek or of integral calculus) hinges on the existence of a game, of a field in which this competency can be employed: a species of capital is what is efficacious in the given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield power, and influence, and thus to exist, in the field under consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity … the notions of capital and field are tightly interconnected (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98).

The social settings in which the young people of Paterson engage in their identity play constitute Bourdieuan social fields. The capital that is recognised by a particular group may be used as a “weapon” or a “stake” in the quest for higher status. These fields are characterised as places of struggle and negotiation:

A field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside the space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that
defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (Bourdieu, 1996).

According to Bourdieu these fields are governed by social laws. He claims that by providing better knowledge of the laws of the social world the social sciences give more freedom to the world. The social laws to which Bourdieu refers are not universal laws in the sense of the physical sciences. They are contingent and context dependent.

A social law is a historical law that perpetuates itself only as long as we let it operate, that is, as long as those whom it serves (sometimes unbeknownst to them) are in a position to perpetuate the conditions of its efficacy... In reality, science must know that it does nothing more than record, in the form of tendential laws, the logic which characterises a certain game, at a certain moment in time, and which functions in favour of those who dominate the game and have the means to set the rules of the game in fact and in law. As soon as the law is stated, it can become the stake of struggles... the uncovering of tendential laws is the condition of successive actions aimed at proving them wrong (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 197 footnote 158).

The practices and strategies within each field, are the product of both the capital holdings of the players and also their historically determined qualities. Bourdieu identifies the unearthing of the laws which govern these fields of social practice as the critical step in opening up these practices to the possibility of change. He challenges the sociologist to expose these taken-for-granted processes to scrutiny so that there may be space for them to be challenged and potentially subverted, transgressed or transformed. The field is neither a fixed entity nor a rigidly deterministic setting. It is a structure which provides a mechanism for agency and flexibility. “The field is the locus of relations of force — and not only of meaning — and of struggles aimed at transforming it, and therefore of endless change” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 103).

Bourdieu’s emphasis on the field as a site of struggle and potential transformation also incorporates a sense of the role of the temporal in social practices. He includes the history of a field and the habitual ways of doing things of a group or individual in his explanation of the nature of a field of practice. The field and the active agent have both been formed by previous experiences and the current experience will either reinforce or alter this structure.

The structure of the field is a state of the power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle, or, to put it another way, a state of the distribution of the specific capital which has been accumulated in the course of previous struggles and which oriented subsequent strategies. The
structure, which governs the strategies aimed at transforming it, is itself always at stake. The struggles which take place within the field are about the monopoly of the legitimate violence (specific authority) which is characteristic of the field in question, which means, ultimately, the conservation or subversion of the structure of the distribution of the specific capital (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 73).

The emphasis on the state of struggle within fields and its power to transform a field is tempered by the observation that:

Those who take part in the struggle help to reproduce the game by helping ... to produce belief in the value of the stakes. The new players have to pay an entry fee which consists in recognition of the value of the game (selection and co-option always play great attention to the indices of commitment to the game, investment in it) and in (practical) knowledge of the principles of the functioning of the game ... the partial revolutions which constantly occur in fields do not call into question the very foundations of the game, its fundamental axioms, the bedrock of ultimate beliefs on which the whole game is based, on the contrary, the fields of production of cultural goods — religion, literature or art — heretical subversion claims to be returning to the sources, the origin, the spirit, the authentic essence of the game, in opposition to the finalisation and degradation which it has suffered ... like the ordeals in rites of passage, this investment helps to make the pure and simple destruction of the game unthinkable in practical terms (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 74)

The tensions within fields discussed here contribute to the development of opportunities for social change, but the tension within a single field may not be sufficient of itself to achieve transformation. The tensions between fields provide greater momentum for change to occur. As change appears to be the focus of Paterson boy’s programs and may be the goal of education there will be a focus in this study on the relationship between various fields of practice in the site of Paterson. Bourdieu’s idea of the habitus provides a mechanism for the initiation of innovation or resistance. The habitus of the young people of Paterson is an important focus of this study.

### 2.4 Habitus

Bourdieu refers to the mental and physical dispositions of agents continually developed within particular social fields as the “habitus”. The habitus is the product of a particular social world and it in turn reproduces and produces the social world in which it is actively engaged.

The dispositions of agents, their habitus, that is, the mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalisation of the structures of that world. As perceptive
dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine (Bourdieu, 1989, pp. 18-19).

The mental structures that we build up in each field that we experience provide us with a “feel” for the practices of these fields, a sense of what is “natural”, a “feel of the game” or a “feel for the game”. Through habitus, we have a world of common sense, a world that seems self-evident.

The commonsense responses, which the habitus habitually gives to its world, occur at a pre-reflexive level. It is very difficult to develop a self aware habitus:

The schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the control of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself (Bourdieu, Wacquant, & Stone, 1998, p. 37).

The habitus is not simply a set of morés or a shared value system; it refers to the mental, emotional and physical habits that are developed in the context of particular fields. Reay (2004) reminds us that:

One of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied, it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions ... Bourdieu writes that it is expressed through durable ways of “standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking” (2004, p. 432).

Bourdieu refers to the embodied nature of the habitus as the bodily hexis. He sees this visible, durable, quality of the habitus as a significant barrier to the flexible movement of agents into new fields of practice such as career paths. The traces of their originary fields mark them as outsiders.

Educationally equivalent individuals (e.g. the students of the grandes écoles) may differ radically as regards bodily Hexis, pronunciation, dress or familiarity with legitimate culture, not to mention the whole set of specific competencies and capacities which function as admission tickets to the bourgeois world, such as dancing, the rare sports, or parlour games (especially bridge). These skills, through the encounters they provide and the social capital they help to accumulate, no doubt explain subsequent differences in career (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 91)

This tendency for the embodied habitus to stand as a barrier to full acceptance into some fields because of the embodied traces of origin apparent in individual habituses has been interpreted by some as evidence of the inadequacy of Bourdieu’s theory in the area of social agency. According to Lovell (2003), some researchers such as Judith Butler hold that:
The quasi independence of habitus, which might guarantee at least the possibility of effective intervention to transform social life, dissolves into the field of its own formation – “submits” is the term used by Butler. In the final analysis, habitus disappears without remainder into the field in which it was forged in the first place (p. 4).

McNay (1999), on the other hand, reads Bourdieu’s notion of habitus as a “dynamic theory of embodiment” which she believes facilitates an understanding of gender identity as a “durable but not immutable norm.” (McNay, 1999, p. 95). She understands habitus to be “The incorporation of the social into the corporeal ... a system of durable, transposable dispositions that mediates an individual's actions and the external conditions of production” (Bourdieu 1990a cited 1999, p. 99).

McNay identifies the temporal, local emphasis of this theory of social practice as a possible explanation for the apparently superficial impact of some so called emancipatory practices (1999, p. 105). She highlights the usefulness of Bourdieu’s idea of “regulated liberties” (Bourdieu, 1991 p.102, cited in McNay, 1999, p. 104) to describe the potential for change that is inherent in Bourdieu’s concept of habitus:

Although the habitus accords a disproportionate weight to primary social experiences, the resulting closure is never absolute because the habitus is an historical structure that is only ever realised in reference to specific situations. Thus while an agent might be predisposed to act in certain ways, the potentiality for innovation or creative action is never foreclosed: “[habitus] is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subject to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures” (Bourdieu, 1992, p.133, cited in 1999, p. 103).

Hillier’s and Rooksby’s (2005) survey of research literature on Bourdieu affirms McNay’s reading of habitus as a generative concept. They found that “habitus is confirmed as a generative rather than a determining structure in most cases, which establishes an active and creative relation between people and their worlds. Researchers increasingly agree that habituses can and do transform” (2005, p. 11).

Hillier and Rooksby go on to outline the ways that researchers have further developed Bourdieu’s ideas to facilitate the investigation of complex objects like identity. They introduce the idea of the plural rather than the singular habitus:

The notion of a social actant as a multiplicity is now widely accepted within the social sciences. Recognising the probability of plural sources of influence on habitus, authors such as Lahire (1998) advocate conceptualising individuals as having multiple habituses ... [T]he treatment of habitus as multiple, interacting and evolving suggests a development of Bourdieuan theory that leaves substantial scope for individual agency, in
the sense that individuals are not immersed inextricably in any single habitus, but can move from one to another, and can develop new adaptive behaviours within the habitus. A parallel recent development, the exploration of Bourdieu’s use of the methods and tools of psychoanalysis, suggests that even when agents have multiple habituses and operate in multiple fields, similar fundamental psycho-social dispositions are at work (2005, p. 14).

The idea of multiplicity proves useful in attempting to explain the complex process of rural youth identities formation. In this study the fields of practice and range of capitals available to these young people are investigated and some of the habituses evident there are explored. The possibilities for social transformation and flexibility in this setting are questioned.

### 2.4.1 Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu’s exposition of the thinking tools of habitus, capital and fields provide the promise of potentially generative structures but this promise is tempered by his observation of the constricting impact of what he calls symbolic violence through the act of misrecognition:

Symbolic violence, to put it as tersely and simply as possible, is the violence which is exercised upon the social agent with his or her complicity... I call misrecognition the fact of recognising a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 167-168).

Bourdieu understands acts of complicity by the dominated as the result of a habitus which has developed over time to recognise oppressive situations as acceptable. He refers to this complicity as an act of “misrecognition” of the violence that is occurring. It is this tendency towards conformity to an originating field which alarms the social theorist Judith Butler. Lovell, a feminist sociologist claims that Butler considers that “the bonds that tied together habitus and social field, are … tied too tightly” (Lovell, 2003, p. 4). Lovell (2003) focuses on the nature of fields as places of contest and instability. She does not fix her hopes for social change on the actions of individual agents struggling to resist their own natures within stable constricting fields of practice, but on “ensemble performances” in exchanges between subjects in ever developing contested fields:

For Bourdieu, social transformation is affected through the fractures of a complex social field as it develops through time, and through the exchanges between subjects that are mediated by habitus. Transformation is not affected, however, through the disposition to resist that constitutes certain
types of habitus, but through forms of collective political action in specific historical circumstances (Bourdieu, 2001, cited in Lovell, 2003, p. 5).

Lovell emphasises the importance of the “collective”, the relational nature of social change. Reay (2004) adds to this a consideration of the multilayered nature of habitus incorporating both a group and an individual history.

It appears that Bourdieu conceived of habitus as a multi-layered concept, with more general notions of habitus at the level of society and more complex, differentiated notions at the level of the individual. A Person’s individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of (Reay, 2004, p. 434).

Accordingly, to be a winner at this social game, it is necessary to master the “logic of the game” at several levels. Rather than a “fixed” habitus Bourdieu regards it as requiring the capacity for “constant invention, an improvisation that is absolutely necessary in order for one to adapt to situations that are infinitely varied” (Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986, p. 112).

The ties between the field and the habitus which cause Butler such concern may be loosened by fractures in that field which elicit an inventive, improvised response. Mills and Gale (2007) explain the notion of habitus as a device that resolves the question of structural constraint and agentic capacity to bring about transformation. They acknowledge the potency of the social structure while focusing on the capacity of the habitus for inventive responses within these constraints. They present this as a powerfully liberating position:

This creative yet limited capacity for improvisation reveals both the dynamic structure of social reality and the constraint of social conditions where many of us believe there to be choice and free will (Bourdieu, 1990a). The notion enables Bourdieu to analyse the behaviour of agents as “objectively coordinated and regular without being the product of rules, on the one hand, or conscious rationality of the other” (Calhoun et al., 1993, p. 4). In this sense, habitus transcends “determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society” (1990b, pp. 54-55, cited in C. Mills & Gale, 2007, p. 3).

As we have already noted, Bourdieu regards the process of exposing the laws governing social fields as an important step in opening up possibilities for social transformation. Lingard’s and Rawolle’s (2005) deeper investigation of the nature of the field may provide a better understanding of the conditions for the production of the important fractures in the field and extend our understanding of the underlying social laws.
2.5 Cross-field effects

Rawolle (2005) provides a summative outline of all of the properties of a field suggested by Bourdieu (1993) before exploring their functioning more deeply. Rawolle considers that Bourdieu describes fields as structured spaces of positions, which function analogously to a game. He notes that they have general laws or logics that guide interactions and the stakes toward which practices are oriented. They require a socialised body endowed with a habitus that ―orients dispositions of agents to the stakes‖. Through this disposition towards the valued stakes in a field, the actions of the agent support the continuation of that social field. Rawolle observes that Bourdieu’s socialised bodies are engaged in social struggles. They compete with other agents for the stakes that are in play and the forms of capital valued in the field. They also compete over the conversion rates between different forms of capital. Finally he explains that they are structured by a state of power relations at a given point in time and produce distinctive patterns of strategies adopted by different agents relative to their own position and trajectory (Rawolle, 2005, p. 707). In terms of the potential for the fracturing of these fields he goes on to observe that:

Bourdieu has described the strategies that particular agents make in attempting to break into a field of which they are an outsider (Bourdieu, 1984, 1998) or of the pressures that particular fields exerted on others (Bourdieu, 1998) and the way that this pressure distorts or alters other fields (Rawolle, 2005, p. 709).

He focuses particularly on the fact that “particular fields, though separable, in practice periodically interact with the stakes and practices of other fields” (2005, p. 722).

Through his own study Rawolle has observed this interrelation of fields. He has noted the profound effect of the field of the media on the field of science education policy and the interaction of the field of policy with the field of media. He proposes that the interaction which he has observed may be usefully referred to as a “cross-field effect”. He observes that:

Cross-field effects result from the inter-relations between different fields. This is to point out something that I take to be under-recognised in Bourdieu’s work: that the relative autonomy of social fields is quite specific to the distinctive products in the habitus that they produce, but that this relative autonomy presupposes some connections between fields that are taken as unquestioned (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004). In the sense that they are not usually in contest between social fields, these connections do not usually figure as relevant to the descriptions of the particular social field. I
argue that these usually uncontested connections, in the form of taken for
granted assumptions about the role and function of field-based practices, are
increasingly becoming the source of contest (2005, p. 714).

By shifting the spotlight from a field taken alone and focusing it on the “competition
and symbiosis structured between fields”, Lingard and Rawolle (2004) are able to
observe an interdependence between some fields. They note that capital acquired in
one field endows advantage (or disadvantage) in another. That structural shifts,
events, changes in value systems, ongoing announcements or shifts in hierarchy in
one field may impose homologous shifts in another. They conclude that:

Bourdieu has not fully developed the concept of cross-field effects,
concentrating more on the internal characteristics of fields as structured

Through the idea of the cross field effect, Lingard and Rawolle have demonstrated
the value of observing the relationships between fields and the potential for effects in
one field to generate fractures in another, which Bourdieu (2001) has observed
provide the opportunities for active agents to accomplish change. They go on to
theorise that:

The fact that there are effects between fields would appear to suggest
something about the nature of autonomous fields in their inter-dependence.
This is to suggest that the autonomy that Bourdieu and others ascribe to
fields is one related to their distinctive products, be they credentials or
innovations, scandals, or laws. However, these distinctive products often
rely on a range of taken for granted conditions in order to be produced,
broad conditions that only appear relevant in exceptional ci
rumbus, or
to different disciplines (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, p. 368).

Through the theory of cross-field effects, attention may be drawn to the epicentres of
change in social situations. As the relations between fields shift then there is
potential for the potency of the habituses of those agents within the fields to shift
also. It is a concept which allows us to move beyond the confines of a single field.

Cross-field effects designate and describe phenomena and practices that are
not easily classifiable into one field alone and in particular here, those that
result from the interrelations between fields. This is one way of focusing
attention on changes in the relations between fields (Rawolle, 2005, p. 714).

Rawolle’s observation of the cross-field effects of the media and science education
policy has led him to theorise a further refinement of this idea. The vigorous
interaction of these two fields provided for a period of time a practice which had its
own autonomy and “rules for the game”. Consequently he proposes a refinement of
Bourdieu’s conceptual base. He concludes that in some cases the interaction of
related fields generates a distinctive practice which is worthy of study. He proposes that where fields are struggling for common stakes then “the concept field should be expanded to include temporary social fields” (Rawolle, 2005, p. 722).

Bourdieu’s insistence on the organic, responsive, conflictual nature of fields demonstrates that a field by nature is not permanent. If it cannot be permanent then the term “temporary” becomes problematic. In the broad sweep of history, all social fields may be described as more or less temporary. Wacquant (1988) points out that “fields are historical constellations that arise, grow, change shape, and sometimes wane or perish, over time” (p. 6).

Nevertheless Rawolle’s idea of cross-field effects which trigger the possibility for the development of new fields provides a compelling counter to the charges of social determinism or volunteerism that Bourdieu’s theories have faced in some quarters (Butler, 1999). Wacquant actively challenges the claim that Bourdieu’s theories provide too little scope for social change. He claims that “contention, not stasis, is the ubiquitous feature of collective life that his varied inquiries aim at making at once visible and intelligible. Struggle, not reproduction, is the master metaphor at the core of his thought” (1998, p. 3).

Wacquant emphasises the tensions which exist within a field, while Rawolle illustrates the pressures exerted from the outside through the presence of other fields. The tensions between active agents from varied life experiences competing for valued capital within a field combined with the pressures from other fields and agents outside of the field provide the opportunities for fractures of transformation to occur (1998).

### 2.6 Bourdieu and Site Effects

Bourdieu claims that: “If the habitat shapes the habitus, the habitus also shapes the habitat” (2000, p. 128). Bourdieu underscores the relationship between social space and geographic or physical space. He describes the way that physical space becomes reified social space and social relationships are impacted and manipulated through the presence of physical objects and geographic locations. He claims that a particular location, or site, fosters the development of a particular habitual way of being and in turn the presence of that particular type of person shapes the way that the location is
experienced and identified. Bourdieu implicates the physical location of an agent with the process of exercising displays of power. He claims that:

In fact, social space translates into physical space, but the translation is always more or less blurred:...An agent’s position in social space is expressed in the site of physical space where that agent is situated (which means, for example, that anyone said to be ‘without home or hearth’ or ‘homeless’ is virtually without a social existence) and by the relative position that the temporary localisations (for example, honorific places, seating regulated by protocol), and especially the permanent ones (home address, business address etc) occupy in relation to localizations of other agents. It is also expressed in the place occupied (by right) in space by virtue of the properties (houses, apartments, or offices, land to cultivate, to use or build on, etc) which are more or less bulky or, as one sometimes says, ‘space consuming’ (greater or lesser ostentation in the consumption of space being one of the forms par excellence for displaying power) (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 124).

Through long association, social realities become inscribed upon the natural world and society comes to see the identification as determined by nature rather than society. The behaviours of a group are constrained by the physical setting but also determined by the selective encouragement and discouragement offered by the group. The habitual behaviours of the group reinforce the hierarchies which exist in that particular place. Particular spaces and places become associated with the possession of attributes which include physical, cultural and social capital.

The ability to dominate space, notably by appropriating (materially or symbolically), the rare goods (public or private) distributed there, depends on the capital possessed. Capital makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance at the same time that it brings close-up desirable persons and things (made desirable, among other things, by their richness in capital), thereby minimising the necessary expense (notably in time) in appropriating them. Proximity in physical space allows the proximity in social space to deliver all its effects (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 127).

According to Bourdieu the type of capital an agent or group may seek to accrue will be prescribed by the group occupying the site that they wish to occupy. As the young people of Paterson select the type of capital they wish to pursue they are subject to particular pressures from their physical and social location. These pressures produce dispositions unique to this rural habitat. These dispositions may provide them with access to a new location or they may bar them from gaining access.

At the risk of feeling themselves out of place, individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that that space tacitly requires of its occupants. This may be the possession of a certain cultural capital, the lack of which can prevent a real appropriation of supposedly public goods or even the intention of appropriating them (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 129).
Newcomers to Paterson may not easily gain acceptance as locals as there are a number of qualities required for acceptance that take time to develop. Bourdieu explains:

Among the properties presupposed by the legitimate occupation of a site, there are some… which are acquired only through prolonged occupation of this site and sustained association with its legitimate occupants. This is the case, obviously, with the social capital of relations, connections, or ties (and most particularly with the privileged ties of childhood or adolescent friendships) or with all the subtlest aspects of cultural and linguistic capital, such as body mannerisms and pronunciation (accents), etc. - all the many attributes that makes a place of birth (and to a lesser degree, place of residence) so important (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 128).

Bourdieu’s linking of physical, social and mental structures challenges the rural researcher to consider the relationship between the physical and the social setting very carefully. His recognition of the embodied nature of our response to habitat and his acknowledgement of the power relations implicit within these responses opens up a rich field for investigation. His emphasis on the “privileged” status of the social capital developed during adolescence, as it is expressed in the cultural capital of things like “body mannerisms and pronunciation” directs the gaze of the researcher to the embodied identities of the young people in Paterson. According to Bourdieu the rural location of Paterson will be structured by, and inscribed on, the “spatial structures” and “mental structures” in the site.

Because social space is inscribed at once in spatial structures and in the mental structures that are partly produced by the incorporation of these structures, space is one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and no doubt in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence. Architectural spaces address mute injunctions directly to the body and, just as surely as court etiquette, obtain from it the reverence and respect born of distance or better yet, from being far away, at a respectful distance (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 126).

Bourdieu points out that the subtle forces at work in physical and social space are usually invisible to the people they are acting upon. He calls these “unperceived” effects “symbolic violence”, acknowledging space as “one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised”. He also sees this power distributed in a hierarchical structure. He claims that:

There is no space in a hierarchized society that is not itself hierarchized and that does not express hierarchies and social distances, in a form that is more or less distorted and above all, disguised by the naturalization effect produced by the long-term inscription of social realities in the natural world (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 124).
For Bourdieu, social engagement is shot through with power struggles over hierarchical position. As a consequence he sees physical settings exemplifying the same stratified characteristics:

The different fields, or if you like, the different, physically objectified social spaces, tend to be at least roughly superimposed: the result is a concentration of the rarest goods and their owners in certain sites of physical space (Madison Ave or Fifth Avenue in New York) which contrast in every respect with sites that, principally and sometimes exclusively, collect the most disadvantaged groups (poor suburbs, ghettos) (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 125).

The hierarchies he speaks of here may not be the ones valued in the town of Paterson. The rare goods of fashion and consumer culture may be concentrated in superimposed fields but there are other fields which value an array of rare goods that are not considered here. The fields he has focused on do not include the fields of fine wool breeding, bulk grain production, lean meat development or sustainable farm enterprise development. The notion of some fields existing in parallel superimposed positions may be a useful one but the hierarchies that Bourdieu refers to may be a little narrow for this study. The stakes struggled over in a rural town may hold no value in many dominant fields of practice in the city. The dispositions of the habitus which develop in response to these stakes are likely to be unique to the rural site.

In the 20th century the acknowledged dominant voice was that of the City. Modernism celebrated technology and the fast pace of the crowded metropolis. Capital that is only available in the rural setting (a sense of freedom, the wide open spaces, fresh air, mastery of powerful natural elements like the ocean, the desert, horses and cattle) is appropriated symbolically through literature and popular culture and attributed to symbolic capital accessible to the city dweller. The Marlboro man typifies the successful appropriation of the rugged outdoors by a cigarette company. As a 20th century thinker, Bourdieu was articulating a widely shared belief when he stated that:

The capital city is—no pun intended—the site of capital, that is, the site in physical space where the positive poles of all the fields are concentrated along with most of the agents occupying these dominant positions: which means that the capital cannot be adequately analysed except in relation to the provinces (and ‘provincialness’), which is nothing other than being deprived (in entirely relative terms) of the Capital and capital (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 125).
His reference to the rural, provincial or peasant culture as a devalued comparator, which is useful in the analysis of the capital of the cities, rings a little hollow in 21st century Australia. The history of the close association of the Australian ruling elite with the rural context troubles Bourdieu’s generalisation of the capital as the site of all high status capital. The cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital associated with the Australian squattocracy is strongly tied to the rural. The potency of this capital may have been challenged in the 20th century but some aspects are beginning to assert themselves anew.

The postmodern world no longer sees the metropolis as the unchallenged site of all “positive poles”. The series of actors who played the Marlboro Man in those iconic cigarette ads have all died of lung cancer after dragging the Marlboro company through a series of very public and messy court cases. Essential services to cities are beginning to break down and faith in technology and science to solve all problems is beginning to waiver. Quality of life issues are gaining currency as the post September 11 western world grapples with a new sense of its fallibility and vulnerability. The social capital of the rural setting is no longer considered universally inferior to that of the metropolis. The cultural capital which the metropolis monopolises is becoming suspect as postmodern cynicism erodes the pre-eminence it once enjoyed. The ‘tree change’ phenomenon, which sees urban Australians relocating to less populated areas in search of an improved lifestyle, repudiate Bourdieu’s position that:

Relocation between the capital and the provinces (may be interpreted as downward social mobility) (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 128).

His reading of rural culture is one of deficit. He notes that “residence in Paris is associated with linguistic and cultural advantages” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 76) and that “Parisian students, whatever their social background, score better results than provincial students” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 74).

The “linguistic and cultural” prism he looks through can find nothing in the rural setting to value. In a study in the 1960s, he interpreted the behaviour of rural bachelors as a direct response to urban culture. He describes it as devoid of any positive potential:

As the peasant internalises in turn the devalued image that others form of him through the prism of urban categories, he comes to perceive his own body as an “em-peasanted” body, burdened with the traces of the activities and attitudes associated with agricultural life. The wretched consciousness
that he gains of his body leads him to break solidarity with it and adopt an introverted attitude that amplifies the shyness and gaucheness produced by social relations marked by the extreme segregation of the sexes and repression of the sharing of emotions (Bourdieu, 2004b, p. 579).

His description of the rural bachelors in *Algerian Landing* leaves the reader with the sense of a species at the point of extinction. He describes the evolution of rural culture as a downward spiral with no possibility of recovery:

The matrimonial market had condemned to an abrupt and brutal devaluation those who were bound up with the protected market of the old-style matrimonial exchanges controlled by the families, the elder sons of the leading families, ‘good catches’ suddenly converted into ‘empeasanted’ peasants, hucous (‘men of the woods’) repellent and savage, forever excluded from the right to reproduce (Bourdieu, 2004a, p. 438).

In her examination of the literature on gender identity on European family farms Berit Brandth (2002) notes what Aasbrenn (1991) has described the “hillbillization” of rural men as in some cases, in research and in the popular media, rural/farm men are no longer pictured as active, decisive, and in control, but as backward, lonely, vulnerable and marginalised” (2002, p. 189).

Aasbrenn, Bourdieu and others appeared to foresee the imminent demise of the family farm unit, however in the 1990s in Australia we find that:

[researchers] have been puzzled by the lack of change in agriculture: while many industries have come to be dominated by large organisations, the basic economic unit in agriculture, even in the most industrialised economies, remains the family-operated farm. While the capital of our manufacturing and much of our commodity-producing industries has increasingly come into the possession of large joint-stock corporations, farm land and capital are still predominantly owned by families and operated by families (Gray, 1994, p. 222).

Forty years after Bourdieu’s observations of the desperate plight of family farms they continue to be the focus of much rural research. Their imminent extinction is debated and their resilience puzzled over. They are the foremost source of income in the town of Paterson and most of the participants in this study place a high value on their prosperity. Bourdieu’s subordination of rural fields to those of the metropolis and his inability to identify any valued capital associated with rural places limit the application of his theorising to this study. For many of its participants there is no allure in the capital of the Capital and many qualities of the local space are highly valued and acclaimed.
Despite this loyalty and affection for local capital many of the participants in this study acknowledged that to gain further education (cultural capital) and employment (economic capital) they must move away from their rural setting. They may consider the achievements of some of the local landholders or businesses as of high status and aspire to a similar achievement but they believe they must move away from this rural site to achieve similar success. The fact that leaders in the rural setting have usually received their education in a non-rural site should not be held to support Bourdieu’s claim that “the capital city is—no pun intended—the site of capital” (2000, p. 125). It is not a question of higher or lower status capital, but capital with different functions available in different sites. Bourdieu’s emphasis on economic capital may blind us to the capital associated with the rural quality of life so highly valued by the participants in this study. The young people may recognise that their opportunities for advancement are limited in the rural town but this does not render the capital which resides there as of no value. For most of them it has become unattainable, for others to achieve it they must first leave. Bourdieu’s hierarchical ranking of capital imposes a city-centric bias in responding to social data. The methodology applied in this study seeks to resist this type of bias. It is acknowledged that the field under examination “is a battlefield wherein the bases of identity and hierarchy are endlessly disputed” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 6), but the hierarchies examined here are determined by the agents in the field. They are affected by forces from other fields but the capital from within a field gains its value from that field. As Thomas reminds us:

To understand any culture we have to begin by unchaining ourselves from our own assumptions and creating new ones that correspond to the meanings of our subjects (Thomas, 1993, p. 9).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the thinking tools of Bourdieu have been briefly outlined to introduce the ideas of capital, field, habitus and site effects as the theoretical foundation for the analysis of the social site of Paterson. The following chapter builds on this theory base to outline the methodology and methods used in this study. Bourdieu’s insistence on the importance of empirical evidence when theorizing about social structures and his emphasis on the need for a reflexive methodology provide this study with a firm foundation.
Chapter 3. Methods and Methodology: Surveying the field

In this community study a critical ethnographic approach is used to focus on the voices of the young people in a small rural district. A detailed examination of the processes at work in this isolated social site is executed to disclose the normative practices and gender and power relations in play here. A critical ethnographic approach is used as an appropriate methodology for this task as:

Critical ethnography takes seemingly mundane events, even repulsive ones, and reproduces them in a way that exposes broader social processes of control, taming, power imbalance, and the symbolic mechanisms that impose one set of preferred meanings or behaviours over others (Thomas, 1993, p. 9).

A picture of the identity options available to the young people of Paterson is developed through an examination of the rich conversations with students, teachers and the broader community in the site of Paterson as well as the documentation supporting the boys’ education strategies initiated by the school and some boys’ arts project artefacts. Bourdieu’s “thinking tools” provide a lens for the examination of the habitual ways of being which emerge in this particular setting and his position on the importance of a reflexive methodology also informs the methods.

The ethnographic methodology used for this study seeks to make sense of a lived culture observed first hand. It is informed by the sorts of questions asked by Agar in his discussion of ethnography and observation:

When you stand on the edge of a village and watch the noise and motion you wonder, ‘Who are the people and what are they doing?’ When you read a news story about the discontent of young lawyers with their profession, you wonder, ‘What is going on here?’ Hypotheses, measurement, samples, and instruments are the wrong guidelines. Instead, you need to learn about a world you understand by encountering it firsthand and making some sense out of it (Agar, 1986, p. 12).

Data has been gathered from a wide range of sources, providing a glimpse into the culture of Paterson from various viewpoints. Documentation has been gathered to provide a history and a sense of the stories of this community, questionnaires provided some preliminary opinions and perceptions and extensive interviews provided elaboration of the social practices of this site. Miller and Glasser have observed from their research that:

While the survey interview gathers information about a wide range of topics, including the individual, her school, friends, family, neighbourhood, delinquent involvement, arrest history, sexual history, and victimisation, in addition to
information about the gang, the in-depth interview is concerned exclusively with the roles and activities of young women in youth gangs, and the meanings they describe as emerging from their gang affiliation (1897, p. 105).

This study concerns itself with youth culture, group “roles” and “affiliations”. It looks to in-depth interviews to provide insight into these practices. It is acknowledged that although an effort has been made to suppress pre-existing world views, to remain receptive to the views of the participants, the analysis is not entirely free of bias. As Thomas has pointed out:

Conventional ethnographers study culture for the purpose of describing it; critical ethnographers do so to change it. Conventional ethnographers recognise the impossibility, even undesirability, of research free of normative biases, but they believe that these biases are to be repressed. Critical ethnographers instead celebrate their normative and political position as a means of invoking social consciousness and societal change (Thomas, 1993, p. 4).

The education strategies examined in this study will be measured against a standard which favours equity and social justice. It looks for policies and practices which support the establishment of a civil society. The leaders in the Paterson community sought to achieve change through their boys’ strategies; this study participates in that journey offering a critical perspective on the impact thus far. The Paterson Boys’ Project participates in the Australian boys’ education debate; this study reflects on its contribution to that debate.

3.1 Bourdieu on Methodology

Bourdieu’s position on research methodology is that “one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality” (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 271).

This study of Paterson is not presented as a disclosure of “the most profound logic of the social world” but it does record a process of immersion in “the specificity of an empirical reality”. This research is a response to the challenges set by Bourdieu. As a close study of a specific social group it hopes to move beyond the abstract to discover lived sites of social engagement.

Bourdieu uses the image of the game to describe the act of applying a research survey to a social situation. He illustrates the way that the recording of a particular moment in the constant state of social flux imposes an illusory fixity to the process of the interplay of resources:
like a photograph of a game of marbles or poker which freezes the balance sheet of assets (marbles or chips) at a given stage, the survey freezes a moment in the struggle in which the agents put back into play, at every moment, the capital they have acquired in early phases of the struggle, which may imply a power over the struggle itself and therefore over the capital held by others (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 246).

Although this study does not depend upon the device of the survey to gather its data it still takes up Bourdieu’s image of the photograph of a moment. It records the identity play of a group of young people at a moment in their history. The moment that was observed lasted for several months but it was a moment nonetheless.

Bourdieu states his position on the purpose of social research very strongly, “I believe that when sociology remains at a highly abstract and formal level, it contributes nothing. When it gets down to the nitty gritty of real life, however, it is an instrument that people can apply to themselves for quasi-clinical purposes” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 199).

Bourdieu does not limit his exposition of the role of sociology to a purely therapeutic function; he goes on to also claim a liberatory role. But this liberation is bound by constraints:

    The true freedom that sociology offers is to give us a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimising the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us. I am not suggesting that sociology solves all the problems of the world, far from it, but that it allows us to discern the sites where we do indeed enjoy a degree of freedom and those where we do not. So that we do not waste our energy struggling over terrains that offer us no leeway (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 199).

The freedom at a “nitty gritty” level that Bourdieu refers to is not the sort usually referred to as political or even social freedom. The participants in this study would be offended at the suggestion that they required to be freed. Bourdieu’s model however puts us all in need of liberation. He describes our situation as evolving under forces which we cannot be aware of because of our closeness to them. He suggests that some of these forces impose constraints which are very difficult to act against while others offer some flexibility. The freedom he refers to is simply awareness, an understanding of the nature of the forces around us. It appears to offer a liberty within constraint, an option of choice based on awareness of the nature of the social laws which govern our existence. Given this emphasis on the development of “quasi-
clinical” instruments of liberation it may be surprising that Bourdieu’s research does not focus on the individual. Instead he claims that:

The notion of the field reminds us that the true object of social science is not the individual, even though one cannot construct a field if not through individuals, since the information necessary for statistical analysis is generally attached to individuals or institutions. It is the field which is primary and must be the focus of the research operations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).

The field is identified as the “primary” focus of social research but a field cannot be separated from the dispositions which constitute it. Bourdieu expects the researcher to include an investigation of both the logic of the field and the capital and habitus within the field in what he acknowledges is a cyclical iterative process:

People are at once founded and legitimised to enter the field by their possessing a definite configuration of properties. One of the goals of research is to identify these active properties, these efficient characteristics, that is, these forms of specific capital. There is thus a sort of hermeneutic circle: in order to construct the field, one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field. There is an endless to and fro movement in the research process that is quite lengthy and arduous (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).

In their quest to identify the logic of a field and the form of the capital negotiated in it the researcher must also take into account that the field is not static nor is the value of the capital fixed. Bourdieu points out the researcher’s capacity to impact on the negotiation of the value of the coinage of capitals within different settings:

In every epoch there is a constant struggle over the rate of exchange between the different kinds of capital, the struggle among the different factions of the dominant class, whose overall capital is composed in differing proportions of the various kinds of capital.... cultural capital, economic capital, etc. are themselves at stake in struggles within the reality that we are studying and that what we say about them will itself become a stake in the struggles (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 33).

The researcher is challenged to accept responsibility for the role they play in the negotiation of capital value. This intervention and potential to do harm must be justified by a corresponding potential to do some social good. Bourdieu claims that by exposing the historically created naturalised state of the social laws governing a field the researcher provides social liberation by rendering these laws vulnerable to change.

Knowledge of the law gives them a chance, a possibility of countering the effects of the law a possibility that does not exist so long as law is unknown.
and operates unknown to those who undergo it. In short, just as it de-
naturalizes, so sociology de-fatalizes (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 26).

The laws governing the field of practice are naturalised as they are the “structuring structures” (Calhoun et al., 1993) which produced us. The determining, or fatal power of these laws, can only be challenged once their status as natural laws has been exposed as a social construct. The researcher is thus charged with the role of exposing the social laws at work in a field through the examination of the dispositions and capital in play in the field. In his Sociology in Question, Bourdieu returns to the image of the photograph and the game to illustrate the role of the researcher in recording not only the nature of the capital at play in a particular social context but also the strategies being engaged and the shared understandings of the rules of the game. Again he notes that the researcher is fixing a moment which is by nature dynamic. He acknowledges that the world described by the researcher is at the moment of recording always about to shift to a new state (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 35).

In order to encompass the concept of transformation within his descriptive images of social research Bourdieu shifts from the image of a game to the image of improvised music. Instead of watching the exchange of various coloured chips Bourdieu describes the social agents as listening for each other’s notes, chords and combinations. To avoid the danger of the “rules of the game” referred to above, being interpreted as fixed and deterministic, Bourdieu counters this possibility by referring to social engagement as resembling a group musical composition. He proposes that the musicians behave as active agents improvising their own melodies. In this image the habitus is a device for achieving “regulated improvisation and the conductorless orchestration of conduct” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 6).

Wacquant (1998) points out that the researcher as the external observer is in a position to identify the constraints acting upon this act of apparent freedom and to “ascertain the objective regularities they obey” (1998, p. 8). He claims that the researcher can “decode” the “underwritten musical score according to which the actions of agents, each of whom believe she is improvising her own melody, are organized” (Bourdieu, 1983, p.89, cited in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 8).

Bourdieu challenges the researcher to identify the “objective regularities” or social laws acting upon the agents within a field “to uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe, as well as
the mechanisms which tend to ensure the reproduction or the transformation” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 7).

This study of a particular social world (or group of worlds) is an opportunity to uncover some of the “underwritten scores” which resonate with the unique capital available in a rural Australian setting. Bourdieu offers methodological guidance to those attempting this task. Wacquant refers to the act of researching as “the most decisive operation, the construction of the object”. He outlines what he sees as Bourdieu’s three closely related guiding principles of research:

The first may be termed methodological polytheism: to deploy whatever procedure of observation and verification best suited to the question at hand and continue to confront the results yielded by different methods (p.4)

... a second principle enjoins us to grant equal epistemic attention to all operations, from the recollection of sources and the design of questionnaires to the definition of populations, samples and variables, to coding instructions and the carrying out of interviews, observations, and transcriptions. .. This stipulates an organic relation, indeed a veritable fusion, between theory and method. The third principle followed by Bourdieu is that of methodological reflexivity: the relentless self questioning of method itself in the very movement whereby it is implemented (emphasis in original) (Wacquant, 1998, p. 5).

‘Methodological polytheism’ and ‘equal epistemic attention to all operations’ are not unusual features in critical ethnography, but Bourdieu’s characterisation of reflexivity has a particular emphasis. Wacquant sets it apart stating that “such epistemic reflexivity as Bourdieu advocates is diametrically opposed to the kind of narcissistic reflexivity celebrated by some postmodern writers, for whom the analytical gaze turns back onto the private person of the analyst” (Wacquant, 1998).

This reflexivity is a professional rather than a personal act. It is an iterative discipline. Wacquant clarifies Bourdieu’s position on reflexivity by reducing it to three clear steps required of the researcher. He instructs them in what they should disclose:

The first and most obvious is the personal identity of the researcher: her gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, education, etc. Her location in the intellectual field, as distinct from social space at large, is the second: it calls for critical dissection of the concepts, methods, and problematics she inherits as well as for vigilance towards the censorship exercised by disciplinary and institutional attachments(Wacquant, 1998, p. 10).

Wacquant emphasises Bourdieu’s concern for the impact of the inevitable bias of the researcher:
Yet the most insidious form of bias in Bourdieu’s (1990) view is the fact that to study society, the sociologist necessarily assumes...the point of view of the ‘impartial spectator, standing above the world rather than being immersed in it, preoccupied by it (in both senses of the term), create[ing] systematic distortions in our conceptions of the knowledge, beauty, and morality that reinforce each other and have every chance of going unnoticed inasmuch as those who produce and consume these conceptions share the same scholastic posture (Wacquant, 1998, p. 10).

Wacquant’s (1998) words challenge the researcher to disclose repeatedly and evaluate their own “scholastic posture”; to examine their own thinking tools, values, attitudes and understandings, publicly. In the light of this challenge I will endeavour to disclose the potentially “insidious biases” which have informed the writing of this study

### 3.2 A Reflexive Self Portrait

Bourdieu challenges the researcher to turn the analytical gaze back upon themselves without slipping into “narcissistic reflexivity”. He identifies the “personal identity” as the first source of distortion but counsels against focusing the gaze on the “private person”. I take this to mean that the role of this reflexive act is to focus on those aspects of the personal identity which may concern the thinking around the particular research object under examination rather than a wholesale baring of the soul. With this in mind I shall endeavour to identify my own “unsought” ways of thinking.

I am an Anglo-Australian female, married for over 30 years to a fifth generation farmer. I grew up in Sydney and attended an urban girls’ school and my husband attended a rural boys’ boarding school. We raised our two daughters on the family farm and they attended the local co-ed rural schools before moving to the city to attend university. I taught English, history and drama in co-educational rural schools for eighteen years. Then, as a consultant in creative arts education for the NSW Department of Education and Training, I worked with both primary and secondary rural school teachers and students in the areas of dance, drama, visual arts and music. Some of the programs I was involved in developing included the promotion of opportunities for rural boys to gain greater access to arts activities and the development of collaborative workshops for isolated schools with the Gender Equity Unit of the Department of Education and Training. Some of the educators I worked with were homosexual and some were heterosexual. All of these experiences in the education of boys and girls have left traces on my thinking which may or may not be apparent in my work.
In my high school teaching career I had a number of leadership roles in both administration as a head teacher and in student welfare. This included eight years in the role of year adviser and student welfare teacher responsible for child sexual assault victim support. I developed youth community theatre performances, ran drama camps and facilitated programs in debating, dance, drama and the Shakespeare competitions. I have spent many years listening to rural young people talk about their lives, challenges and aspirations. My view of the schoolyard has not been restricted to the one you get from in front of the blackboard; I have shared many young journeys through the rural schooling experience, some painful and others triumphant.

The habituses that have been developed in these professional and personal roles provided me with easy access to the field of this study. I was comfortable in the school setting, was welcomed by the principal and enjoyed a high level of trust from the young participants. Some teachers on the other hand were a little wary because as a Senior Education Officer for the Department of Education and Training I had been seen as a representative of the Sydney-centric bureaucracy which, through its edicts and curriculum, put a lot of pressure on their professional lives. There was also a suspicion that because of the area I was investigating I must be a ‘rabid feminist’ come to point a critical finger at their ‘old fashioned’ ways. I was aware of the conflicting views about the Paterson Boys Project (PBP) but I did not want to take sides with the positions taken in the evaluation of the PBP program I just wanted to understand what was really going on for the young people involved.

Perhaps some of the personal bias I bring to this field is not so “insidious” as painfully obvious. My middle-class, white, femaleness stands as a perpetual barrier to my real understanding of many things in this field. I acknowledge that I will present to you only those things that I have become aware of from my limited stance. I am also limited in other aspects of my vision. I feel a loyalty to the school system I have worked in most of my adult life and to the isolated rural community so much like my own. I identify with both the teachers and the agricultural context and I am unlikely to be persuaded of conspiracies emanating from the bureaucracy that I had been working in for the previous four years. On the other hand as an insider to these fields I have had firsthand experience of their inadequacies and potential oppressiveness. I am sensitive to their weaknesses as well as their strengths. I am unlikely to romanticise the rural setting after 30 years of being an outsider inside of it, or to overlook school rigidities after many years of trying to counter them.
However, I am not looking to find fault or apportion blame for the problems that beset the Paterson boys’ programs but rather to investigate the nature of things as they are, acknowledging that all of the stakeholders in this field are looking for some sort of change in the area of boys’ education.

The second source of bias which Bourdieu asks the researcher to critique is that of “Her location in the intellectual field, as distinct from social space at large” which includes, “vigilance towards the censorship exercised by disciplinary and institutional attachments” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 10).

As most of my professional life has been spent in school education where promotion is gained through the demonstration of practice rather than loyalty to a particular academic school of thought I entered the field of research with a level of cynicism. I was eager to test any theoretical position against practice as practice had been my focus. I have not been subjected to many years of inculcation in academic politics but the process of producing a PhD carries with it many constraining filters of expectation and ritual. The bias of the eyes I write for is bound to be deeply imprinted on the image that will emerge from my efforts. As I become inculcated with the expectations of the PhD culture this understanding will mark my practice. I am also bound by the need to retain the confidential status of the field. My attachment to the field of education in NSW constrains my work at many levels as I have been entrusted with confidences at the school, district and state levels. These constraining factors need to be acknowledged without disclosing any specific confidences; this imposes a particular form of bias. Some material cannot be included in the study as it is too sensitive or it may expose the informants to threat.

The final source of bias of particular concern to Bourdieu is that imposed invisibly by the researcher’s “scholastic posture”. My own “conceptions of knowledge, beauty, and morality” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 10) must be critically acknowledged and made vulnerable. As an educator in the fields of English, history and creative arts I have been very influenced by the literature that explores the tensions between modernism and post-modernism and the cultural theorists’ explorations of discourse and cultural identities. Foucault’s work elaborating the nexus between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1976, 1977, 1994) informs my search for normalising practices. Butler’s exploration of the role of the body in performing identities has informed my examination of the clothing and behaviours that characterise youth.
microcultures. Theorists like hooks (hooks, 2001) challenge the possibility of an essential singular identity and thinkers like Derrida (Derrida, 1976) challenge the possibility of a single immutable meaning for cultural signs.

Much of the literature on boys’ education takes for granted a need for all boys to stay longer in formal schooling. There is an understanding of valued “knowledge” emanating from this one source. ABS statistics demonstrate that many of the men in the Paterson region of this study do not privilege schooling knowledge in this way. They chose to leave school early and sought further education from certificates that did not require school completion. As a high school teacher I have habitually granted school education a higher status than alternative vocational certificates. Foucault’s (Foucault, 1977) explanation of the inextricable links between power and knowledge is helpful in dislodging a traditional fixed understanding of the nature of knowledge.

An understanding of knowledge as constitutive of power directs the researcher’s gaze from the norms to the powerful and from the powerful to the determined norms. Everett (2002) explores the relationship between the idea of Foucault, that knowledge indicates “what constitutes the normal” and those of Bourdieu who:

likewise concerns himself with knowledge, but of a particular variety, the common sense or “doxic” variety, which also tells us what is normal or “legitimate”. It is through the processes of classification, calculation, codification and so on (Bourdieu, 1990a), and it is in this telling of what is legitimate that knowledge affects human subjectivity and the constitution of identity. To put this in Foucault’s terms, discourses constitute the subject; in Bourdieu’s symbolic (and social) structures constitute the “habitus.” These ideas imply … scepticism towards ‘truth’, which is a social construction for Foucault (Alverson, 1996, p. 101) and an (necessary) ‘arbitrary’ for Bourdieu (Everett, 2002, p. 59).

Foucault and Bourdieu ask the researcher to examine the context for forms of knowledge that are valued rather than bring to the field preconceived values. The relationships of power within each field are at all times in tension and “conceptions of knowledge, beauty, and morality” are repeatedly renegotiated. Foucault (1977) redirects our thinking about the nature of power:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power producers; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1977, p. 194).

Here he emphasises both the positive productive nature of power as well as its links to the production of what Bourdieu would refer to as symbolic capital and objectified
cultural capital. These objects and symbolic capitals are the indicators of the norms of the field. They point to the social laws governing the field which are a key focus for the researcher. In this study I will endeavour to discern the conceptions of knowledge, beauty, and morality of the participants rather than presume that they might share my own.

3.3 Focusing this study

In this study a number of fields have been identified at play in the community of Paterson. Bourdieu provides instruction in the methodology that should be used in the investigation of fields. He provides three steps, he states that to research a field, “first one must analyse the position of the field vis-a-vis the field of power...” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99).

In the Paterson study the significant fields in play for young people in this community will be identified and then the social trajectories and dispositions apparent in those fields will be explored to determine the relationship of the field to the field of power. Rawolle’s idea of cross-field effects will also be called upon in this investigation. An analysis of the “position of the field vis-a-vis the field of power” should reveal any cross-field effects in relation to power. It is in these places of collision between the fields that potential for change may be identified. This is also the space where the value of the symbolic capital of one field is renegotiated in the context of another where unequal power relations exist.

Bourdieu’s (2001) concern with the relationship of a field with the overarching field of power will be extended to also consider its relationship with the overarching field of gender. Cross-field effects with the field of gender, which, according to Bourdieu pervades all fields, are of particular interest to this study as the Paterson boys’ programs are a direct response to perceptions of this field by aspirational parents and concerned teachers.

Bourdieu’s first step then focuses the study on consideration of the status of a field and allows us to consider the differential power relationships between fields. Following this he goes on to explain that:

Second, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field is the site (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99).
This study will rely on an investigation of the capital displayed within a field to identify the “legitimate authority of agents within the field”. Symbolic capital which represents social, cultural and economic capital will be the principal source of information. Bourdieu (1984) places much emphasis on the hierarchical nature of social negotiation of groups; this study is concerned to note the impact of high status in one field on the access to another. It explores the relationship between levels of legitimacy in cross fields as it investigates the social mobility of these isolated young people and examines the impact of the boys’ programs. Bourdieu’s final instruction states that:

... one must analyse the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favourable opportunity to become actualized (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99).

The dispositions of the young people in each of the fields under investigation in this study are explored through a number of sources. As the participants in this study move between fields different habituses may be ‘favoured’ in one field and marginalised in another. The contribution of the physical location of this community to the internalisation of a particular habitus is also one of the points of interest of this study. The dispositions of the teachers, community leaders and micro cultural youth group members provide an invaluable diagnostic tool for understanding the ebb and flow of identities in this location.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Research conducted in sites which are characterized by unequal power relationships is always problematic. This is exacerbated by the focus of this research on young people. Holt claims that:

Unequal power relationships between children and adults underpin all ethical dilemmas facing adults researching children (Holt, 2004, p. 14).

The challenge of this inequity was apparent in this research in a number of arenas.

3.4.1 Consent

As the high school students who participated in this study were self selected their participation may be described as consensual. The primary school students and their parents however were asked to attend by the deputy principal. They assented to this request but the student participation was not necessarily with their “consent”
The power position of the teacher who informed them of the study prevents them from questioning its integrity or resisting the instruction to co-operate and their parents provided the signed consent document. The first interviews were also conducted in the Principals office (in her absence). It was difficult to move out of the office without offending the enthusiastic, helpful staff members but most Primary School parent interviews were conducted in the playground or classroom veranda rather than an office. Some of the young participants were so intimidated by the interview situation that they barely spoke, effectively exercising the power that they did have to withdraw their consent. As the focus of this study was on teenagers rather than Primary school children the issues canvassed here did not prove a significant disruption. It is none the less useful to bear in mind Rose’s reminder that:

> We cannot know everything, nor can we survey power as if we can fully understand, control or redistribute it, What we may be able to do is something rather more modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognising that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands (Rose, 1997, p319)

Rose challenges the researcher to work at all times to include participants in the research process. She emphasises the “empowering” of young people as a counter to the unequal power balance. In my work with the young people of Paterson I often felt that they had the knowledge and power and that I was the one needing to be “empowered”.

### 3.4.2 Access

Although I entered this field as a guest of the principal and was identified as a member of an education elite (an academic and an education consultant), I was also an ignorant outsider. In this site I was the novice and the local people were the experts. I had to work to gain access to the fields of rural identities and youth identities. The local practitioners in these two fields could easily have barred my access. As Holt has observed:

> Children are the gatekeepers to their own games and discussions, and can allow or deny adults’ participation. P19(Holt, 2004)

Teachers and rural adults were also gate keeping. There was a concern that the school image be protected, that rural people be portrayed positively and the boys’ programs be vindicated. The gate keeping motivated by these concerns had to be taken into consideration in the research process. The enthusiastic engagement of the Principal and deputy of the Primary and High schools proved problematic. The
filtering gaze of the deputy principal had to be considered in interpreting the data
gathered at the Primary school. The presence of the High School Principal and
several supervising teachers during the administration of a culture questionnaire
rendered the data gathered unusable as the students did not have an opportunity to
consent to this exercise and they were under surveillance during its administration.
When the young people were given the opportunity to freely consent to participate in
the research process they were very generous in assisting me to enter the field of
their identity play. It was also important to gather data in sites away from the school
setting. Conversations in the street, at the Post office, supermarket, newsagents, RSL
Club, local pub and in family homes supported the material gathered at the school.

3.4.3 Privacy and Confidentiality
The NSW Department of Education and training imposes rigorous constraints on
researchers working in its schools to ensure that the privacy of all participants is
protected and that material gathered does not disclose any matters that may be
considered confidential by the school community or administration. In keeping with
these expectations, pseudonyms have been used for all people and place names in
this study. Photographic images were not gathered in the study site and ABS data has
been presented in combined groups which could not be easily traced. Illustrative
material has been gathered in similar sites to the study with the consent of all
participants.

3.5 My Methods
The investigation of the culture of Paterson was undertaken in three phases between
May and December of 2003:

1. familiarisation with the field – school climate questionnaire, observation,
   interviews with the principal and some community leaders, document
   collection and initial analysis

2. youth, community and school interview data collection-focus groups and
   individual interviews, initial transcription

3. in-depth interviews following up initial analysis
3.5.1 Phase 1: Entering the field of Paterson

The principal of the high school and the president of ‘PBP Inc’ provided the first in-depth interviews for this study. They provided an overview and a context for the boys’ education strategies. Documentation gathered in the first phase of the research included: school magazines, Country Areas Program project records, Parents & Citizens records, local histories, school newsletters and the principal’s records of boys’ education strategies undertaken in the school. Sites in Paterson that were visited include: the local library, council chambers, tourist information centre, video shop, newsagents, the caravan park, the local pub and the RSL Club.

In the first weeks of the project the principal administered a New South Wales, Department of Education and Training School Climate Survey to all of the students in years seven to ten (about 250 students). After completing this survey each year group was also asked to complete a small questionnaire for me (see Appendix 1). This questionnaire canvassed issues of gender identity and rural identity but its findings were later eclipsed by the material gathered through the interview process. The presence of the principal and two supervising teachers in administering this questionnaire also rendered it problematic as a research tool. It did however serve to provide an introduction to the field and raised some initial themes that were developed further in focus group interviews.

3.5.2 Phase 2: Data gathering in Paterson

The second phase of this study began in August 2003. It began with an address to a full high school staff meeting and a meeting of the high school parents (mothers only) at a P&C meeting. With their permission interviews began with the senior students at the high school.

The first set of interviews concentrated on the Year 12 students who were in their last weeks of school. They were very reflective and quite outspoken on issues of isolation, alcohol, risk taking, sport, careers, music and the Paterson Boys’ Project (PBP). They celebrated the end of their schooling with an auction and a formal assembly which were recorded for later analysis. The interview process was an iterative one, as issues arose they were pursued in subsequent conversations. The emphasis on PBP in early interviews was replaced by the investigation of the rural youth microcultures of Friggers and Skeggs in the third phase of the study.
To begin with, senior classes were spoken with during their release time, beginning with two classes of 20 then small groups of three to eight from Year 12. Interviews varied in length; at times they were very long (an hour). The students were very generous and enthusiastic and they exploited the opportunity to avoid their formal classes in their last few days of school.

Most of the interviews with junior high school students took place in the final phase of the project in November 2003. It was more difficult to get permission to speak to junior students as they had to take consent forms home and remember to bring them back. Forms were given out in roll call classes one year group at a time. Teachers often forgot to give them out and rarely explained their purpose. It was more successful to approach students in the playground, or in the library, to give them notes to take home. Year 11 were approached in their recreation area during lunch time. After a group discussion of the project a number of consent forms were taken home for signing and several interviews were conducted in the library, in the senior study and in the playground. Group interviews were followed up by in depth individual interviews.

Interviews were conducted in corridors, the playground, in classrooms, storerooms and offices and on verandas. An office provided for the research was rarely used for interviews as it was too far away from the main classrooms and formalised the process too much. Particular care was taken to ensure that for teachers, the situation should be quick, informal and unthreatening. It was often very noisy; lawnmowers, drills, bells, crowds, traffic in stairwells, traffic in corridors often drowned out responses. Interruptions were frequent problems.

Students from the primary school were also interviewed. Two children from each grade group (eight boys and eight girls) were spoken to either in pairs or small groups. The assistant principal organised notes and selected a cross-section of students and nine parents to interview. These interviews occurred in the playground or the principal’s office. The principal and assistant principal were very generous and supportive but their involvement had to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the data collected.

3.5.3 Phase 3: Targeted data collection

The final phase of data collection was informed by the analysis of initial data. The emergence of information about the youth microcultures of Friggers and Skegs
prompted the development of a conversation stimulus sheet (Appendix 2) aimed at identifying the detailed practices associated with these youth identities. The discussion starter document was intended to focus discussion of the gender roles of Friggers and Skeggs; it supported data emerging from the conversations elaborating the behaviours associated with each microculture and provided an easy checklist for recording responses. In depth interviews developed these findings further.

The formal interviews included:

- nineteen secondary teachers (7 male 12 female)
- fourteen secondary senior female students
- twelve junior secondary male students
- eleven senior secondary male students
- ten junior secondary female students
- two secondary teachers’ aids
- four canteen workers
- eleven community members
- two primary school teachers
- two principals
- two deputy principals
- three senior education bureaucrats
- eight primary school male students
- eight primary school female students
- two Gender Equity Unit officers

Further community contact included conversations with the newsagents, pharmacist, video shop assistant, clothing shop assistant, community health worker, local gallery owner, the tourist information officer, the district superintendent, a shire office worker, a local nurse, a local radio disc jockey, the high school Parents and Citizens Association and participants in two meetings of ‘PBP Inc’.

There was ample opportunity to observe the rural school culture outside of the formal interview situation and beyond the boundary of the schoolyard during meals with teachers at the pub and the club and in teachers’ homes. Many rich conversations were not recorded but served to inform an understanding of the fields of practice being recorded.
3.5.4 Handling the data

Some of these participants were interviewed a number of times and group interviews also occurred. One hundred and thirty interviews were transcribed verbatim providing 200,000 words of data. This data was transcribed into tables with each new idea on a separate row and the interviewer and participants’ voices in different columns. Each transcript was numbered chronologically providing a tracking number. A summary of the ideas emerging from each row was provided in a third column. These summaries were merged and transferred to a central database to provide a holistic picture of the emerging themes. As themes emerged they provided a direction for further data collection and the initial structure for a re-reading of the data and ongoing analysis.

In keeping with the rural focus of this study the model of a machine for cleaning seed varieties will be enlisted to provide a summary of the process of data handling in this study. This model simplifies and sanitises a complex process for, as Silverman reminds us: “a botanist classifying a plant is engaged in a less problematic activity than an anthropologist classifying a tribe” (Silverman, 2004, p. 298). This model simply signposts the process that has been applied in the slow and iterative journey of sorting the raft of ideas that have emerged in the discursive space, social space and material space of Paterson.
Figure 3.1 The Petkus seed cleaning machine: An illustration of the process of data gathering and sorting in this study

1. documents, conversations and observations from Paterson are gathered in the harvesting of material
2. stories beyond the scope of this investigation which may be pursued at a later date are put aside and selected material is sent forward for processing
3. the data transcription, sorting, categorising process begins
4. the most obvious stories relating to the Friggers and Skeggs are gathered for closer analysis
5. records, artefacts and accounts of the Paterson Boys’ Project are gathered for closer analysis
6. evidence of sport and football culture emerge
7. evidence of gender dominance and subordination gathered
8. rural identities stories gathered for analysis
9. identity contexts: the arts, school, peer activities and work are identified
10. unused data may be pursued at a later date.
One of the contrasts between the process of seed sorting and data sorting is in the volume of discarded material. A good farmer gathers a relatively clean seed sample and discards only a small percentage of his yield. This ethnographic process on the other hand is not able to be so selective in its harvesting. It is not clear at the outset what material is of value and what is not so the volume of data gathered is, of necessity, very large and the percentage of discards quite high.

When seed is initially harvested it is laden with contamination from weeds, straw and other seeds which render it unuseable for re-sowing. It must be cleaned of foreign matter and different seed varieties and qualities sorted to achieve pure seed samples. The Petkus seed cleaning machine illustrated above is used for this process, it provides an image of the research method applied in the rural site of Paterson as data is sorted and categorised to achieve ‘clean’ samples that may have application elsewhere.

The initial harvest of research material was very wide in its scope. Conversations ranged over many aspects of rural community and school life and artefacts concerning the histories and cultures of the community were gathered. In the first stage of cleaning grain in the Petkus processor a blast of air dislodges empty husks, empty seeds, straw and dry matter blowing away this bulky contamination, allowing the weightier matter of the seeds to drop down into the next stage of processing. Literature provided the blast of air that was needed to blow away irrelevancies in the early stage of analysis to allow the initial sorting of weightier data to begin. This literature included the literature of rural social research and gender education theory policy and practice.

Just as seed is sorted by constant movement the data gathered in this site was read, re-read and sorted into a variety of contexts. Seeds with similar properties are gathered together and so are ideas with similar properties. The largest seeds are initially removed through a series of tables full of holes like sieves. Similarly the biggest ideas emerged first, dropping out of the throng of stories and catching the eye, separating from the mass of smaller ideas. The two big ideas which emerged initially were the concerns of the Paterson Boys’ Project and the youth microcultures of the Friggers and the Skeggs.
After the initial sorting of grain when the largest and most obvious seeds have been screened off, finer screens are applied to begin to seek out the smaller grain. The most obvious ideas emerge in an initial analysis but closer scrutiny and finer tools of analysis reveal subtler detail. Another process to shake out the subtle differences in grain is the gravity table. As the grain runs across an oscillating table at a slight angle seeds of the same weight, size and quality fall together. The theoretical ideas of Bourdieu, Lingard and Rawolle provided the oscillating cam shaft for this analysis. Their ideas shook the data causing patterns to emerge.

In some instances velvet rollers may be applied to grain to catch seed that is known to have fine hairs on the husk. Computer technology which will actively seek out a known quality provides a similar assistance in data sorting. Sorting through stories for key words is akin to applying velvet rollers to the grain. Just as the seed sorting process requires the constant movement of grain, application of air and oscillation of equipment, the data analysis process requires the constant interaction of the data, literature and theory.

### 3.5.5 Analysis

This study calls on Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital and field to develop a picture of the social engagements in the site of Paterson. The youth identity play in Paterson will be examined in the three sites of discursive space, social space and material space. The associations between these three will then be explored through an examination of the relationships in intersecting space. The Paterson Boys’ Project and the youth microcultures of Frigger and Skeggs will be examined to identify their position in the field of gender.

Through an identification of the language, signs, symbols and discourse that structure the habitus of these young people a picture of the identity options available to them will be developed. An examination of the contribution of history and geography to this structuring will also be considered. The capital that is being exchanged in the site of Paterson by the young people will be investigated and the stakes focused on in these transactions identified. The significant fields in Paterson will also be investigated to explore the relationships between these fields and the overarching or institutional fields of power and gender.
Cross-field effects will be identified to determine any constraints bearing on interactions and representations, experiences and dispositions of the young people.

3.6 Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the site of Paterson, providing a picture of a unique rural community which developed and supported an educational program for boys. Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical ideas that provide a framework for the analysis of the research data in this study. Chapter 3 elaborates the methods and methodology employed in this study in response to Bourdieu’s theoretical position. The following two chapters explore the literature on rural social contexts and gender education programs as a background to the ethnography presented in Chapter 6.
Chapter 4. Exploring rural fields

In Chapter 4 the rural context of this study is explored. Research literature in rural gender identities and rural youth activities are examined to provide a background for the boys’ initiatives in Paterson. Bourdieu’s (2000) proposition that the habitat, essentially where people live, shapes their habitual ways of being informs the focus in this chapter on the rural context. The rural gender and rural youth research explored finds similarities in settings as diverse as Norway, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia.

Researchers have traced changes in the representation of rural gender in response to economic and social pressures. The rural setting has traditionally privileged a physical masculinist culture which positions women as subordinated ‘helpers’. The literature explores 21st century gender representations illustrating change while demonstrating the durability of the subordination of the feminine in the rural setting, particularly in the context of the family farm discourse. The data presented in this study from the rural site of Paterson has been gathered within the discourse of school youth, not the family farm but similar issues of rural change and gender roles emerge. The issue of rural gender dominance and subordination will be further examined in the context of Paterson.

The literature also explores the pressures on rural young people from isolation, alcohol consumption, risk taking, reckless driving and heterosexism. Rural youth research highlights the role of the public display of masculinity in the identity play of young men. It represents the rural context as a highly gendered setting and highlights concerns over rural suicide rates. The data gathered in the rural site of Paterson speaks into this field supporting some findings and challenging others.

4.1 Introduction

The special program for boys initiated by the Paterson school and community leaders, illustrates a concern for the development of the identities of boys in a rural setting. Before examining this initiative further, relevant research literature will be explored to provide a critical context. In the past decade social researchers have examined the idea of rurality, masculinity and femininity in the rural setting and the influences on youth identities constructed in rural contexts. Rural social research literature illustrates the importance of the role of geographic contexts in the formation of social identities. It highlights the shifts that have occurred in recent
decades in the gender roles of rural men and women and it identifies some concerns about rural young people. Before exploring these findings a shared understanding of the concept of rurality and the role of rural place in identities construction will be sought.

4.2 Defining Rurality - Place Space and Community

The concept of rurality is difficult to measure or define. Planners and government policy makers use a range of measures of rurality to inform their decision-making. Factors that they consider include; isolation, population density, the travel time, distance to services and the presence of agricultural or mining industries. The ARIA, the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, is one of the measures used to inform bureaucratic decision-makers. It is used extensively by rural health providers to provide a picture of the population density but it gives little sense of the different social situations present in different rural places. Jordon, Roderick and Martin report their search for more reliable measures in their study of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004, p. 120). They found this index to be useful in some areas but inadequate in others. For the purpose of this study a definition which focuses on the social rather than the physical or economic characteristics of Paterson is needed but even in the area of rural sociology the definition of “rural” has been contentious.

Rural sociology originated in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century as a reaction to the development of urbanisation. Theorist Ferdinand Toennies (1855-1936), developed the ideas of \textit{Gemeinschaft} and \textit{Gesellschaft} (Toennies, 1963) to explain the historical transformation of Germany from a rural to an industrial society. He proposed that the rural society, or \textit{Gemeinschaft}, was characterised as a morally cohesive, homogenous community, largely based on kinship and organic ties, often founded on common religious sentiment. Industrial, urban society, \textit{Gesellschaft}, dissolved the ties of community by dividing up the labour force to form “associations” which promoted individualism and competitiveness (Perdue, 1986). The “rural” is understood to be the site of communities tied by common place and values and is contrasted with the “coldly considered” (Perdue, 1986) relationships that characterise the urban setting. The natural countryside is associated with order and morality in counterpoint to the “spoiled and calculating” (Perdue, 1986) world of industrialised society. The introduction of the social binary of the rural and the urban, initiates a discourse of difference into the literature which dominates this field. This focus on the
differentiation of the rural and urban was difficult for researchers to sustain. Well marked differences between the two lifestyles were difficult to demonstrate and social groups which behaved as communities existed in both urban and metropolitan settings. Nonetheless the dualism of the “dark city” and the “rural idyll” still inform much discussion of this field and many of the participants in the current study spoke about Paterson and other urban sites in these terms. On the other hand some sociologists, like Bourdieu, considered the urban setting as a place of greater promise. For some the image of the tight knit rural community is not always interpreted as a positive, desirable force. Iris Marion Young (1990) mistrusts the homogenising influence of community and uses the image of the city as her model of an inclusive positive society:

Community represents an ideal of shared public life, of mutual recognition and identification ... the ideal of community also suppresses difference among subjects and groups. The impulse to community often coincides with a desire to preserve identity and in practice excludes others who threaten that sense of identity. I develop another ideal of social relations and politics, which begins from our positive experience of city life. Ideally city life embodies four virtues that represent heterogeneity rather than unity: social differentiation without exclusion, variety, eroticism, and publicity (Young, 1990, p. 13)

Young (1990) challenges Toennies (1963) image of the idealised social unit. She regards communities as forces of social reproduction which exclude and marginalise. In 1930 Redfield (cited in Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000, p. 302) proposed that the rigid distinction between rural and urban be replaced by the idea of a rural urban continuum. Small rural villages (or folk societies) were interpreted as the most rural social unit and large cities as the most secular and individualistic with a greater division of labour and consequent social and cultural disorganisation. Frankenberg (cited in Abercrombie et al., 2000, p. 302) differentiated the rural from the urban by means of the concept of role and network. He claimed that in urban areas there is much greater differentiation of roles and the network of social relationship are less dense. This theoretical position has been challenged by some who consider it too descriptive or spatially deterministic (Abercrombie et al., 2000, p. 304).

The relationship between geographic place or sites and social patterns has proven to be difficult to classify. In 1996 Little and Austin pointed out that the concept of rurality does not have a single meaning in the literature. The multi-layered nature of social engagement creates a multiplicity of readings of social places. They cite Cloke and Milbourne’s claim, that “there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a
multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area.” (1992, cited in Little & Austin, 1996, p. 102)

Little and Austin go on to explain that:

Rurality becomes a social construct and ‘rural’ a world of social, moral and cultural values as defined and understood by rural dwellers. The construction of rurality takes place over a range of different spatial scales, shifting subtly in emphasis over time (Little & Austin, 1996, p. 102).

The subtly shifting emphasis on different spatial scales which occurs as understandings of rurality are constructed, explain one of the difficulties researchers have had in applying a tight definition of ‘rural’. Mahon (2006) asserts that much social research makes reference to an assumed national scale which blinds the research to pressures above and below this level. She refers to the need for a “new spatial imaginary”, claiming that:

The literature on the politics of scale has insights to offer, as it develops the implications of Eduard Soja’s (1989) representation of the world as a ‘mutable hierarchy of nested locales’. Soja’s conception serves to denaturalize the national as the primary scale — or ‘focal setting at which spatial boundaries are defined for a specific social claim, activity or behaviour’ (Agnew 1997, 100) — without falling into the opposite error of proclaiming the death of the national state (Mahon, 2006, p. 458).

As our focus shifts from the global scale down to the micro level of youth cultures Soja’s image of the world as overlapping and interweaving sites of social interaction provides a useful new way to capture the fluid and multiple nature of community. A community comprises a “focal setting”, a place, composed of “nested locales”, spaces with boundaries which subtly shift and change in relation to each other as the agents within them move through different activities and social engagements. A community is composed of many communities and the boundaries between them are fluid and shifting. Just as a sense of a national community is not lost when we explore the global or local communities related to it, so we need not lose a sense of a geographically located rural community composed of all age groups, as we explore the nature of some of the youth micro cultural communities which are nested within it.

4.2.1 Rural place and identity

The site of Paterson is understood by the people living there to be a “rural” place. It is economically dependent on the agricultural industry. The family farm continues to
be the dominant social and economic unit. It is geographically isolated and characterised by a “tight knit community” (Perdue, 1986). This community comprises a number of interrelated and interwoven communities, of sporting groups, age groups, social clubs, professions and volunteer groups. Within these contexts rural identities, youth identities and gender identities are being iteratively constructed.

In the 1990s rural social researchers began to investigate the relationship between place and identity formation.

Place provides an essential space for social interaction. Place, which Labao (1996:78) has defined as a ‘distinct social unit and setting within which social relationships transpire’ are spaces which in the words of Yi-Fu Tuan (1977: 198), serve as ‘centres of meaning to individuals and to groups.’ That is, place is a space that has social boundaries and meaning-brought about primarily by the social interactions occurring there. Place serves as an ‘important component’ of both our individual sense of identity (Entrikin 1997: 302) as well as an important component of group identity (Sack 1997: 135). Place and identity cannot be understood separate from each other (Petrzelka, 2004, p. 387).

Petrzelka (2004) highlights the way that both individuals and groups attach meaning to their association with particular sites. Bourdieu has elaborated this process (2000). When the site is a physical geographic location then that site contributes to the nature of both the group and individual identities. It becomes part of the way they represent themselves to the world and to themselves. Hansen and Pratt (1995), explore the social role of place further. They speak of the relationship between social, economic and physical geography. They explore the way that different structures of employment opportunity are constructed in place foregrounding the inseparable links between the social, geographic and the economic features of place. Place provides social networks, physical lifeworld settings, recreation opportunities, a shared history, shared services (government, church, health, legal and commercial).

Kenway and Kraak (2006) extend understanding of place to include the global. They refer to the coexistence and inter-relationship of the “supra-territoriality” of the global location with the geographically located territory. They cite Benyon and Dunkerly’s (2000) observation that:

Even though most people remain rooted in a local or national culture or a local place, it is becoming increasingly impossible for them to live-in that place disconnected culturally from the world in which it is situated (2000, p.10, cited in Kenway, Kraak, & Hicky-Moody, 2006, p. 20).
The process of infiltration of local culture by images from cultures identified as located far away is described by Giddens as a “stretching out” of our sense of place (1990, p. 19). Tomlinson (1999) argues that:

As a function of global media images, there exists an increasing sense of ‘worldwide proximity’ and that this sense is accompanied by the very real connections that arise through economic, environmental and communicative links and through long distance travel, tourism and migration (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 9).

Imaginary and real proximities and the ebb and flow of new meaning systems and symbolic forms which may be “assimilated, hybridised or resisted locally” (Hannerz, 1991, cited in Kenway et al., 2006, p. 21) shape the identities of individuals and groups in local places. The physical geographic site encompasses physical space, social structures and discursive spaces. Identity constructions occur in the context of all of these spaces. Bourdieu’s idea of Habitus, which explains the links between the nature of a person or group’s habitual ways of behaving and the location in which these behaviours have been developed, incorporates the structural and discursive influences from beyond the location. A model of this process of identities construction will be developed in the following chapter to guide the exploration of the gendered rural youth identities of Paterson but first, the findings of rural social researchers will be reviewed.

The school community under investigation in this study has developed a program for the boys. As there was no parallel program for girls it may be inferred that their concerns were of a gendered nature. The gender roles taken up in rural sites have been the focus of a number of rural social research studies.

### 4.3 The literature on rural gender

Rural gender is a surprisingly well explored field in the research literature. According to Whatmore (1993) research into rural gender has shifted from an examination of gender roles, to an examination of the division of labour, then gender relations and finally gender identities. Brandth’s (2002) analysis of research texts divides this identities research into three types, or three discourses: the family farm, masculinisation and detraditionalisation and diversity. Brandth (2002) found that the family farm discourse has been and continues to be “hegemonic” within the research literature.
4.3.1 Rural gender identities

Family farms are the dominant economic and social unit in Paterson. A significant body of work exploring the role of gender in the context of the family farm has been produced in the last two decades. According to Whatmore (1993), prior to the 1980s rural research was preoccupied with the productive labour of men. The “family”, the distinctive feature of the social organisation of farming, was treated as “an organic or unitary entity, accessed through and represented by a single individual – the farmer and head of the household, both masculine-defined terms” (1993, p. 10). The diverse nature of families was not recognised, nor was the contribution of women and children to the productive function of the agricultural sector. The reproductive or domestic contribution of women was also invisible.

In 1990 Alston (1990) edited a collection of papers on rural women which included the exploration of: paid and unpaid work, women’s decision-making, domestic violence, farm wives in the US and rural women from non-English speaking backgrounds. These researchers clearly reached beyond the masculinist treatment of the rural outlined by Whatmore (1993), signalling a shift in the focus of rural research. Teather (1998) claims that the formation of The Australian Women in Agriculture group in 1993 saw a shift in the recognition of the voice of women. She notes optimistically the acknowledgement by policy makers of the need to consult this important sector of the rural community. She claims that rural women suffered “a double bind” as invisible farmers and a group overlooked by the feminist movement. She notes that rural women see the feminist voice as an urban one, unable to speak to their needs. Her co-edited collection of papers in 1994, Country Women at the Crossroads and Alston’s 1995 Women on the Land sought to address this perception with explorations of the role of farm women through a feminist perspective.

The 1998 edited collection of papers Australian Rural Women towards 2000 (Alston, 1998) repeated the claim that rural women were invisible. Alston notes the critical absence of the women’s voice in the national debate about gun restrictions. Haslam-McKenzie (cited in Alston, 1998) analyses the reluctance of rural women to adopt a feminist framework and Board (cited in Alston, 1998) identifies the position of rural women as outside of the agricultural policy debate (Alston, 1998). The theme of rural change is introduced in these papers with claims by Bryson and Warner Smith that
the burden of care which results from the reduction of rural health and aged care recourses is falling inequitably on women (cited in Alston, 1998).

Whatmore claims that:

Research on women in farming began with the important task of making women visible within the established categories and measures of labour and economic activity on the farm: hours worked, tasks performed and involvement in farm decision-making (Siiskonen et al. 1982; Lagrave, 1983; Bauwens & Loeffen, 1983; Gasson, 1987, 1990; MAPA, 1991; Shorthall, 1991). But it has been the development of the concept of gender itself, as a social division constructed on cultural rather than biological foundations that marks the most significant theoretical achievement to date in the study of women’s position in farming (Whatmore, 1993, p. 10).

Grace’s 1997 report for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 

*Networking Systems for Rural Women* appears in the context of rural economic, social and environmental crises. It quotes Clark’s (1989) claim that “responding to the changing roles of women is possibly the greatest challenge currently facing rural people” (cited in p. 1).

It identifies a number of factors combining to produce change in the roles of rural women including the pressures on agricultural production, that is, the family farm, from high farm debt, uncertain markets, drought and high production costs including labour costs. It notes the rise in participation of women in higher education, paid employment, public life and economic independence and power. It cites Leipins’s observation that “for women in agriculture, the politics of change includes a politics of identity and a politics of diversity” (cited in Grace, 1997, p. 2). It acknowledges the tension between the push for change in gender relations and the desire to affirm rural cultural values.

### 4.3.2 Changing gender roles

In a 2005 *Four Corners* report on Australian rural life called “Gambling the farm” Chris Masters stated that in the last 20 years, off-farm income has risen in the bush by up to 45 percent According to Fairweather (1995) 63 percent of those employed off-farm are women. Oldrup (1999), Evans and Ilbery (1996), Fairweather (1995), Saugers (2002b), Eikeland and Lie (1999) all explore the issues involved in pluriactivity, or off-farm work. Fairweather’s Australian study sees the movement of women to off-farm employment to assist in the survival of the family farm business as a positive sign of the adaptive capacity of the rural sector. Saugers and Oldrup in
France and Denmark see it as a part of the reconstruction of rural gender identities as women begin to take on and embody new roles. Evans and Ilbery (1996) in the UK found that despite shifts in responsibilities “archaic patterns of gender relations seem to be persisting in farming” (p. 90). Eikeland and Lie (1999) in Norway found that while men moved to off-farm work to develop new business activities women’s incomes were used to sustain the household needs for stable income. Oldrup observed that these women also took responsibility for most of the household work. They constructed their identities in opposition to a housewife identity stating a preference for outside work but they accepted that “their men were busy” and “it seemed fair they should do this work” (1999, p. 351).

4.3.3 The family farm discourse: Cultural Change or Reproduction?

Shorthall’s (1992) research highlights the way that farm women police the proper submission to the “rural patriarchy that subordinates” them. She has also questioned the role of Irish agricultural education and training structures in reinforcing gender inequities (1996). Villa (1999) explores the pressures on the traditional family farm society in Norway in a post traditional age where “a society of duty” is exchanged for a “marketplace of opportunity” (1999, p. 328). She identifies shifts in the attitudes of farm women:

Younger farm women see the family as more important than the farm, in the sense that consideration of the farm is not unquestionably set above one’s happiness. The farm and the perspective of eternity has not the same disciplinary effect on the younger generation (Villa, 1999, p. 330).

Voyce (1994) is not convinced by Villa’s findings that there had been a shift from obligation and duty to care for the farm to one of fostering interest and offering more possibilities. He supports Evans and Ilbery’s claims (1996) as he still sees very traditional patterns at work. He notes that shifts in property law in Australia, which might have reduced the gender inequities in farm inheritance have in fact:

Little affected the power relationships between father/son and mother/daughter.

Under the umbrella of privacy and family autonomy the law creates what West refers to as a “zone of protection within which patriarchal forces are left intact” (Voyce, 1994, p. 80).

McKenzie refers to the “daughter-in-law syndrome” which is a symptom of this. She found that daughters-in-law were feared by the older generation, excluded from
decision-making and denied access to information about the farm succession plan. (cited in Teather, 1998, p. 213).

In the context of research into the Landcare movement Beilin (1995), comes to a similar conclusion about the status of women. Governments point to the high participation rate of women in Landcare programs as evidence of gender equity but Beilin claims that this movement constructs both the women and the landscape in a traditional subordinated way which prevents significant change occurring for either of them (Beilin, 1995). Little and Austin explore the role of the “rural idyll” myth in supporting these traditional gender relations by “prioritising women’s mothering role and fostering their centrality within the rural community” (Little & Austin, 1996, p. 110).

Several other studies also assert the persistence of traditional patriarchal gender norms in the face of significant shifts in life practices. Gidarakou (1999), Darque (1998), Barbic (1988), Garcia-Ramon & Canoves (1988) identify the drift of young European rural women away from farming. They note that women who enter farming through marriage are increasingly drawn from non-farming backgrounds imposing pressure on traditional rural practices and values. Despite these shifts the responsibility for domestic chores, childcare and aged care continues to fall to those women who stay on family farms and in negotiations over purchases the farm is still given precedence (Barbic, 1988).

Rural researchers in the 1990s found that farm women were very actively involved in the maintenance of the family farm business. They often provided farm labour, domestic labour and off-farm income. They were coping with rapid changes in their roles but appeared resistant to change in their gender status. As Alston argued, they “derive occupational definition, personal fulfilment and private power from their role as pivots of the farm business and family” (cited in Teather, 1996, p. 5). More recently Bock and Shorthall (2006) cite evidence that many farming women are experiencing a greater voice in decision-making and providing significant financial support for the farm business. They found that these rural women accept a secondary role to the (male) farmer and were more concerned to provide support than to seek independence or to have their voice recognised. Many, however, have sought greater decision-making and leadership responsibility beyond the family farm in their rural context with mixed success.


4.3.4 Gender roles in rural leadership

In 1998 Alston described the leadership voice of rural women as “subjugated”. She decried what she described as structural impediments to women’s access to agricultural leadership roles and cited the merit selection processes in place as flawed and politicised. The survey data presented in Wilkinson and Alston’s 1999 *Let’s walk the talk inside the department: Messages to Government, farming associations and agribusiness from the women of rural Australia*, demonstrated that boards associated with agriculture were overwhelmingly dominated by males despite an educational advantage held by women. Barbara Pini (2003) also investigated the leadership roles of rural women but she took issue with the way that other researchers represented women and men in their literature. She accused them of ignoring the differences between women, obscuring those men who are marginalised in the rural sector and conflating leadership and masculinity. She claimed that women were homogenised as either the same as men or uniformly possessing unique “feminine” leadership skills. Despite the material advantages that these postures may accrue to some women, Pini (2004) rejects them claiming that they are feeding into a “discourse of difference” which may reinforce stereotypical assumptions about women, and support the positioning of women as the agricultural “other”. She investigated this “othering” process further in her study of leadership in the Australian sugar industry (2002). She found that managers represented themselves as distinctly different from growers and women, legitimising and naturalising their hold on power through a more complex “discourse of difference” (Pini, 2004).

4.3.5 Representations of rural gender

Pini (2004) is not the only rural researcher to contribute an analysis of discourse and representation to the field of rural gender research. Alston (1996), Leipins (2000), Brandth (1994) and Saugers (2002) all explore the constructions of gender identity through an examination of the way that gender is represented in a range of discourses. The subordinate representation of rural women’s sport was highlighted by Alston in a 1996 report *Goals for women: Improving media representations of women’s sport*. It drew attention to the disparity between the way rural women’s sporting participation was represented in rural media and the way it was experienced in the field. As we will observe, cultural constructions of rural femininity and masculinity have been examined through analysis of representations in community
conversation and everyday interaction as well as a range of media in Europe, New Zealand and Australia.

In 1994 Brandth began to explore the way that tractors were used as symbols of the dominant rural masculine identities. She noted that technology functioned as a symbol of masculinity and she proposed that through machines men confirmed their connection to other men and their distance from women (p. 131). Women who drove tractors constructed a new femininity from bits of masculinity and traditional femininity. They represented this new femininity through their tractor work combined with knitting, crochet, outdoor farming, ironing and childcare. Brandth (1994) notes the dynamic nature of gender as some aspects of it break while others continue or are even strengthened.

Brandth’s (1994) interest in gender representation shifted from the feminine to the masculine as she examined the representations of shifts in rural masculine identities apparent in tractor advertisements and Norwegian forestry magazines. She observed that in these images “The ideal of the strong, dirty, manual mechanic is giving way to a more business-like masculinity” (Brandth, 1995, p. 132). And the “old sturdy working logger is replaced by the energetic, young man with efficient and powerful machinery” (Brandth & Haugen, 2000, p. 343). Leipins (2000) pursues a similar examination of Australian and New Zealand representations of masculinity in the discourse of farming organisations and the rural press. She found an emphasis on strength, battle, decisiveness and outdoor labour associated with “tough men” and “powerful leaders”. She looks to women’s groups to provide “resistance” and “discursive contestation” to create “new opportunities for alternative gendering of agriculture” (Liepins, 2000a, p. 618).

Saugeres’ (2002a) study of the discourse of a Southern French rural community found that men were constructed as possessing an embodied knowledge of farming through their physical strength and an innate knowledge of the land. Women were excluded from this relationship as they were constructed as being like the land “both nurturing mother and seducer” (Saugers, 2002a). This representation of rural gender “constitutes a cultural idiom which legitimates men’s mastery over nature and women” (2002a). In a further study in 2002 she identifies the tractor, a symbol of masculine power and domination, as an ideal site for the “contestation of patriarchal gender relations” (2002a, p. 143). Her confidence in this assertion is surprising given
that both Brandth (1994) and Pini (2005) noted that even when the identity of “farm wife” is transformed by the engagement in activities such as tractor work, the construction of “farmer” remains intact. Brandth (1994) notes the care that women take to protect the masculine “dignity” of their men. Lie (1992, p.78, cited in Brandth, 1994, p. 145) claims that “Women’s use of technology does not threaten masculinity as long as they do not enter into the knowledge about it”. In her 2006 study of the embodied identities of women who use farm machinery like tractors, Brandth notes that the meaning attached to the body in agricultural work was not a constant but varied according to the different discourses and settings. Tractor work within the family farm discourse did not undermine the conventional reading of the gendered body as the woman’s role is that of farmer’s helper but there may be room to renegotiate this reading within a gender equity discourse when women take up farming in their own right.

These researchers claim that the data to date show that the nature of rural masculinity and femininity may be fluid and constantly adjusting to the new demands of the 21st century but the relationship represented between the two remains unchanged. The feminine is subordinated to the masculine in rural discourses.

Ni Laoire’s (2002) paper, Young farmers, masculinities and change in rural Ireland, examines the response of young farmers to the threat to core farming identities by the transformation of “inheritance, the stem family system, mutual aid and the status of the farmer in the household and in local society”(p. 16). She found that:

This does not imply that masculinism itself is under threat, rather that the ways in which it is constructed and reproduced are. Masculinism is extremely resistant, of course, and one response to the threat is to replace traditional agrarian and nationalist ideologies of family farming with business-like discourses, characterised by values of rationality, professionalism and profit (p. 26)

This type of masculinity maintains the hegemonic rural masculinity characterised by the tough, self reliant hard working man. Another response that was observed in this research built on “the interconnection of alternative farming narratives with romantic agrarianism, giving rise to discourses that associate masculinity more with fathering, ecological values and a degree of emotional openness” (Ni Laoire, 2002, p. 26).
She noted the persistence of conventional farming masculinities in a modern form but acknowledged the possibility of a challenge to them from this new, if subordinated, form of rural masculinity.

4.4 **What are the pressures on rural boys?**

According to the findings of these rural social researchers rural boys are negotiating their masculinity in the context of rapidly changing roles. A consciousness of this pressure may have motivated the school and community leaders of Paterson to initiate the strategies to support boys. Researchers focusing on rural youth have identified further areas of concern for rural boys.

4.4.1 **Rural Youth in place**

Rural youth research elaborates the diversity of young people and exposes the tendency for the media and occasionally research to homogenise and at times pathologise young people.

Research which focused on the relationship of young people to ‘place’ finds that young people are often positioned as “intruders” in public places (Curtin & Linehan, 2002; Kraak & Kenway, 2002; Malone, 1999). Shortall (2004, p. 42) questions a romantic naïve view of rural communities, where, “civic harmony and inclusion triumphs”. She notes that social exclusion in rural areas is neither uncommon nor well understood. Shucksmith (2004) found that young people’s ability to exert agency and build capacity to act is impacted by impersonal systems and institutions and social class. In his examination of young people in social space he notes the visibility of young people in a rural community citing Leyshon’s finding that “For rural youth, marginality is in part founded upon adult surveillance and regulation of activities and spaces within the countryside” (2003, cited in Shucksmith, 2004, p. 46). In his interviews with young people in rural areas from Britain, France, Ireland, Germany, Austria and Finland he found that:

> Young men thus appear often to have more freedom to shape their own biographies than young women, despite women’s better educational qualifications. This is not always the case, though. Young men were sometimes expected to follow traditional male pathways into farming or vineyard labour (Shucksmith, 2004, p. 50).

Shucksmith (2004) notes the dilemma of rural service providers as the aim of retaining local youth in the rural area to serve the needs of local development conflict
with those of youth and education workers. He describes the process of pursuing higher education as one of being “educated out” of the rural areas (p. 52). In *Learning to leave: The irony of schooling in a coastal community* Corbett elaborates Shucksmith’s position finding that schooling was only valued by the young people who wished to leave, in the small fishing community that is the focus of his study (Corbett, 2007). Some researchers have cautioned against stereotyping the youngsters who “stay behind” as “indolent ‘rednecks’ holding onto a ‘pre-cultural’ and animalistic ‘wild’ masculinity” (Bye, 2009, p. 279). They remind us to remember that:

> Late-modernist or post modernist youths may choose to build their own universe in the old hometown or homestead (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006, p. 299)

Whether the rural setting is focused on a fishing culture (Corbett in Nova Scotia), a hunting culture (Bjarnason in Iceland) or an agricultural culture (Ni Laoire in Ireland, Campbell in New Zealand and Alston in Australia) the finding is that rural schooling is often a poor fit with the local culture. Shucksmith calls for a more “responsive, flexible” education systems to allow young people to continue and complete their education. He cites the position of Wyn and White (1997) that “the challenge is to develop policies which are based on the different realities of young people’s lives, rather than on a fictional mainstream” (cited in Shucksmith, 2004, p. 52).

### 4.4.2 Education in rural sites

Alston and Kent focus on access to tertiary education highlighting the financial barriers for rural families. They note that the resultant educational exclusion leads to social exclusion. They also pursue the gender differential in this area as “85 percent of the girls surveyed, compared to 71 percent of boys intend to leave town and significantly more girls (63%) than boys (39%) intend to seek a university education” (Alston & Kent, 2003, p. 12).

They also note that, “It was clear to the researchers that girls’ educational aspirations are driven not only by a valuing of higher education but also by a lack of other opportunities in the town” (p. 12). The trades and rural work are still considered the domain of men and boys. Corbett’s work in Nova Scotia, Canada supports the finding that employment opportunities in rural towns impacted on school engagement. His study, *Learning to Leave: the irony of schooling in a coastal community*, demonstrates that students who do not wish to leave their coastal fishing village see
no value in formal education, whereas those who wish to leave are motivated to engage with the schooling process (Corbett, 2007).

Gidarakou’s (1999) research in Greece also found that rural girls had a strong inclination to emigrate to urban or semi urban areas and their attitude to farm employment was “extremely negative” (Gidarakou, 1999, p. 147). She implicates the patriarchal structure of the family farm noting that mothers did not “regard their own work roles as a satisfactory prospect for their daughters” (1999, p. 148).

Curtin and Linehan note studies that have demonstrated the capacity of teenage boys to “claim space and make it in their own image” (2002, p. 64). They cite Lieberg, 1995; Pearce 1996; Cressida, 1997; and Tucker and Mathews 2001 as exploring the ways that boys have been able to inscribe public space with “masculine intentions”. Kraak and Kenway describe this as using the space “as a theatre for certain of their masculine performances” (2002, p. 145). Krenichyn (1999) supports this description claiming that:

> From the classroom to the home, teenage boys negotiate their self-concepts and gender identities, changing their performance of masculinity depending on the places and spaces that they inhabit from one moment to the next (1999, cited in Curtin & Linehan, 2002, p. 65).

Panelli, Nairn and McCormack (2002) build on this position with the proposal that young people actively construct their own community through their different strategic actions and the meanings they give to sites and social interactions. This position needs to be informed by an understanding that:

> Childhood cannot be understood outside the context of other variables, such as class, gender, ethnicity and culture, which in turn shape the diversity of children’s and young people’s spatial experiences and cultural knowledge (Mathews and Limb, 1999, cited in Panelli, 2002, p. 110).

Kraak and Kenway (2002) illustrate the process of the demonisation of young people as a result of a demographic shift in their study *Place, time and stigmatised youthful identities: bad boys in paradise*. As the population of “Paradise” became dominated by retirees and tourists, the beach parties and rowdy gatherings of young people became less welcome in both the landscape and the soundscape. The young people of Paterson were also involved in risk taking behaviour in their use of cars and their consumption of alcohol.
4.4.3 Rural Youth and Cars

The Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition policy paper on rural and remote youth issues states that:

Long distances between communities and between regional centres makes availability of transport a critical issue in rural and remote communities. For many young people in these communities, access to services in regional centres and to opportunities for employment, education and training are severely limited by the lack of public transport. Where it does exist, timetables often cater to the needs of tourists and provide an unreliable and inconvenient schedule for people trying to participate in education or training programs or social activities outside their communities (Croce, 1993).

Rural young people often learn to drive at an early age (G. W. Jones, 1992) and their leisure activities frequently revolve around modes of transport. Campbell and Phillips refer to the popularity of “circle work” at Bachelor and Spinsters Balls where young men test their skill as they drive at speed in their utilities leaving tracks in the paddocks and on the roads (1995, cited in Kraak & Kenway, 2002, p. 148). Kraak and Kenway also describe dirt road races, “wheelies”, “laps” and games of “chicken” on the beach. These high spirited driving exploits are identified by the researchers as important aspects of the performance of masculine identities. Jones on the other hand, examines the phenomenon of “blockies” (a version of “laps” or “lappies”) and finds:

My research indicates that ‘blockies’ is unlike subcultural phenomena involving youth and motor vehicles. The culture of the road is not masculine. Female and male behaviours are not clearly differentiated, as in other subcultures, indeed, young women participate equally with young men…They are as active, skilful and dominant as the young men. Approximately 40% of drivers are female. The young women drive with as much skill and daring as the males. They participate in the verbal interchanges between cars with as much verve and raucousness as the males. They pick-up young men as often as they themselves are picked-up. They are active participants not merely peripheral spectators (G. W. Jones, 1992, p. 69).

Jones may have identified a shift in the gender behaviours of rural youth. We will examine this more closely in Chapter 6 in the context of Paterson High.

4.4.4 Rural Youth and alcohol

Jones notes that doing “blockies” is cheap entertainment and due to the age of the participants, their high visibility and the scrutiny of the police it is not characterised by alcohol or drug consumption. She does note however that “for those over the age
of 18 who are legally allowed to enter pubs or discos, the appeal of blockies diminishes” (G. W. Jones, 1992 p.70).

Kraak and Kenway (2002) link the values and leisure pursuits of a locality with its history. The residents of its study town of Paradise explain that:

Paradise has been a traditional hard working, hard drinking, hard playing culture (Ni Laoire, 2004). It has been part of the history, it came with the people who settled in the town – starting with the whalers ... This used to be a rough sea shanty town (Kraak & Kenway, 2002, p. 152).

As Ni Laoire has pointed out alcohol consumption is often powerfully linked with some forms of rural masculinity (Ni Laoire, 2000, 2001, 2004). This can become particularly problematic according to Campbell and Phillips, when it is combined with “a rough male physicality” which is “not only acceptable but occupies a hegemonic position among adults and young males”(p11) in many rural locations (1995, cited in Kraak & Kenway, 2002, p. 152). Sjostedt (1992) cites research by Yellowlees and Kaushik in 1992 into psychiatric health problems in the Far Western Region of NSW finding that “alcohol was a serious problem about four times more common than elsewhere in Australia” (Sjostedt, p.140). Paterson and Pegg also cite Lawrence and Williams (1990) to claim that “people living in rural areas consumed 30 percent more alcohol than their urban counterparts” (1999a, p. 25). Kraak and Kenway (2002) use the links between the public enactment of masculine identities that include dangerous driving, intoxication and “unseemly” (p.153) or illegal behaviour and the development of an “anti-young people feel to the town” (p.154).

They observe the changed nature of the public gaze from a working class one that tolerated “men letting off a bit of steam” (153) to one composed of tourists and retirees whose values and expectations were very different positioning the local residents as “stuck in a time warp” (p.152). The gaze of the outsider, so clearly visible in the town of Paradise, is provided for young people in many rural towns by the school and the media (Kraak & Kenway, 2002).

### 4.4.5 Rural Suicide

From as early as 1994 researchers have been expressing concern about the issue of rural suicide. King (1994) found that “Australasia leads the world in the rates of suicide for youth to age 24” (King, 1994, p. 122). He highlighted the focus on rural youth in this data finding that despite a decline in the national suicide rate, “in rural areas and in small towns in some states, notably NSW, the increase in the suicide rate
for younger males and females (15-24) has been substantial” (p. 122). King also called attention to the gender differential in suicide attempts noting that “the rate of attempted suicide among 15 to 25-year-old females has remained steady at about four to five times the rate of males” (King, 1994, p. 122).

He observed that the female preference for reversible methods like medication overdose was responsible for this differential in suicide rates. He also noted that “while rural males had a higher rate of suicide than urban males, the reverse was true for females” (King, 1994, p. 122).

This data highlights the concern for rural boys, but should not obscure our concern for girls. King (1994) notes that the response to high rural suicide rates has focused on social structures with policy and planning decisions highlighted. He implicates the education system as a potential causal factor describing it in very damning terms:

As a result calls for structural changes are promoted, such as reducing unemployment, ameliorating poverty and improving what some see as the competitive, failure-producing, alienating, education system. Support for the family, improvement in family communication, education in parenting skills and providing a caring supportive and positive environment for children are also seen to address the major forces in suicide causation (King, 1994, p. 124).

Baum and Clinton (1997, cited in Patterson & Pegg, 1999b, p. 24) suggest that both structural and personal vulnerability contributed to the high rural youth suicide rate. They referred to declining populations, restricted job opportunities, media representations of suicide, greater availability of lethal means of self harm and problems in accessing and using mental health services in rural settings as the main contributing factors.

Ramirez-Ferrero’s 2005 study continues the discussion implicating global industrial pressures in the transformation of rural gender. He refers to the “modernization” of agriculture claiming that:

These economic realities had other social consequences. I discovered individuals struggling to make sense of their rapidly changing communities, struggling to make sense of their place in a world whose fundamental ground rules, they believed had changed. They bemoaned the loss of community and the lack of career options for their young people and their inevitable departure. Most insidious of all, they told me of the increasing competitiveness of their neighbour (Ramirez-Ferrero, 2005, p. 11).

He reads these changes in cultural rather than structural terms stating that:
Implicated, then, in suicide and the experience of severe financial distress are deeply gender linked cultural factors. They include among farm men: (1) the equation of masculinity and sense of self-worth with the ‘financial bottom line’, (2) the social support available—or unavailable—both within and outside of the family setting and the cultural proscription against most emotional expressions, (3) an honor system in which the ‘capacity to demonstrate autonomy through making and enacting choices’ (Errington 1990:639) — including economic ones — is central, and (4) an intense attachment to land, which is tied to notions of gender and kinship (Ramirez-Ferrero, 2005, p. 13).

In his attempt to theorise about the social situation he was observing Ramirez-Ferrero (2005), cited Sloan’s 1996 reading of Habermas which examined “the impact that modernity, and the capitalist industrialisation and bureaucratisation that has accompanied it, has had on the psyche” (Ramirez-Ferrero, 2005, p. 157). He conjectured that the colonisation, or invasion of the “lifeworld” by the “system” had left some men “cut off” from the traditional and symbolic communicative activities that had sustained them in the past. He noticed that the idea of “farmer” and “community” were being transformed through their association with technology and rational management science (p. 173). “Masculinity, like femininity, has become ornamental or superficial in American culture” (p. 175).

He cites Faludi (1999) to support his position that capitalist modernisation has cost farmers their peace of mind.

Truly men and women have arrived at their ornamental imprisonment by different routes. Women were relegated there as a sop for their exclusion from the realm of power-striving men. Men arrived there as a result of their power striving, which led to a society drained of context, saturated with competitive individualism that has been robbed of craft or utility and ruled by commercial values that revolve around who has the most, the biggest, the fastest (Faludi, 1999, p.599 cited in Ramirez-Ferrero, 2005, p. 175).

Ni Laoire (2001) theorises from a different framework but shares some of this position. She proposes that rural restructuring, in presenting a challenge to traditional hegemonic forms of masculinity in rural Ireland, threatens the sense of self of many rural men and contributes to an increased incidence of rural male suicide. Hegemonic is used here in the sense that Connell (1995) used it.

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations (Connell, 1995, p. 74).
Ni Laoire (2001) is drawing attention to a particular type of masculinity. An editorial in the medical journal *Current Therapeutics* in 2001 also implies one particular type of masculinity in the problem of Australian rural suicide. General practitioner Andrew Pattison observed that:

> The high suicide rate in young males is a particularly alarming issue. Between 1964 and 1991, the youth suicide rate in males aged 15–24 years tripled. In rural areas, the rate increased six-fold. Suicide is the most common cause of death in young males. At least 2300 suicides occur in Australia each year. With the number of unexplained motor vehicle accidents, the number of suicides may be a lot higher. It is said that for every suicide, at least ten people’s lives are irrevocably changed. (Pattison, 2001, p. 10).

He asserts that the “macho syndrome” is implicated in the gender discrepancy in health statistics claiming that: “For any real progress to occur in men’s health, our concepts of maleness itself need to be explored, discussed, challenged, preferably from an early age” (p. 9). Macdonald, McDermott and Di Campli (2001) protest that this response, which they describe as the “deficiency syndrome” is typical of the Australian health and legal systems. They claim this “cultural pathologising” of men has created negative social comparisons which compounded with the pressures of a changing world is tipping men over the edge into despair. They propose that the “lack of respect” for men from health and legal services contributes to this downward spiral and they charge service providers with the task of reforming this position and providing a “positive view” of men and boys.

We postulate that the corrosive effects of men’s perceptions of negative societal regard on self worth eats through the safety net holding a range of men – already vulnerable owing to relationship breakdown, loss of employment, cumulative grief, alcohol and other drug problems, depression, psychosis, ill-health or trauma – from suicidal action (Macdonald, McDermott, & Di Campli, 2001, p. 5).

The issue of the predominance of men in roles of power in both the legal and health fields which are charged with perpetrating this cultural pathologising is not addressed in this paper. They claim that the national Australian culture is characterised by a deficit perspective on masculinity and cite World Health Organisation statistics on suicide as evidence. They name Greece, Italy, Asia, South America and the Middle East as having lower rates of suicide, thus demonstrating that “suicide is a cultural issue”. Burville’s study of migrants from these countries (1998, cited in Macdonald et al., 2001, p. 4) demonstrates that they maintain rates of suicide similar to their country of birth rather than the rate of their newly adopted country. This data is
supported by MacDonald and Steel who also confirm that the suicide rate of non-
English speaking background youth in NSW, aged between 15 and 24 is lower than
the NSW state average  (1997, cited in Macdonald et al., 2001, p. 4). They also refer
to a 1999 forum on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse men which cited
the difficulty of “having to adapt to the lower social value of being man in Australia”
as one of their sources of stress. MacDonald et al. state their case for the need to
change the Australian gender culture by quoting Riaz Hassan’s book Suicide
explained the Australian experience:

Under conditions of accelerated modernization and women’s emancipation
which have prevailed in Australia…since the mid-1960s, one might argue
that the increasing pace of female emancipation has resulted in … status
loss (for men) … one can speculate that the high rates of unemployment
since the 1960s and the relative status-loss experienced by men produced a
social, psychological and economic climate which was conducive to an
increase in their suicide rate (Hassan, 1997, cited in Macdonald et al., 2001,
p. 7).

Ni Laoire’s (2001) description of the intensification of factors linked to suicide rates
in a changing rural society does not include a reference to “women’s emancipation”,
or modernisation. Nor does she propose the restoration of “respect” for a
homogenised Australian masculinity. She notes the structural changes in the rural
workplace that threaten some types of masculinity, citing Willott and Griffin’s
(1996) finding that:

Long-term unemployment undermines particular forms of masculinity but
does not necessarily lead to a challenge to patriarchal power. Instead, men
use discursive strategies to take on alternative masculine identities (Ni

Ni Laoire (2001) observes that the sites used by urban working class men for
reasserting their masculinity may not be available to rural men. Willon and Griffin
(1996) described the role of the pub and the urban street as places where men
gathered to develop discursive strategies to cope with the impact of unemployment
and enact new masculinities. Rural pubs clearly provide very important meeting
places but their numbers have reduced in the last decade as rural populations
dwindle. It is also difficult for men with no cash flow to participate in the social
‘shouting’ system which characterises masculine pub socialising. There is also
pressure to reduce alcohol consumption as it is implicated in antisocial effects in the
rural setting (cited in Ni Laoire, 2001). The urban street nominated by Willon and
Griffin as a valued meeting place for urban men is obviously not available to isolated
agricultural workers. The Australian football field may provide a parallel function for rural men but this has not been investigated.

Ni Laoire (2001, p. 230) explores a range of literature on rural suicide to identify the factors which translate into “a sense of hopelessness, entrapment, isolation and a belief in external control that can increase suicide risk”. She identifies “certain groups of rural men, such as the marginal farmers and the isolated”, as particularly vulnerable to the changes in hegemonic masculinity triggered by global shifts in the agricultural industry. She notes that for many young men and women the family farm may be a constraint tying them to the local area, denying them access to further education and binding them with the responsibility of maintaining the family heritage. She notes that the lack of social support structures and absence of psychiatric services as well as the reluctance of men to use them all compounding the problem of rural male suicide. She sums up declaring that:

for many men, the struggle to maintain identity (and control) in a changing rural society involves dealing with isolation, spatial confinement, lack of support networks, declining self-esteem and a challenge to ones very identity. This connects to the notion of competing masculinities. On the one hand, the masculine ‘pub-football’ culture is a dominant one in rural Ireland. At the same time the way of life that underlies this – traditional farming, traditional gender relations and divisions – is under threat. Those who choose this way of life have to deal with competing definitions of masculinity which challenge ‘staying behind,’ and also have to deal with realities of staying behind’, such as issues of isolation, financial insecurity and declining self-esteem (Ni Laoire, 2001, p. 233).

Apart from a few generalisations such as Ramirez-Ferrero’s (2005) that, “a man would rather die than admit he’s failed” (2005, p. 12), most of researchers refer to “some men” or “certain men”, or even “many men” suffering negative effects as a result of their gender identities. Rowe’s (2000) report on men’s health which highlighted a number of health risk factors for men also observed:

What use is there in highlighting gender differences when there is greater discrepancy within gender than across gender. Currently there is a view that sex role-gender analysis discourses (that is, masculinity discourses) stresses the importance of the range of male roles, males experiences and variety of choices open to some men – particularly those with social and economic power. Therefore viewing men as of a single group embracing a universal masculinity is clearly wrong. Instead it seems logical that there are many different types of masculinities. Some researchers suggest that developmentally boys – men experience and experiment with a range of masculinities and sex roles. From this pool an individual adopts a masculinity that suits their peer group, environment, work role and family life.
Therefore there is a need to separate what is an individual's experience (that is, the amount of physical activity) and what someone thinks all men experience (that is, poor health care). (Rowe, 2000, p. 5).

Rowe (2000) points out that differences within gender in the area of health are in fact greater than the differences between gender, rendering the “discourse of difference” highlighted by Pini (2003) in the context of rural gender research, fruitless and unhelpful. He goes on to outline a gender theory position that he considers defensible in the area of men’s health. The rural suicide research has revealed a level of diversity in gender identity theory that has led to confusion and conflict in masculinity research. This field will be further explored in the following chapter.

### 4.4.6 Rural sexuality

The patriarchal power relations identified within the family farm discourse have been charged with promoting the nuclear family and heterosexual identities as the dominant model of social and community organisation in rural areas. Little (2003), Kirkey and Forsyth (2001), Roberts (1991), Pace (2004), Bell and Valentine (1995) explore the rural sexual identities associated with the rural gender identities that have been explored.

While many researchers accepted a straightforward heterosexist reading of rural sexuality Bell and Valentine (1995) found the relationship between sexuality and rurality to be: “ambivalent, contextual and malleable” (1995, p. 120). Their study found that the lives and lifestyles of lesbians and gay men in rural locations embody a range of responses to the rural from Edenic and Utopian to dysfunctional and oppressive. For some it offers a place of escape while others see it as a place of isolation and loathing. Kirkey and Forsyth (2001) found a similar diversity in their study of the “geography of personal comfort” of gay men in the Connecticut River Valley area of Massachusetts.

The relationship between rural gender and rural sexuality may not be as straightforward as it at first appears. Bell and Valentine (1995) point out that:

> Autobiographical accounts such as Crew’s and work such as Kramer’s, show that many people who feel attracted to others of the same sex, and many who act on these feelings, often actively deny the label ‘homosexual’, let alone ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’. In fact due to the intense heteronormative pressure of rural life, many are married, or have long-term partners of the opposite sex (1995, p. 116).
Roberts (1991) blames the higher prevalence and intensity of “homophobia” and “heterosexism” in rural communities for the absence of rural non-heterosexual communities and highlights the difficulty of targeting HIV awareness programs to this at risk group. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission responded to this perception by commissioning Miller and Mahamati (2000) to devise a Challenging Homophobia training program for rural service providers. The title, Not round here and the cartoon on the front of the document confirm their belief in the entrenched nature of rural homophobia. The cartoon shows a researcher saying to a man with a beer “We just need to know if you think gay and lesbian people face hardship in rural areas like this?” The beefy bloke replies “Not “round here luv … They wouldn’t last two minutes!”.

The research of rural high school principal Nicholas Pace, illustrates the level of anxiety in schools generated by the fear of homophobic responses or homosexual disclosures. Page acknowledges that he felt inadequately prepared to deal with this issue. He observes that:

Most inquiries into hegemonic curriculum and diversity have overlooked sexuality and its connection to educational institutions. Furthermore, research into lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (l/g/b/t) educational issues in a rural context is nonexistent (Pace, 2004, p. 14).

He noted that a 1999 Massachusetts survey found that 32.8 percent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual students attempted suicide the previous year compared to 7.6 percent of other students, a quarter reported being threatened and 20% reported skipping school the previous month due to feeling unsafe (p. 14). He also cited the findings of Elia (1993), Human Rights Watch (2001), Telljohann and Price (1993), Walling (1993) and Harris and Bliss (1997), that schools constituted a “toxic atmosphere” for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual students. Sears (cited in Pace, 2004, p. 15) exposed the inadequacy of the supporting structures in place with the evidence of eight out of ten teachers reporting negative feelings towards lesbians and gay men and only a third of guidance counsellors considering homosexuality a legitimate topic of discussion with students. Despite the grim statistics and Pace’s (2004) acknowledgement of the sense of inadequacy, a student in his small rural school enjoyed a trouble free “coming out” at his junior school prom and went on to gain a scholarship which had been instituted to honour the memory of a victim of an anti-gay hate murder. Pace (2004) was so surprised by the easy acceptance offered by the staff and students of his school that he was moved to research the event.
Little’s (Little, 2003) examination of two programs finding wives for bachelor farmers highlights the highly conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity that prevail in the rural context. Little notes the expectation that any shortcomings in the bachelors, who all failed to come up to the standard of the normalised rural masculine image, should be remedied by the efforts of an understanding woman. She cites Hubbard (2000) claiming that heterosexuality can take different forms in different spaces finding that the naturalised rural heterosexuality is characterised by “highly conventional ideas about the links between sexual attraction, dependency, stability and the continuation of the family farm” (p. 415). Little regards this position as a narrow, demanding identity regime which places an unfair expectation on women, but she does not elaborate on the cost to the young men of failing to live up to the strictures of rural masculinity as they are described as: “unpractised”, “naïve”, “inexperienced”, “uncouth”, “loutish” and “backward”. The sexuality that is associated with rural patriarchal power relations may be as problematic for rural men as it is for rural women.

### 4.5 Conclusion

The first chapter of this thesis provided background on the site of Paterson which is the focus of this ethnographic study. The second chapter outlined the theoretical framework based on the ideas of Bourdieu, which will be used for the analysis of the ethnographic data and Chapter 3 outlined the methodology used for this process. In this chapter a rural context has been provided through an appraisal of research literature. The literature illustrates tension between the changing roles of rural men and women and the maintenance of the traditional understanding of rural masculinity and rural femininity. This tension is exacerbated in the context of rural youth culture where young men appear to be “at risk”. The anxiety about the future of rural boys which lead to the development of the boys’ programs in Paterson is echoed in the social research literature.

The following chapter continues to develop a context for the Paterson ethnography, focusing on the area of gender programs in schools.
Chapter 5. The troubled field of boys, girls and schooling

The gender education policy and practice context for the Paterson boys’ initiatives is introduced in Chapter 5. The literature concerning gender education in the Australian context is outlined tracing the shifts in gender theory and policy. The literature traces the development of a series of gender theories and education strategies beginning with the first explicit gender education programs emphasising girls’ education strategies. These strategies, of the 1970s and 80s, beginning with the *Girls, School and Society* report (Australian Committee on Social Change and the Education of Women, 1975), were informed by radical feminist theory. By the turn of the century the ideas of liberal feminist theory began to swing the emphasis away from girls to focus on gender equity. This position is characterised by the *Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001* (NSW Department of School Education, 1996). Despite the support of resource kits and a team of consultants in a specialist Gender Equity Unit in the Department of Education and Training in NSW, these programs gained little traction in the schools. An anti-feminist backlash and a developing men’s movement found expression in the *Boys: getting it right: report on the enquiry into the education of boys* (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). This report signalled a movement away from gender equity policies, as they were replaced with “Boys’ education” and “Girls’ education” strategies.

The chapter concludes with an examination of gender identity theory through the theoretical lens of the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and a model of the factors contributing to gender identities is proposed.

5.1 Australian gender education theories and policies

Australian school gender policies and practices over the years have been informed by the changing gender theories of the time. The time and energy devoted to this work demonstrates that in each era educators believe that through their efforts the gendered behaviours of their charges could be altered, or reinforced. Ideas about gender inform the nature of the *habitus*, the habitual ways of responding to the world around us, as gender provides an ever present field of practice for all subjects. From their various standpoints, educators over the years have laboured to regulate the habitus of their students.
When the teachers and community members of Paterson elected to develop a program for boys, they added a page to the history of gender policies and practices in Australian schools. They became part of what Kenway refers to as the “moral panic” about boys (Kenway et al., 2006, p. 13). Boys’ programs have characterised the most recent chapter in that history of gender in education in Australia. A history of gender education in Australia is provided to demonstrate how the Paterson program fits that history.

5.1.1 Gender in Australian Education: 1900-1980s

A 1900 document from the Education Department of Western Australia illustrates the thinking behind gender segregated education at the beginning of the 20th century:

If we look to the ‘relative values of subjects’ in afterlife, a woman will rarely be called on to work a sum in square root or analyse a sentence; but nearly every day of her life will require mending, and stockings have to be darned. The woman who can do these things will be a thriftier, tidier, and therefore more useful member of society that the one who cannot (cited in Alloway, 1995b, p. 24)

The “thrifty, tidy, useful woman” characterised an ideal model of acceptable femininity presumably in service to a masculinity busily involved in calculating square roots and analysing sentences. The church naturalised these gender roles as divinely ordained and schools accepted the responsibility for passing on the necessary skills. A less than ideal model of masculinity emerges from another Western Australian schools document produced nine years after this. It states that:

in the schools an attempt is being made to combat with the evils of drink and smoking ... a superficial knowledge of the matter is sufficient to prove that a very common cause which drives a man from his home to the hotel is a badly cooked dinner or a mismanaged washing day. Therefore it seems to be of more importance to provide instruction in practical cookery and laundry work for the girls who will develop into wives and mothers than to teach directly the evils of excessive drinking and smoking (1909 cited in Alloway, 1995b, p. 24).

The educational needs of girls and boys are linked here as their habituses are characterised as interdependent. The biologically determined role of the female is understood relationally as, at a very basic level, the feminine is understood in service to the masculine.

Teachers in post-World War II Australia still assumed that biology was the basis of gender difference and that their role was to teach children the socially prescribed
behaviours that matched this biology. This position was gradually modified by the
sex role socialisation theory which still focused on difference but acknowledged the
possibility of sex roles being modified by social encounters. Educators and their
society saw their role as reinforcing and reproducing the dominant norms of
gendered behaviour. The reciprocal roles of men and women and the preservation of
the traditional family were seen as essential to the maintenance of the broader
society. Messner (2004) points out that “in the same era, some early feminist scholars
took up the language of role theory to begin to illuminate the limits and pressures
that narrowly defined sex roles placed on women and men” (2004, p. 257).

Research in the 1960s generalised findings on boys in boys’ schools to “all pupils”.
Discussion of education made no reference to gender even though the data referred to
had been gathered only from boys. Second wave feminists in the 1970s drew
attention to this problem referring to the “invisible” girls also receiving an education.
These liberal feminists focused on sex role differences and stereotyped modelling in
schools. Attention was focused on the ways that knowledge was produced within
schools without reference to the impact of external forces.

In the late 1970s researchers began to investigate the gendered nature of school
knowledge, focusing on the curriculum (Bernstein, 1975). Researchers like
Humphreys (1975), Branson and Miller (1979), MacDonald (1980, 1981), Barret
curriculum” as the source of the naturalising of woman’s subordination and men’s
power. Yates (1993) cites these researchers as all demonstrating that the curriculum
positioned men and women through individual achievement and choice.

Ann Oakley (1972) investigated links between gender and school structure shifting
the focus from sex differences to socially constructed gender. The 1970s also saw the
rise of “men’s rights” research. This explicit research on boys took as self evident
what it was to be a boy and tended to position boys as homogenous, with a common
experience of schooling. It provided insights of schooling as experienced by white

Cultural reproduction theory also examined the roles of gender and class in shaping
Narrow subject choice and underachievement in career related subjects was a
concern of researchers by the 1980s. Girls underachieving in mathematics and
science was investigated by Sutherland in 1983 and Whyte in 1986 (Lucey, Francis, & Skelton, 2001, p. 178).

Marxist feminists sought to expose the class and gender inequities emerging from single sex schools. They proposed links between education policy, male domination and capitalism (David, 1980; Walker & Barton, 1983). Radical feminists examined the patriarchal language of school subjects and school structures (Mahony, 1983 & 1985 cited in Francis & Skelton, 2001).

These theorists demonstrated that social structures had the capacity to impact on the type of identities that were developed in a particular field. They alerted educators to the need to be aware of some of the unintended consequences of their practices but this awareness did not translate into liberatory education. Those theorists who posited the subordinated role of girls and women as a consequence of their “shaping” by the state, national policy and the economy, through education, intended to raise awareness of the needs of girls in society. But this discourse positioned girls and women as responsible for their economic inequality as they were held to have selected this position through free choice. The constructions of men and boys also remained unexamined by most theorists as was the structure of work and pay and the division of labour.

5.1.2 A new phase from Affirmative Action to Gender Equity

The 1975 report *Girls, School and Society* (Australian Committee on Social Change and the Education of Women, 1975) found that girls were not being given equal treatment in Australian schools. It focused attention on the books used in schools and the subject choices of girls, particularly noting girls’ avoidance of mathematics and science. It found that girls were encouraged into a narrow band of jobs and careers. Through the discourse of liberal education this policy supported access to equal opportunities in both treatment at school and schooling outcomes. It treated women and men as unitary categories with unique rationalities. It aimed to ‘add on’ to existing practices strategies that were sensitive to the needs of girls. Subsequently:

- Laws outlawing discriminatory access to subjects were passed; new materials were produced; funding was made available for school-based action research projects; consultants were employed (Yates & Leder, 1996, p. 6).
In NSW, non-sexist education guidelines were provided for schools in the policy *Towards Non-Sexist Education Policies and Guidelines for schools pre-School-Year 12* (NSW Department of School Education, 1980). It focused on the needs of both girls and boys and provided practical school-based activities addressing school structure and the hidden curriculum.

In 1987 *The National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987) was produced and endorsed by all State and Territory Ministers of Education. This policy no longer took a unitary view of women and girls. It states that “strategies to improve the quality of education for girls should be based on an understanding that girls are not a homogenous group” (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987, p. 2).

The policy called for the equitable allocation of resources, the provision of a supportive school environment, improved awareness of the educational needs of girls and equal access to and participation in “appropriate” curriculum. The NSW Department of Education produced the *Girls’ Education Strategy* in 1989 (NSW Department of School Education, 1989) which aimed to increase the participation of girls in science and technology classes, expand career choices and provide more supportive and challenging learning environments. Schools produced Action Plans in response to this Policy and the Project of National Significance scheme began funding further research into the area. Government funded publicity campaigns including: *Girls can do anything; Try a trade* and *Maths multiplies your choices* were supported by an appealing coloured newsletter called *The Gen* (1989-1996). It was produced by the Commonwealth Department of Equal Opportunity and provided to all schools. Lyn Yates noted in 1993 that:

> By the late 1980s then, issues such as sexual harassment, racism, and the physical environment of the school, are seen as matters which are part of the conditions of learning of girls. And what is to be learnt is not one ‘non-sexist’ picture of the world, or an ongoing ‘critical examination’ of sexism, but rather is a curriculum that should be differentiated according to the ‘needs’ of learners. In the terms of this policy, curriculum should be “appropriate” and “inclusive” (Yates, 1993, p. 1820).

She observes that the pluralistic position of the National Policy reflects two contrasting paradigms in feminist theory of the time. The first is that of psychologists who posited that a “women’s ways of knowing” challenged the masculinist Enlightenment “rationality”. She named Gilligan (1977, 1982); Gilligan, Lyos and
Hanmer (1990); Martin (1982, 1984); Harding and Sutoris (1987) as examples of this position. The second position focuses on the issue of differences among women, and particularly in the area of race and ethnicity as they impact on understandings of “sexism”. She cites: Amos and Parmar (1984); Barrett and McIntosh (1985); hooks (1984); Tsolidis (1984, 1986, 1990); Bottomley & de Lepervanche (1984); Hirsch and Fox Keller (1990) as exponents of this position (Yates, 1993, p. 1820). She demonstrated that the feminists’ deconstructive strategies are transformed in this policy by a “language of embracement and not of critique”. She refers to the work of McHoul (1984); Arnot (1986), Lingard, Henry and Taylor (1987); Kenway (1990) and Middleton (1990) which demonstrate that “the language of feminist politics is taken up but transformed and contained when it is made into policy”.

The 1992 report Listening to girls (Milligan, Thompson, & Associates) found that there were still many gender inequities in education. In particular their surveys found that:

Boys interrupt all the time; the girls hardly say anything; the boys muck around a lot; boys dominate most areas of the playground; boys dominate use of the computer. Girls (the survey found) had a much more negative perception of their capabilities than the boys; boys used the sports equipment the most. It became clear to the staff that not all children, and particularly the girls, were getting an equal opportunity to learn, and they concluded that ‘sex-based’ harassment in the school, caused the problem (Milligan et al., 1992, p. 5).

In response to findings like these the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls was produced in 1993 (Australian Education Council) and a range resource initiatives proposed.

Government bodies began to produce school support materials addressing the concern over “sex-based” harassment. The No Fear kit produced by DEET (Ollis, 1993) and the strategies and activities booklet Says Who? Sexual harassment: Students explore the issues (Department of Education Queensland, 1993) are typical. By 1995 the emphasis in the support material had shifted to focus on the idea of equity. The differences between sex role theory and gender construction theory were elaborated in teacher training programs like Stages: Steps towards addressing gender in educational settings (Allard, Cooper, Hilderbrand, & Wealands, 1995), Divided by a common language: Gender and the English curriculum, (Gilbert, 1994) and I spy: practical ideas for gender equity (Directorate of School Education (VIC), 1993). The gender equity era of education policies had begun. The focus had shifted away from
providing alternative role models for girls to encourage them to take up a trade or to improve their participation in maths and science. It had begun to examine the role that education played in the constructions of gender at a deeper level. Instead of focusing specifically on the needs of girls, gender equity policies considered the impact of education on both boys and girls as they made gender choices. Programs which “deconstructed” the gendered language used in the classroom and professional development strategies which emphasised the importance of providing gender neutral resources in the classroom replaced the affirmative action of the 1980s.

5.1.3 Backlash? “What about the boys?”

The 1992 report Listening to Girls, mentioned earlier, did not exclude a consideration of the educational needs of boys. Under the now familiar heading of What about the boys? it states:

What about the boys? This question was asked many times during the consultation. Sometimes the question was asked by people who do not believe that girls suffer any educational disadvantage. For these people special attention for girls, unlike the Aboriginal people and for non-English speakers, is unjustified. Initiatives for girls are seen as discrimination against boys. Others asked the same question but for different reasons, convinced that if mutual understanding and tolerance between the sexes is to be achieved the education of boys needs to change. In this view, boys need to be taught that harassing behaviour is unacceptable and need to explore the changing role of men and women in society, and to develop the skills of cooperation, communication, and tolerance. Without changes in boys’ education much of what needs to happen for girls cannot be fully realised. Moreover, boys will not have the skills and understanding required in their adult lives. These latter arguments suggest that strategies to improve the education of girls need to attend to some educational needs of boys as well (Milligan et al., 1992, p. 82).

Although it focuses on the issue of harassment, this 1992 report outlines the competing positions that have characterised the gender in education debate for the first decade of the 21st century. As educators began to grapple with the evident gender inequities in schools, men’s rights advocates were beginning to raise their concern that schooling restricts and oppresses the ‘essential’ maleness of boys. The simplified, binary divide activated in some quarters was modified by Mac an Ghaill’s proposal in the mid 1990s that a power imbalance existed between males and females and males and males (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). He complicated and challenged the essentialist view of boys and girls by claiming that different ways of being male emerge from different contexts of class, age, ethnicity and sexuality.
The 1994 enquiry into boys’ education in NSW, *Challenges and Opportunities: A discussion paper* (O'Doherty, 1994) stated that the national debate about boys' educational achievement needed to move on from notions of competing interest. It proposed that the issue of boys and gender needed to be examined in the context of the structures of society and the general processes of schooling. This report was commissioned by the NSW Fahey Liberal Government but was tabled under the Carr Labor Government. Boys’ advocates such as Peter West championed the report and vigorously lobbied the new government to act upon its findings. The report’s association with the previous government and philosophical differences between West and education officials tainted its credibility in the bureaucracy so its findings were not acted on. The 1996 policy emphasised gender equity rather than the unique needs of either boys or girls.

5.1.4 A redefinition of Gender in Education: 1996

Despite the shift from “Girls” policies to “Gender” policies in the later stages of the last century, the education support material produced in 1996 was characterised by a focus on boys and the reduction of oppressive and violent behaviours. The Commonwealth-funded gender newsletter to schools, *The Gen*, stopped publication in June 1996 so support materials were a vital source of gender information in schools. *Boys Talk, A program for young men about masculinity, non-violence and relationships*, (Friedman & Miller, 1996), *Getting it together: The Gender and violence project, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues*, (Tripcony, 1996) and *Girls and boys come out to play: teaching about gender construction and sexual harassment in English and studies of Society and Environment* (Dally & Tunney, 1996) typify the mid-1990s concern with the way that dominant masculinity impacted on femininity and marginal masculinity. Books like Mac an Ghaill’s *Understanding Masculinities: Social relations and cultural arenas* (1996) provided a theoretical base for these concerns.

A 1996 project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs also highlighted harassment as a gendered concern stating that:

> More work on the whole pattern of sex-based harassment is urgently needed. It seems to be part of a process of establishing dominance relations among males as well as of putting girls, as a group, ‘in their place’ in a gender system (Collins, Batten, Ainley, & Getty, 1996, p. x).
Collins et al. (1996) examined the conditions that students experienced at school in the toilets, playground, classroom and in relationships with other students, staff and systemic structures. They concluded that:

Young people are put under a range of pressures to see themselves and their place in the world in certain ways because of their biological sex. The twin process of external pressure together with the personal project of attempting to make oneself acceptable in gender terms is called ‘gender construction’ or the ‘construction of gender’. It is a process of learning and important aspects of it take place in schools (Collins et al., 1996, p. ix).

This report claims evidence that interventions in schools did bring about change in the gender experiences of the students. It cited improvements in individual schools as well as a generalised change produced by national programs targeting “some particular girls’ issues” (Collins et al., 1996, p. xiv).

In the same year, Yates and Leder produced a report which reviewed all of the national databases on gender equity. Yates highlights an increasing interest in boys’ education adding a very personal plea for care in interpreting data:

On the matter of gender and quantitative results, I would like to say that one thing researchers ultimately have no control over is the political uses to which data, and reports on those data, are ultimately put. To give a personal example: the ESSA report has been used as evidence fuelling the current debate on boys’ education taking place around the country. Yet, as the primary author of the first draft of the report, I hardly recognise how the data is presently interpreted in the media debate today. I didn't and still don’t interpret the national 1991 evidence as suggesting boys were doing worse than girls in Year 12. I felt then as I do now that the picture painted by the data in the different States was quite varied in most subjects with the exception of English. National results in English are uniform and unequivocal — boys do much worse than girls on average. But this pattern of results is long-standing and in fact was identified from the early 1970s. The gendered nature of English results (and other humanities subjects) has been recognised within South Australia since the mid-80s (Yates & Leder, 1996, p. 203).

This report is rich in data and provides a useful overview of the issues in gender education from 1975 to 1995. It acknowledges a concern by some educators that boys had become the “group needing specific attention” but continued to problematise any data which was referred to this cause.
5.1.5 ‘Girls and boys at School’: 1996-2001 policy

The NSW Girls and Boys At School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001 defined gender as “the social arrangements we make to deal with sex differences” (NSW Department of School Education, 1996, p. 1). It states that:

the purpose of schooling is to expand the ways in which young people can understand themselves and others and the society we share, and can develop a capacity to make informed decisions about their lives (NSW Department of School Education, 1996, p. 1).

It sums up its position that the education of young people should not be constrained by “[O]utmoded or damaging ways of dealing with sex differences” (NSW Department of School Education, 1996, p. 1).

It does not foreground the particular ways that masculinity is privileged by both structural and discursive school practices as feminist educators had hoped but presents both boys and girls as equally disadvantaged by “outmoded ways of thinking”. The memorandum to principals from the Director General of Education stated that:

The strategy embeds ideas for dealing with gender within the context of equity principles. It will assist schools to achieve improved outcomes for all groups of girls and boys in a culturally and socioeconomically diverse society (Director General of Education, 1996).

Ailwood & Lingard (2001) describe this type of language as “difficult to resist”. They characterise the policies which mobilise a broad discourse of gender equity as “serving as a compromise between the competing stakeholders”. They regard the 1987 National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools as the “high point of effective and pragmatic feminist politics in education in Australia” (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001, p. 10). Kenway also saw it as “A peak moment for federal gender reform policies” (Kenway, 1997a, p. 2). The Gender Equity: a Framework for Australian schools (MCEETYA, 1996) is the federal policy which relates to the NSW Girls and Boys at school document. It responds to rising tensions between feminists and the lobby groups for boys. It is characterised by Ailwood and Lingard as “a hybrid, heteroglossic policy statement which knits together these competing discourses” (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001, p. 10). They see these policies as symptomatic of “feminist agendas on the defensive” claiming that:

Most significantly, recuperative masculinist politics have attempted to ‘regain, defend or maintain’ male dominance in the face of the minimal
gains made for some girls through feminist politics and policies (Lingard & Douglas, 1999). Feminist and pro-feminist groups are now focusing their efforts upon attempting to repel the most simplistic and repugnant claims of the recuperative masculinists, while also seeking to recognise the (educational) gains that they have made for some groups of girls (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001, p. 10).

They cite the work of Arnot, David, & Weiner (1999) and Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, & Rennie (1997) as examples of this defensive feminism. The gender equity policies are charged with “appropriating the opposition’s discourse” and constructing “both boys and girls as equal victims of the schooling system thereby concealing the power-knowledge relations that underpin the policy” (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001, p. 11). Policies are understood as “a discursive conglomerate of particular compromises and particular moments in power-knowledge relations”, consequently when attending to the content of a policy we need also to consider the “silences, exclusions and marginalisations” (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001, p. 12).

Ailwood and Lingard refer to the feminist bureaucrats responsible for the State gender equity policies as “femocrats”, an Australian neologism coined by Eisenstein (1996). In 1993, Anna Yeatman spoke on behalf of these feminists employed by the government, as she elaborated the tensions between their emancipatory agenda and the new corporate practices of the Labor party.

At the moment our historical options are very wide. As I see them, they concern whether we are to be part of maintaining the legitimacy of the politics of the state or of contributing to the de-legitimating of the politics of the state. If the former, then we have to enter into an uncomfortable and critical relationship of support to the Labor corporatist politics of economic and welfare state restructuring. If the latter, then regardless of our intentions or ultimate allegiances, we will be giving support to those who want to displace public in favour of private principles of distribution (Yeatman, cited in B. Davies, 1996, p. 10).

Bronwyn Davies’ study, Power knowledge desire changing school organisation and management practices (1996), elaborates the practical consequences of this political and theoretical tension in the school context. She illustrates the “informal and intangible barriers to structural change” as she highlights the resistance to bottom up change in a climate of “new managerialism”. She cites Dennis’s critique of the Total Quality Management (TQM) agenda in the Northern American context to warn that:

Through an emphasis on measurable outcomes, on goals defined by management at the highest levels, and on the systems through which such goals are achieved, the new managerialism is always dangerously at risk of cutting its populace adrift from moral and political debate (Dennis, 1995, cited in B. Davies, 1996, p. 6).
She notes that emancipatory practices are practices of dissent whereas corporate managerialism is based on top down control monitored through surveillance, with the individual constructed as consumer. In this climate she notes:

‘Successful consultation’, according to several principals I have talked to, is the art of getting parents and citizens to support mandated policies. It is essentially a process of ‘educating the community rather than opening the school up to the possibility of changes unthought of, or out of keeping with, departmental policies (B. Davies, 1996, p. 10).

Her study exposes the hazards faced by school gender reformers and the potency of the institutional resistance they face. Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1997), elaborate similar observations. They cite “vehement resistance” to and “wilful misinterpretation” of the ideals of gender reform. They note that aggressive behaviour of boys and harassment of girls continues to be excused, justified and naturalised. Women who speak out against sexism are derided as “anti-pleasure, humourless, extremist and man-haters” (p. 116). Single sex classes set up for the benefit of girls end up providing boys with a new forum for reinforcing old hegemonic behaviours. The report concludes that “gender reform was on the wane almost everywhere” (Kenway et al., 1997, p. 210).

In another 1997 study, Kenway also elaborated her observation of the political context at the Federal level, of gender in education reform. She identified the presence of the “economic rationalist” Education Minister John Dawkins as the foundation of “the uneasy relationships which continue to exist between economic rationalism, corporate managerialism and matters of gender justice” (Kenway, 1997a, p. 2). She traces the history of gender reform from the 1970s and 1980s with its emphasis on “sex-role socialisation, sex stereotyping, self-esteem and role modelling” to the 1980s and 1990s where girls were “encouraged into “non-traditional” areas in the curriculum and the workplace”, noting that this emphasis:

- tied in with the Federal Government’s attempts to ‘kick start’ the economy by stressing the importance of science, mathematics and technology for growth (Kenway, 1997a, p. 3).

She continues to explore the shift of emphasis in the 1990s to include a growing concern about “sexual harassment” an emphasis on the construction and reconstruction of gender within school cultures and across the curriculum with a new focus on boys. She attributes the new focus on boys’ education in this period to the
shift of power at the federal policy level to MCEETYA. She sees this structural impediment as a symptom of the gender condition where:

Mainstream gender reform will probably always have a stunted growth as it can only ever exist within the tolerance limits of the male consciousness of those in power (Kenway, 1997a, p. 7).

5.1.6 Support Material: Boys’ Education 1997

In 1997 Kenway edited a collection of articles entitled Will boys be boys? Boys’ education in the context of gender reform, which explored issues of boys’ schooling achievement, sport, vocational education and gender reform. This text illustrated ongoing concerns for girls’ schooling experiences and claimed that the “panic” over boys was misplaced. It signals a shift in the emphasis of gender education to a focus on boys. A number of gender education support documents with a focus on boys were produced in 1997.

The Boys and Literacy: Teaching units, produced by Nola Alloway and Pam Gilbert (1997) comprised teaching units suitable for schooling years ranging from preschool to post compulsory. These units focused on:

1. The construction of masculinity and femininity through language practices.
2. The relationship between language, gender and culture.
3. Gendered teaching and parenting practices as they impact upon literacy learning.
4. The value of critical approaches to literacy for boys (as well as girls), and the use of popular community texts in the classroom.

Educators such as Wayne Martino and Chris Cook supported the new emphasis on boys’ literacy with publications like Gender and texts: a professional development package for English teachers (Martino & Cook, 1998) emphasising curriculum focused classroom strategies. Implementation of ideas presented in this support material required an understanding (and acceptance) of critical literacy theory. Mainstream educators required support to engage with this challenge.

The NSW Department of School Education produced Food for thought and action: a professional development resource to assist schools in implementing Girls and boys at school: Gender equity strategy 1996-2001 (NSW Department of School Education, 1997). Selected teachers from across the state were trained to implement this training
in their schools with the support of district consultants. The Commonwealth
Government funded the production of *Gender up front: strategies for a gender focus
across the key learning areas* which also offered practical classroom strategies
(Nayler, 1997). The NSW Secondary Principals’ Council produced a gender support
document which introduces a now familiar refrain. It was called *What About the
boys! Strategies in boys’ education* (Bonner, 1997). The introduction to this package
draws attention to the political context of gender education at that time, noting that
boys’ education:

has probably been neglected in recent years partly because of the strong and
vocal commitment of Stephen O'Doherty presently Shadow Minister for
Education and Training in NSW. It is not usual to find a government ready
to embrace a cause dear to the heart of the Opposition (Bonner, 1997).

Bonner (1997) goes on to note that working in boys’ education is “like stepping
lightly through an ideological minefield”. The teaching ideas contained in the
package were contributed by a range of schools across the state and reflect diverse
theoretical positions.

By 1998, pro-feminist masculinity theorists such as Mac an Ghaill and Connolly had
begun to highlight imbalances in power between males and females and males and
males. Various feminist perspectives shared the view that schools were masculinising
agencies that privilege maleness over femaleness. These theories are well articulated,
but Lingard and Douglas (1999) observed that they offered classroom teachers few
practical classroom strategies.

At the same time, psychologist Steve Biddulph (1994, 1997) was popularising a
biologistic position which proposed that boys are victims of testosterone, mature
later than girls and should start school later. Men’s rights advocates present schools
as demonising agencies, staffed predominantly by women who employ feminised
teaching styles and classroom management practices (Martin Mills & Roulston,
2000). According to Lingard and Douglas (1999), this group offers many remedial
strategies which are accessible and appeal to a notion of “common sense”.

As researchers like Arnot, David and Wriner (1996) began to celebrate a “closing of
the gap” between girls’ and boys’ educational achievement, the media presented the
improvement as having been at the expense of boys (Yates 1997 cited in Francis,
1999). In Britain, Epstein and others examined these claims in studies like *Failing
Boys?* (1998). They identified three separate discourses used in the popular and
academic press to express boys’ educational failure: “poor boys”, “failing schools”, and “boys will be boys”.

According to Epstein the “poor boys” discourse presents boys as disempowered victims. This discourse blames females (girls, mothers, female teachers and all feminists) for boys’ purported educational failure. The schools and related external forces were also targeted as responsible for the problems of boys in the “failing schools” discourse which blamed ineffective schooling for boys’ problems, whereas girls’ problems were perceived as issuing from internal inequalities. The biologistic and naturalistic claim that “boys will be boys” supported the development of programs to adjust schooling to be more appealing to boys’ perceived “essential” needs. Francis cites the research of Spender (1982); Stanworth (1981) and Francis, (1998) as evidence that:

A large body of feminist research suggests that school curriculum has always reflected and favoured the interests of boys at the expense of girls, and that a far greater proportion of teacher time and attention is spent on boys than on girls (Francis, 1999, p. 355).

In the late 1990s consultants were trained to present the Gender Equity resource kit in schools. Judy was the consultant for the district of Paterson. She remembers resistance from some schools and disinterest from others. Judy noted the growing popularity of the men’s movement attributing this to anxiety about the challenging behaviour of boys in the classroom. Judy observed that:

The gender equity kit didn’t give effective strategies that could be used in the classroom. The boys’ advocates’ materials are taken up more because it’s boys who are a problem in the classroom. In any primary school you find the ones who are at risk are the boys. They are the majority with behaviour issues and causing problems. Teachers are looking for strategies to manage behaviour rather than strategies to achieve a more equitable classroom. Gender equity strategies looked for an equitable classroom and ways to progress girls whereas teachers need behaviour management tools. A focus on those at risk is a focus most often on boys. They are a small percentage but they can disrupt a whole class for a whole year, but when you focus on modifying their behaviour the ordinary child is often left to their own devices. In essence girls miss out (Judy, 60s,144).

Even after losing the funding for PBP, teachers in Paterson did not include the idea of “equity” in their discussions about boys’ education. The concern was for the needs of boys; girls would be permitted to join in with their activities if this would help to secure funding.
5.1.7 Reports into Boys’ education

In July 2000, Collins, Kenway and McLeod published an Australian national study called the *Factors influencing the educational performance of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school*. It was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and confirmed that in general girls were outperforming boys but it warned against a simplistic reading of this tendency, noting that rurality and socioeconomic status had a greater impact and that school achievement was not translating to a post school advantage.

In its examination of the “interaction between gender and other variables” which examines the relationship between gender and socioeconomic status (SES), this report emphasises the phrase “which boys, which girls?” (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000, p. 60). In its elaboration of the complex interaction of gender and other factors. The report found that the SES makes a larger difference than gender to Year 12 performance, even in the subject of English where girls generally do better than boys, and that the impact of a low SES was greater on boys (Collins et al., 2000). It noted that poverty was a major indicator of low participation for both boys and girls and for Indigenous students the combination of isolation and SES meant that the probability of poor schooling participation and performance was extremely high. (Collins et al., 2000, p. 5). SES was also observed to impact on subject choice. The report notes:

The lower middle (skilled) and highest SES (professional/managerial) groups have the greatest differences between male and female patterns and male students in these groups show the most traditional patterns for their SES backgrounds. Well over a third of the highest SES males take the traditional maths or physical sciences subject group. Lower SES males tend to divide up (probably on the basis of academic success) between this subject group and one of the subject groups in the Vocational Education and Technology ‘field of study’. Upper middle SES students show the least gendered pattern because the males of this group show the greatest spread across fields of study. Within fields of study, however, these males, like their counterparts from other SES groups, tend to choose a tight group of subjects rather than the broader options which females tend to take (Collins et al., 2000, p. 4).

As the Paterson study reported in this thesis focuses specifically on the issue of rurality, the Collins et al. report reference to the rural, are of particular interest. The report found that:
Rural, remote and urban localities have high concentrations of poverty and disadvantage for both sexes, (with regard to school participation and subject performance), with rural males more negatively affected than rural females. However seven years after leaving school, boys who graduate from rural schools are much more likely to be employed full-time than their female counterparts (Collins et al., 2000, p. 4).

This finding affirms the Paterson High School’s concern for boys but highlights a post school consideration that needs to be investigated further.

Collins, et al. (2000) highlight the importance of looking beyond the “moral panic” about boys as a unitary group to consider the many other variables which impact on schooling. In the area of post schooling expectations, the report notes that:

Beyond Year 12, particularly for those not going on to complete a higher qualification, gender takes over as the major sociodemographic factor affecting young people's labour market outcomes. A higher proportion of females do not enter the full-time labour market in spite of their higher school retention rates and better than average performance in most subjects in Year 12 (Collins et al., 2000, p. 5).

Another report into boys’ education was produced in 2002 by Lingard, Martino, Mills and Bahr. The Research report addressing the educational needs of boys was produced for the Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training. Like the previous report, it emphasised the importance of “the need to go beyond viewing boys as a homogenous group”. It affirmed the findings of the previous report stating that:

The research has demonstrated that we need to recognise diversity among the category of boys when considering boys and schooling. Furthermore, we also need to ensure that such a focus does not lead to neglect of girls. Schools which adopted programs and policies which had a ‘which boys/which girls?’ approach appeared to be most successful for more students. These approaches recognise that there are several background factors beyond gender affecting students outcomes, factors such as SES, Indigeneity and geographic status (Lingard, Martino, Mills, & Bahr, 2002, p. 11).

Lingard et al. (2002) also emphasised the importance of the teacher knowledge, quality pedagogy, peer influences and the disruptive influence of harassment and bullying. It added a particular elaboration of the problem of homophobia, demonstrating its place in heterosexual policing of hegemonic masculinity.

Homophobia also emerged as a problem across many of the case study schools. Homophobic put downs were often used to insult those boys who identified as not conforming to dominant and stereotyped ways of being male, including in some schools those boys with pro academic attitudes. Use
of homophobic put downs, such as ‘poofter’ and ‘faggot’, did not appear to be necessarily linked to issues of sexuality, but was rather about not conforming to a mainstream way of being a boy. This highlights that homophobia is often about the ‘policing’ of what is perceived to be acceptable or suitable male behaviour. Thus it can be argued homophobia affects all boys and not just those who might identify as non-heterosexual. None of the schools in the research appeared to be very effective in addressing homophobia (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 5).

Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert and Muspratt also produced a boys’ education report in 2002. Boys, literacy and schooling: expanding the repertoires of practice closely examined the area of boys’ literacy with a definition of literacy that included facility with technology and multimodal texts. Alloway et al. once more reinforced the “which boys, which girls?” theme as they encouraged teachers to apply this learning to their classroom literacy practices. They note that:

Boys are not all the same and cannot be treated as an homogenous group. They bring different social and cultural backgrounds to the literacy classroom and these need to be given serious consideration. However many boys share some common experiences of ‘being a boy’ in Australian society, and are likely to be influenced by dominant discourses of masculinity. The ways in which these discourses affect the life and learning of a particular boy in a particular classroom and community are always matters for empirical enquiry, calling for ongoing observation and analysis by teachers and researchers (Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2002, p. 7).

Creswell, Rowe and Withers (2003) elaborated the boys’ problems that had been identified in the previous reports. They found that the gap between boys and girls was widening and that compared with girls, boys at school:

- are more ‘disengaged’ and likely to be ‘at risk’ especially in literacy;
- exhibit more behaviour problems, including at home;
- constitute 75 percent to 85 percent of Year 1 or 2 children identified ‘at risk’ in literacy and selected to participate in a reading recovery program;
- report less enjoyment, curriculum usefulness and teacher responsiveness;
- are more likely to drop out prematurely;
- are subject to more disciplinary actions; and
- are referred to paediatricians for behavioural problems (the ratio is nine boys to one girl); have a higher prevalence of auditory processing problems (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 1).

The report does little to respond to Alloway et al.’s (2002) challenge to recognise the importance of differences between boys. According to the earlier findings of Collins et al. (2000) and Lingard et al. (2002), the boys most at risk are likely to be from low
SES, Indigenous or geographically isolated areas. The importance of the intersection of class, culture and gender highlighted by Collins et al. (2000) and Lingard et al. (2002) were not highlighted here. Instead the conclusions of the report construct all boys as homogenous victims. It is one of many voices trumpeting a focus on the “crisis in boys’ education”.

The Parliamentary enquiry into boys’ education (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002) is one of the most authoritative of these voices. It also discusses the issue of boys’ education as if boys exist as an essential homogenous entity. It provides a challenging context for the development of further policies and government reports.

The Motivation and engagement of boys: Evidence based teaching practices report (Munns et al., 2006) deals with this challenge by examining boys’ education through a motivational framework designed by Munns and Martin (2006, p. 12). It allows for the consideration of differences without confronting the binary oppositional view of gender which has characterised the boys’ education debate to date. It sidesteps the question of gender without addressing it.

5.1.8 Marginalised voices

Some education researchers have confronted the narrow interpretation of masculinity. Palotta Chiarolli and Martino provide a voice for Australian young people at the margins. Martino’s research has explored the homophobic nature of Australian masculinity, particularly as it impacts on the acquisition of literacy, and Palotta Chiarolli examined the intersection between gender and ethnicity.

In an effort to include all those who may be rendered ‘other’ by the Australian school culture, their jointly authored works Boys’ stuff: Boys talking about what matters (2001) and So what’s a boy?: Addressing issues of masculinity and schooling (2003) examine the intersection between gender, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and disability.

5.1.9 Boys’ Education Strategies

In 1999 Lingard and Douglas examined the pro-feminist boys’ education strategies that had been implemented in schools. They found that they were problematic as they appeared to locate boys as the problem and made them the subject of change. They made boys feel guilty about being boys and they endorsed images of masculinity
which many boys did not find appealing. They also relied on strategies like discussion-based activities, journal writing, brainstorming and role play, exercises which boys frequently identified as feminised classroom activities. Most of the classroom strategies developed in the 1980s and 1990s were also targeted at secondary education which many educators argued was too late to have an effect (Alloway, 1995a; Clark, 1989; Gellatly, Clark, & Gascoigne, 2008).

In contrast to these strategies the men’s rights movement offered many practical strategies from a limited and limiting conceptualisation of boys and masculinity. Popular authors like Steve Biddulph (1994) provided checklists for educators and a reassuringly clear position on the essential nature of boys’ needs.

Researchers Browne and Fletcher advocate programs such as the *Rock and Water Program, Dad in the Shed, School/Work Programs: Creating a work Ethic*” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000, p. 451). They emphasise leadership skills, self defence and a “positive work ethic” associated with the dominant type of “traditional” masculinity. Fletcher leads the Engaging Fathers Project in Newcastle; he explained to the Parliamentary Enquiry that segregated schooling offered an opportunity for teachers to adjust their teaching to acknowledge “the fact that boys as a group will have preferences for learning styles” (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000, p. 1050) West and Lillico, school principals and boys’ advocates, provided training and development workshops to schools outlining the “unique learning styles of boys” that they have observed in their practice and their research. The strategies they advocate include an emphasis on the need for structure, hands on physical experiences, frequent movement, short concrete tasks which do not emphasise verbal skill (Lillico, 2005; West, 1999, 2001) #613}. In support of his advocacy for outdoor education programs for boys, Lillico claimed that “Boys need to develop their hunter-gatherer instinct” (Lillico, 2005).

The Paterson Boys’ Project was initiated at a very sensitive time in the history of gender programs in NSW schools. Pro-feminist advocates were on the defensive. Fletchers boys’ programs were achieving a high profile in NSW school professional development circles. School gender equity support funding in NSW had been drastically reduced and consultancy and resource support was very difficult for an
isolated rural school to access. These challenges did not prevent the Paterson school from developing a vibrant boys’ arts project nor did they discourage community support for the project.

5.2 In search of armistice in the gender theory wars

Each of the policies and practices explored in the previous discussion is an expression of a particular theory of identity. Some see the identity, particularly the gender identity, as a preordained singularity (Richard Fletcher, 2006; Lillico, 2005), some as a cultural construct (Butler, 2005) and others as a fluid multiplicity of possibilities (Hall, 1996). Even within feminist theorists there are theorists who focus on biologically (or psychologically) determined differences between the identities of males and females (Chodorow, 1994), while others focus on the impact of social structures on the identity of those subjected to constraint (Willis, 2004). Still others identify cultural discourse as the principal agent in forming identities (H. Moore, 1994). Teachers have been buffeted by the various winds of change in gender policy and practice over the past decade. They are charged by their employers with implementing policies to bring about change with very little emphasis on the identity theory informing these shifting directives. The educators of Paterson are no exception. They felt that there was a need for change in the area of boys’ education and sought guidance and training in this field. The principal explained his dissatisfaction with the support that was available at the time:

I’m talking from personal opinion here. People like Richard Fletcher and those ones are actively involved in research and they’ve got a lot of books… My gut reaction is they do a lot of talks but they don’t really have the resources to really change the culture of schools (001).

A useful theoretical position had not been provided and teachers were left with a sense of responsibility for a problem with little equipment to deal with it. The principal observed that the professional development available to his staff was problematic because, “it often provides more questions than answers. It opens a Pandora’s box” (001).

Inadequacies with training and development are exacerbated by problems within the policies and directives themselves. Ailwood and Lingard (2001) have pointed out that at times policies have been compromised by their attempts to conciliate between competing stakeholders. These “stakeholders” often hold incompatible views on the mechanisms at work in the formation of a young person’s gendered identities.
Educators are left with inconsistent and at times conflicting messages about the way that gender identities are formed.

Bourdieu speaks about gender as an overarching field (Bourdieu, 2001). This description acknowledges the pervasive nature of this influence on the construction of identities. He emphasises the link between the social and the physical expression of gender:

The perceived body is socially doubly determined. On the one hand, in even its seemingly most natural aspects (its volume, height, weight, musculature, etc.) it is a social product that depends on its social conditions of production through various mediations, such as working conditions (especially as regards the associated formations and occupational diseases) and eating habits. Bodily hexis, which includes both the strictly physical shape of the body (‘physique’) and the way it is ‘carried’, deportment, bearing, is assumed to express the ‘deep being’, the true ‘nature’ of the ‘person’, in accordance with the postulate of the correspondence between the’ physical’ and ‘moral’... but this language of nature which is supposed to reveal both what is most hidden and what is most true, is in fact a language of social identity, thereby naturalised, in the form for example of ‘vulgarity ’and in what is called’ natural distinction’ (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 64).

Bourdieu cites here material, discursive and social influences on gender identity constructions as they are revealed through the body. His theorising combines the features of previous gender theory opening up the possibility of observing a range of influences on the process of gender identities construction. Lingard and colleagues' research, building on that of Collins et al. (2000) and Yates and Leder (1996), introduces a note of caution. He observes that:

There are several background factors beyond gender affecting students’ outcomes, factors such as SES, Indigeneity and geographic status (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 11).

Gender identities are not formed in isolation. Educators who wish to influence gender identity must take into account a range of considerations. The “Which boys? Which girls?” position reminds educators that:

The research has demonstrated that we need to recognise diversity among the category of boys when considering boys and schooling (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 11).

A focus on the diverse nature of gender may assist teachers to guard against a narrow essentialist view of the schooling needs of boys. It is a reminder that the category of the “normal boy” is indeed a social construct. In his discussion of the gay and lesbian movement Bourdieu wonders:
How can people revolt against a socially imposed categorisation except by organising themselves as a category constructed according to that categorisation, and so implementing the classifications and restrictions it seeks to resist (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 120)

His observation is usefully applied to schools where gender programs intended to widen the idea of what it is to be a boy have the effect of “classifying” the group selected to participate. Bourdieu goes on to observe that:

By revealing the status of ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ to be a social construction a collective fiction of the heteronormative order which has moreover partly been constructed against the homosexual, and by underlining the extreme diversity of all the members of that constructed category, the movement tends... in a sense to dissolve its own social bases (italics in original Bourdieu, 2001, p. 120).

Perhaps the diverse nature of the masculinities observed in the isolated site of Paterson may go some way towards undermining the strength of belief in a unitary, essential, normal boy. This category might also “dissolve” as it is acknowledged that a singular essential masculinity does not exist.

5.2.1 Theorising identity in the site of Paterson

In this study the “thinking tools” of Bourdieu are elaborated to develop a schema for examining the identity play evident in the field of Paterson. The idea of the “habitus” is taken up and elaborated to highlight the range of forces at work in Paterson in the process of constructing identities. The concept of the habitus is articulated by Bourdieu as a means of explaining the strategies that people develop to represent themselves to the world and to themselves in a range of fields.

Bourdieu’s (Wacquant, 1998) image of the reflexive agent iteratively developing a number of habituses in response to lived experience in a range of fields, breaks with the humanist view of the autonomous individual with a coherent, stable self constituted by a set of natural and pre-given elements such as biological sex. It also moves beyond, yet acknowledges, the Marxist view of an agent subjected to constraints and opportunities offered by complex social structures. Bourdieu’s (Wacquant, 1998) view also encompasses the post-structural theorist’s consciousness of the constituting capacity of social discourses.
5.2.2 Material space

In his acknowledgement of the role of the habitat in forming the habitus, and his recognition of the role of the habitus in also shaping the habitat (2000), Bourdieu breaks with many identity theorists of his time (B. Davies, 1996; H. Moore, 1994). Bourdieu includes the material world in his consideration of the factors contributing to identity constructions. His elaboration of “site effects” in The weight of the world (Bourdieu, 2000), opens up the possibility of including the examination of local geography and material lived experiences, as well as social and discursive contexts when exploring the formative pressures on individual habituses. Rural social researchers grapple with the role of the material world in the formation of particular group identities:

Place-based “communities” indicate the importance of a material, biophysical space in which people build cultural and political practices and meanings. Matless’ (1994, 77) reading of ‘the English Village’ provides a cultural geography of this kind as he accounts for how village relations are connected to the surrounding environment and how this biophysical space is culturally layered through different discourses about ‘landscapes’, ‘watersheds’, and ‘countryside’ (Liepins, 2000b, p. 32).

Chapter 1 elaborated some of the features of the township of Paterson which constitute the material space which is the context of the Paterson study. The material, geographic space, characterised by a severe climate, isolation, unique vegetation and a sparse population favour the availability of particular capital and militate against access to others. Individual biological characteristics interact with this setting to open up some possibilities and foreclose others.

Not only does what the body takes into itself (diet in the first instance) effect a ‘surface inscription’ of the body; the body is also incised by various forms of adornment. through exercise and habitual patterns of movement, through negotiating its environment whether this be rural or urban, and through clothing and makeup, the body is more or less marked, constituted as an appropriate, or, as the case may be, an inappropriate body, for its cultural requirements. It is crucial to note that these different procedures of corporeal inscription do not simply adorn or add to a body that is basically given through biology; they help constitute the very biological organisation of the subject – the subject’s height, weight, colouring, even eye colour, are constituted as such by a constitutive interweaving of genetic and environmental factors (Grosz, 1994, p. 142).

Habitual ways of being in the world are developed according to the type and quantity of capital available to young people in this location. The material elements available constitute the material space in which gender identities are developed. Bourdieu is
not joining the ranks of the biological determinists in developing this dimension. He notes that particular dispositions are favoured by some material realities and not others, but agents react to these materialities by “regulated improvisation” and the “conductorless orchestration” of conduct (Wacquant, 1998, p. 6).

The identity opportunities available in a particular material space in one field may be foreclosed in another. Bourdieu acknowledges a role for the material world in influencing the development of particular habitus but he does not express this in an essentialist singular form. The schemes of perception, appreciation and action which are developed in response to a material space are also subjected to modification and reinforcement from the social and discursive spaces which an agent inhabits.

5.2.3 Discursive space

In every culture, agents develop particular ways of representing themselves to others and to themselves through their chosen ways of being, speaking and doing their identities. Representations are produced using shared signs and symbols or language. Bronwyn Davies sees language, or the discursive practices of a society as the principal means of identity construction. She asserts that it is the responsibility of feminist post-structuralist theory to expose “the processes of meaning making, of establishing and maintaining hegemonic beliefs, of setting up patterns of power and powerlessness” (B. Davies, 1996, p. 13).

She explains the mechanism for achieving this:

> It does this by locating and making observable the very language or discursive practices through which these differences and patterns of privilege are spoken into existence, and by searching for alternative ways of constituting identity (B. Davies, 1996, p. 13).

Bourdieu also indicates that the unequal power relations of the masculine and the feminine in western culture are evidenced in language by the non-marked invisibility of the masculine; “both in social perception and in language, the masculine gender appears as non-marked, in a sense neuter, in opposition to the feminine, which is explicitly characterised” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9).

He notes that the discursive cues used by a culture must be learned, illustrating unequal power relations revealed through the discursive:

> The verbal or non-verbal cues which designate the symbolic the dominant position (that of a man, noble, chief, etc) can only be understood by people
who have learned the ‘code’ (rather like military stripes which one has to learn how to read (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 34).

The material space may favour a particular type of habitus but the discursive space which is simultaneously inhabited also surrounds the agent with a range of discourses which will impact on the identity opportunities available to them. In the discursive space, symbolic capital is exchanged, cultural capital acquired and social capital transacted. Habituses which furnish identity representation are formed from the capital in play in any field of practice.

5.2.4 Social space

The social institutions and structures which also act upon groups and individuals in society will further contribute to the structuring of identity options. Grosz provides a compelling snapshot of the way that identity choices prescribed and proscribed by sociocultural institutions may be inscribed on the living body. She begins with a focus on the physical marking of the body:

In our own culture as much as in others, there is a form of body writing and various techniques of social inscription that bind all subjects, often in quite different ways according to sex, class, race, cultural and age codifications, to social positions and relations. These modes of scarification are no less permanent or more removable than tattooing or epidermic or muscular lesions, although they may be less readily observed or directly readable. The civilised body is marked more or less permanently and impermeably. In our own culture, inscriptions occur both violently and in more subtle forms. In the first case, violence is demonstrable in social institutions of correction and training, prisons, juvenile homes, hospitals, psychiatric institutions, keeping the body confined, constrained, supervised, and regimented, marked by implements such as handcuffs, the traversing of neural pathways by charges of electricity in shock therapy, the straitjacket, the regimen of drug habituation and rehabilitation, chronologically regulated time and labour divisions, cellular and solitary confinement, the deprivation of mobility, the bruising of bodies in police interrogations, etc. (Grosz, 1994, p. 142)

After establishing the case for institutionalised social impact on the physical body Grosz goes on to broaden her argument to include less visible social forces at work on the physical body:

Less openly violent but no less coercive are the inscriptions of cultural and personal values, norms and commitments according to the morphology and categorisation of the body into socially significant groups – male and female, black and white, and so on. The body is involuntary marked, but it is also incised through ‘voluntary’ procedures, lifestyles, habits, and behaviours. Makeup, stilettos, bras, hairsprays, clothing, underclothing mark women’s bodies, whether black or white, in ways in which hairstyles,
professional training, personal grooming, gait, posture, body building, and sports may mark men’s. There is nothing natural or ahistorical about these modes of corporeal inscription. Through them bodies are made amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power. They make the flesh into a particular type of body – pagan, primitive, medieval, capitalist, Italian, American, Australian. What is sometimes loosely called body language is not an inappropriate description of the ways in which culturally specific means of power, regulation, and force condition and provide techniques for the formation of particular bodies (Grosz, 1994, p. 142)

The power of social structures and institutions to shape the behaviours of those people subjected to their influence has been outlined by some Marxists. Bourdieu elaborates the impact of social structural agents. He asserts that the unequal power relations that are evident in society are supported by the structural institutions of that society from the level of the state to the level of the individual:

The perpetuation of this relationship of domination ... resides in agencies such as the school or the State, sites where principles of domination that go on to be exercised within even the most private universe are developed and imposed (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 4).

He notes that masculine domination is most visible in the domestic sphere but he attributes the maintenance of this structure at the personal life level to the presence of institutions which make these unequal relations appear natural and universal:

While the domestic unit is one of the sites where masculine domination manifests itself most indisputably and most visibly (and not only through recourse to physical violence), the principle of the perpetuation of the material and symbolic power relations exerted there is largely situated outside that unit, in agencies such as the church, the educational system or the state, and in their strictly political actions, were they overt or hidden, official or unofficial (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 116).

Bourdieu asserts that the “naturalistic and essentialist vision” produced through social institutions needs to be exposed as an historical construction which is vulnerable to disruption. He expounds the need to make the invisible patterns visible:

Far from asserting that the structures of domination are ahistorical, I shall try to establish that they are the product of an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) and institutions – families, the church, the education system, the State – contribute. The dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural. This can lead to a kind of systematic self-deprecation, even self denigration (italics in original Bourdieu, 2001, p. 34).
Bourdieu includes within the social space consideration of both the institutional structures of society and the private lifeworld ones. The identity opportunities offered by social institutions impact on the individual:

It appears that Bourdieu conceived of habitus as a multi-layered concept, with more general notions of habitus at the level of society and more complex, differentiated notions at the level of the individual. A person’s individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of (Reay, 2004, p. 434).

For the purposes of this study, it may be useful to separate these different manifestations of the social space to acknowledge that an individual’s gendered identities are subject to social pressures at different levels. In the context of this study, the school and local community may constitute one social space, but in a parallel space family and friendship structures will also play a part in constituting a particular habitus. The habituses developed in the space of interplay between these levels succeeds in:

the incorporation of the social into the corporeal...[producing] a system of durable, transposable dispositions that mediates an individual’s actions and the external conditions of production (Bourdieu, 1990, cited 1999, p. 99).

The “durable but not immutable norms” (McNay, 1999, p. 95) which constitute the habitus provide the markers of identity which will be activated in various fields of practice. Social, discursive and material spaces are all actively available for the process of developing these “durable dispositions”.

5.2.5 Investigating identity in Paterson

The material, discursive and social spaces of our world are all implicated in the reproduction and potential disruption of the identities of individuals and groups. Some theories emphasise the importance of one over the others but, as will be shown in Chapter 6, in the community of Paterson all of them can be seen to be at work. Figure 5.1 illustrates the interaction of these 3 domains.
This schema is offered as a lens for exposing the significant elements at work in this particular site. Every young person has a legacy of economic, cultural and social capital. The material, social and discursive contexts into which they are born will enable the initiation of particular types of habitus and inhibit the development of others. The value placed on that particular capital will depend upon the various fields of practice that are engaged in. The overarching fields of class, gender and race impact on the capital value in every other field. As an active agent in their own identity constructions a young person may seek out alternative capital or reinforce the capital they have already acquired. Teachers with a concern for the identity opportunities of the students in their care may take heed of all of these dimensions and become sensitive to the ways that they interact.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The previous chapters have established a context for the examination of the youth culture of Paterson. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data in Chapter 1 illustrated the dominance of agricultural activity in the site and highlighted some of the gender divisions which characterise this community. Chapter 2 outlined Bourdieu’s concepts
of “field, habitus and capital” which will be used to examine the stories from Paterson. Chapter 3 elaborates the methodology used in this study and Chapters 4 and 5 explore rural social and gender education research literature to frame the boys’ education strategies in Paterson. A schema of the relationships of material, social and discursive space has been proposed as a guide to the investigation of youth identities in Paterson. The following chapter explores the narratives gathered in this site.

The anxiety about boys’ education which informed the development of the Paterson Boys’ Project positions the participants in this study in the middle of the contested field of gender education. The controversial nature of this project is explored in this study, recognising that gender identities are not the only stake in play in this field.
Chapter 6. Paterson: fresh fields, playing fields and fields of gender contest

In this Chapter the youthful social world of Paterson will be explored through an examination of the fields of practice of; the youth microcultures, sport, the culture of the girls and the Paterson Boys’ Program (PBP). Through the voices of the people of Paterson the capital exchanged in these fields will be identified and the practices discussed. The segregated nature of PBP and the creative arts strategies which characterise it are critically explored. The youth microcultures of the Friggers and the Skeggs are introduced and the signs and symbols associated with these identities discussed. The role of music, sport, football, alcohol, driving and skateboarding are examined. The impacts of the masculinist cultural characteristics of these rural identities on some of the girls of Paterson are also investigated in an exploration of the field of gender in a rural site.

The Paterson location fits the descriptor of ‘rural’ according to the definitions of a range of social researchers. It may be described as the opposite of “urban and metropolitan” (M. M. Bell, 1992), it has a low population density and is “remote” according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The residents of Paterson are deprived of a number of public facilities and are therefore “isolated” according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Jordan et al., 2004) and most of the residents of this location depend for their economic survival on a “single industry” (Lucas, 1971), the industry of agriculture (Marsden, Lowe, & Whatmore, 1990). For rural sociologists in the twenty first century each of these definitions is problematic. Many would now hold that:

“there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area.” (Cloke and Milbourne 1992, cited in Little & Austin, 1996, p. 102)

It is these overlapping “social spaces” of Paterson that are the concern of this study. The rural place under investigation is the one that exist for the young people. Their “subjective ideas” providing significant data as:

If people act according to a variety of particular discourses about what is rural, then their subjective ideas are just as important as objective “facts” or evidence about their lives.(Corbett, 2007, p. 15)

The representations that influence the choices made by these young people and the aspirations that they articulate are as important as the behaviours that may be
observed in this location. In the rural site of Paterson a number of sources are explored to investigate four things:

- The significant identity practices of young people in this community
- The power relations within youth cultures in this site
- The forces at work upon identities construction processes in this site
- The position of the youth culture in relation to dominant (institutional) fields of power and gender

Before conversations with the young people of Paterson could begin the investigation had to be approved by a number of the gatekeepers in this community. First the High school principal had to be persuaded of the worth of the study and assured that all ethical considerations could be secured. Then meetings with the Paterson Boys’ Project Committee, the high school staff and the Parents and Citizens Association were held so that each group could consider their stake in the project. During this phase of the project documentary material elaborating the history, commercial and economic context of Paterson and the background to the development of the boys’ programs in Paterson was gathered. In the next phase a questionnaire was administered (Appendix 1) and initial group interviews completed. The structure of the interviews in the final phase was informed by the findings in the first two stages. The material gathered in the questionnaire appeared to be strongly influenced by the fact that the principal and some staff members rigorously assisted in its execution. It was administered by them after the students completed a Quality of School Life survey under test conditions. The school survey found that the students demonstrated a satisfaction with their school life well above the state average. It is not possible to judge if the responses to my questionnaire were those intended to reflect well on the school they had just demonstrated such loyalty to, or the deeper beliefs of the students. Although there were some differences between the years, with year 7 often expressing the strongest opinions and year 10 the most moderate, there were no clear trends of opinion evident in the data. The context of the administration of the questionnaire may have tainted the findings. This data could not be considered a reliable indicator of student perceptions but may reflect the endorsed position of the dominant school culture as illustrated in the Quality of School Life survey. A subsequent survey, developed to clarify the characteristics of the youth microcultures (Appendix 2), was not administered as a questionnaire but used as a focus for interview discussions.
Through the analysis of the data gathered in the site of Paterson the identity material available to a particular group of rural young people is examined in the context of the fields of practice of: the school, a boys’ education project, youth microcultures, football and a girls’ affinity group from a small outlying town. The voices of the young people provide the most potent data here but adult voices are also significant as they illustrate the attitudes and perceptions of the contexts in which young people develop their identities. The adults do not speak for the young people but they highlight the pervasiveness of some aspects of the local cultures and the differences between adult and youth cultures. Adult voices provide the history of The Paterson Boys Project but they do not speak for the young people’s experience of it.

The implications of this impact on the formation of rural youth subjectivities is explored in the context of young people who are preparing for a future in either, or both, the city and the bush. In this study, youth microcultures characterised by signifying music and embodied identities expressed through physical exploits are identified. A range of masculinities and femininities is observed in the relational identities of the girls and boys.

6.1 The rural youth Odyssey

Ben is a softly spoken, big boy who has struggled with the formal aspects of schooling. He characterises the school as a focus for the changed expectations of rural young people:

A lot of parents around here are farmers and a fair few weren't really educated, like, I am the most educated person in my family. My father grew up on a farm and he wants me to achieve what he never did so there is always that pressure to achieve. The kids want to achieve to get out of here. If you want to go to do anything you have to go three-quarters of an hour to a job opportunity. So kids in Year 12 or even younger they want to achieve to get out of the small town. They want to go to a big city or to a place a bit bigger than here. They want to get out of the small town. So that is the pressure of school. School is a very big pressure. A lot think[if] they don't get the marks that they want then they can't go to somewhere like Melbourne, something like that. It is pretty much do or die in their mind (Ben, 17 years, 005).

Ben has articulated the place of the school in the changing culture of rural Australia. Previous generations of boys have forged successful futures on a foundation of early school leaving supported by vocational certificates, but the current generation feels pressured to complete their schooling. The school is also the place of access to the outside world. From an early age many rural children are looking for a way to “get
out of the small town”. The data presented in Chapter 1 demonstrates that the expectations from schooling are quite gendered, with girls seeking higher qualifications than boys; nonetheless Ben claims that the consciousness of the link between school marks and physical mobility is now putting enormous pressure on both boys and girls. His expression “do or die” sums up the potency of this situation. Ben points out that the school is a field of practice which offers access to cultural and social capital which may be in short supply in the field of practice of home and family. He emphasises the importance and value of this capital for young people who want control of their futures, but he also alludes to the difficulty some young people may have in orienting themselves to this field as their dispositions and ability to “play the game” (Calhoun et al., 1993, p. 4) have not been developed in a context sympathetic to it.

Ben is speaking about the overwhelming pressures of high school study from experience. In the past few years he has suffered several severe bouts of depression and resorted to self harm. The principal and staff of Paterson High have worked closely with this young man to support him through to his graduation. The Paterson Boys’ Project was initiated in a context of changing social and economic structures which were placing enormous pressures on both individuals and rural schools. It was initiated in response to concern for boys like Ben and other boys who did not relate comfortably to the school setting, boys whose fathers and grandfathers had seen little value in academic pursuits.

### 6.1.1 Rural masculinity and schooling

The data explored in Chapter 1 demonstrates the way that career paths and credentialing have been historically divided along gendered lines in Paterson. To position the next generation of young people to prosper in the 21st century the principal of the high school believed that he had to address this differential as he believed it would handicap boys in the future. John, a senior Department of Education and Training bureaucrat with responsibility for Paterson High School, shared that perception. He believed the rural downturn would directly impact on boys. John articulated many of the issues that galvanised the township of Paterson into developing its boys’ education strategies in observing that:

There’s a fair amount of despondency with boys at the moment, with boys in rural NSW ... Opportunities with rural pursuits in occupations aren’t like they used to be. It is a bit gendered. It is difficult now for the boy who has
limited academic skills to obtain meaningful work in rural settings in comparison to what it was a few years ago because the changing nature of our economics in rural NSW does have an impact especially for the kid who has limited academic possibilities and opportunities. They are different, let’s be realistic. Backgrounds have a lot of influence on that. They can’t go out and get a job on a farm like they were able to ten or so years ago. Those jobs don’t exist to the same extent (John, 60s, 007).

He describes the impact of this change as engendering a mood of despair:

There is an element of despair in some of our male students and they tend then to switch off on the academic side of things and pursue what you call the more blokey type things, some of the sporting and social aspects that they choose. Boys can see that their opportunities are more limited than what they used to be whereas girls still have the local employment in the service industries and the possibility of going away and the other possibility of larger service industries of teaching and nursing which requires them to go away as well (John, 60s, 007).

The career paths aspired to by many of the boys of Paterson continue to be traditionally masculine: farmer, electrician, plumber, butcher, mechanic or engineer. This narrow focus leaves them vulnerable to structural changes in the economy. Year 11 girls agree with John’s position that boys’ engagement with schooling is very different to that of the girls.

Janice: (16) Most of the girls round here go right through school and go to Year 12, and then go to uni and do whatever they want. Heaps of the guys just drop out and think, “Oh, well, there’s an apprenticeship here, or I’ll be able to get a job there.” Or they just work on the farm.

Cressida: (16) They don’t try.

Janice: A lot of the girls round here like agriculture, but they’re really into it, involved with ag. schools and stuff like that.

Cressida: They do. But most of the boys drop out. Not many of them go to uni.

Janice: They float. I think it’s because we’re in such an isolated area. No-one tries. You don’t really want to go to uni, so you’re not trying as hard as you could be (003).

The girls make the point here that even the girls who move into traditionally masculinist careers like farming pursue this interest through academic pathways, whereas boys are taking up farm labouring and logging positions which don’t require any schooling. The rural downturn and shifts in Australia’s economic structure are leaving these boys very exposed as the demand for an unskilled workforce diminishes. One of the High School teachers described a consequent gendered school engagement as a characteristic of rural schools:
I come from a rural background. Before I came here, the school that I came from, the feeder schools were all farm based. And what we found was girls and boys were not treated equally. Not really. There was an expectation on a lot of the boys that they would go and run the farm and therefore the motivation … school meant nothing to them. A lot of them came either from a farm or self-employed, dad was a woodcutter or he was a shearer. He had some sort of business to pass on to the son. I don’t tend to think that they valued education anyway, so a lot of boys came to school with the attitude that: “well, school’s not part of my future: I’m going through the motions, I don’t want to be here”. That created a real attitude problem because when you tried to motivate them they said, “Well when I hit Year 10 I’m going to work in dad’s garage” or “I’m going to work on the farm, what’s this got to do with me?” You couldn’t get them to realise that there might be life beyond dad’s farm or dad’s garage… And girls, it’s funny; I think girls are probably a lot more independent in terms of deciding “Well if I’m going to have a future I have to study at school.” Nobody ever seems to push that with them outside of the school itself. I think a lot of girls succeed because it is an intrinsic thing; they want to succeed for themselves. They are not necessarily pushed (Kerry, 30s, 077).

The staff of Paterson High School and the parents of the Paterson community chose to take action to address what they perceived to be the narrow focus of the boys. According to the principal, the Paterson Boys’ Project was initiated to pose “a fundamental challenge to an anti-academic culture with limited role models of successful masculinity” (Greg, 40s, 001). In this study the practices of PBP are examined and the characteristics of the youth culture of Paterson explored to develop a picture of the identities and social formations that constituted Paterson at this period of time.

### 6.2 Boys’ education Programs in Paterson

The Paterson community has fostered boys’ programs over a long period of time. In the 1990s Paterson High School introduced a new leadership position in the school called a Boys’ Adviser and engaged in a number of boys’ education strategies. The principals and deputies of Paterson Primary School and Paterson High School, who were all male, collaborated to hold a Dads’ forum. The high school principal explained:

> We had probably... I don’t know ... about 60 fathers. We ran a forum evaluating male role models, relationships between those particular men and their fathers and how they relate to their children as fathers. What we can do to improve the outcomes of boys (001).

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2 Note: the approximate age of adults is indicated before the data reference number in brackets after each citation
Following this forum, a fathers’ reference group was formed. A newsletter was produced and a Father’s Day breakfast program began. Outward Bound programs were promoted and parents were encouraged to involve their boys in outdoor educational camp programs. The school sent boys who were considered to be “at risk” to one of these in the Snowy Mountains. The principal noted:

We’ve helped facilitate this; we don’t run it, the parents take their kids up. That’s proven to be a pretty useful thing although it’s hard to get the most at risk kids into that kind of thing (005).

The problem of engaging these targeted boys continued to challenge Paterson High boys’ educators as they explored a range of strategies. Participation in the programs which were intended to rehabilitate these boys often required the social and cultural capital that they lacked.

As we saw in Chapter 5, boys’ education programs at the turn of this century were of three main types:

- Men’s liberationist programs emphasising the reclaiming of masculinity. These promoted sex-segregated activities and masculine role models (e.g. “Rock & Water”, “Boys In Focus”, “Men and Boys” projects)

- Feminist programs which positioned hegemonic masculinity as oppressive and emphasised the liberation of girls from traditional constraints. These emphasised non-traditional career paths and non traditional role models (e.g.”Girls can do anything”, “Try a Trade”, “Maths multiplies your Choices”)

- Pro-feminist gender equity programs which emphasised the needs of boys and girls in a culture which defines gender as a binary exclusionary. These emphasised the relational nature of gender, promoted anti-bullying and anti-homophobic campaigns (e.g. “Boys Talk”, “Getting it Together: The Gender and Violence Project, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues” and “No Fear” and “Girls and Boys come out to play”, kits for primary age children)

As the staff of Paterson High School developed its boys’ programs, the principal encouraged them to seek training and development in the area of boys’ education. They attended training provided by Richard Fletcher whose approach falls into the men’s liberation category. Fletcher provided some impetus for the Paterson Boys’ Program but the principal explained that they did not find the material offered to them from this source entirely helpful. He explained that:

We went to the boys’ education conferences in Newcastle run by Richard Fletcher and that crew, although we probably need to get away from some of those sort of things, they’re probably a bit commercial. I’m talking from personal opinion here. People like Richard Fletcher and those ones are
actively involved in research and they’ve got a lot of books… My gut reaction is they do a lot of talks but they don’t really have the resources to really change the culture of schools, it’s got to come from within the schools. It’s got to be sustainable, manageable, ongoing processes as opposed to highlighting great need and then leaving some paper resources and suggestions (001).

The principal saw the problem as bigger than that presented by the men’s liberationists. His use of the word “entice” in the following quotation points to his consciousness of the need to fully engage those boys who are facing “major hindrances” in life because of their perceptions of masculinity in the rural context characterised by alcohol abuse, risk taking and alienation from academic activity.

At the end of the day you’ve got to do it yourself and at the end of the day having the right vehicle to entice boys to rethink the core issues which aren’t often what we talk about on the surface you’ve got to engage in some process. [It] often provides more questions than answers. It opens a Pandora’s box. It gives you some directions to work in but not a lot of solutions in terms of growth and self esteem and the really critical issues of how boys relate to their families and move into those adult roles without major hindrances (001).

The Paterson staff became aware of a project which combined creative arts and physical skills being initiated by two teachers in a boys’ high school in Sydney. It emphasised the development of arts skills for boys through men’s mentoring programs. The Sydney-based boys’ program stated that its goal was to:

Provide boys with tools for self expression which were non-aggressive and self-empowering. It was also designed to break down stereotypical attitudes towards male artistic expression as well as open up new horizons for boys in the performing and creative arts and the opportunities they can offer (PBP archive, 1999).

Paterson High applied for funding to initiate a similar program. The Premier’s Department, Attorney General’s Department, Health Department and the Office of Children and Young People combined to fund several pilot programs in urban and rural schools to be independently evaluated in 2000. One of the initiating Sydney teachers from Sydney was funded to visit Paterson and develop a new project. To protect the confidentiality of the school this project will be referred to as the Paterson Boys’ Project (PBP) and the project worker from Sydney as Jenny White.

### 6.3 The field of Paterson Boys’ Project (PBP)

In 1999 Jenny spoke at meetings initiated by the principal. In 2003 PBP committee members still remembered these meetings as dynamic and inspiring:
One meeting I went to was absolutely phenomenal. There was a PBP meeting. There was probably 100 men there. This is early on in the program. This is introducing it. Probably not 100, probably 50. Dads, from workers on the council, from the properties, whatever. They were all there and that is what I saw PBP as, an education time. I heard men actually swapping stories. And that’s what I saw PBP as. To set up a network of blokes that knew, knew that you’re not the only one out there that’s experiencing that. Don’t be embarrassed about it. Talk about it. That’s what I thought PBP would achieve (Brendan, 30s, 096).

Jenny came into town, she really did galvanise a whole lot of people behind her vision of ‘PBP’ and what she thought it could do and what she thought would work. And so she began by sort of trying to get groups together and get some projects off the ground …Jenny is the history of PBP. Jenny is the reason for us all being here today. Jenny White, without Jenny it wouldn’t have happened. It categorically wouldn’t have happened (Frances, 30s, 002).

Jenny used her Sydney contacts to organise Physical Theatre workshops with training provided by the Leaping Loonies, a Theatre In Education troupe accredited by the NSW Department of Education and Training:

She had lots of marvellous ideas and she had resources and she had backup. That was the key. She had contacts here and there so things happened straight away. The Leaping Loonies happened. She knew. She’d done the same sort of thing so she knew where she was at. She bodily put people in the school. All it needed was a bit of willing support here, which obviously she got from the principal and there was myself and a few of the male staff at the time I suppose (Col, 40s, 066).

Organisers from both Sydney and Paterson appeared to see a cultural capital deficit for school age boys in the area of the expressive arts. This was the focus of the boys’ programs. The first activities were advertised for May 2000. These first two workshops focused on physical theatre and film making. The project worker from Sydney noted that “many boys came from backgrounds where they were not exposed to performing arts and the program gave them an opportunity to learn and participate in them”(White, 2000, PBP archives).

The text of the publicity poster promoting the first workshops in Paterson used robust masculine language to describe the activities they were promoting:

PBP is coming to Paterson High Boys
Have you ever thought about…..
Being revoltingly, disgustingly, insanely famous?
Being able to dance without falling flat on your face?
Beating drums very loudly?
Throwing bizarre objects into the air and then catch them and juggle them?
Being the next Mel Gibson?
Creating amazing and HUGE formations from scrap metal?
Make your own action movies?
Then you need Paterson Boys’ Project! (PBP archive, 2000).

By emphasising the physical, strenuous nature of physical theatre the poster compensates for the possibility of any feminised image that may be associated with the arts. Through its use of words like “revoltingly, disgustingly, insanely, bizarre, amazing and huge” a vigorous masculinised image is promoted for the new boys’ program. The popular boys in the local football team were also enlisted to participate to lend credibility to the program and to guard against any un-masculine slur.

To celebrate the goals of PBP, later in the year a men’s art exhibition was organised and launched with a physical theatre performance:

They started having an art show down here, which was good. Oh having an art show in THIS area! You know I don’t know whether they have too many. They’ve got an art group and they have art shows at the Services Club and they’ve had them in the park. You know a lot of people coming along to see it. It’s good, gets everyone together. The kids were all there. They did demonstrations in cycling, and pushbikes. That was good to see too. It was all boys’ artwork, Yeah, yeah, so it was good. And the public really responded. They liked the idea (Chad, 40s, 095).

The principal was deeply committed to this program and very enthusiastic:

PBP has been a vehicle for thinking differently. PBP in its essence is about giving boys a chance to be creative in some of the non-traditional creative areas. It’s giving them ways of being skilful outside of typical sports. It’s opening up other ways of being successful and being male. We’ve had the circus troupes and the acrobatics and it’s generated a fantastic response (001).

The mission statement for PBP was that it aimed to:

create strong, resilient, community-minded men by providing opportunities to develop creative skills that build links between males of all ages (PBP Strategic Plan, 2003, p.1).

Its philosophy states that it will “use the creative and performing arts as a vehicle to improve self esteem and wellbeing.” The Victorian Health Department funded a number of creative projects in the first decade of the 21st century on the basis of research linking health, wellbeing and creative activity. The 2003 strategic plan articulated the links the organisers envisaged between self expression, career opportunities and community-based workshops:
- It provides males with tools for self expression which are non-aggressive and self empowering through workshops within the school and community
- Generates enterprise and develops career opportunities
- Break down stereotypical attitudes towards male self-expression and supports the diverse range of masculinities
- PBP is flexible and utilises the resources in each community
- It empowers each community to make proactive choice concerning addressing the needs of their own community, thus ensuring self-sufficiency and sustainability (PBP Strategic Plan, 2003, p.1).

The references here to diverse “communities” acknowledge groups within the district of Paterson who may not identify with the town centre. This identifies an aspiration to initiate projects in outlying towns like Manywarra which was never realised.

### 6.3.1 Funding issues

PBP was one of a number of similar boys’ arts projects funded and evaluated in 1999-2001. The evaluation of the original program in Jenny’s Sydney school found that:

> There doesn’t seem to be any evidence that the program made a difference. The program continued, but there was no evidence from student outcomes that it had made any difference. They enjoy doing it… If you gave a post program survey they would all say they loved it, but in terms of making any change there wasn’t any evidence that any change had taken place at the school (Barb, 50s, 134).

A principal’s report from this school took a very different position. He cited improved attendance, behaviour, self esteem, literacy, student/staff relationships and academic engagement from a number of boys who participated in the program. The contrasting perceptions of the school principal and the evaluators in Jenny’s school were echoed in Paterson.

> Oh there was a consultant, an independent consultant that came in that did a report and interviewed a few people around town about PBP; all I know said very positive things but inexplicably the funding was cut (Frances, 30s, 002).

The Paterson organisers did not believe their project had been given enough time to fulfil its potential. They believed that the criteria for the evaluation were problematic:
They wanted to see reduced crime rates and major innovations in terms of stats in high-risk kids in twelve months and it's not going to happen. In other words it was never going to pass that criteria and the argument from me and others here was it had the potential to do that but at this stage you couldn't prove that was going to be successful. Some of these things take sometimes three to ten years to make an impression (117, 40s, Greg).

The independent evaluation of the program in Paterson voiced a concern that PBP did not conform to the best practice promoted by the NSW Gender Equity Policies of the day. This policy cautioned against the homogenising of boys and girls into stereotyped norms. It emphasised the differences within groups of girls and groups of boys noting that advantage and disadvantage is associated with particular groups of girls and boys and this should not be generalised. It emphasised this point by referring to the “Which Boys? Which Girls?” position elaborated in the research of Lingard et al. (Lingard et al., 2002), Martino (Martino, Lingard, & Mills, 2004), Pallotta-Chiarolli (1997) and Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000). The evaluation also pointed to concern over homophobia and sex based harassment in schools which was not addressed by the PBP projects. In the light of this evaluation the funding was withdrawn and the personnel support of Jenny White was lost as her secondment from the Department of Education was terminated and she went back to the classroom.

This evaluation expressed a concern that PBP failed to address evidence of homophobia and sex based harassment. It noted that the type of masculinity reinforced by this program was already hegemonic in the school. These observations were interpreted by some of the local PBP supporters as evidence that the decisions of the evaluation were a result of pressure from “the lesbian lobby”. The pro-feminist position of the gender equity unit and the independent evaluators of the boys’ programs across the state were read as pro-homosexual.

I believe it was the strong lesbian set that have run that part of the department for many years and are totally in antithesis with a boys only concept program (Greg, 40s, 144).

The people that stopped the funding had an issue with it because of their sexuality (Brendan, 30s, 96).

Despite the view of the local PBP supporters the committee responsible for making the funding decision could not have been lesbian as it was almost exclusively male. The female bureaucrats working in the gender equity department also identified as heterosexual. The gender equity team in the DET may be characterised as pro-
feminist or “pro-homosexual” but do not fit the description of a “lesbian lobby”. The agenda of the Gender Equity Unit was to bring about change in gender perceptions and to challenge the hegemonic position of some types of masculinity in Australian culture. The PBP organisers on the other hand did not want to radically change masculinity, the power position of the masculine, they were rather offering an opportunity to extend the activities which may be read as masculine, to broaden what was perceived to be a narrowing power base. This was not a program which aspired to transformation in the same sense as the Gender Equity Unit. These groups did not share the same goals, aspirations, perceptions and agendas. In the field of practice of schooling under PBP the hegemonic form of masculinity continued to privilege the football ethos at the same time as it championed the achievements of the film makers and physical theatre practitioners. In the field of practice of gender the segregated activities failed to challenge messages of power imbalance or dominating behaviours like harassment and violence. The capital valued by the Gender Equity Unit was not valued in the same way by PBP.

6.3.2 PBP Community Project

The community of Paterson had taken on the PBP project with great passion. They were shocked by the loss of the funding and unsure of their capacity to see the projects through:

A lot of the fire went out when Jenny lost contact with us ‘cause we needed that outside input and like a dedicated one I suppose. We were nice and happy following things and leading the bits and pieces and the small parts but when the total coordination went out of it, it was hard work. We have a fairly full workload now and that sort of chasing those sorts of things up (Col, 40s, 66).

There were a couple of small projects that Jenny started then what happened was Jenny’s funding was. Ooah I don’t really know, I mean I’ve read the report, but from where I sit, inexplicably cut. Oh there was a consultant, an independent consultant that came in that did a report, on um, interviewed a few people around town about PBP. All I know said very positive things but inexplicably the funding was cut. So then we were a town after a year left with um, left with projects half finished, an idea that had actually cemented itself within the community and people really did, it was beginning to have a bit of a name and as I said we had these half.. Which would have been a real shame because there had been a lot of work put in (Frances, 30s, 002).

Jenny White’s support had been crucial to the initiation of this project but the evaluation was critical of her failure to plan for evaluation. She inspired a high level of enthusiasm in Paterson but her methodology drew some criticism:
When Jenny left there was no formal committee in place, we had a President and that was all we had. We had no strategic plan; we had no mission statement, no formal committee. We just had Clark, so he was flying by the seat of his pants because he didn’t really quite know what he should be doing and who should be helping him (Frances, 30s, 002).

Frances was very committed to PBP and lauded its achievements but she believed that Jenny did not appreciate the capacity of the local rural community culture to work together to achieve shared goals. She felt that locals needed more opportunities to act collaboratively. Jenny clashed with one of the Paterson Project organisers and Frances observed that:

I reckon Jenny would have clashed with me too because I would have been saying, “You can’t do that Jenny. You can’t just run around.” I know that she would come here and Clark was on call, and she would (I mean he and Jenny would go and sit down in that back shed all day, which is fine), but he’s a busy man. And he would be left with a whole lot of stuff to do which just overwhelmed him. It depressed him quite frankly. But he couldn’t… But as well, because there were no second or third tiered people helping out… And that’s what we do best in country towns. I didn’t get to know her that well, I just know there was a lot of stuff that she was throwing at us which was impractical in its current form and needed to have organisation structures underneath it. (Frances, 30s, 002).

Problems also arose from clashes between Jenny and teacher leaders in Paterson and between Jenny and the other Sydney project coordinator. It was observed that the independent evaluators had difficulty judging the effectiveness of some of the other boys’ programs being piloted across the state.

The evaluation was fraught. It had to cope with completely different programs depending whether they are being run by one leader or the other. They were clashing with each other. The two consultants had different viewpoints. It was hard to do an evaluation when there were two completely different things being evaluated, and both were saying that theirs was the right way of doing it (Barb, 50s, 134).

Jenny also struggled to support the Paterson community in its transition to independence;

Jenny? She was here ohhh in 1999-2000 and then her funding was cut and it was either do or die really. That was when the decision was made to do! What we did was we asked a whole lot of key people from the town… And we sat them round the table and we started to talk about it. That was Tom from the Shire, Dick from the Club, Harry, myself, Clark. But what happened on that day, Jenny was here and we were trying to get a Mission Statement, you know, “PBP, What do you see it doing?” She was more into the touchy feely bit and I could tell, I was getting frustrated but I could tell, and it was commented on by both Tom and Dick, that there were questions that they knew they were there for. These are both
people who have worked in local government and business. They knew what they were here for and they knew what they wanted to do. And Jenny didn’t handle it. And I think that was the greatest failing, that she didn’t understand about procedures and you know… That was her last visit (Frances, 30s, 002).

Despite the disappointment at losing Jenny’s support the local community continued the program. A community group was formed to carry on the projects that had been started and this committee went on to initiate a range of further activities. The community group developed a strategic plan to guide their operation for eighteen months while they applied for a grant from the Department of Transport and Regional Affairs to bring in a consultant to assist them to develop a Mission Statement and long-term Strategic Plan:

What it did was it gave us a new breath of life. It gave us credibility. It gave us a real working document to use for Government Grants, you know. It gave us many more things than just on a piece of paper (Frances, 30s, 002).

The new committee represented many sectors of this small community and was surprisingly large. It comprised: the local vet and his wife as president and secretary, two nurses, a builder, an irrigator, two school principals, a farmer, two shire officers and two high school students. This committee of ten males and three females was supplemented by community health, tourism and arts officers as projects caught their attention. PBP became a focus for many community youth activities.


6.3.3 The purpose of PBP

The perceived reasons for the development of the PBP program were elaborated by a range of participants. They include the fostering of creativity, the provision of an alternative to sport, to broaden horizons, to provide male role models, to boost self esteem, to encourage boys to be more ‘involved’ and to protect boys from risk taking, drugs alcohol and suicide.
a) Fostering creativity

Col, a leader of the PBP program focuses on the importance of fostering creativity in adolescent rural boys in a setting which he describes as “stifling” creativity:

I think it was probably, you know PBP has got a lot of high ideas, hasn’t it; it’s the idea of creative and male. It’s to be masculine and to be physical you know. And it’s to be sensitive sort of. And also it’s to provide that outlet for boys who are creative, not to stifle it. I suppose in a rural setting it can be pretty stifling for any boys who are creative I think. Yeah. I notice it too as a father. I’ve got boys in a primary school. Boys in primary school, they love to dance, they love to be in the choir, junior choir, senior choir. They love to get up on stage to perform and to act. You get into high school. They don’t want to do it. The kids are singing and the boys are singing and dancing. The girls are always doing... the girls don’t stop dancing but the boys do. It’s such a shame ‘cause obviously the kids have got talent; that are living out here. Lots of them are not going to reach their potential that has that sort of talent (Col, 40s, 66).

He sees that one of the barriers to the development of creative potential in the rural setting is the shortage of skilled personnel:

And obviously, country schools do need staff for that sort of creative art input (Col, 40s, 66).

He notes that creative behaviours that are valued in the primary school culture attract ridicule in the larger High School with students from a wider geographic area:

Oh it’s just the… for some strange reason, the ridicule that exists in the High School doesn’t exist in the primary school. Or whether it is better controlled in a Primary School. In a Primary School perhaps you’ve got the kids are together and perhaps they feel more comfortable for that five years they are together. Get them in high school and you get kids from School M, from School W, from School H and other feeder schools and they just.. I don’t know, the comfort zone is sort of shattered I suppose (Col, 40s, 66).

Trish, a PBP committee member, also felt that the community’s attitude to the arts was not positive. She saw PBP providing a new outlet to support her husband’s creativity:

I never hoped to shift behaviours. I’ve only ever hoped to... my husband is very creative and he had difficulty in finding a place for himself in this community, because he is more creative and he is not involved in the football so I suppose I hope we might be able to find an outlet for his energies. As social support to him. And I’m aware of other people in the community like him. And it is able to fit to the community as a whole (Trish, 40s, 21).

Trish’s understanding of the anti-artistic nature of rural culture is based on personal experience:
To what extent does rural culture encourage boys to be involved in creativity?

They don't really. I don't think they support anybody, boys or females in creative activity. I grew up in a rural household and my parents always said that is nonsense you know. The arts is just a time wasting thing, it will never put food on your table. It might be pretty bad, it will never achieve anything. I think that is basically the whole position (Trish, 40s, 21).

She appreciated the pressures that have contributed to this position:

I think you have to understand, too, the rural people don't have as much money as city people. They don't have time for the pretty niceties. Life is a struggle for a lot of people on a daily basis. The creativity is just not where they want to put the time and effort. They would rather put their money into their hospital or something that is a more basic need as far as they are concerned. It is not only a matter of finance, it is a matter of resources of any sort. To find enough hands, enough hands-on people to do anything in clubs. The numbers are so small. People start to think what is really important and that's what they put the time and money and effort into. So the arts is almost perceived “well you’ve got more time and money than me if you’re doing that” (Trish, 40s, 21).

Suzanna, a parent, attributes greater recognition for the arts in Paterson to the impact of PBP:

The arts probably aren’t recognised enough. It’s probably through the PBP group that there is a lot of arts recognition. And even through the likes of their Flick-heads, the movie nights and things that they were having, and then the different workshops, that they have done for film making and the circus one that they did. There’s not a lot of activity in the community in regards to that I don’t think (Suzanne, 30s, 102).

When a member of the PBP committee was asked about the purpose of PBP an interest in the arts was linked to gender identity perceptions:

Oh, [we want] an active interest in the arts. An active change in the way people see men and women. Perhaps the lines a bit more blurred in terms of what men should do and what women should do.

Well in a country town men play footy and women do tapestry. Now they are two extreme examples but that’s really how country people view the roles of men and women. You know take the rubbish out and the women do the dishes and that happens in my house too. I’d like to see that perhaps those roles are blurred and I think PBP is capable of doing that. Just given that we’re offering, particularly boys, opportunities to do outside what perhaps they have seen their role as being. And I think that can only bring on the good things. ... So I think there are all sorts of aspects to PBP that can change the ways of people in the country think. I wanted to expose some young people to the big wide world. Which just don’t come to Paterson (Clark, 40s, 079).
The physical nature of some of the PBP activities was explained by a teacher as a reaction to the perception that the arts are feminised.

Oh because of that perception that I’m telling you about that “art’s for girls” and that’s why they’re particularly focused on physical theatre and stuff like, but they’ve still; I think they’ve focused on macho things rather than, you know, looking at what painting and drawing can do for a boy’s growth and development you know (Dianne, 20s, 062).

Local mum, Amanda felt that the focus on “artsy” activities was not appropriate for rural kids. Even though she likes the idea of “bringing out the art” in them she sees them resisting this as they expected the type of stimulation provided by driving fast. She suggested that PBP would only appeal to a minority group:

Oh I don’t know, the kids just didn’t find it stimulating. Really they want a dirt track they can get in cars and burn around in. That was a bit... I really like the idea that it was to bring out the art in rural kids but rural kids aren’t… they are rare, artistic kids in rural settings. When you’ve got a bigger amount of kids area you can find more artistic kids, but in rural areas they’re rare (Amanda, 30s, 084).

Boys who had been actively involved in developing the town sculpture did not characterise this activity as creative or expressive. They did not identify as having engaged in creating a work of art but rather described it as engineering, a more acceptably ‘masculine’ activity:

\[ LCP: \text{ So why did you do it? } \]
\[ Neville: \text{ To get out of class [laughter]. Like, it was something fun to do like with everyone. It was sort of relaxing, you just had the time to clear your mind with a group and everyone was involved. It was an engineering experience (Neville, 17, 049). } \]

Prior to PBP the cultural capital associated with the performing and visual arts were identified with primary school age children. As a result of its success some activities were integrated into a sector of the local youth culture. This cultural capital was not available to everyone however, as PBP was perceived to be a field dominated by a cultural ‘elite’, the same group who dominated the football. PBP was also perceived to offer an alternative to this dominant field.

b) An alternative to sport

Creative activities were often characterised as the opposite to sport in a binary exclusionary representation of stereotyped masculine behaviour:

[Paterson’s culture is a] stereotyped gender identity, sport, not expressive. Yeah, PBP is trying to address, say, in a small rural community, areas such
as performing arts. Areas that boys may not think of, because it is outside the mould, the stereotype of sporty etc. (Molly, 50s, 070).

Ebony, in grade 6, sees boys as always absorbed in sport:

[PBP] is just about boys. It is to get boys off sport. To get them more into visual arts and stuff like that. So they can just experience it really instead of just playing sport all the time. So they can be doing something else for a change (Ebony, 12 years, 037).

Committee member Sue expresses concern for any young people who are not good at sport:

Well I guess that brings you back to the culture in Paterson where things like sport are held in esteem. And what happens to boys who may be good at something else but they never get a chance to try. Kids might be good academically. The kids who are not good at sport and they’re no good at school. What happens to them? They may be good at something else (Genevieve, 40, 022).

Lisa took this concern for the non sporty youngster one step further by proposing a link between drink or drug problems and poor ability at sport:

I see it as perhaps an awareness that there needs to be something for the young people of the town... I think the idea behind it originally was very good. Small town with very little to do, it is very easy for them to fall into the way of drinking or drug taking or those sort of things because there is nothing else to do. So I think the idea behind it was very good. There’s always that proportion of the community that’s no good at sport. That’s scared off by sport. I think there’re the ones that can get into trouble in their teenage years because there’s nothing (Lisa, 35s, 019).

Some women expressed a desire to see PBP offer an alternative to the dominant sport and pub culture:

Males, it’s either sport or it’s at the Pub, they are the only two places where men tend to gather and congregate and get together in this town. If you do it around some sort of activity that didn’t involve drinking or sport it would be nice I think (Susan, 35s, 096).

Sport and PBP provide a focus for the development of social capital as well as cultural capital. The networks of affinity and trust developed through PBP offered an alternative to those developed through the well established sporting groups. Cross age networks were developed breaking down some of the age barriers developed by school and grade sport structures. The sport afternoon time was used to provide a timetabling opportunity for some of the PBP activities so a link between the two did appear on the surface. At a deeper level there was no evidence of PBP challenging the primacy of sport and drinking in
Paterson’s masculine culture. Tony is a student member of the PBP committee and an active participant and advocate of PBP, he is also a keen footballer and actively participates in the local drinking culture:

When we finished the season Tony had been down at the pub all day pretty much. He hadn’t been to school. The end of the season it’s a big wind down. Tony was off his face and was telling me quite meaningfully what the team meant to him (Chris, 16 years, 053).

PBP does not appear to challenge the primacy of the capital celebrated in sport. It co-existed with it.

c) Broaden horizons and boost self esteem

The isolation of Paterson was linked to narrow life experiences and narrow attitudes by some participants. PBP was proposed as a counter to this.

I mean the great thing is that it brings experiences to an isolated rural [town] that otherwise they might not get access to. I mean if they have got parents who aren’t willing to or might not be able to take them. It’s just not easily accessible (Molly, 50s, 070).

Chad saw the narrow concerns of the traditional Paterson masculinity as an obstacle to building relationships with the opposite sex. He explained that PBP would give young people more to talk about:

They had had so much more experience I suppose. Instead of just being able to discuss sheep dip and footy they could talk about something that was more of interest to them. I don’t know women that are interested in sheep dip and footy (Chad, 40s, 095).

Aspirational parents were seen as responsible for the cultural emphasis of PBP:

I think it was aimed at children in the country getting to do things that they otherwise would not have the opportunity to do. It came about because of a few families and unfortunately one of them is leaving, who wanted their children to be able to do everything. They didn't want the children to miss out on certain things so they did dance, they did horse riding, they did music, they did everything they could (Violet, 50s, 113).

Some boys who had participated saw the program as inspiring and challenging:

To get you out there, to get you thinking of what your abilities are and how you can use them to make a future life for yourself (Seth, 15s, 099).

Although some PBP organisers expressed a desire to encourage boys to broaden their career aspirations, others believed that this was beyond their brief:
You know, with PBP you can increase their exposure to what are increasingly social pursuits, with an artistic bent. You’re a long way to changing their career aspirations and their feelings of different careers being suitable to them as rural students. I think PBP as it is at the moment in Paterson couldn’t possibly do that. We just don’t have recourses or access to the kids or the level of participation to be able to influence them to that degree. I think that to ask PBP to do that, it would be a long-term generational. It’s also about parents and Dads. You’re tackling the Dads there too.

I think PBP is a given add-on in this town rather than getting the…. we’ve got no influence on the education process. We’ve got no influence on career, the career prospects of those kids. We are simply trying to create a little bit of an alternative in terms of their social outlet as adolescents. Which can lead to spin-offs if a kid is suitably impressed by what he can see and what he participates in, that he would like to take that a little further. That’s up to the kid and it requires the school and the education system to accommodate him doing that. To suggest that PBP could be responsible for that wholly and solely: No I wouldn’t have thought so. And I don’t think any of the kids would have thought that either (Clark, 40, 079).

Clark was the president of PBP. He did not view the program as a mechanism for gender transformation or even significant social change. He describes it here as an “add-on”, an enrichment program for those who have access to it. His reference to “parents”, “dads” and “education” demonstrate his conviction that cultural capital would only be accepted as of long-term worth if it was endorsed in the fields of family and schooling.

d) Provide male role models

A perception that boys were drawn to risk taking behaviour because of a shortage of male role models was expressed by a number of participants, including primary school children. It was felt that new male role models were required to challenge the “traditional” masculinity that had been found wanting:

There was obviously concern. The concern was coming from well educated teachers quite frankly. Concern about attitudes I would say. Attitudes of young boys and men. Perhaps alcohol consumption, drug consumption, cigarette consumption. Perhaps a lack of input from fathers. Traditionally, traditionally again country towns are traditional. Fathers have less input than mothers. That’s changing, I know that on excursions or on sports day there are a few of these farmer fathers coming in. Whereas perhaps in the past they didn’t. I think it was a real attempt to get men and boys working together for the betterment of men and boys. ‘Cause women are traditionally involved and therefore girls pick up the slack there perhaps (Frances, 30s, 079).

The assistant principal of the primary school also emphasised that the local women were actively involved in their children’s lives. His understanding of the single
parent demographic in Paterson infers that the anxiety about fathering was not a concern for their absence, but a concern for the nature of the fathering of those present.

We have a lot of good participation in the school setting by mums and a lot of good things where kids go home to mums. A lot of mums find work where they can still be at home when the kids come home. It is very good for families. The positive things are that it is very, very orientated to families there is lots of families around with still a mum and dad this is probably not so typical in a lot of places. (Deputy, 40, 097).

When asked about single parent families he explained that:

It is pretty different. They really actually do stick out a bit. It is really very strange to the other kids. They have no concept of that. It is a very positive place (Deputy, 40, 097).

Although some people appear to have seen PBP as a response to a need for more male role models for single parent families, in this community they are the exception, not the rule. It may be easier to talk about nonexistent absent fathers than appear to criticise the fathering of those present. The “traditional” masculinity in Paterson represented by footballers and farmers is not associated with valuing academic success or culturally diverse expression. According to the principal, PBP hoped to pose a “fundamental challenge to these limited role models of success” (Greg, 40s, 001)

e) Encourage boys to be more ‘involved’

The drive to get boys “more involved” appears to be a response to anxiety about the future rather than a concern for disengagement in the present:

I thought PBP project was great because it focused on boys. It came after a TV program which showed boys in the city saying we don’t run for student representative council because girls would do it. I was absolutely appalled the boys were choosing to just opt out. We realised the boys here weren’t doing much, although we always have enough boys put their hand up for student representative council, I think a real effort was made to include all boys (Gladys, 50s, 058).

Jenna and Serena are aware of the constraints imposed on boys by the narrow definition of masculine behaviour in this community. They see PBP as a way around this characterising its community engagement as a connection with behaviour that is “normal”:

Jenna: (15) It was sort of to give the boys more to do like doing other things out of school.
Serena: (16) It takes a lot more to keep boys entertained.
Jenna: There’s not a lot for boys to do.
Serena: Girls have dance and stuff, and the boys started off doing it but then they didn’t do it ‘cause they ended up getting teased and stuff.

Jenna: But they loved it when they were doing it. Like the unicycles and that sort of thing. They loved all that, they practised at lunch time and that sort of thing.

Jenna: It just keeps them entertained.

Serena: And it keeps them involved in the community too.

Jenna: It’s normal. It gets them out there to do stuff with the community. Instead of just not doing anything (072).

“Normal” here refers to activities that were once out of the ordinary but have become accepted as every day. The girls are boasting here about the circus skills of their friends. Drew, a Year 12 boy who actively participated in the PBP program, points out the value of involvement at both the administrative and creative levels:

To actually see what they’re doing is amazing. I’m actually part of the group, as a member of the youth who actually goes to the meetings and to actually go and see what they’re actually doing. Like making climbing walls and organising ‘Youth Dynasty’ and getting big bands together. I think just being part of a committee like that, for me it just gives you something to strive for and it gives you a sense of making goals. Whereas you feel a little bit lost in the country if you haven’t got something to do. And being in the country I think if I didn’t have something to do I would go a little bit crazy. Not having something to do drives me a little bit crazy (Drew, 17 years, 053).

An interesting array of cultural capital and significant social capital appears to have been made available to some of the PBP participants.

f) Protect boys from risk taking, drugs alcohol and suicide

The Office of Children and Young People’s Children’s Commission report on Deaths, young people and risk taking (2003) found that 70 percent of those who had died from risktaking behaviour or suicide were boys. It found that rural boys were at particular risk as masculinity was defined in much narrower ways in rural areas and boys were afraid of failing to fit in to this definition.

Outside observers to PBP presumed that the program targeted these at risk young men:

I guess it was targeting boys with low self esteem. Maybe boys who didn’t have a dad at home. Boys who needed some extra help to get out of themselves. When it first came in the boys loved it and they were the boys who were the naughty kids. They were coming in here to get the keys to the shed for the monocycles. They were practising all the time. They just loved it. They were focused on something that was positive otherwise they would have been out tormenting someone. So that was a good thing for those kids.
And then going on to perform. They were fantastic. It really developed. To see these kids perform it was really quite meaningful. (Bridget, 40s, 078).

Serena and Jenna, saw the behaviour associated with the boys drinking as a major problem in Paterson, they felt that PBP interrupted this pattern:

**LCP:** Do you think being involved in the arts can make any difference to those [drinking] things?

Serena: (16) I think it did ‘cause it gave them something to do other than just find their own entertainment.

Jenna: (15) And also how they usually drive around in utes.

Serena: Instead it gives them something to focus on and practice and something else to think about.

Jenna: It builds up their self esteem and their confidence. They just look at things differently. Maybe after they’ve done something like in a theatre group they’re more willing to give it a go again (072).

Trish also saw PBP as a diversion or outlet. She saw it as a release for some young people, but doubts its capacity to bring change:

**LCP:** Have you been pleased with PBP?

Trish: (pause). Yes and no. I think PBP has done some great things

**LCP:** Has it brought any change? Permanent change?

Trish: (long pause). No. No. It hasn't brought any permanent change no.

**LCP:** Can it?

Trish: No. Probably not. It can help people at different times when they are in need. It can perhaps prevent crisis... It can help provide social support. For some individuals. It may not make them happy or comfortable in this environment but it may give them a small outlook, so that they do not reach crisis point, if you like. I don't think it can solve the problems, but it can just help (Trish, 30s, 021).

The boys who chose to participate in PBP, identified by Bridget as potential “torments” and Serena and Jenna as boys who ride around in utes and go drinking are also the boys who play football. They were not identified by the principal as the “at risk boys” as he was disappointed that these boys did not participate in the program. There is no evidence that participation in PBP impacted on the risk taking behaviour of the boys involved.

### 6.3.4 Benefits of PBP

**a) Community connectedness**

Marlene is a teacher who has lived in Paterson for many years. She comments on the PBP program as an informed outsider, observing its capacity to develop a positive connection with the community:
I believe that the circus skills thing, that appealed to the kids, like the idea of riding those unicycles and walking on stilts and showing off if you like. The kids who are involved benefited from increased self esteem. Now, I guess the school itself benefited because the kids put on little performances. Primary school benefited with the bigger kids doing activities with the little kids. I say probably everyone benefited but I actually think it was probably good to... it was a good way of showcasing the school in the community it was good to have members of the community involved, because not everybody has connections with the place. Especially getting back to the sculpture, some of the people who worked on that have had no contact with the school since they had kids. It was a nice way to have them involved. Some of them only see kids hanging around the streets at night, or they read about them doing graffiti. So it was a nice positive.

It was good (Marlene, 50s, 116).

Marlene highlights the spin-offs from PBP in terms of school and community links. The connections between the Primary School and High School were strengthened by the mentoring program, where a group of Year 8 boys ran physical theatre workshops for boys at the Primary School. The town monument project helped to forge further bonds within the community. The structural social capital (Godquin & Quisumbing, 2008) she has identified here may provide more long term benefits for Paterson than the cognitive social capital (Godquin & Quisumbing, 2008) produced in the individual participants in PBP. The private social networks enjoyed by individuals will impact on their orientation to life practices and assist them as individuals, but the cooperative group networks fostered through PBP will continue to support other young people for some time to come. PBP appears to have had a significant impact on the social capital of the township of Paterson.

b) Impact on relationships across years

The vertical groupings of students in PBP established bonds across Years, breaking down some old rivalries and age barriers common in schools:

I did the clock tower, the circus side of it and the filmmaking. I think that's about it. I enjoyed it all. I suppose it made people aware of... I'm not sure if it changed the school but it just brought people closer together. Like all the friends. We just knew each other a lot better, instead of leaving people out. You are in a closer relationship sort of thing. It changed the way people viewed each other and that, and had a bit more respect I suppose... . There were two years doing it together and after, those two Years sort of stayed together. Like I did it in Year 10, and all my mates in Year 11 have now left me but we’re still mates and all that. Instead of being in different Years it joined everyone together (Tim, 17 years, 006).

Ben claims that this experience also taught him how to cooperate and work in a team:
There’s a few boys that you still talk to but you don’t go and talk to them all
the time. You’re still friends with them but they’re not in your close circle.
It would be good to do it again with something else. It gave everyone a
break from just school work. We got to know everyone. We learnt team
work and how to cooperate with each other (Ben, 18 years, 005)

The social networks developed through PBP established new patterns of social
capital in Paterson.

6.3.5 Criticism of PBP

a) Sexist

The principal criticism of the program was that it was sexist, failing to consider the
needs of girls in the community, while it reinforced the dominance of the physical
sporting culture:

I remember being a bit outraged because the boys shouldn’t just get access
to that and not the girls as well. I thought that sounded a bit sexist (Jane,
40s, 130).

The Year 12 girls were irritated by their exclusion from the program. This study
appeared to be yet another focus on the boys:

LCP: If you had a million dollars, how would you improve
education for boys in the rural setting?
Mary: (18) Oh bugger them! [energetic, all at once].
Susan: (17) I don’t think they need it (004).

This level of criticism was characterised by PBP supporters as the voice of “political
correctness”. Charges of “elitism” caused them much more discomfort.

b) Elitist

The program was charged with having elitist goals and only serving a social elite:

I think the leadership on it. That was through no-one’s fault, that other
people said it’s a good idea but these people wanted to pick up and run with
it. And they did and then PBP became, in my opinion, an elite group. I don’t
know if people intended it to make it an elite group or not? (Brendan, 30s,
096).

PBP appeared to be taken up only by those free of peer pressure:

PBP hasn’t been extended beyond those bright children. It sticks to the
children who have academic ability and are not affected by their peers. You
don’t see antisocial kids for example. The kids who have social problems,
going to physical theatre, you don’t see them going to theatre although some
of them can dance (Elizabeth, 50, 064).

Brendan characterised the exclusionary nature of PBP as a symptom of the local
class structure:
I don’t want to call it a class system but it is a class system. There’s your haves, your landed gentry if you like, and they tend to be the haves. And then you throw in people with their business in town that are performing really well, that may have something to do with the landed gentry. I shouldn’t say anything… And then you have a lower class and then you have your own class in teachers because in a country town schoolies usually hang around schoolies. Unless you’re good at sport or something and then you’re accepted into the community.

At the moment it’s driven by the upper class, if you like. I don’t want to say that but that’s who it’s driven by. And they believe that it should go this certain way. It should go, if you like, the extreme sports way, the circus performance and that means very little to lots of boys doesn’t it?

A lot of boys, if you like, from the lower middle-class particularly aren’t that rapt about circus skills and riding the unicycle or juggling, I don’t know. It just doesn’t seem to make sense. They’ve done some great things but once again it was for their little niche. And when you get into niche it’s hard to look outside (Brendan, 30s, 096).

Initially boys with high levels of social and cultural capital were encouraged to participate in PBP to give it credibility. Instead of increasing its appeal this association may have served to alienate boys without the locally endorsed capital as they felt “outclassed”.

c) Failed to attract boys ‘at risk’

In reflecting on the impact of the program, the principal observed that:

It’s been seen as being good fun and I guess the big thing is it hasn’t really tapped into the ‘at risk’ kids to really lift them (High School Principal, 001).

Elizabeth felt that it only appealed to the confident boys:

So it didn’t always probably target those boys who would benefit because they might be shy or feeling a bit unusual or a bit nervous about it. I think confidence is a big thing, and a lot of those boys just don’t have the confidence just to try something or take that risk, you know to volunteer for something like that. It’s scary; it’s easier to just not put your hand up. I think that confidence levels of the males in Paterson is probably one of the issues (Elizabeth, 50, 064).

Genevieve was on the PBP committee; she was concerned that the program was not attracting the ‘at risk’ children:

But the thing we have found with PBP is, how do you target those kids? With the programs that we’ve run we see the same kids going. It’s kids whose parents are interested in their children and want to see them trying new things. They’re the kids who are being taken and I’m more worried about the others (Genevieve, 30s, 022).
This is once more the problem of attracting students with low status cultural capital to activities which they perceive to be dominated by the high status boys.

d) **Did not offer new opportunities but reinforced what was already there**

The boys who were most engaged with PBP demonstrated leadership, confidence and creativity. Some observers claimed that these qualities were already apparent and would have emerged without PBP:

> I think he would have done it any way. His mum’s very much into the music... He likes his music. I agree PBP’s done a lot for him, but I think he would have done it anyway (Susan, 30s, 096).

The initial publicity for PBP deliberately targeted the physical football culture of Paterson calculating that other boys would join in if they saw that the “footy boys” endorsed it. This strategy may have unwittingly reinforced the position of the dominant boys and intimidated the marginalised ones. It may also have exposed PBP to the charge that it was reinforcing the hegemonic masculinity in Paterson instead of fostering alternative masculinities.

e) **Did not meet expectations**

After the initial excitement and enthusiasm, there was some disappointment with the new directions of PBP:

> It never ended up being what we thought it was going to be. What we thought it was going to be, workshops with people mentoring, with older and younger, sort of. And it never actually turned into that. There were a few workshops that happened at school but initially we all thought there was going to be a place and older people were going to come and pass on their skills to younger ones and were going to pass it on to older ones and stuff like that. I suppose in that way it hasn’t done anything (Brad, 40s, 100).

Brad may have been one of the local men to support the “Men’s Shed” initiative which began to flourish in rural towns just as PBP went into decline. Carol went further than Brad believing that the entire focus of the project had been wrong:

> They need something more in terms of speakers on ‘risk taking’ or ‘driving and alcohol’ and things like that (Carol, 25 years, 131).

There was not always consensus on the cultural capital endorsed by the PBP committee.
Activities were ‘one-off’ projects without any future direction

Students observed the need for an ongoing context for the development and showcasing of skills that had been introduced;

There was a few boys that done the circus and juggling and all that. It taught them new skills, anyway after they done it they had new skills and they wanted to use ‘em more but we had nothing for them to do. Things like unicycle riding they couldn’t just go do it during sport lesson or anything just ‘cause there were only two or three of them who could do it (Andrew, 15 years, 074).

Community members also felt the need for longer term projects;

Yeah, I think they could have done more. They didn’t do a lot more lasting activities. They really only did activities, like there was a film making activity but it was only really useful for that period of time, it didn’t really carry on if you know what I mean. (Suzanna, 30s, 102).

The shortage of skilled personnel was seen as a reason for the short-term nature of the activities which renders them vulnerable:

I guess the downfall of those sorts of, some of the subsequent programs, not so much downfall, they're sort of one-off sort of programs. Unless you’ve got that, follow-up all the time, and you see things that are working, like the music ones that come in. People come in every week and fine that’s good. A few advanced classes they were going all the time because you had that input all, the time. But the one-off ones, where you have someone come in, they run a workshop and then say “OK, left to your own devices.” Well that’s when it’s hard because you don’t have that person who can coordinate the follow-up to kids practising, to kids around the school. That’s where the failure has been.

It’s like everything now. Like inservice course in any profession, if it’s a one-off thing everyone gets inspired and walks out feeling great but... That’s where the down side is (Col 40s, 66).

John, a Senior Education Officer was quite sceptical about the capacity of an arts project to bring about lasting change. He also saw it as an issue of personnel:

If you have a very good musical teacher who is a very hard worker and has high ethical skills and strong people skills they are able to capture at a local school a great deal of interest and they are able to capture a great deal of interest in that particular subject. Things will flow on from that that will be measurable because you’ll have performances and you’ll have people joining bands and things like that. But it’s all dependent on having the right catalyst to do that. You can’t just suddenly say that injecting arts into the rural community will suddenly up the self esteem of males and improve their academic performances I don’t think that’s credible. It comes totally down to the individuals concerned and totally down to the individuals who are available on the ground to make that difference occur (John, 60s, 007).
PBP began with funding and personnel support but after a short period of time this support was removed and the community picked up the responsibility for the program. The town memorial was completed entirely through local efforts and a range of ongoing activities initiated and sustained. A large committee worked to bring in movies, plays, cartoonists, rock bands, to build a climbing wall and paint a community mural. This program was not dependent on a single talented individual, it harnessed the support of a local team.

g) It is controlled by the dominant boys

As a corollary to the claims that the project was elitist and did not attract the unconfident or “at risk” boys, it was also claimed that the activities were dominated by the “cool” boys:

Grant: (18) They wanted to get the boys into the arts. I don’t know why.
Steve: (18) It just started coming up and boys were starting to get into it.
Grant: The boys that got into it were the boys that get into anything anyway. Like it’s the same boys that will play footy, that will get out and do like, yeah anyway. I thought it was to get the boys out of their shell that don’t come out and do things. It was just the same boys who do footy, do music (009).

John enjoyed the PBP experience. He did not share the view that the program was dominated by a particular group:

David: (17) I had a go but it was controlled by the cool boys. You know, “we are doing things this way”. It just seemed to be basically controlled by the cool kids.
John: (17) I disagree. It was about anyone. Anyone could have gone.
David: It just seemed too hierarchy. To do anything you had to be in the group.
John: To me there are no groups (050).

Steve has pointed out that the “cool” boys are identified with involvement with both football and music. Despite John’s protest there clearly are groups in the youth culture of Paterson and involvement in music and sport, particularly football is associated with the higher status groups. These two fields will be examined more closely in a future section as the nature of the capital valued in Paterson is examined further, but first it is important to examine one of the key features of PBP in practice.
6.3.6  Sex Segregation of PBP

The strongest criticism levelled at PBP and the highest levels of tension in discussions concerning the program, developed around the sex-segregated nature of its activities:

I know there’s some lady teachers on the staff who have very strong feelings that it’s very much a boys’ club (Stuart, 60s, 090).

The senior students were uncomfortable that the program had become divisive:

Jacinta: (16) It’s mainly for boys.
Tim:  (17) That’s why girls don’t like it ‘cause it’s unfair.
Mary:  (18) It’s sexist. How come the girls can’t do it?
David:    Yeah, they need something for girls.
Tim:   What are you meant to do while we do that? (107).

The seniors did not object to the boys having exclusive activities, they just wanted to have some too.

They need something for the boys and girls. Not necessarily combined but it is like the boys are being favoured they get to do all these good things while we do nothing (Sally, 18 years, 081).

On the other hand Year 7 could see no reason for segregating these activities.

Sue:  (12) It’s unfair though. All it is, is ‘Scagging’ and doing tricks and everything. Girls can do that too.
LCP:   Why wasn’t it?
Seb:  (12) I don’t know.
Sue: It’s not as if boys don’t get out and everything they are out the whole time.
Seb: I don’t understand.
Sue: It should be for both girls and boys (107).

Both boys and girls valued the male “bonding” offered by these activities. It was generally accepted that the presence of girls would interfere with this:

Umm they don’t have, like if the girls were there they wouldn’t have as much of the male bonding thing happening. Like I guess we’re a bit of a distraction. And they probably would have been too busy trying to impress us, as they do! (Edith, 15 years, 091).

Tim, a 12 year old boy, was very involved in all the PBP activities. He was aware of the criticisms of the girls and explained that their criticisms could not be answered:

You probably couldn’t, [answer their criticism] well you would in a way because it's benefiting males and all that, but there’s nothing there for them. You couldn’t back it up with anything (Tim, 17 years, 006).
He felt that there should be a program for the girls but he still valued the men only activities very highly:

When girls are around boys I suppose they try to impress them more. Like men always speak differently when you're around women like, keep expletives, swear words out, and like what they speak about as well. When you're around other males and that, they speak differently. It just brings the closeness between the group or whatever (Tim, 17 years, 006).

Tim is a keen footballer but he does not see this as an opportunity for the same type of “male bonding”. Tim identifies the social capital provided by PBP as unique and valuable:

There are times like, just when the socialising that I suppose you can have just males but there are always our females around… football that’s sort of a male thing… But netball and football are all joined around here but in the change room, on the field and in training that's all male…It is the same, sort of, but because you're playing football you're playing to win a premiership and a coach or someone is there telling you what to do and that, so you're not as free or whatever to do what you want. But with PBP there was no-one was sort of the leader, well there was the leader there organising it but we could choose. It was sort of the team it wasn't just coach or whatever. That was pretty good. Like I said before, when males are by themselves and there are no females around they express themselves differently. It would have been different in a way. If females had been there we still would have a good time I think. Yeah probably. You know you try and stand out when you’re around females. By yourself you try not to impress everyone, you just work together and have fun (Tim, 17 years, 006).

Tim is a busy senior student who also has family farming responsibilities. He valued the shared social involvement of PBP very highly:

Yeah because it was something to do. Like if you had problems at home or at school or anything when you did PBP. Everyone was mates and everyone had a good time everyone had a joke and everyone did it. That was really good sort of thing (Tim, 17 years, 006).

He represents PBP as an opportunity to provide masculine social connections for boys who may or may not have a father at home:

Everyone just gets in and has a go. You are always like, you don't just concentrate on what you are doing, you’re not serious about it. You have fun quality doing it and enjoy it.. All bonding in the male bonding sessions, and although that helps, there are a lot of kids around here as well, a fair few anyway, that the parents are separated and living apart, obviously with their mother, that's very good for them, they can still have the male input or whatever. Without their father they'd have none of that. So that's good (Tim, 17 years, 006).
Despite his enthusiasm for the men only program Tim did not believe in exclusively segregated education:

You have to have a mix of them, you can't, like…that's just an occasional thing. Like you have PBP once a week but in school mixed classes are the way to go.
You still have to have that, like, bonding between the different sexes and the bonding between the separate sexes as well. You can't have just boys always altogether sort of thing and girls together all the time. It’s just part of the learning curve I suppose (Tim, 17 years, 006).

For some members of the community too the masculinist segregated nature of the activities were its strength. There has been some disappointment at the changes that have occurred in the program:

I think PBP is a real blokey thing. When it first started it was like it was meant blokes working with young blokes. You know to make things. It’s gone down a different course now. It’s gone to the circus and it’s gone to the expanding the kids’ skills in expression. But when it started off there were people who were prepared to make metal statues with kids or prepared to make furniture with boys and swap their skills. And I think a lot of men saw that as valuable ‘cause a lot of boys want to get in those skills. And I think that’s where it was a really good idea and that is where it diverted. It sort of went down a line and then…I think their intentions were in the right direction but it just happened that way. And I think it went well in the first year because the lady that came up with the idea was driving it. Then the idea that the community take over [was proposed] and then she [Jenny] was taken off. Any way, you know, and, you know, various strong minded people in the community took over and drove it where they thought it was going to be the right idea, And you know they’ve got some great ideas, the climbing wall and all that sort of stuff, but that’s not what I think PBP was about. I think PBP was blokes teaching blokes and I don’t see taking risks climbing walls, or a Fruit Fly Circus, la de dah de dah. I don’t see how that’s a blokes, a Dads and sons, or old men and sons, activity. And that’s where it’s gone, in my perception. I may be wrong, but that’s where I see that it’s going (Brendan, 30s, 97).

Brendan felt that PBP failed to meet the needs of boys without fathers as well as it might have:

You might cater for those boys who don’t have dads if it was more those practical skills because that’s what a lot of boys today miss out on. They don’t have a dad at home and so many boys don’t, they don’t have a male role model around. You do miss out on a lot of those skills that, in the old days, were just handed on from father to son (Brendan, 30s, 97).

Brendan valued the idea of men training boys in areas considered masculine and rural (metal and woodworking skills). As he doesn’t see himself in this role he saw this as an opportunity to remedy a perceived deficit for his son:
As far as our son goes, you’re not handy as far as carpentry or any of those things.. so if he could go somewhere around here where you’ve got people with those skills. I mean what it was originally intended for. I mean for me having a son who, having a father who’s not handy in that way. You could benefit from those sorts of things and that ties in with the rural scene (Brendan, 30s, 97).

Brendan refers here to the “rural scene” indicating that he believes that the local rural culture emphasises some specific skills as part of its representation of masculine behaviour. It appears from the enthusiastic adoption of the PBP program by the community of Paterson that they had some concern for the transformation or maintenance of this aspect of their culture. Feminist researchers working in the area of social capital may see this aspect of PBP as a “strategy to exclude women from powerful networks of trust and reciprocity among men” (Claridge, no date), the leaders of the PBP committee saw it as a necessary recuperative measure to retrieve essential levels of social connection. The High School had been using this strategy for some time.

6.3.6.1 Sex-segregated Classes in Paterson

From the late 1990s to 2003 the executive of Paterson High School introduced sex-segregated classes in Physical Education, Years 7 and 8 Music, Science and Art, Year 9 German and Computer Science and in Year 11 Maths. The current Year 12 has observed this strategy in a range of settings:

 Bronwyn: (17) We were the guinea pigs actually. It was to see if we would work any better, on our own. [Laughter]
 Michelle: (17) I think us girls worked better than the boys.
 Brian: (17) Yeah you would say that too.
 Michelle: I can just imagine a whole group of boys together. [general laughter]
 Brian: No! (004).

The principal and parents were supportive of this strategy:

That’s proven to be very helpful. You can tailor the focus of the class. You can make it a bit more masculine or a bit more feminine as the case may be (001).

A parent of primary aged children was very enthusiastic:

I love the idea of segregated classes. When they get to high school and start realising their own sexuality they are much, much better when not confronted by the other sex all the time. They are able to think better, they are able to relate to teachers better, I think it is a great idea (Trish, 30s, 021).
This support for segregated classes was not generalised to the early years of education:

Certainly in primary school I think it’s important that boys and girls learn in those early years how to co-exist with each other, without all the hormonal and sexual overtones kicking in. It’s important girls have boyfriends and boys have girlfriends and I don’t think single sex primary schools provide that (Trish, 30s, 021).

Teachers in Art, Physical Education and German saw some benefits from segregation. The art teacher believed that she was better able to manage the productivity of the group.

They were more successful [with] their paintings. This particular program, their paintings they did, but boys tend to hurry through things but the girls; the difference between the girls and the boys’ output wasn’t as great as the year before (Diane, 35s, 062).

She attributed the success of the segregation to the elimination of the competitive edge that girls are perceived to carry in a creative environment.

Umm boys are more competitive in an environment where it’s just the boys. If they are in with the girls, girls tend because of their maturity level, tend to excel in the subject and there’s too much competition there for the boys and they feel like they can’t achieve as well as the girls, whereas they’re not comparing themselves to the girls when they are working in a single sex climate (Diane, 35s, 062).

The head teacher responsible for agriculture believed that this situation is reversed in “Ag”. The teacher sees the girls as disadvantaged by their “reserved” stance.

I think it’s [segregation] a good idea. I’d like to have it for Ag. Because a lot of the girls are a lot more reserved than the boys and I think practically you’d be able to do a lot more with the girls and spend more time with them ’cause the boys take over (Allan, 50s, 131).

The German teacher sees the girls as both a distraction to the boys and also a civilising influence.

I teach German in a segregated class and I did enjoy that last term because there were a few people who would be a problem in a mixed class. They try very hard to be macho and tough. I feel that it is better for them to be separate. I have a different group now. The girls really want to learn but the boys are constantly having a go at each other and I think this group would be better mixed. The boys might have been diluted a bit if they were mixed (Gladys, 50s, 058).

The PE teacher referred to the different physical needs of girls and boys and their self consciousness in her preference for segregated classes.
Girls and boys are going through such physical changes at that time that they don’t want to be out there doing something physical in front of the other sex unless they’re really good at it. And I think that you don’t cater for the kids that aren’t that sporty and it actually puts them off exercise sometimes. You know phys ed. might be the only time that some girls get involved in any physical activity and if it’s co-ed class they hang back even more because the boys are involved. When I first came I had single sex classes and then I experienced twelve months here when I just taught phys ed. by myself because our numbers dropped and I was forced to have co-ed classes that year. And I got in and I had Aussie rules football co-ed classes and just found that some sport didn’t work and you’re much better off with the option of having single sex when you need to have single sex and then combining them other times (Molly, 50s, 070).

Some teachers were not enthusiastic about the segregated classes:

At one stage we had a, I think it was a Year 8 or Year 9 group, this is going back lord knows…nineteen…, I think it was a failure. They segregated the boys off thinking that it was a hormonal thing going on with girls and boys. But I think it was just a naughty group of boys and they still remain a naughty group of boys. I think that’s been my experience … I don’t think it had any major outcomes.

... I don’t think it did the boys much benefit, but it may have done. Didn’t do them any harm (Col, 40s, 066).

An experienced senior teacher questioned the presumption that boys were falling behind, noting that higher retention rates disadvantaged many boys:

Well I often wonder if they were actually falling back or whether the girls’ education actually improved the girls so much more that the boys suddenly, you know, ‘cause the boys have always dropped out of school much earlier than the girls. We’ve had senior classes going through with two boys and fifteen girls to Year Twelve in the past. So it’s been a tradition in the past. A lot of boys drop out of school as soon as they turn fifteen. They go and get work on the farms or get jobs rouse-about, shearer or something like that. I think that the change in the educational climate has meant that the boys generally stay on much longer at school but they’re not achieving that well. We’ve always had our good academic boys as well but I think they sometimes have a struggle in the school now because they are coming through with non-academic boys who stay on longer at school who tend not to achieve so well (Stuart, 60s, 090).

The librarian noted that the all-girl classes were quite big and “they are pretty noisy”. The all-boy classes were also challenging for some teachers. Amanda found one of these classes particularly intimidating:

They were fairly feral and they had a young female teacher and it just didn't work ‘cause they were too busy, you know, just being blokes. They were trying basically... . they were just horrible. I wasn't a teacher to them I suppose I was their mum and they treat their mum like a dog so they treated me like a dog. It was quite yucky. And they were three times the size of me.
Like one kid stood in the doorway and he would have taken up three-quarters of the doorway and he said “make me go outside miss” I think they were so busy bouncing off each other for my attention that it just turned into a riot most of the time. But then I know that Sue gets it to work for Art really, really well (Amanda, 30s, 084).

The junior boys that I spoke to did not remember their segregated classes as successes.

No. I know I stuffed up heaps. All the time. I got the feeling the teachers they hated us (Andrew, 15 years, 075).

They claimed that girls in the room were less distracting than boys.

I know I work well sitting next to a girl. I always talk and you do your work at the same time. Whereas with the boys you never do work at all. And that’s different (Luke, 15 years, 111).

The senior boys had a similar view:

LCP: Do single sex classes work better for boys?
Tom: Um. No. Because, just from my own knowledge when we went down to a single sex maths class we didn’t do anything we just talked. Could have to do with the teacher, but yeah. It was Year 11. I don’t know we just didn’t get a lot done. I don’t want to blame the teacher but didn’t really seem to control us…. I guess if there were girls we’d work a bit better (Tom, 17 years, 004).

The Year 12 girls looked forward to returning to mixed sex classes after Year 11 but they found the reality disappointing:

Michelle: (17) In the beginning I thought cool! you know, I thought it would be better.
Bronwyn: (17) No I really liked it in the beginning but lately... like today I was just sitting there trying to do my work and all the boys are just talking and laughing and that and it does distract you. They talk about something completely irrelevant so it does distract you a lot.
Michelle: (17) When it was just the girls we would just sit there and do our work. You would chat but you did not get distracted.
Bronwyn: You would get more work done (004).

Annie and Serena, two Year 11 girls, enjoyed the distraction of boys in the classroom for some subjects but considered them a liability in others.

Single sex classes work well in the arts [for girls] because boys distract us. They might work well for boys.. In some subjects they are okay because you need the boys. Like Primary and Hospitality like because they can't cook, you need them there to bag them. They bag us, we have to be able to bag them. I do prefer all girls class, but boys make it funny. They say things and do things that are funny. If you didn't have guys it would just be boring
because all you would do was work. So you need guys to make it funny (Annie, 16 years, 098).

They enjoyed the competitive banter in subjects which are often sex stereotyped like Primary Industry Studies (Agriculture, or Ag.) and Hospitality Studies (Cookery), but they also recognised that at times this interaction impacted on their learning.

We had Art and Computer with just all girls. That worked all right ‘cause you could express yourself (Annie, 16 years, 098).

Art worked alright. The girls could express themselves more (Diane, 35s, 064).

This year we had Driver Education with just girls. It was a lot easier without the pressure of the boys. Girls found they could just get out there and drive. The boys wanted to be there with the girls I think. Because they wanted the chance to bag us (Serena, 16 years, 072).

The junior high school students saw both costs and benefits in the proposition of sex-segregated classes.

Bronwyn: (17) I’d say Maths classes would be a really good idea to split. Like I feel much more comfortable with just a group of girls. They’ve done that in Year 11 this year and the boys I’ve talked to don’t mind it. They get on with their work and do good.

Edith: (16) In English it would have a worse effect because in English you talk about a lot of things and it’s good to have boys’ and girls’ input on topics and things.

Bronwyn: You need both sides. English would be better as a mixed class.

Edith: Science is a bit the same you need the boys’ side too.

Bronwyn: Music mixed as well because they have it in common and they will probably get along really well (086).

Bronwyn introduces here the idea of the value of relationship building within mixed classes. One of the boys cited this as an important benefit from mixed schooling.

Well I suppose if you’re together with them in a class you get to know each other a lot better. If you have the same interests you have a lot more to talk about. You know you don’t just sit there and have nothing to talk about (Toby, 15 years, 068).

After three years of experimenting with segregated classes there was little consensus among staff and students on their advantage or disadvantage. An experienced Department of Education consultant for Gender Education was ambivalent about the idea of sex-segregated classes:

I have read all the research and I'm still not sure. We have collected data across New South Wales about single sex classes. People are starting them as a boys’ strategy. The research is saying they work better as a girls’
strategy and they are disbanding them just as quickly as they are starting them. So lots of schools are starting them “Oh this is a great idea we will start this” without having a look at the research or even looking at their colleagues. “Have you tried this? What happened? So they’re not working?” And in single sex boys’ schools enrolments are going down. AND single sex girls’ schools you can’t get into (Barb, 50s, 134).

In an overview of this topic Munns et al. (2006) cite three studies which find evidence of some educational advantages in segregated classes; Sukhnandan, Lee and Kelleher (2000), Younger and Warrington (2003) and Woodward, Ferguson and Horwood (1999) (Munns et al., 2006, p. 33). They go on to cite fourteen which raise doubt about the value of this strategy. Neither academic success nor positive social outcomes could be attributed to segregated classes. Although teachers reported improvement in class participation in segregated classes (Younger and Warrington, 2003), Godhino and Shrimpton claimed that:

A twelve month case study in Australia involving three schools and 120 students found that the extent to which boys and girls engage in class-based discussions depends more on their sociocultural positioning than on their gender (Munns et al., 2006, p. 34)

Systematic evaluation of the segregated teaching of both literacy (Younger & Warrington 2003) and mathematics (Jackson 2002) found no uniform improvement in boys’ performance. Improved performances from the girls in the segregated classes also increased the gender divide. The social consequences of this model of schooling may be more costly to young people constructing identities as homophobic stereotyping was found to be supported by this setting (Martino & Meyenn, 2001). In summary single sex classes were found to be:

more competitive, resulting in the boys being more easily distracted.
Furthermore there is the risk that separating girls and boys intensifies gender stereotypes (Sukhnandan, Lee & Kelleher 2000; Martino & Meyenn 2002; Younger & Warrington 2003). There is evidence suggesting that it may lead to a deterioration in boys’ motivation and engagement (Jackson 2002)

The Quebec Ministry of Education (2004) found that “single sex classes possibly reinforced anti-social masculinities and reduced teachers’ expectations of boys” (Munns et al., 2006, p. 34). Despite these findings segregated activities continue to be popularly advocated by the Australian men’s movement and popular psychologists like Stephen Bidulph.

The exploration of sex-segregated classes is an example of the willingness of the Patterson High School administration to introduce structural changes in the school in
pursuit of improved outcomes for the boys. There is little evidence of this change contributing any improvement in the capital available to the boys, on the contrary the social capital available through their friendships with the girls appears to suffer under the model and the discourse of competition and the anti-academic culture which was fostered in the all boy classes did little to support the idea of improving boys’ educational opportunities. Nonetheless, the leaders of the Paterson High Boys’ programs continued to pursue the strategy of sex-segregated programs beyond the classroom.

6.3.7 The Arts: PBP and Performing Art

The focus on arts activities in PBP introduced new symbolic and cultural capital to the site of Paterson. Initially the focus was on visual and performing art, then dance and music activities were introduced.

In the first year of PBP a Sydney based physical theatre troupe ran workshops which culminated in a performance at the opening of a men’s art exhibition. This was the first of several physical theatre activities leading to the formation of a performance group and a team of peer trainers with school monocycles who worked with boys from the primary school to pass on their skills. Film making workshops and a film club were also initiated and went on for several years training young film makers, producing local videos and providing community film nights. In the second year cartooning workshops and a sculpture project, two visual art initiatives, also enjoyed a measure of success in the project. A dance group however, formed to support an eisteddfod performance in the second year, did not stimulate the same sort of long term activity. Local perceptions of acceptable masculine behaviours do not appear to have inhibited the performing arts activities, as no reference was made to masculinity or femininity in this context, but the dance activities did draw comment:

Michelle: (17) No. Actually, there was a jazz course, a dancing competition, and our school got asked to go to Sydney and dance at Wonderland. And there were seven boys in it. But they didn’t do any girly dancing; they were all macho boys, in tight shirts to show their muscles, and they lifted the girls up. They weren’t doing any dancing.

Bronwyn: (17) That would have been funny. I think they wouldn’t have done it if they had to do leaps

Michelle: But it wouldn’t be funny if you saw someone else do it. I guess it’s just ‘cause you know who they are, and if you see them jumping around like pansies, it’d be funny (011).
Even the informal social dancing appears to be closely policed according to a
gendered code:

Michelle: (17) Disco dancing, that’s alright. Parties and stuff.
Bronwyn: (17) Guys have their own sort of dancing.
Michelle: It’s techno dancing, sort of - sharp moves.
Bronwyn: Although if they’re like Tony on the weekend – that was a
bit girly. If they do all the techno dancing and stuff like
that, that’s fine, but if they start moving their hips and
doing stuff like that, I feel freaky.
Cressida: (16) Yeah, but he’s out of school now
Michelle: You could say he was a little bit feminine. It’s funny
Bronwyn: It was just wrong, it didn’t fit in. Because all the other boys
were doing the other dancing and he was just ‘out there’,
pretending to be a girl (011).

The PBP dance, physical theatre, film making, cartooning and sculpture projects
focused on activities. They did not spend time on discussing the idea of masculinity
or exploring issues of marginalisation or subordination. Traditional anxieties
associated with a binary exclusionary understanding of masculinity attached
feminised associations with dance and masculine associations with music:

Although there’s a couple of boys in town that are really into their dance
and things. But they are seen as not normal by the other kids. They’re given
a bit of a hard time and I mean I used to work in the city and I saw it happen
there too so it’s probably not just a country thing. But it’s probably more
acceptable in the city to do something that’s not seen as normal. Well the
boys here seem to be in their bands and things like that, so obviously
musically they’re able to express themselves and make it a social thing as
well. Oh they are always up here in the library on the computers with the
music on. I brought them headphones ‘cause it gets a bit tough with ten
different computers playing music (Miranda, 30s, 063).

According to Diane, the art teacher at the high school, music is perceived to be a
more masculinised art form than either dance or visual art:

There is more high participation in music than there is in art. ‘Cause that’s
perceived to be a little bit more macho. A bit more acceptable. There’s a
very large perception in this community that art is more of a craft based
thing that girls do in their spare time, and it’s nice and neat and tidy and that
sort of thing. So [they have] more traditional ideas about art (Diane, 35s,
062).

In terms of masculine cultural capital that is valued in Paterson youth culture,
music appears to be quite high status.
6.3.7.1 Music: High status cultural capital

Boys are actively participating in music activities both formally and informally in Paterson:

Michelle: (17) I think music’s not really categorised as bad as art.
Cressida: (16) Heaps of the guys are in their own little bands, and heaps of them do music. I don’t know how many of the juniors do it.
Michelle: There’s a junior band.
Cressida: There’s a lot of seniors that get music.
Michelle: But they’re not actually in the music class. They just play guitar and sing and stuff (011).

Paterson boys invest both time and money in their passion for music:

Neville: I like it as backfill so there’s something around. I listen to music everyday.
John: I’ve got about 7,000 EP3s so I just randomly go through them.
Neville: I download songs (16 years, 050).

Music is ranked as second only to sport in importance to the youth culture in Paterson:

I think if something is going to happen in Paterson, usually it’s sporting or music. There’s a fair few self made bands around here and they just basically enjoy music making together (Seth, 15 years, 099).

Parents acknowledge the importance of providing children with access to music by the provision of personal CD players at quite an early age:

My daughter got a CD player when she was nine or ten. She was annoying me with the music that she was playing so it was obvious that she needed one. Claude already has one he got it when he was five. He pinches CDs from the girls CDs (he is six). he will choose his favourite track and he will go to that one and play it over and over (Trish, 30s, 021).

I got my son a CD player in his bedroom for his fourth birthday, But my daughter got hers when she was about six or seven (Miranda, 30s, 063).

Tom was four when he got his first CD player my daughter was about five (Genevieve, 30s, 022).

A parent of older boys describes the enthusiasm for music:

You’d walk down the hall and the walls would be vibrating, you know, thump, thump. Their cars vibrate as they came up the driveway, you know that sort of thing and listening and they have music on all the time (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).
Both parents and educators expressed an enthusiasm for music as a valuable expressive outlet for boys. The Primary school provides many opportunities for developing an appreciation of music:

the boys, particularly in our five sixes stream are into music big time. And probably in three four too. I think music is very important because they can express themselves physically in ways that aren't violent. They can sing, they can do all sorts of things. It allows them to connect with themselves really well. Even my son who is six will sit up beside them putting CDs on and he will sing. He actually has quite a good voice. (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).

The local community radio provides air time for the schools. This opportunity appears to be monopolised by the boys.

Well our boys do it here because they do radio. So they pick their music and they know there's a certain standard. I don’t allow swearing or stuff, so they have to be a bit circumspect about what they choose to play on the radio. But they are given play lists. I usually give them the Top Forty and say, ‘You can choose, but remember the rules.’ basically. It’s just the way it is. The boys, they get into everything (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).

The high school also fosters a keen interest in music:

We’ve got two rock bands here now at the school. Year 8 and Year 11. They’re all male bands. And the thing I think, that sort of rock music is a pretty sort of masculine thing. It’s a funky sort of punk rock. Aggressiveness perhaps (Mathew, 40s, 067).

The type of masculinity that is supported by the music culture of Paterson is characterised as “physical and expressive”. It appears that access to this particular area of the arts does not foster the development of an alternative masculinity, rather it is reinforcing the one associated with the local football. The importance of music culture to these boys is demonstrated by the time commitment they make to it.

The Year 8 boys practise every Tuesday night. Quite often they want to practice at lunchtime. The Year 11 boys are always asking me to borrow the PA equipment over the weekend. So they pretty well go over Saturday and Sunday. The senior boys are planning tours (Mathew, 40s, 067).

The school provides very valuable equipment to these boys to support their afterhours performances and rehearsals. They enjoy a high level of freedom and trust and have consequently developed a high level of skill in using and maintaining electronic musical equipment. These boys claim that involvement in music has transformed them:

To me it’s been pretty much everything. Through music I have done so many things, I have been so many places. That’s why I’m a bit... I enjoy different things than most people around here. I’m a bit more extroverted
and that’s what performing on stage through my musical instrument has done (Drew, 18 years, 054).

Chris values music as a support to the development of masculinist identities. He believes that a level of transformation is also available through listening to music:

Music can be a very guys type of arts thing. It is probably the most accepted. You learn a lot from music and stuff. It is very important in that respect. You listen to it for other reasons too, not just for relaxation. To learn, not just to relax.
You learn lots of things, what other people have done. Their view of things, what things mean. I’ve found it really good. You think of Eminem and that, like the lyrics... that applies to me. You see somebody else the same age as you, you see something in somebody else, and you understand it. But I don’t think you listen to it because you’re trying to show yourself, [but] to develop on your own self-image through other people’s experiences, through music (Chris, 17 years, 054).

Chris and Drew feel that their capacity to engage with music is constrained in their rural context:

Chris: (17) If you are in the city you are closely linked to music of all different types, here you are very limited for choices. I don’t know.. If you were in the city there’s always places you can go and listen to music, whereas down here you have pretty much got to buy a CD and you hope that will be music you like. The radio is poor. I guess we are a small minority in the community. Our radio station sees it as that anyway.

Drew: (18) Although we probably make up a fair proportion of the listening, if they would play more of what we like.

Chris: And there is censorship, pretty strict for radio, it makes it hard for them to play certain music.

Drew: I did community radio for a while yeah. It was like Year 8 English you had the opportunity to put your hand up to do your own radio show. He has pretty much hit the spot. A lot of the music that I wanted to play didn’t go down too well with the censorship laws so I guess I kind of... there can be no swearing or particular imagery.

Chris: It’s also... Even if we could play what we wanted to it wouldn’t get played a lot because you know you’re going to have to compete with everyone else’s music type (054).

The Boys’ Project in Paterson did not at first tap into this enthusiasm for music. It was an arts program but visual art, dance and theatre dominated the first years of the project. Music activities were introduced in response to Drew’s influence on the PBP committee.

The most significant visual art project undertaken by PBP was the town monument.
6.3.7.2 PBP and Visual Art: The community sculpture

One of the incomplete PBP projects initiated by Jenny, the Sydney-based coordinator, was the construction of a town monument to be designed and built by boys under the mentorship of skilled local men.

It was Jenny’s initiative, Veronica [a high school art teacher] picked it up. Then I think there was a clash between the two of them. I don’t know what about. I wasn’t privy to that (Clark, 40s, 079).

The project was carried forward after Jenny left with funding from the local shire:

There was three big Paterson streetscape groups and it was initially the Paterson streetscape group and PBP commenced work on a proposal for the town monument with Veronica who is a high schoolteacher at Paterson High. In terms of really the initial stages of the design and all that sort of thing. So it was at a committee level that Vanessa and the principal came to our meetings with sketches of what our sculpture might look like. Once the construction started it was PBP and the High School that drove it and built it and worked with the local engineer, and sourcing parts and all that (Suzanna, 30s, 102).

In practice the idea for this project came from Jenny the consultant, a female from Sydney, and the responsibility for the project was carried by a female art teacher. It was difficult to sustain the goal of the ‘men only’ role models. When the art teacher transferred to a new school the project faltered:

Vanessa left and the town monument sculpture was in pieces. She left the district. It was PBP and the principal. By then we had a committee and we had regular meetings and it was then: ‘What’s going on with the town monument sculpture?’ to the principal. ‘How are you going with the town monument sculpture?’ every meeting. ‘Oh we’re getting there’.

So he knew that he had to keep plodding along. And he did, slowly but surely it all came together. And then we had this very low key opening. But that was twelve months after. That was October two years ago the town monument sculpture opened. Long after Veronica and Jenny had left. It was in pieces in the workshop. Actually the work had started and it was probably a third of the way through when those two women left. And it was the perseverance of the principal and the PBP committee that actually got it up into the air. And then going to the Shire saying we need a spot, we need money, and they agreed and they cooperated. They liked the whole philosophy and they liked the idea and they said, ‘Rightoh we’ll do this’. (Frances, 30s, 079).

The principal responded to the unfinished project by organising for groups of volunteer boys to work with a local engineer during their metalwork class time. He established vertical groupings of students from different Years to encourage peer support and masculine networking.
It was just during school time. Most of the people at school knew that it was going on. It was good any way. It was different to school ‘cause it gave us time out.
At times it was good, but at times there was arguments and stuff, but there was nothing major. It helped because you got to know the other people that you wouldn’t normally talk to at school from different Year groups. It was 7 to 10. You just wrote your name down on a sheet to start off with, then the teacher organised us into groups of mixed Years. There was two different groups, you got to choose. There was welding and grinding and stuff. It was really good (Tyler, 15 years, 068).

One of the points of appeal for this and other PBP activities was the opportunity to “get out of school”.

You tend to be able to get boys involved if you let them off time in school, to do extra things. I mean they are not silly [laughs] (Diane, 35s, 062).

I participated in it in Year 7, made the town monument sculpture. I took part in that. Our art teacher at the time she just came up with the idea. She designed it all. We went to Kel’s and we just picked out parts and eventually just put it all together. We just picked out the parts and welded them on to the actual thing. We just took it in turns. We had about four or five groups of seven boys in all. Each day we took a different group down for an hour or two during ‘metal’ (Andrew, 15 years, 074).

Students were encouraged to think about their efforts in terms of civic pride and creative expression:

   It helped me to express myself ‘cause we got to think of what parts we sort of needed like the shapes and we worked out with the whole group where they were going to go. Most of the pieces were like old wagon axles and just pieces of old machinery that were lying around. And you just felt like you were contributing your part to it (Andrew, 15 years, 074).

It was reported in the local paper as:

   A project which encourages innovation and creativity from rural and regional communities. It supports males, including youth, to access education and training which will lead to improved job prospects, reduce unemployment and enhance leadership skills (Paterson Bridge, 2001).

These goals were difficult to achieve. Even the concept of student initiated creativity proved difficult to execute. The teacher provided strong leadership and structure:

   I cut out the teeth on that big saw. We had an old one and then we traced it off and enlarged it to make it twice the size it was. It is representing our community. What was it about? I have no idea. I just did what the teacher said to do pretty much. You’ve got the agricultural side of things and the forest (John, 16 years, 050).
This teaching style brought her into conflict with the Sydney coordinator. The breakdown of this relationship ultimately saw the teacher leave the district with the sculpture project in limbo:

Veronica’s teaching style was not to get the kids to do it. She totally controlled the design. The boys workshopped the whole day with her, but basically I know she designed it based around a structure that's up in Hornsby. The concept came from that and then she tied in all the bits and pieces that we dug up and the kids were perfectly happy, however the design was totally not designed by the boys. Jenny wanted the kids to have ownership. They enjoyed the process. They didn’t consider it as an issue at all. The other personality clash things came in around those things (Greg, 40s, 117).

The adults involved in finishing the monument also had difficulty with the collaborative aspect of the creation:

Oh I remember them having some problem there (Susan, 40s, 096).

We had Kel as a mentor, whose workshop it was happening in. He kept adding things to it after it was done like giant scissors, that he’s got on the top of his car (like he’s a bit of an idiot). And he put those up there. And also he put a milking stool.

It was just awful. It was terrible and we kept going; “Now how are we going to tackle this”. This is a really tricky situation ‘cause the town monument is his too you know. So we sent off an email. “It was great having you at our meetings; you know we’re not here for the Shire. We are not entirely happy with the additions.” And he said “Neither is the Streetscape Committee neither is the Shire. I’ll have a chat to Clark”. So that was fine, nothing happened. So a few months later they disappeared. And about two weeks later they are back again on top of everything. And I realised and prayed again and then they went. We had no other issues. (Clark, 40s, 079).

Yeah then there was a bit of a disturbance about what should go up there because some older gentlemen wanted something to go on, yeah some shears they took some shears off. So that’s the difficult thing about it. Some people wanted this, some people’s belief was in this direction, and they happened to be in charge and they were very strong people. They believed what they believed in and yet other people had input, you know what I mean (Susan, 40s, 096).

The local newspaper reported the monument as “a local landmark with a difference”, “an unusual landmark and innovative sculpture”(2001).

The community is now quite thrilled with the monument. They value it as an expression of local creativity and a focal point for an isolated location:

I love it... I thought it was a great project. Jenny White initiated it with the High School. She approached a number of businesses around town to help them do that project. It took a lot longer than they ever anticipated and it was a lot more difficult than they ever anticipated. But when it was done
they were all very surprised at how well they had done. It now sits in the middle of the town. And, to my knowledge the feedback has been good. A lot of tourists stand in front of it to have their picture taken. And there was discussion to having a postcard made out of it. It is a long lasting monument that stands there. It depicts the town, doesn’t it? Parts of it have come out of different farms really. It has a history, and says lots about the town. It’s not built out of brick, it’s built out of iron, the colours blend with the river (Trish, 30s, 021).

The concept of local men passing on their skills to the next generation appealed to the general public as well as those directly involved in PBP:

Great, I think it was great. I think the fact that there were such great role models in the community, the kids respected, looked up to, came on board. It would not have been as good if it had not been embraced by people from the community with those particular skills. I mean the working on the sculpture that was absolutely fantastic. Advice that the kids got out of that, not only the kids in the design, they owned the building, but working with the artist. That is something that will last forever. Even though our local bus proprietor says they failed to get it right. They didn’t represent every industry, they needed a local bus on top! Which I thought was great (Meredith, 50s, 116).

It is fantastic. There were these old guys who worked on it with the boys. They designed it, made it and installed it and they are really proud of it. The girls are really proud of it too (Genevieve, 30s, 022).

It pleased people to see their local culture represented by local youngsters:

I think it’s wonderful. Just the fact that it shows a little bit of everything that is in the area and I assume, from the little bit I know about it, that it was designed and made by the young people of the town. I think that’s great (Lisa, 30s, 019).

It is valued for being “different” and “unusual”, a testament to the originality and creativity of the town:

I have never looked at it very closely. I like the idea of the whole cooperative nature of the thing and the artistic nature of the thing. I think it’s great that a community can express themselves a little bit more interestingly than through the town or whatever (Jane, 40s, 130).

Some pointed to this as evidence that the town was more tolerant of difference and nurturing of creativity:

The town monument was a good example. Interesting, it’s better than, have you been to X town? They have got a really boring town monument. It’s just a little thing and it sits on a square thing. Ours is a lot better. That’s something different that’s been accepted (Michelle, 17 years, 011).

I think it’s pretty good for them, like if you can’t be creative you’re just boring. (John, 16 years, 050)
Well the abstractness of it says that we’re willing to be different and try and understand different things. Umm I s’pose being made from ex-machinery stuff shows that we have industry around here (Sally, 17 years, 081).

The tenacity of the principal in picking up this difficult project and bringing it to fulfilment was universally admired but the image of the community portrayed by the work is not without its critics:

Cherilyn: Oh yeah. Oh it’s all right.
LCP: What’s it about?
Cherilyn: Cutting down all the trees. And using all the water [Laughs] and watching it all slip away on the clock! (Cherilyn, 40s, 089).

In my first meeting with a group of Year 12 students at Paterson High the students discussed the monument:

Tim: (17) It’s pretty good.
Jackie: (16) I like it [general noises of assent].
Nichola (17) I love it, it’s pretty cool!
Jackie I said I like it.
Wendy (17) Yeah I do.
Jackie So do I.
Brent (18) It sums it up. Paterson [general giggles].
LCP And what do you think it says about Paterson?
Jackie Rust, old… country town.
General Yeah!
Brent It is, it has the big saw that is the red gum, the water wheels from farming round the area and all the mechanical parts. It sums it up. Shearing and tractor parts.
Jackie Like Paterson, very Masculine. (003).

A Year 11 student made the point more strongly:

The clock is so masculine, all sharp and spikey, just like Paterson, Very Masculine (Kerren, 16 years, 048).

The Year 11 girls illustrated their perception that the monument was masculinist by exploring feminine alternatives:

Ella: (15) The monument is cool.
Jenna: (15) It’s got sharp edges.
Ella: It’s got like saws and wheels and things…
Jenna: You can tell that a male made it like from around here like it’s got like stuff that relates to around here, which is mainly males’ jobs anyway, like woodcutting, farming, stuff like that. It hasn’t got like flowers or stuff like you know you can tell that it’s like a male production, or something like that. Or a male influenced production… because if you just put like a big flower it would be just…
Jacinta: (16) It would look completely different if it was a production by girls.
Jenna: Yeah it would look really different it wouldn't have all saws and sharp points and boys stuff and silver. It would be completely different. It would be like… (lots of giggles of assent and encouragement throughout). feminine (003).

The suggestion that the image may be considered masculine was not well received by a member of the PBP committee.

Well I don’t see it that way. I see it as a testament to the history of the district. And unless you want to hang bloody tapestry quilts over it I don’t know how you could do it any other way (Frances, 30s, 079).

In 1984 Australian sculptor Rosalie Gascoigne created an installation of large enamelled domestic objects; jugs, pots, bowls, urns, teapots, salvaged from rubbish tips (Gellatly et al., 2008, p. 72). This celebration of the labour of women in the Australian rural landscape challenges the perceptions of both Frances and the Year 11 girls that representations of the rural feminine are restricted to images of flowers and tapestry quilts. The PBP sculpture project raises many interesting questions about rural images of masculinity and femininity and the changing cultural capital valued in this rural place but there was no evidence of either boys or girls participating in any discussion of these issues.

6.3.8 The field of practice of PBP

There is evidence of shifting in the cooperative groupings and networks of Paterson as a result of the social engagements facilitated by the activities of PBP in the form of structural social capital as well as the development of new personal links in the form of the development of new cognitive social capital (Uphoff & Wijajayaratna, 2000). According to the organisers, one of the goals of PBP was to increase the value of artistic cultural capital in relation to the dominant sporting cultural capital. There is little evidence of this goal having been achieved, however changes in cultural capital values in Paterson youth culture were evident.

The symbolic capital associated with PBP indicated interesting shifts in the cultural capital valued by the young people in the site of Paterson as the project which relied on traditionally rural imagery, the sculpture, faltered and the activities which introduced imagery from beyond the rural setting, film making, physical theatre, rock concerts etc. flourished. A closer examination of the field of practice of youth culture in Paterson will explore this phenomenon.
6.4 Youth microcultures: Friggers and Skeggs

According to Bourdieu an examination of “taste” and “valued cultural capital” will reveal the distribution of power and status in a social group (Bourdieu, 1984a). On the surface status appears to be distributed in Paterson according to traditional Australian class lines. The “landed gentry”, or “squattocracy” is referred to, and there are references to “poshness”, “toffs” and “snobbery”.

The squattocracy comes to town to a function they all have their old school tie on. Maybe Melbourne Boys’ Grammar or Geelong Grammar, Scotch Boys or whichever school they went to. You know what I mean, that old school tie still holds sway for sure (Cherilyn, 40s, 089).

It was really interesting the year that I worked on The Show, for the Lions I mean, the horse community! ‘cause the second day was gymkhana day, and that was a real showpiece in the pecking order. You could almost see them park their horse floats in order of their social standing in the community (David, 40s, 088).

This old structure appears to be associated with what Bourdieu refers to as the overarching field of power. Historically the landed class with private school education procured a greater quantity of the capital legitimised in the overarching field of power. Although this structure has demonstrated a degree of durability, changes in the rural economy and pressure from global cultural dynamism is beginning to challenge its hegemony. The field of power is changing and this has a cross-field effect on the youth culture of Paterson. Within the field of practice of youth culture there were two unique microcultures which functioned within their own codes of status and power. The young people called these groups the ‘Friggers’ and the ‘Skeggs’. The Friggers identify with the traditional rural culture and the Skeggs identify with a cosmopolitan ‘street/beach’ culture.

6.4.1 Friggers

In this isolated rural location it is not surprising to find that one of the youth microcultural identities is tied to the image of the horseman or grazier. The symbolic capital of the Frigger image (Figure 5.1) is associated with the country clothing provided by the iconic Australian Company RM Williams:
Masculine Frigger clothing; collared shirts, leather boots, buckled belts, tight jeans and big hats (Williams, 2009)

The dress code of the Frigger was readily recognised by the young people of Paterson:

It’s more country. It’s more your country style of dress up. He’s got the R. M Williams Shirts and the tight jeans (Leticia, 13 years, 141).

The following images, taken from the RM Williams web site, illustrate the association of the boots, belts, jeans and collared shirts with the handling of livestock and outdoors physical work.

Frigger are potentially identified with the old Squattocracy. The term appears to originate with a derisive jibe at Polo a popular pursuit of the successful Australian landholders:

Anyone who plays Polo is a saddle Frigger (Sue, 40s, 137).
The Concise Oxford Dictionary provides a definition for the term *frig*:

Now course slang: 1. wriggle 2. rub or chafe 3. masturbate also fuck, muck about, fool around (Fowler & Fowler, 1964).

The term *Frigger* appears to originate with rural anti-establishment feeling. The socially elite polo players are referred to as:

Wankers on horseback (Sue, 40s, 137).

Like many terms which originate as an attack this one has been subverted by those who were its target. The term may still be applied to horse riders but it is more generally applied to those who identify with a particular rural image. Many rural people choose to claim this label and identify with this image:

It’s the country look. You don’t necessarily have to have the cowboy boots and the big ten gallon hat but if you dress mainly R. M. Williams style of dressing maybe.. yeah. It is, like the moleskins, the nice shirt, the R. M. Williams boots (Cressida, 16 years, 042).

They’re cowboys. Sort of farmers in their jeans and boots and hats and everything (laugh). Drivin’ their utes around with big mud flaps and 50 aerials (Steve, 18 years, 009).

The *Frigger* image is not restricted to boys:

Chelsea, she dresses very country. The first time she came in Fred said “She’s a Frigger Mum.” It’s not derogatory or anything it’s just putting them in that category. They don’t necessarily have to ride horses (Sue, 40s, 040).

It’s somebody who’s really country. If you saw somebody, say even a women like Miss Riley for example, the way she dresses for work with the moleskins and the country type shirt (Sebastian, 12 years, 142).

*Figure 6.3* Feminine Frigger clothing; collared shirt, leather belt, large hat, riding boots and tight jeans.
This advertisement, Figure 6.3 for RM Williams illustrates symbolic capital of the female Frigger image.

Vanessa is very proud to be a Frigger. She points out that some of the young people who bear the signs of being a Frigger (for example driving a ‘ute’), may not be authentic. She is scornful of these aspirants and confident that her skill in the masculinist tasks of country living will be approved by genuine Friggers:

Yes! I love my ute and my boots and my hat and I’m just really comfortable with that and I expect people to take me as I am. I don’t change for other people. I’m not sure that I’m tough but I’m more respected in some means because I’m not a yobbo sort of thing. You know there’s the town boys and the country boys and there’s two types of country boys. There’s the wannabe city boys who drive around in utes and they’ve got no idea and there’s the real country people who have a real love for the country and they’ve got respect. And being off the land they know that I know what I’m talking about and you get accepted because they know you can do it (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

Vanessa characterises the customising of utilities as a rural art form. She celebrated the creativity of:

Utes, bull bars, aerials definitely a trade mark when you know it is a country person (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

She defied the Paterson preference for the Skegg culture:

Like tomorrow when I wear my big akubra to school I’m not sure how the others will react (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

The Year 7 students at Paterson High note that the Frigger image is identified with rural wealth. They saw the potentially superior status of the Frigger identity rendered more acceptable to the anti-establishment sentiment of the local culture by their engagement with hard physical work and rough behaviour:

Kelsey: (11) I was just thinking about that. I’ve got a lot of friends in Hay.
       It was just like that.
Leticia: (12) All the toffs.
Arizona: (12) Yeah that’s what you’d wear, but it’s also a Frigger culture over there.
       Yeah.
Arizona: See it shows that you’ve got money if you dress like that. The poor farmers or the workers on the farm can’t wear that stuff
       ’Cause it’s expensive.
Leticia: It separates you. So you own a farm as opposed to work on a farm. If you wear R. M. Williams quality, it’s expensive.
Arizona: Friggers are more posh than Skeggs.
Kelsey: But Friggers aren’t posh ‘cause they get out on motorbikes and they shear sheep and they spit and they...yeah (141).
They also pointed out the importance of location and context in establishing the status and acceptability of an image.

Jan: (12) When you’re a Skegg you’re one of the cool people.
Sean: (12) Yeah and if you’re Posh you’re not cool.
Kieran: (11) Friggers they’re not, if you went into the country they’re all right. They’re not cool like the Skegg.
Sean: In the rural countryside Friggers fit in, they are not ‘posh’ or ‘toffy’ but they are not ‘cool’. Only Skeggs are cool (141).

Miss Riley has only recently arrived in the township of Paterson and she feels that her Frigger image is not comfortably received in the town:

I feel like a bloody alien when I wear by riding boots into town (20s, 131).

Miss Riley considered the term Frigger insulting in the Paterson context but she was aware of its use as a badge of pride in other locations:

Miss Riley: If they don’t like them and they’re paying them out they call them Friggers. It’s more of an abrupt way of saying it more..
LCP: Insulting?
Miss Riley: Yeah. But I’ve got a friend that lives at Hubtown, they’ve just moved out and they said their place is called ‘a Friggers weekend’ (20s, 137).

In Hubtown the Frigger identity is quite high status so the country retreat is proudly labelled a “Friggers weekend” but the township of Paterson identified more with the image of the Skegg so in this location the name seems offensive.

6.4.2 Skeggs

The word Skegg was originally associated with surfing. A dictionary definition describes it as:

A small stabilising fin attached to the underside of a surfboard (1988, p. 928).

The Title Skegg appears to have been applied to surfers in the early 1980s in southeastern Australia. The Lexicon of Cadet language: Royal military college Duntroon in the period 1983 to 1985, offers a succinct definition:

skeg(g) a surfie, i.e., an afficionado of surfboard riding (or one who seems to be such because of his long bleached hair and bronze-tanned skin): a cult figure (B. Moore, 1993).

Tracks magazines from 1984 supported this definition in the April edition:
skeg/skeghead a surfie one who rides a surfboard (p. 5)
and provided an elaboration in the August edition:
Ever since I moved to the western suburbs I've been confused about the different sayings for a surfer. For instance, the most popular term for a surfer out here is 'waxhead', although some people like to use the word 'skeg' (1984b, p. 5)

The usage of the term in a rural context may also have appeared in the 1980s as a Riverina farmer explains:

When I was at Ag college in Geelong, 1984-6 there was a guy there we called Skegg 'cause he used to skip lectures to drive across to the coast to surf. He would drive around in a little Toyota Hatchback with Oakley and Rip Curl stickers on it while everyone else drove around in their utes with Conargo Pub stickers. Instead of moleskins he wore Fair Isle high neck jumpers and beanies (Alistair, 34, 127).

The link between the US surf culture and the local culture signalled by the term Skegg was identified by some of the trainee teachers at university in Wagga Wagga:

John: The Skeggs grew out of the Homies which was the original that came out of the East seventeen [USA].
Bernadette: The Homies were kind of the first. You know the baggy pants
Val: The homeboy American.
Bernadette: When I was at Primary school everyone was a Homie. By the time I got to High School, in that three year transition between Year 5 and Year 7 [1995] they became Skeggs, they were ‘skater boys’ (20s, 140).

The online urban dictionary explains that:

Language used in the representation of the surf culture transferred to the skateboarding culture in California. Skateboarding and Rap culture in Australia was briefly identified with the African-American street language of ‘Homies’ but reverted back to the surfing language. The term Skegg appears to have quite wide usage among young people in NSW and Victoria (Herbert, 2005).

A 2004 entry demonstrates that the usage of the term had in fact crossed the continent applying exclusively to skateboarders:

Skeg(g) -Popular term in the State of Western Australia referring to teenagers, in particular, who wear ultra baggy/loose jeans with some of their underwear showing (why the hell we ask!?) and a t-shirt that's a bit too small. either that or an equally baggy jumper/sweater. The key thing is they skate. Generally loners too.
"Bloody skegs think they own the footpath..." (McGee, 2004)
6.4.3 Youth microcultures in Paterson

There is evidence that the younger girls in Paterson are more interested in the urban image of the Skegg than the rural image of the Frigger but the behaviours associated with a female Skegg appear to focus on the identification of representations rather than physical actions. The Skegg image appears to be the dominant one in the High school setting:

Then you get to Year 9, every one of them is a Skegg. And like them boys that I was talking about they’ve got.. they’ve like got the jeans and the Skeggy shoes and everything but they’re not as Skegy but then a year above them every one of ‘em is a Skegg (Kieran, 13 years, 107).

It is interesting to note that many of Australia’s top surfing brand clothing businesses originate in Geelong, Victoria. The Austin Brothers Company and others staffed their business through mates from the Chillwell and Newtown football clubs (Valda Cotter, 2007, personal communication). It is possible that the colloquial usage of the term Skegg accompanied this branding north, away from the coast to the inland destination of Paterson where it became more generalised to describe a culture of bike riding, snowboarding, skating and rollerblading.

One of the key signifiers of a Skegg is the presence of surf labels on the clothing:

John: You tend to see them; they will have the skater shoes.
Val: A bit more labels.
Bernadette: Yeah the labels. They tend to be in jeans more.
Val: And baggy.
John: They tend to be baggier and they have the big key chains connecting the wallet.
Val: That’s usually weighing down the pants.
John: That will hang halfway down the trousers. The caps at weird angles.
John: I don’t know the meaning of the angles any more apparently there is some sort of code (20s, 140).
Figure 6.4 Rural youth in a skateboard park.

Figure 6.4 shows rural skateboard parks provide a focus for the *Skegg* identity. Pushbikes and skateboards share the space which is monopolised by boys in baggy pants, caps and ‘skate’ shoes.

### 6.4.4 The semantic space of youth microcultures

The appearance of the *Friggers* and *Skeggs* clearly sets them apart from each other as the symbolic capital associated with the identities is a pointer to the cultural capital valued in their practices. The hat is an important signifier:

Tim: (13) *Friggers* wear cowboy hats.

Arizona: (12) They wear their Akubras most of the time.

Tim: A lot of *Skeggs* use the visors and stuff as hats so tennis visors and stuff.

Leticia: (12) Sideways any way at all.
Arizona: The normal hats they wear backwards or sideways or something.

Tim: You know the truckie hats? They have em like they just plonk them on their heads. They don’t make them tight.

Arizona: Or they sit up- and it doesn’t matter if they are pointing out this way (107).

Each piece of clothing is recognised by these young people as significant:

Leticia: (12) Because they’re like, the clothes they wear. As soon as you see the colours and the clothes you go, ‘there’s a Skegg’. They’ve got the shoes, the socks.

Arizona: (12) Usually the boys, if it’s hot they have the three-quarter pants with the socks pulled up and skate shoes.

Kelsey: (11) They have their pants like down their bum.

Leticia: Oh they wear like chains.

Tim: (13) Chains from the jeans to the wallet.

Arizona: And they wear the things with the silver pokey out things.

Leticia: Oh yeah, the spiky things.

Tim: They wear dog collars.

Arizona: You just strap it on your wrist and then they’ve got spikes on them.

Leticia: They wear whatever is fashionable.

Kelsey: More chains than most.

Tim: And cowboys, they could like wear a chain maybe but they wouldn’t wear fashionable stuff. [Skeggs] wear hair gel.

Arizona: Cowboys probably wouldn’t.

Chelsea: Skeggs could well.

Danny: Me brother’s a Skegg. He’s got the Jeans and the shoes.

Tim: A lot of the Skeggs if it’s cold they wear the jumpers with the hoods.

Leticia: Yeah they wear the hoods over their hat or just the hood.

Danny: (11) He’s got the visor thing coming out the front with the hood over the top (107).

Even when they are in school uniform and appear to the untrained eye to be unvarying the identity markers are readily recognised by these young people:

Arizona: (12) Flat hair like Hat Hair, like all combed down.

Leticia: (12) When he puts his hat on it all comes out the sides. (they surround one of their friends sitting at a computer in the library).

Kelsey: (11) You can tell by the baggy pants.

Arizona: The socks are Skeggy too. See he has them way up like sitting higher.

Sebastian: (13) I like baggy pants and socks.

Arizona: If you go to Cropper you’ll see heaps of them. Lots of big baggy jeans and skate shoes.

Leticia: They come down round their bum.

Arizona: Yeah. Like nearly ever boy in Cropper is a Skegg. (they inspect the boys shoes).
Leticia: They’re like globes. Ya untie ‘em and (babble, all talk at once).
Arizona: No I don’t think he’s got ‘em on has he?
Leticia: He hasn’t got his globes on today.
Arizona: See how they’re like loose. [for riding ]on skateboards (107).

Figure 6.5 Skegg “skate” shoes

Figure 6.6 Skegg “gangsta” pants

Figure 6.5 shows that Skegg shoes are wide and flat. The loose elastic style lacing is designed to allow them to slip off easily. Skegg pants, as shown in Figure 6.6 are baggy, often dragged down below the underpants line. According to conversations on a number of blogging sites:

Sagging pants became the behind-the-bars thing thanks to ill-fitting prison issue garb: some of those incarcerated were provided with clothing a few sizes too large. That oversizing, coupled with the lack of belts in the big house, led to a great number of jailbirds whose pants were falling off their arses. (Belts are not permitted in most correctional facilities because all too often the lifeless bodies of their inmate owners have been found hanging from them.) (Progger, 2006, p. 1)

Enthusiasts on the Wikipedia site trace the fashion from an act of protest/solidarity with a gaol inmate on suicide watch whose belt had been confiscated. As a hip hop style statement this fashion has travelled from Los Angeles around the world. They also note the possibility of its association with urban poverty:

This style of fashion, along with its associated hand signs and territorial or "homeboy" mentality, was adopted by African-American youth in Los Angeles initially, and later by the hip hop community at large. The style of sagging one's pants is also a style that originated in poor, urban communities where clothes had to be passed down from older, bigger siblings to younger, smaller family members (Anonymous, 2009).
The fashion of “sagging” the pants is an integral part of the embodiment of this identity as bloggers also noted that: “Sagging pants worn this way are kept up by constant hitching, an act that becomes an integral part of the walking style of the wearer.” (Mikelson, 2005, p. 1). The association of this appearance with street gangs has lead to a series of attempts to ban the clothing in some centres in the U.S.:

February 2005 Virginia House of Delegates passed the so called droopy draws bill, legislation that would have imposed a $50 fine on people who wore their pants so that their underwear was visible in a ‘lewd or indecent manner.’ That bill was killed by a senate committee two days later. In May 2004 Louisiana law makers attempted to say no to the plumber’s crack by passing House Bill 1625, legislation that would have made it a crime to wear clothing in public that ‘intentionally exposes undergarments or intentionally exposes any portion of the pubic hair, cleft of the buttocks or genitals’. That bill was also rejected by the state’s senate (Mikelson, 2005, p. 1).

Antagonism to this fashion has not been as strong in Australia. In urban sites this image is identified with graffiti and skateboard damage to street furniture, there was no evidence of these aspects of this image in the rural site of Patterson. There was a little graffiti in the larger centre an hour away but Paterson’s Skegg culture appropriated the sagging pants and beach labels with emulating acts of vandalism. There was enthusiastic discussion of tattoos and piercing but little evidence of actively engaging in these practices.

### 6.4.5 Friggers and Skeggs in practice

Conversations in response to the discussion starter surveys about Friggers and Skeggs (Appendix 2) demonstrated the nature of the practices associated with these two youth microcultures. The surveys were administered in thirteen conversations with students from Years 9, 10 and 11.

In summary these surveys found that Friggers could be expected to:

- work on a farm
- shoot guns
- play football
- drink beer and “bundy” (Bundaberg Rum)
- care for children and the elderly
- manage machinery
- be careless about their appearance and health
- be self sufficient
- enjoy Country and Western music

They would not be interested in:

- reading
- movies or theatre
- the arts
other people’s opinions
brand names
cosmetic products
masculine jewellery
tattoos or piercing

The important place of football in the Frigger culture is demonstrated by the integration of the football jersey into Frigger formal wear (figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7 The Frigger identity includes football jerseys with the RM Williams items.

The surveys found that the practices associated with the Skegg identity included:

- riding
- skating
- driving
- drinking “cruzers”
- body piercing
- Rap, movies
- loud music
- smoking
- brand names
- painting graffiti
- break dancing
- downloading music
- downloading movies
- chat and MSM
- colouring hair
- using products
- masculine jewellery
The *Skegg* identity is not associated with:

- the ute culture
- Country and Western music
- domestic duties
- child care
- aged care
- RM Williams clothing

### 6.4.6 Beach culture

The symbolic capital of the ‘*Skegg*’ beach culture is most apparent amongst the younger teenagers. At the Primary School the Year 6 celebrated the end of their final year with a fun day of activities including a “Dunk ‘em” machine. Students lined up to attempt to dunk the Year 6 victim sitting on the ledge above a dunking tank. A line of excited Year 6s waited in their swim wear for their dunking turn. It was startling in this isolated inland town to see so many ‘trendy’ bikinis and surf label board shorts and accessories. I have supervised at many rural school swimming carnivals where I was accustomed to seeing ‘footy shorts’ doubling as swimmers and tired bath towels serving as swimming towels but these youngsters were well equipped with brightly coloured, labelled surfware. One of the locals explained this as a symptom of a mindset which looked outward in contrast to a town nearby which looked inland:

> And maybe living on the River and Melbourne being the central place to go to the kids here aspire to go to the beach. Whereas when you go to Ricetown [30 kms away] it is nearly too far away. It sort of becomes inland. It’s cowboy country once you get to there. And yet we have always had this down to Melbourne thing. To shop, all my life it was, “we’re going to Melbourne”. Yeah, but when I lived at Ricetown to go to Melbourne is a big journey. You know it’s all day to get there and it’s only that extra bit out of town but they have that cowboy crossover mentality at Ricetown (Cherilyn, 45s, 089).

Hubtown, which is an hour away from Paterson has easier access to Melbourne with an airport and better quality roads but the dominant youth culture there is the *Frigger* culture which looks inland rather than to the coast for its signs and symbols and symbolic capital.

The Year 7s do not believe that the electronic mass media is important in the development of their images. They emphasise the importance of watching others, particularly older brothers and sisters, and reading magazines:
**LCP:** So do you think the ideas all come from television and movies?

**Jan:** (12) Not really.

**Sean:** There’s not really many Skeggs on television is there?

**Jan:** No not really.

**Sean:** (12) In magazines and stuff you see people and when you go to Melbourne you see it all about the street and you come back and they’re in the shops and stuff so you try it (107).

### 6.4.7 Attitudes in youth microcultures

The rural Frigger image is associated with hard work and physical endurance. The “cool” Skegg image which has high cultural capital value to the young people is not as acceptable to the adult community:

A typical job for a Skegg is no job at all. ‘Friggers’ are farmers [they] will help out on farms. A Skegg has higher status in the town than a Frigger, they are more popular with the town people. But if you think of the parents of the town kids the ‘Friggers’ and cowboys are more highly... well socially acceptable. Parents don't accept what the Skeggs do (Kirrily, 16 years, 108).

Yes, there is a lot of cowboys, they are just basically farm people. ‘Friggers’ are people who work more. Like if you gave a job to a Skegg I bet he would leave it to the last minute. And they would not do it properly. But ‘Friggers’ will, and they will work late, like they will just work more (Sunny, 17 years, 045).

**Fred:** (14) ‘Skeggs’ probably can't be bothered about doing their homework anyway. They sit around and talk shit.

**Brian:** (15) A Skegg would be someone who just bums around the streets (109).

Arizona explains that it is possible to be identified with the “cool” Skegg image and still be socially acceptable. She identifies three boys who are still “nice” but are identified as “Skeggy”:

He wears some Skegg clothes but... like there’s Cato and Nick and Brice and all of them. They’re really nice but they’re very Skeggy (13 years, 104).

**Skeggs** value their image and their friendships:

*Skeggs* worry about how they look and act. Cowboys really couldn't care less what people think of them. They care about when the crops can be harvested or when the rains are going to come (Mark, 15 years, 082).

**Skeggs** are associated with smoking and illicit drug use whereas Friggers major in alcohol consumption:

Not all Skeggs do it but a lot of Cropper people smoke drugs and stuff (Arizona, 13 years, 104).
Friggers refer to drinking “slabs of Bundy” (rum). Beer is associated with both of the groups both male and female:

They [Skeggs] always drink things like cruzers and Red Bears and stuff like that. They hate Bundy. They sometimes, usually drink beer (Luke, 15 years, 133).

For some young people Friggers and Skeggs represent a social binary, the divide between the rural and the urban:

It is a town and country thing again. A lot of the town kids like Eminem and that sort of stuff and a lot of my more farm friends like Lee Kernagan and that sort of thing. Country is an easy identity to go with, it is sort of easy flowing, it’s not quite as grunge as the kids in town (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

But Sebastian points out that many of the young people who identify as Skeggs come from farms:

They, when they come into town they are all Skeggsie. If a Skegg lives on a farm they ride a motorbike and do jumps and everything (Sebastian, 12 years, 141).

Based on his personal experience Mark rejects Ella’s supposition that a farming upbringing leads to identification with the Frigger culture. He sees the selection of a youth microculture for these young people as a matter of choice. He notes that people react differently to situations. He does not see the Frigger identity as an inevitable choice for farming youth:

Ella: (15) It depends. If he’s brought up on a farm and like he’s been working on a farm since he was little he might.

Mark: (15) I was brought up on a farm. My brother lives on a farm but he’s not a Frigger but my sister’s a Frigger. She looks after sheep. It depends on how they’re brought up. Depends on how they react. Mark (15, 082).

Mark’s reference to the way young people react to their context affirms the agentic capacity held by these young people as they construct their identities in this isolated rural place.

6.4.8 Rejection of the ‘other’

Music is an important signifier of social grouping. Rivalry between the two images of Frigger and Skegg is articulated by a rejection of the music identified with the ‘other’. The Frigger image was often derided by the boys from Paterson and Manywarra;
There’s a lot of people up in Manywarra that listen to all this cowboy stuff. I don’t really like it. And the Skeggs are into Techno and Rap and all that (Mark, 15 years, 082).

Seth: (15) The [Friggers] clothes are the RM’s (both snigger).
Brad: (15) It is just.. . It doesn’t bother me at all if they like it they like it. It just depends what type of person they are.

Seth: Everyone’s different,
Brad: They love the country music, The Garth Brooke and that sort of stuff.
Seth: Oh yeah! [they both laugh shaking their heads in mock disbelief].
Brad: They don’t really dance they just run around and jump around and whatever.
Seth: And do wheelies in their utes.
Brad: [laughing]. yeah (009).

The youth culture of a neighbouring town, an hour away from Paterson, is dominated by the Frigger culture. David, a young man in his early 20s who now works in Melbourne, felt that he could not fit into this town because he identified with the Skegg culture. He explains the difficulties he had as a result:

I wouldn’t be in Melbourne now if it wasn’t for being a Skegg.

The reason I’m not in Hubtown now is I was never a ute boy. My taste in music is... One of my biggest influences when I was young was music and movies. There was a cinema but it closed down. There was a single record store. The radio station was pretty pov. Very commercial. The only good stations, like Triple J were, you know, stand on one leg and hold one leg out with the aerial. If you are into the arts of any sort you are a queer, fag, gay. You were bagged out. But now if you’re into the arts aside from music then you’re queer. Now you’re accepted if you play music.

We get ‘gay, fag, Skegg, homo’ purely for the arts, except music.

It’s really gratifying that you go back now and they want to know you ‘cause they’ve discovered your music (David, 21 years, 139).

Music and skating set David apart from the dominant Frigger culture that he grew up in:

I feel like a bit of a pioneer, in 1996 my best friend and I were roller bladers. We sent a letter to the local council requesting a skate park (David, 21 years, 139).

He is not complimentary about the culture that he rejected:

A Frigger is a cockhead jackaroo. “It’s boots, its chaps it’s cowboy hats” – Garth Brooks. They drive a ute with so many stickers you can’t see out the back. The girls dress up in a ball gown with blunnies [work boots] for a Guys and Dolls ball. Or B and S, full, to the hilt on rum. The vomit of humanity (David, 21 years, 139).
Friggers, Skeggs and Girls

Several of the girls from Paterson High, including a teacher, identified with the image of the Frigger. Although they spoke with much excitement and authority about the Skegg culture the Paterson girls don’t make a claim on this “cool” image for themselves:

Leticia: (12) We’re [kids from Paterson] not that much Friggers, we’re more Skeggs. The boys are anyway. There’s no girl Skeggs.

Arizona: (12) There are girls Skeggs at Cropper.

Leticia: Well the girls get skate shoes but they don’t wear the baggy jeans or anything.

Arizona: They have the cords and stuff.

Leticia: They wear three-quarter baggy pants.

Kelsey: (11) But they’re not a Skegg.

Arizona: There’s girls in Cropper that are Skeggs.

Leticia: Yeah (104).

Skeggs are always referred to in the masculine, in Paterson I could not find any girls who claimed this identity despite the fact that it was referred to as “fashionable, cool and trendy”. They describe themselves as a bit Skeggy but the boys’ engagement with the identity is accepted as more legitimate.

Luke mixes with both Frigger and Skegg groups. He believes there are “fussy” girls and wild girls in both groups:

I reckon Skegg girls are fussy. But then you can get real feral ones as well. I suppose it is the same with Friggers you get the easy ones but then there are some who are real fussy (Luke, 15 years, 133).

He referred to another type of girl as the “tomboy”. Girls in Year 10 also made reference to this type as someone who was not a Frigger but took on the active outdoors life:

A tomboy just really acts like a boy. A Frigger still acts like a girl and can wear perfume and stuff like that. A tomboy always wears jeans instead of skirts and stuff like that. She swears and smokes and drinks Bundy or Bourbon or something like that. I know a few girls who do that but not all of them are tomboys. They like to hang around with boys and they’re not choosy, they are easy to get into bed. (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Luke has observed a variety of ways for girls to identify with the Frigger image:

There is some who are real posh. They don’t wear the Drizabone but they have the Frigger ute. And they are different. I don’t know how to explain them (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Luke aspires to fully engage with the Frigger culture:
I would like (Grinning). I'll probably end up being a Frigger. I would like to go up north and work on a cattle station. The mechanic on a cattle station and get into the big musters and stuff like that. Do cattle work for neighbours and stuff like that. Hopefully I can get a trade and then do that (Luke, 15 years, 133).

In naming this ambition Luke sees himself as accepting a minority status:

That's our shooting group that would have those sorts of ambitions and there is only three or four in our Year and one girl. Which is strange (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Luke is aware of females taking on farming responsibility. He does not appear to be comfortable to accept a girl into his “shooters” group and he interprets their farming involvement as an economic arrangement:

Her Dad owns a big property but she hasn't showed any interest, she only drives a tractor to raise money. And now she is enrolled to go to an Ag. College. There is a few ladies around here who own and run farms. And there was a girl who used to chip burrs in her father's rice paddies to earn money (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Luke’s parents both work in town but he is passionate about the bush and is resisting pressure from home and school to aspire to academic success.

I want to be a mechanic, so school doesn't really matter to me that much. I know mum wants me to do Year 12. She is sort of smart and she expects me to be too. I am smart but I don’t wanna be. I hate school it is a pain in the arse. No-one really likes to say that they studied. Everyone says ‘Oh no, I did not study.’ But I did study for Year 10 in case I had to leave. But otherwise I don't study. I do the assignments, but I don't study. I would if I didn't have anything else to do, but I have always got other things to do at home (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Despite encouragement from home Luke sees schooling as at odds with his passion for the outdoors physical life of Paterson. He pretends to be completely disengaged from his studies to conform to the anti-academic image required of local boys but takes care at the same time to get enough marks to survive as an early school leaver.

6.4.10 Utes, Bikes and Skateboards

When Chris and Drew earlier explained that cars were important markers of gender identity they did not go on to outline the significance of other modes of transport in the youth microcultures. The ute is the vehicle of choice of the Frigger, Skeggs drive loud sedans, skateboards and bikes.
Cowboys go for a Ute more than a car and Skegg would go for a car so he can get all his friends in it ‘cause they drive round in their cars and just listen to music real loud (Mark, 15 years, 082).

A lot of boys around here have bikes. We’ve got a ute on the farm but we’re not really into the ute culture. There are people here who are into the utes, Friggers. But it’s not like at Hubtown (John, 17 years, 050).

It is not only the mode of transport that may set these two groups apart. The way that they ride is also an indicator of culture:

The Skeggs have the skate boards but the Friggers like they’re more on the motor bikes and stuff, like going after sheep and stuff. But the Skeggs they do jumps and freestyle and stuff on the motorbike. They do freestyle and jumps and tricks and stuff on a motorbike. And they do that in competition where the Friggers just round up the sheep and they’re not into jumping and stuff (Sean, 12 years, 141).

Friggers are known for their “circle work” in the farm utility:

You go to a party, there might be a bonfire and the boys have a few drinks and then they get in their cars and drive around the paddocks and go crazy. They just stay in one place and blow up the dirt. Or they might be in the ute and have people in the back of it (Franny, 20s, 014).

They’re sort of more ... circle work ... they do more wheelies ... just sort of smoking a lot, on the bitumen.

Burn outs. That’s more their form (Luke, 15 years, 133).

The ‘ute’ or utility vehicle has always been associated with Australian rural culture since:

The ute first rolled off the production line in 1934 after a Gippsland farmer’s wife wrote to Ford pleading for a vehicle that could get her to church on Sunday and the pigs to the market on Monday (Lewis, 2006).

Figure 6.8 “Circle work” is formalised into a competition at the Deniliquin “ute muster”

The Skegg culture is identified with “the street”:

Skeggs are skater people and street people (Teagan, 16 years, 040).
As skateboards require a smooth surface to run on skateboarding is of necessity an activity of the public streets. In Paterson there appeared to be a shift towards dirt bike gymnastics as a development of the Skegg culture. The skateboard parks that have sprung up in many towns in rural NSW are being increasingly occupied by pushbikes which are better fitted to the local terrain but the clothing, music and language associated with the beach/skateboard culture has been maintained.

They are more pushbike people (not motor bikes). They do all their skate parks and things like that (Luke, 15 years, 133).

### 6.4.11 Relationships

Skegg culture is often seen as threatening by adults as it is characterised by boys congregating in unstructured groups in public places. This may be a milk bar, a street corner or a skateboard park.

Skate parks are a culture that’s not as positive because there are no rules. The rules are dominated by whoever is the biggest person there. Can lead to a lot of violence. Some kids feel threatened at it but it’s still a culture. It’s where kids spend a lot of time on skateboards (Margaret, 40s, 060).

Jan: (12) Skeggs sort of follow the group thing but Country are more individuals.

Sean: (12) Yeah they go more by themselves.

Jan: Usually if you see Skeggs there’s more than one there. Like there are two or more there. They don’t usually go by themselves. So it’s like a group Skegg thing but country people are just by themselves (12 years, 107).

Frigger are identified as prioritising the land over relationships. Rural social researchers found that this was often a feature of agricultural societies:

They don’t care whether they’re alone or with someone as long as they’re out on the farm (Mark, 15 years, 082).

### 6.4.12 Location of Friggers and Skeggs

Year 7 saw the distribution of the two microcultures in geographic terms:

Arizona: (12) If you go to our shire like one side will be like all Skeggs and the other side will be like all country and stuff and when you walk past you’ve got all the Skeggs all cool and stuff.

Leticia: (12) Friggers come from Hubtown and like that side of the town.

Arizona: And all the cool Skegg people are on this side of the town.

Leticia: If you go out to Cropper you’ll see lots of Skeggs and if you go out to Hubtown you’ll see lots of people in tight jeans.

Arizona: And we’re like in the middle so we’re like half and half (13 years, 107).

Steve and Greg, from Year 12 also identify a geographic divide:
Steve: (17) The cowboy culture is not really big in this area. It is more over in the Hubtown side.
Greg: (18) It’s more around Manywarra.
Steve: It is more in the more remote farming areas.
Greg: It’s more in the big farming areas, the inland areas.
Steve: But not in the towns.
Greg: No. Not in the towns like this, there is hardly any of them.
Steve: Yeah (009).

They appear to see their geographic location as an opportunity for greater social mobility as they can choose between the two images:

Yeah. If you want to be like the Cowboy side, and you live out of town, and if you want to be a Skegg with everything, if you want to be in fashion, you’d be like on the Skegg side (Arizona, 12 years, 107).

They note that there are degrees of “Skegginess” and “Friggerness”

Arizona: (12) At Paterson we’re sort of a cross between Friggers and Skeggs because we’re not real, real, Skeggs and we’re not real Friggers either.
LCP: So what are they in Paterson?
Arizona: Sort of medium.
Leticia: (12) Yeah, there’s some of them Skeggs and some just normal people.
Sue: They’ve got the Skegg shoes.
Arizona: Then you get to Year 9, Every one of them is a Skegg.
Leticia: Most people are around the teenage like.
Arizona: And like them boys that I was talking about they’ve got, they’ve like got the jeans and the Skeggy shoes and everything but they’re not as Skegg but then a year above them every one of em is a Skegg (107).

There are subcategories within the Skegg category often determined by the type of music they prefer:

Greg: (18) A few of us are called Skeggs or ‘Skaters’ or ‘Punkers’ or you get your ‘Skaters’. They’re the ones who are always listening to punk music.
Steve: (17) Baggy clothes.
Greg: They have baggy clothes, they’re down the skate park all the time with their skateboards.
Then you get just your average ‘Punkers’.
Just mostly just listen to punk music really.
Steve: They like the baggy stuff, all the bright colours.
Greg: There’s different names for everybody.
Greg: There’s hardly any ‘Goths’ around here.
Steve: ‘Metalheads’ are just sort of the people that are like mostly..
Greg: They are not like ‘Goths’ and that, walking around like you say stuff like this, wearing all this silver stuff around their
necks and wearing black shirts, black shorts, black everything.

Steve: Wearing all makeup on their faces.

Greg: No, that’s mostly ‘Goths’ really, ‘Metalheads’ don’t do that. They’ve got the spiked up hair, however they do their hair and all they do is just sit there and do what they do, but all they really do is listen to heavy metal all the time (009).

Steve believes that young people in Paterson are freer to move between different microcultures because there is not so much pressure to conform to one group. He sees it as an advantage that the microcultures are forced to mix because of the small population.

In the city because it’s so big, you’ve got your skaters, you’ve got your ‘punkers’, you’ve got your ‘Metalheads’. They all stick in the one group, ‘Metalheads’ with ‘Metalheads’, ‘Punkers’ with ‘punkers’ but here it is just a whole different mixture. Steve, 17 years (009).

A small number of boys who identify as Skegg’s choose not to participate in the local culture but the majority include football in their identity play. Steve and Greg point out that diverse groups all play football together and socialise together as they develop their individual images:

Greg: (18) Yeah. They [Skegg’s] play footy.
Steve: (17) Yeah we all play footy. We all do the same thing, we’ve all got our different way we are but we all do the exact same thing. There’s just a whole mixture of us really.

Greg: Everyone’s different, everyone to their own. We do what we do and there’s basically a whole mixture of us (009).

According to John this “mixture” is not quite unified as he claims that the Skeggs are also subdivided into groups according to their engagement with recreational drugs:

There’s two types of groups, they mix but they hang out differently. We have different social habits.

Like we had a party a few weeks ago. One group was here with half the Year 12s the other group was at a different function. ‘Cause one group has drugs. The cool thing. The majority smoke and also speed. And there are older kids. The majority dropped out in Year 10. There’s just a few Year 12s.

The other group likes to party and have a good time with a few drinks and listening to music. Good old rock. Diverse. We had a dirty dancing CD Rap and Hip Hop (John, 17 years, 050).

The girls from Manywarra who identified as Friggers and aspired to be jillaroos reflected that there were also two groups of Frigger girls:
Actually there’s all of us who hang around with boys and a few of them who think that they’re better and they won’t come out with us (Teagan, 16 years, 040).

The *Frigger* girls who do not associate with the “Shemales” are the girls from large rice properties. They see themselves as the *bona fide* rural identity. The “Shemales” live in the small rural towns, their families tend to be rural labourers.

Luke moved between two groups of friends identifying sometimes with the *Frigger* image and at other times with the *Skegg* image:

> We’ve got different friends here. You’ve sort of got different groups here. I know one group, we would go out. What we would do is go out shooting. Have a good time with bikes. Just everyone having ‘Stacks’ and stuff. Crash and things and wreck cars. Yeah, well we stay in old houses. We take a CD player. You just sit there... have a few cans and listen to the music. Go pigging. We go out with our dogs and guns. I always go out with my brother.

> Then we’ve got other mates who are more into listening to music and go out partying. Like the other shooting group you make your own party (Luke, 15, 133).

At times this movement between the two identities has caused him problems but he appears to be maximising the potential of both images:

> I’m sort of one person stuck in the middle, me and another mate. You’ve got two different groups and we’re stuck in the middle. They both don’t have the same views, and some don’t like each other. It’s hard. I always got bagged. Got called ‘a shooter’ for a year, I’m still friends with them but I just didn’t care what they think. It’s really hard, I got offered to go out pig hunting and I got offered to go to a party, I passed up pig hunting for that weekend.

> Why did you choose the party this time?

> A girl (15 years, 133).

The images in Figure 6.9 illustrate the choices made by Leanne demonstrating her interpretation of each of the *Frigger* and *Skegg* identities. She selects a few key items of clothing which she identifies as typical of the image: the jewellery, belt and shoes are particularly important. Like Luke, Leanne moves between the identities.
Figure 6.9 Identity switching

Figure 6.10 illustrates the footwear in detail. Leanne may choose from her formal *Frigger* boots, her work *Frigger* boots or her *Skegg* skate shoes. This diverse wardrobe demonstrates that the youth microcultures are not exclusionary in nature.

Figure 6.10 Footwear for identity switching

Danielle, Teagan and Sunny discussed the Paterson youth culture in some depth. They compared the characteristics of Paterson and Manywarra rejecting the notion of the microcultures representing a town and country divide:

Danielle: (17) They’re *Skeggs* more party going. Every weekend they go and get drunk.
Teagan: (16) But then there is two different sub-cultures in the Manywarra as well.
Sunny: (16) We’re more rural though. Most of them are like, they are more towney, *Skegg*.
Danielle: Most of the *Skeggs* are country people anyway.
Sunny: Then you’ve got the Country/country, then *Skegg/country*.
Teagan: We’re more country than the Paterson.
Danielle: I’m not a *Skegg* and I’m from Paterson.
Teagan: Yeah but you’re not a country person either.
Danielle: I’m a bit of a bitza.
Teagan: The thing is there are people who aren’t townspeople and they aren’t country people. They live out-of-town, so what are they?
Danielle: Then there’s the out-of-town people. They can mix with everyone (119).

The girls concluded that their particular locality and culture provided them with great social flexibility as they could move fluidly between the two microcultures:

Danielle: (17) You can choose which bit.
Teagan: (16) They do that all the time. They ride a skateboard with a cowboy hat on. And we can wear Skegg clothes with our cowboy boots and our hat. You can do anything here because it will be accepted (119).

Sunny identified as a Frigger and she came from the little town of Manywarra she observed that she did not actually know anyone who called themselves a Skegg but she spoke eloquently about their characteristics:

Skeggs are more... I don't really know I haven’t exactly met one yet. They are more an idea that people have (Sunny, 17 years, 045).

Sunny points out that youth identities are developed from resources both seen and imagined in the local context. Just as rural identities are constructed against imagined metropolitan identities Sunny’s Frigger identity is constructed against an imagined Skegg identity.

The youth microcultures of Paterson furnish the young people with a range of symbolic capital which has been gathered from sources outside of its local boundaries. It is actively traded within this community and provides the possibility for transactions beyond the local culture. It provides them with “ideas” that transcend their local fields of practice.

For an insight into the sort of “ideas” that are being explored when the highest status cultural capital is being negotiated, we must investigate the field of football.

**6.5 The field of football**

According to the people of Paterson, both young and old, sport provided the most potent field of practice for acquiring and securing the highest valued social and cultural capital and football capital was considered the highest status capital. A newly arrived teacher was struck by the pervasive nature of the football culture:

Oh It’s the almighty god! It drives me demented [Laughs]. It is! It’s the Almighty god! I have never seen! I’ve never seen! ... and it’s not just the boys it’s the whole town. It’s the culture of the place in the winter (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).
Becoming one of the “cool” kids becomes more and more important as the young people get older and the social groups become larger and more exclusionary. Sport is acknowledged as much more than just physical activity; it is a valuable access point to the “cool”, high status capital.

### 6.5.1 Sporting capital

Paterson is a small town but, as we noted in Chapter 1, it has a large number of sporting organisations and clubs for girls and boys of all ages. It has excellent sporting facilities and volunteer groups maintain the grounds and clubhouses with dedication and vigilance. Sporting connections are the basis of much of the community’s social capital:

Out here there’s not much else to do other than sport and outdoor things so it’s more a way of communicating and socialising (Bronwyn, 15 years, 086).

I don’t think that in the long term it’s more important, but in the social scene sport is regarded more highly than anything else is (Seth, 15 years, 099).

Sport is very important. It is important in every country town. It is what binds the community together (Trish, 30s 021).

If there wasn’t sport there would be nothing. Pretty much everybody in the community gets involved in netball and football (Serena, 15 years 072).

A high schoolteacher observed that involvement in sport was highly connected to popularity and success:

It means they’ve got the good bodies. And the sporty ones tend to be the personalities. And it seems to follow that when you’ve got in every year the ones that are on the school committees, and they have the most friends, tend to be the good at sport ones for some reason (Vonny, 30s, 083).

There was a strong consensus from all age groups that sport was the arena that brought people together:

Oh it’s pretty high in importance. Oh it’s got a very strong social role. Football clubs and tennis clubs and those sorts of things play a very important role socially as well as the physical sport entailed. It’s sport that’s one of the things that brings a lot of the community members together. Probably the biggest thing in the community, bringing community members together when they do their various sports. You know football, bowls, tennis, golf, squash. All those sorts of sports. Probably the most important social activity bringing people from different backgrounds together. It’s very important from that point of view (Stuart, 60s, 090).

Sport is the centre of the social life. When it becomes summer then there is tennis and cricket and the bowls. There are kids at school who actually play bowls. They are very into it, they really enjoy the bowls. There is a bit of interaction between the tennis club and the bowling club, they organise social things where they share the expense. Sport is more important than
anything, as far as I'm concerned it’s fantastic. It is healthy, it is usually family oriented and you get situations where if there are both parents playing then there are so many people there who will look after the kids (Meredith, 50s, 116).

Sport provides the entrée into the social groupings of Paterson for both children and adults:

I’m not sporty. Two of my children are. One wasn’t. It is very important. When we first moved here we were told if you don’t do sport you won’t fit in here. And I’ve heard that comment quite a lot. It was a general statement (Bridget, 40s, 078).

Adults meet other people and make social connections by supporting their children’s sporting involvement:

[Sport is] extremely important. There’s nothing else for kids to do in rural communities, except play sport. And that’s very much a social thing, kids who play football that’s where they meet other kids, pretty much. I think adults get accepted in a rural community via their children (Amanda, 20s, 084).

Paterson’s population is distributed over a wide geographic area, perhaps sport provides a reason for people to be regularly drawn together with shared agendas focusing the development and maintenance of essential social capital. As the sport followed by the highest percentage of the population football provides the most powerful site for capital status to be contested.

6.5.2 Footy

Social connection in Paterson revolved around sport. It is claimed as the most significant field of negotiated status and football is the epicentre of this field. Sport is acknowledged as the social glue that binds people of all ages to this community, it is recognised as a site of vital social capital. It is also an important source of cultural capital. Every sport has cultural capital associated with it in the form of rituals, costumes, language, artefacts and customs. Meredith is very sensitive to the value of the capital associated with the local football club and her son is actively involved in the development of new capital that has nothing at all to do with the playing of football:

It holds the community together. Most of the communities around here have got excellent sporting facilities. Like eight grass tennis courts, footy oval, night footy shared from netball courts, basketball courts. Every little community around here has the same… Kids are encouraged to play team sport. I think it is one of the most fantastic things about the rural community. Parents bring their kids to, say, footy training Thursday nights;
you've got older people who take an interest in training and coaching. You see them there in their runners and some training with them. The kids love the smell of the liniment and the blokey stuff that goes with it. Girls are the same with netball. They are exactly the same. Then you've got the match on Saturday. Every home game it becomes the social centre. Afterwards, you don't just go home after the game because about ten years ago we were trying to raise funds so we started a Saturday night meal. So at the footy shed after the game they have a different footy meal after every home game. It could be a roast or lasagne and tossed salad. It makes money for them but it is a reasonable meal for families. So everyone stays and socialises and has a lovely time.

My son no longer plays but he is very into the social club. He and a mate organised fireworks for the little kids. And fishing competitions for anyone who wants to be in it. They have had two hugely successful “Survivor” nights on the river. People raved about that, it was just brilliant. The last one they had was a Cowboys and Indians theme. Several weeks before they were carving totem poles and making a huge Dream Catcher and a huge big Tepee. It was extremely creative. The bar was a medicine man tent they painted the scene of Buffalo on (Meredith, 50s, 116).

When he was no longer able to play football, Meredith’s son appears to have developed a microculture attached to the football club which provided him, and his friends, with the opportunity for “people” to “rave about” them. He has secured powerful social capital and a site for new cultural capital associated with football without the need to continue playing. The potency of this strategy becomes very clear as the Paterson informants elaborate on the centrality of football in the social life of the district of Paterson:

If you haven’t got a football club you haven't got a community (Brad, 60s, 020).

Footy is the highest status sport and netball for girls (Genevieve 30s, 022).

Tomorrow is Grand Final Day. Nobody has talked about anything else. In our community people will walk on water to go to a football game. The football is achieving in our local communities. I suppose it’s been a way of life to country New South Wales. It’s not just here. …Football gives the kids a sense of identity. A sense of belonging. They get teams. They get a sense of belonging. They get someone that looks after them. They get someone that cares for them. They get to wear a uniform (Margaret, 40s, 060).

Margaret refers to symbolic capital and social capital as vital dividends she associates with football. Playing with the team may gain the status of “achieving” but identification with the local team may endow the all important “sense of belonging”. For rural young people the social value of football is universally acknowledged:
I think it’s really important because I think that it is important to the town ‘cause in winter that’s what happens on Saturday. A thousand people go down to the football and you can talk, even now you can talk about the games he’s played. I think it’s good for the town, football ‘cause I don’t know what would happen in winter without football or netball. Each weekend brings a new unique thing to talk about. Certain things you’ll do. Football is pretty much the thing. It makes the town I think (Zeb, 17 years, 101).

Team amalgamations forced by dropping populations have occasionally ruptured these community connections but the drive to sustain the central role of football has overcome this challenge:

But footy is very central. Local footy is a very big centre for the local community to get together, to support the team. It connects the community big time. Before the two teams joined you could see... it has taken four years or so before most of the community has come back together to come behind the team (Teagan, 16 years, 040).

For the boys of Paterson, identity formation is closely associated with involvement in the local football:

Oh well it’s a way of acceptance in a rural community.

The whole community will rock up to see a football match. They admire you, the community admire you. Why wouldn’t it be important for you? (Allan, 30s, 131).

Drew is one of the most popular boys in Year 12. He is on many committees, performs in a band and his studies are progressing very well. He is also passionate about his football:

If you had asked me at the start of the year I would have said it is a place to play sport but just finishing up now it is amazing. The friendships actually mean a lot more to me than the game. It’s just the overall feel of the club and a sense of belonging, I guess.

It gives the town something too. Something to believe in I guess. It’s just that being together for so long and building up so much to the grand final. It’s a big thing. Working together and working hard, that this little hobby that you do, sport becomes a much bigger thing. It becomes bigger than anything else. You will try your best to win the game (Drew, 17 years, 053).

Fred does not like football but at the age of fourteen he has realized its importance and regrets his lack of involvement in it. He is a very small timid boy and notes the passion that accompanies the commitment to football:

I’ve never really liked football. Although now, looking back I should have started playing it when I was young. Football, I’ve never really been interested in it, and for most people it is pretty important. The kind of goals you score, how you run, and most people (speaking for my brother or some
of my really aggro friends), will get really pissed off if they have a long streak of losses (Fred, 14 years, 109).

Trish has no doubt about the pre-eminence of the football culture as a marker of rural masculine identity:

It's a blokey thing that they can all go to. They can have a beer. And it is acceptable that they can stand there and yell things over the fence that they couldn't in other places. It is just a bonding thing that they are all able to do. It is really quite important to them. You have to play football. If you are male you really have to play football there are really not many other options open to you (Trish, 30s, 021).

Paterson girls are also passionate supporters of the football and some are frustrated by their exclusion from playing:

Kirilly: (16) You get to a certain age and you are not allowed to play.
Danielle: (16) They train you but then you're not allowed to play. Once you get boobs you cannot play.
Kirilly: When you hit puberty you are not allowed to play. Because it is dangerous.
Danielle: We are going to form an all girls team.
Kirilly: As a fundraiser we will get to play against each other.
Kerren: How much fun would that be!
Danielle: It would be great.
Kirilly: Just go down and have drinks, and run around like idiots, and kick a footy.
Danielle: It would be good (108).

In Paterson the girl’s netball competition is played at the same location and is run alongside the football competition. Playing Netball is quite popular among the girls but the game does not enjoy the same community support as the boys football:

The whole community will rock up to see a football match and the people who have got their daughters playing netball at the same time go along and watch the netball. The male football, it’s everywhere. It’s not just in a small country town. You think how much attention our women’s cricket team gets paid. It’s national! It’s just a reflection. So I don’t think it’s something that’s...it might be something that is a little bit more exaggerated in the country though (Jane, 40s,130).

Jane believes that the netball competition organisers see their role as a support act to the serious game of football:

[males] They demand more attention and they get it. You know if you are going to watch a sport, Well, people of the whole community will turn out to watch a football game, and a limited number will go on to watch the netball game. It’s a bit irritating. And you know when the
football decides that it’s going to change competitions; the girls just go along to facilitate it. Well as rural communities are shrinking, some rationalisation of the actual areas in which the competition operates [is happening]. So in the community I’m from they actually moved over to one of the other comps. a long way away. Like miles out in the wheat belt, and it recently moved back into the same competition that Paterson’s involved in. The football went, so netball went too. And I think the same thing would be happening virtually everywhere (Jane, 40s, 130).

6.5.2.1 The excluded

Brad saw the rejection of football by some boys as a symptom of social dysfunction. He views these boys with suspicion. He points to the recuperative capacity of sport. There is an indication that football is the superior social curative but ‘even’ any sport will be a help to these boys:

You just wonder why, especially on Saturday, there is plenty of activities down at the football ground with the netball and football, and you might have to come down into town to do something, and you see these groups of youths just congregating, and you just wonder, what they are up to, you know. I just wonder, you can’t force them I suppose, but if they got more involved even in the sporty side of things, it might bring them out of their shell to investigate other things (Brad, 40s, 020).

Brad understands this deviance from ‘the right way’ as a symptom of the absence of fathers. Local demographic statistics do not support this supposition but it indicates a link commonly made between sporting preferences, gender identity and parenting:

\[ LCP: \text{How many kids in town would not be part of the sporting activities?} \]

Brad: It is pretty hard to say. You are probably looking at maybe twenty.

\[ LCP: \text{Why have they withdrawn?} \]

Brad: Just looking at them I would say broken families and stuff.

\[ LCP: \text{Why would having a broken family cause them to withdraw from the footy?} \]

Brad: They probably think the bigger kids laugh at them because they haven't got a Dad or a Mum, and they haven't been guided in the right way. They probably feel out of it. You see them just walking around the street smoking. They haven't got a father most of them. I reckon that is really important (Brad, 40s, 020).

Brad makes no reference to the bike riding and skateboarding of this disaffected group. His expectation of endorsed youthful masculinity within a narrowly prescribed code centred on football renders other ways of doing masculinity either invisible or pathologised. Genevieve is aware of the exclusive nature of the sporting
Genevieve: Sport is big. Sport is overwhelmingly big. There is a lot of emphasis at the school on sport. Sport is really good for teamwork, that’s really good. It is healthy, kids play tennis and swim, they play a lot of sports and that is healthy. There are some kids that just don’t cut it and they don’t play any sport.

LCP: What happens if you’re not good at sport, where do you go then?

Genevieve: I guess just look in the streets on a Saturday afternoon and the kids that aren’t playing football, they’re probably walking the streets or sitting outside a cafe…And you can call riding a bike or a skateboard sport. It may not be competitive, although it does have a competitive edge in that it says ‘look what I can do’ (40s, 022).

Genevieve is indicating here that a youth culture does exist in Paterson which is not tied to the dominant football culture but its minority status has not rendered it visible enough to be acknowledged. The young people note that the group who choose to reject the dominant football culture risk being marginalised and ostracized by the adult community:

Danielle: (17) Some people just aren’t interested in things. It is not that they don’t want to be part of anything it is just that it does not interest them. They are really nice people, but they just want to do their own thing. A lot of parents look down their nose at people like that, if they go out and hang around, because you know it is a small town and everybody thinks the worst of everybody. But the kids don’t, it’s more the parents.

Teagan: (16) But the parents will say don’t go out on the streets and don’t hang around with those people because they roam the streets (119).

Young people who choose to identify away from the football supporting norm of Paterson risk social exclusion. The capital associated with this identity must offer them dividends in another field of practice which makes this cost worthwhile.

The Paterson youth microcultures demonstrate the potential for change to identity constructions even in an area that appears to be established and universally dominant.

6.5.2.2 Footy critics

Paterson football culture is not without its critics. One of the High School teachers declared her classroom a “football free zone”, banning any reference to football in the room. She believes that “their world is very limited. They know a lot about football” (Gladys, 50s, 058).
The music teacher was very surprised when HSC music students pulled out of an HSC performance practice opportunity because of football training:

The football was very important. Up there in priority. So it was a high priority. It was that team thing. And even this year we...I had a concert, (my last Year 12s that have just gone through), I had a concert that we arranged the time to suit everyone and at the last minute one of the guys said, “No I can’t perform in it. I’ve got to play semifinal football. I promised the coach’. I said “Well it’s your HSC I mean this is only to help you.” He did well anyway in the end. But he put the football above a practice. Actually it was only training for the semifinal ‘cause it was a Thursday night and it was only a training session. Well that was the silly thing about it. We all set down what was a mutually accommodating date. Yes, yes so footy can be... I think it’s a lot of pressure from the team mates, you know. And maybe it’s not overt from the team mates; maybe it’s in their own heads. That maybe they are going to let the team down or the mateship thing or if that’s it I don’t know (Mathew, 40s, 067).

The art teacher also commented that it was difficult to work on HSC projects outside of school time as there was no time:

Because sport activities absolutely takes up their whole lives. They have training a few nights a week and Saturday it’s all day and there’s a real football culture in this town. Everything is a priority is the sport (Diane, 35s, 062).

Even though Frances’s son and husband are deeply involved in playing, coaching and administering the local football she has strong misgivings;

Now look it is fantastic that at least they have that but it would be nice if there were other things as well. I’m not saying that football shouldn’t happen I’m just saying that football doesn’t suit everybody. It’s narrow and it fosters consumption of alcohol, [and the idea] that it’s OK to be violent under some circumstances (Frances, 40s, 079).

### 6.5.2.3 Footy and Aggression

Several participants commented on the aggression that often accompanies the passion with football

I think that when you’re playing football it’s like, you might not like some people but everyone’s drawn together against the common enemy. That’s good but the thing is when you go up to the under seventeens everyone’s so much angrier on the other side and on your side. Next time you’re playing you want to get back at them. I reckon it makes them more aggressive. I’m speaking in experience because of my brother. He’s twelve years old, if he really has a team that gets under his skin and he’s lost, he will take out his aggression afterwards or just then. But he plays tennis in summer, and he’s really good at it and he rarely gets agro [aggressive] at that (Seth, 15 years, 099).
Mothers are particularly bothered by the physical aggression associated with it. Frances elaborates her concern:

[There are] children in town who would spend every Saturday of the winter at the football. Now that is good and bad as far as I’m concerned. I mean football is about working together and team spirit but it is also a seriously contact sport and they do see people being injured on the field and carried off. I think in some respects there is an ethos that in some circumstances it is OK to be on the violent side, or on the physical side. I think football breeds that. I mean on the football field it is OK to give someone a hit with the shoulder, for god’s sake. I don’t think it’s OK in any circumstances (Frances, 30s, 079).

The principal of the primary school has no doubt about the impact of this culture:

For two terms I spend my life dealing with issues that have occurred at football. Because that is where all the aggression comes in (Elizabeth, 40s, 064).

The aggressive, physical contact which characterises the football matches in Paterson coupled with a tradition of heavy alcohol consumption caused anxiety for many parents and educators.

6.6 Alcohol

Rozzie’s sons are still in primary school, she is a keen football supporter but she does not want her son to be at risk of injury or in a climate that promotes alcohol consumption:

[My son] and his friends didn’t play football. I think it is a dangerous game, the injuries are terrible They play tennis and golf. But he will watch it. And I love watching football too. I wouldn’t miss watching it. I’m sure the football club doesn’t encourage them to be drinking after the match. That was our worry too. If you don’t have a stubby after the match then you’re not one of the boys and I felt that perhaps boys who were not yet eighteen were being told.. I don’t know.. . I know in some towns they have a keg after the match (45s, 061).

Stephanie is a high schoolteacher. She is also concerned about the inclusion of alcohol in the football culture that her boys are already locked into:

I think it’s a masculine culture with the sport side. At the moment my boys are involved heavily with the sport and the training and the organisation, at an early age. What’ll happen, if both my boys are playing football and are involved in coaching for instance, but once they are in that stream they are locked in that stream. They’ll go from under tens, under twelves, under fourteen, and they’ll be in that lot all the way through. Up to now they have led a pretty sheltered existence because it’s only sausage sizzles and soft drink. But once they are in under fifteens or under seventeens, that’s when the alcohol comes in (Stephanie, 40s, 129).
Serena and Jenna see a link between sport and drinking and the poor school performance of some boys:

Serena: (15) There’s some guys round here that would prefer to go to the pub than to school.
LCP: What’s pushing them towards that?
Jenna: (15) Sport. I think that’s all it is. And probably the fact that they don’t really want to go anywhere in life.
Serena: Well, they don’t know if they want to go anywhere yet. I think it’s just a way of socialising, and procrastinating.
Jenna: Or they’re just fed up with school. But none of us feel like this at the start of the year.
Serena: No, everyone’s like, ‘we’re not going to bomb out again like last year.’ But it’s so hard.
Jenna: By the end of the year no-one’s putting in effort any more.
Serena: They’re just sick of it.
Jenna: Yeah, we do.
Serena: We just make a joke. But if it was the day before exams or something you’d say something to them (073).

Although these girls acknowledge that it is not a great idea to be drinking instead of attending classes they are quite matter-of-fact about the dominant place of alcohol in the sport culture.

Serena: (15) Older people get drunk at the footy but younger people they’ve got their things to do. They walk around and socialise and watch the football. There can be drinking after the match.
Jenna: (15) And on the footy trip and stuff like that.
Serena: The footy trip is just to go out and write themselves off again. They do that once a year, every year.
LCP: Do you think there are rules about when you get drunk and when you don’t?
Serena: Yeah, They’re really strict on that. Like the coaches and that are really strict on the drinking and stuff. Pretty much you’ve got to time it right.
LCP: What if a woman was drunk at the footy.
Jenna: I can’t picture that. People wouldn’t like that, not in the daytime you know, there’s a lot of older people go to the football and netball and it’s not just our age group so it’s not.. (sense of respect for elders).
LCP: Do you know of boys who are drinking in the daytime?
Jenna: Not at that time no.
Serena: Drinking is pretty much an after dark activity..
Jenna: When they go camping, they do, they start really early, but otherwise they don’t really. It’s not like they drink all the time but when they go out they really, really do (072).

The girls suggest that drinking in the football context is regulated by social norms which do not condone drunkenness of either young people or women during the
match. The football players drink after the match or on the notorious football trip. Drinking in other contexts is not so constrained.

Yeah like some of the boys in our Year, (like I won’t mention any names), but some of them go out every weekend and get really drunk and I don’t think that’s very good at all. They do it for fun (Bronwyn, 15 years, 086).

It’s common that boys will get drunk. Then there are boys that will get drunk every weekend and they’re always looking for a special occasion where they have a good excuse to get pissed (Seth, 15 years, 099).

We go on camping trips; most of the time when we go camping we have a fair few cans in a day but nothing to excess except sometimes at night. If you’re out camping there might be a couple of nights in that week, so it’s not as bad. You might drink a couple of slabs during the week, whatever, I don’t know (Luke, 15 years, 111).

Serena saw the frequent binge drinking as a cause for particular concern:

I don’t think the boys see the risks like what can happen, they don’t look at that side of it, they just think it’s fun and they just do it over and over again. They don’t see what can happen to them and what can go wrong. They don’t think that you’ve got all these years to do it. They just think ‘live it up while you can’ (Serena, 15 years, 072).

Some older ladies working in the school canteen were divided in their views about the town’s drinking problem:

LCP: Do you think alcohol is a bigger problem than it used to be?

Margaret: (40s) Yes.
Audrey: (60s) No. Since the 10 o'clock closing came in I reckon things went bad. When we were going to balls and that it used to be a real daring thing to have a bottle in the boot of the car. Yeah, boys would duck out and have a swig and that. Now with 10 o'clock closing they’re half stung before they go.

Margaret: It's the peer pressure (emphatic).
Audrey: It's because more of the parents actually drink. Because parents go out and get drunk themselves it's more acceptable for the children to do the same.

Dorothy: (40s) Let's face it there is more sophisticated drinks in cans now. I think that makes a lot of difference.

Audrey: Their main drinking is those UDL cans. You don't very often see them drinking stubbies it's those UDL cans.

Margaret: There is a lot more home brew around now days too.

Dorothy: Kids wouldn't be into that if it's not in a can it's not sophisticated enough (113).

Col, a high schoolteacher, is concerned about the extent of underage drinking in Paterson:

It's a sports orientated town and kids get their kudos from sport; specially males' sports, they also get their kudos from alcohol consumption at a reasonably early age. Most of these kids would have Year parties from as
early as Year 8 where they would be consuming alcohol. Definitely by Year 9 and probably 10. You would probably have mixers for the girls and beer for the boys. But you will find lots of parents supply alcohol. That’s what’s disappointing (Col, 40s, 066).

Rozzie, a parent believes that drinking is central to the socializing of young people:

LCP: What is the main thing that 15 and 14-year-olds do when they get together to socialise?

Rozzie: Drink!. They might stand around and talk with the loud music going and they might dance a bit I suppose. But I think drinking will be the prime reason they were there (45s, 061).

Even the Year 10s think that underage drinking is on the increase:

Alcohol is probably important every weekend. There isn’t much to do around this age and maybe younger. They seem to be starting off even younger these days (Michael, 16 years, 094).

I’ve got friends in Year 9 and they get away with it. I don’t know if I was like that when I was young, but I dunno. Some nights you just can’t remember. There’s three or four of them, they’re friends with us and um there’s two of them, I don’t know how the hell they drink so much. They drink all night, this couple of them. And I reckon it’s way too much but it doesn’t affect them like in a way that it would affect even me (Luke, 15 years, 111).

Serena and Jenna believe that the underage drinking is a problem for boys, not girls:

Jenna: (15) I think the boys are a lot more into going out and partying. They are into the drinking and smoking and that sort of thing, because there’s not a lot to do that’s what they do on the weekends.

Serena: (15) They start very young.

Jenna: Year 7.

Serena: There were some at the primary school drinking and smoking. There’s not girls in Year 7, it is boys.

Jenna: In the younger groups they are all together but the girls just don’t do it. In the older groups the boys plan camping trips and stuff. They just go out and write themselves off for the fun of it. They all sit around and tell stories and stuff.

Serena: They don’t remember any of it (072).

Weekend drinking is having an impact on the school as the boys struggle with their hangovers:

Yeah, like some of the boys in our Year, (like I won’t mention any names), but some of them go out every weekend and get really drunk and I don’t think that’s very good at all. They do it for fun. Yeah they still do [school] like, the next day they’re rather dull, but after that it’s ok. They’re all right at school (Bronwyn 15 years, 086).

A teacher observed that the intrusive drinking was part of “an image” that the boys worked hard to maintain:
[alcohol is] very important. They say things like I’m going to a party this weekend with my friend Jim (Jim Beam). A Year 9 person! I do know that we have students at this school who do not turn up on Monday because they are still hungover, Year 8 onwards. It just seems to be more accessible here, they mix with the same people here and at sport and they seem to have an image that they need to keep. In the city you don’t necessarily see the same kids on the weekend or a sport. You have a chance to develop your own identity and stand up for what you believe in rather than going along with the group. They do drink a lot. They will brag about how much they have had. When I will say ‘How come you don’t remember what happened’? They will say ‘Oh I was blind drunk’. When I say ‘isn’t it terrible having lost control’? They say ‘Oh, but everybody does it’. It is a matter of pride rather than shame (Gladys, 50s, 058).

6.6.1 Non drinkers

There appears to be considerable pressure on boys to conform to a drinking regime in the Paterson community:

* LCP: *What about a boy who didn’t want to drink, how would he survive?*

  * Group: He wouldn’t! (unison). naah.
  * Sunny: (16) Medical reasons they’d accept that.
  * Kerren: (16) No they wouldn’t.
  * Sunny: Yes they would.
  * Janice: (16) No they wouldn’t. Ian is a diabetic and he is still an alcoholic.
  * Sunny: Some of them do accept that though.
  * Kerren: A lot of the boys still bag him out and call him weak though.
  * Sunny: But they don’t mean it, it’s just a joke and they all know that they’re just mucking around anyway (040).

Girls are also under pressure to participate in a heavy drinking culture:

 It is jolly hard and even for girls. If you don't drink there is something wrong with you. That is something that needs to be changed in kids’ mindset that if you don't get drunk every weekend there is something wrong with you. That is probably one of the biggest issues around Paterson, alcohol. It is a bit scary and I don't know but from what I hear from my daughter I think maybe girls are worse (Rozzie, 45s, 061).

Although the pressure still appears to be great, the group of older women working in the school canteen believe that there is in fact less pressure now than there used to be in the sport culture on the non drinker:

* LCP: *What is the relationship between sport and alcohol?*

  * Audrey: (60s) No more than it has always been. There was always a barrel at the footy on Sundays. It has been for years.
  * Beryl: (50s) Probably no more than it has ever been in that if you drank you were more part of the footy team. There is a very select minority who can cope without drinking.
Dorothy: (60s) My father didn't drink so he became an umpire. He couldn't really be part of the footy team because he didn't drink so he became an umpire. But that was back then now I know a couple of them who don't drink and they still play footy. They are still very social with the others but it is very much the minority (113).

6.7 The field of gendered practices in Paterson

PBP was a program for boys only. Its presence in the town impacted strongly on the girls, positioning them as ‘other’ to a group needing to be rehabilitated at the same time as they were being privileged. This boys’ education program amplified the highly gendered nature of the identity play in Paterson. Although the cultural capital valued by girls and boys appeared to often be the same the practices were different.

6.7.1 Gendered culture

The gendered nature of rural youth culture is emphasised by the categorising of drinks and drinking into masculine and feminine types:

Michelle: (17) I don’t know any girls round here that go to the pub during the week. Whereas on the weekend most of the girls you would see going out and having a social drink. I wouldn’t say they’d get like the guys.

Bronwyn: (15) If a guy decided not to drink for the night, everyone’d be like, ‘why aren’t you drinking?’

Michelle: Most of the guys on Saturdays start at lunchtime, and the girls don’t.

Bronwyn: That’s considered pretty masculine, to start at lunchtime and go all night. And then they drink the next day.

Michelle: Actually, I’ve seen a few guys lately drinking what’s considered ‘chick drinks’. Like, cruzers and fusions and that. They buy a whole box of cruzers.

Bronwyn: Some of the guys just do it for a change. They’re cheaper than their beer.

Michelle: It doesn’t really matter to us. I don’t say, like, ‘you’re a man because you drink Jim Beam’. But the younger kids, that get the older kids to buy them alcohol, they get Jim Beam and Bourbon, ‘cause they need to feel masculine (011).

The “need to feel masculine” is strong in Paterson. Even Drew who is a very high status Year 12 boy with considerable social and cultural capital discovered that a car is not just a car:

I think masculinity around here is sort of judged by the things you do in the community. I think a lot of it rides on, you know, sport, you know like you have to be a footballer or like playing sport. Or you have to drive a certain type of car. A guy wouldn’t drive a little small car, you wouldn’t drive a hatchback or something like that. Like if you’re looking to buy a new car.
you don’t get a white hatchback because it would not be appropriate to get around in. You would buy a ute, or a sedan that you can fit things in. I just recently bought a car and I remember my parents saying what would you like? And I said ‘You know, just anything’. And then I thought about it. And then we looked at a car and it was a little hatchback white thing and I said ‘I know what I don’t want and it’s that.’ Previous it wasn’t something I have thought about before that, that there was a certain type of car that fitted. But after looking at certain cars I said ‘Well yes if I was a girl that would be great.’ I ended up getting a VP Commodore. Yes that is blokey! (Drew 17 years, 053).

Masculine cars and daredevil driving are important markers of rural masculinity. In addition young people invent recreational activities that may be interpreted as risk taking behaviour which is less gendered:

Kearan: (17) They go skiing on the back of their utes. They had a bonnet or something and they were towing it around with their ute.

Teagan: (17) They do it in the channel and instead of a boat they get towed by the ute.

Danielle: We’ve done that on a knee board. To me skiing behind a ute on the channel is not taking a risk.

Teagan: We usually sit in the ute not on the back of the bonnet or the skis we do the good stuff so we don’t get hurt as much.

Danielle: Yes they get that drunk and do stuff. They get bored, they decide to make some fun. They just make stuff up and do stuff. (119)

The domestic roles in Paterson appear to be quite traditional:

It is very old-fashioned really the men go out to work and women run the home. Women do all the school stuff, and that, fund raisers. And the men do all the macho stuff. They help build stuff and help each other.

Women look after the guys, but the guys look after the women. The guys around the place do make money so the women look after them while they do it. The guys are more dominant than the women. Like they want to be the sole breadwinners. They want women to be sitting at home and looking after the kids and doing the cooking (Gwen, 17 years, 043).

In the farming context expectations of boys and girls impact differently on their lifestyles:

The boy is brought up to work. He would get up at dawn and he will work all day. They are expected to work. If they do something good then they might get a treat and might be able to go out or something (Ben, 18 years, 005).

The involvement of boys with the running of the farm carries with it some privileges:

My brother gets to drive the tractor and he’s about ten and I’m not let drive the tractor for two years yet. He’s let drive the Ute and my sister, she’s definitely not let drive the Ute. Mum and Dad don’t trust her. She’s like two years younger than me and he’s two years younger than her and he gets to
drive the Ute and they still don’t trust her driving and they trust him!
(Bronwyn, 15 years, 086).

Girls also assist with the farming duties but they are rarely called upon to put this work above their schooling. The capital valued in these two fields is often at odds. The deputy principal of the High School was sympathetic to the boys from farms who appeared to be disengaged from their schooling:

I’ve seen so many of the kids here that you would say, “Oh typical of a poor work ethic”, and yet hear that they have been on the tractor fifteen hours a day for five days a week. You’d got to say they’ve got a fantastic work ethic… Dad says you’ve gotta jump on the tractor. You’ve gotta get the harvest in. This is life. This is what you do (Deputy Principal HS, 087).

Even though she has raised her children in the township of Paterson, Amanda believes that the rural context impacts on both the skills and the attitudes of the Paterson girls.

Amanda: Girls have to do different things when they live in rural communities. They still have to work on farms and know how to work dogs. Kids round here take for granted that they know how to train a dog but other kids will never know that. City kids come and see that and they think, “Oh gosh,” Because they don’t know the training discipline so to speak. Living on a farm and being told don’t touch that. They know it’s the truth.

LCP: So are consequences more real in a sense?
Amanda: Yes they are because they are more basic. They are back to the basic survival instincts and fitting in instincts and all that sort of thing. They are not flowery off to the movies happy-go-lucky sort of things (Amanda, 20s, 084).

The rural habitat of Paterson has been described by the participants in this study as “tough” and “outdoorsy”. Resourcefulness is valued above intellectual achievement:

Now the kids here are tougher rural kids. I mean when you talk about intellectual, I think there’s a lot of people with nous. Not necessarily university degrees and learning but nous. You know, how to invest, how to run a farm, how to run an industry (David, 40s, 088).

Physical and mental strength are prized attributes for Paterson girls as well as boys. Girls must “stick up for themselves”:

It’s just that I won’t be walked over. And I won’t, I suppose I’ve never been confronted with a situation where I’ve had to be physically tough, but I hope I can hold my own. I think us girls are more mentally tough than physically tough (Sally, 17 years, 081).
Frances believes the freedom of living in a safe rural community has made her daughters more sure of themselves:

Girls have a life where they can run. They have a life where they are confident because they had a lot of freedom. In terms of freedom of movement, the walking home from school since they were 7 and I think that makes them tough. Gives them a sense of their own ability. Even in terms of physical toughness. We have city kids who come here who are scared of dogs, scared of spiders and scared of all sorts of creatures that our children take for granted and they have perhaps a connectedness with nature. They swim in the Murray River they know about the birds, they know about things that happen in terms of nature. We've reared animals here, you just don't do that in the city, [it] just doesn't happen. And they have a sense of space and the sense of freedom a sense of community and certainly confidence (Frances, 30s, 002).

Meredith felt even more strongly than Frances that rural girls had access to a particularly valuable cultural capital because of their location. An experienced schoolteacher who has raised her children on a local farm she was offended by the questions on the questionnaire presented to the students which focused on gender difference. She was irritated by the implication that either girls or boys might be missing out on anything in this rural setting:

Paterson is a rural community, I mean the kids who don’t actually live in the towns and things … ‘More things to do for girls than boys? More things to do for boys than girls?’ I mean I’ve got three kids, they all grew up on a farm. I think it depends. I mean what the heck. I mean, my daughter when she got married went round yabbying in her bridal gown, I mean she just did all the blokey things all her life, like whatever the boys did. Their sex made absolutely no difference for them (Meredith, 50s, 116).

Access to masculinist activities was read by Meredith as true freedom for girls. She valued the outdoors physical life and saw her daughter’s transgression of the traditional feminine behaviour represented by the iconic bridal gown as emblematic of the freedom from constraint available to rural girls.

The traditionally feminine symbolic culture associated with the colour pink, dresses and makeup were not considered typical of the culture valued in Paterson. In their exploration of Paterson femininity John and Neville explain that the girls who wear dresses and makeup are an exception. John explains that this does not necessarily mean they are “stuck up”, an indication that rebellion against the local casual dress code may be interpreted as an act of snobbery:
John: (16) There are a few girls who.. they’re girls, they put make up on, they wear dresses, but they’re easy to get along with, they’re not stuck up or nothing...
Neville: (16) Most girls around here would get in and do the sheep and do the cattle and do the tractor. A lot of girls do tractor work. So their hands aren’t all smooth.
John: And they drink ‘bundy’.[rum]
Neville: They just don’t fit into the stereotyped girl to me. They can be equally attractive depending on their personality and what they look like.
John: It rubs off on the town girls as well (050).

Amanda and Vonny believe that the girls reject the image of the ‘soft, pink feminine’:

Amanda: (20s) Girls don’t cry.
Vonny: (20s) No!
Amanda: Unless they’re looking for sympathy from the boys and they then become a girl. You know what I mean.
Vonny: If you are sooky you’re out. You’re a pink, softy sort of girl.
Amanda: [There’s] not too many of them.
Vonny: A few, a few.
Amanda: Not too many of them. Most of them try to fit in with the rules which is to be up front and tough and able to handle the situation because you live in a rural situation, which is tough (084).

Some girls in Paterson emulate the masculinist behaviours of the boys. Many of them are involved in heavy drinking, risky driving and they aspire to participate in football, shearing and wood chopping but just as the boys are constrained to withdraw from activities that may be coded as feminised there was evidence in Paterson of girls also facing pressure to restrict their activities to acceptably feminised areas:

Neville: (16) The main style of music round here is rock music.
John: (16) Girls can if they want but they choose not to do it.
Neville: It’s more the boys who get into it. I don’t know why. There was a girl in our class who was a drummer for one of the rock bands.
John: She was good, and then she just decided to stop (049).

Some younger girls appear to be resisting this pressure as the music teacher claims that Year 8 have just formed a new band and “there has been a lot of interest shown of the girls starting rock bands themselves” (Mathew, 40s, 067).

Changes in identity pathways for girls are also reflected in changing career options.
6.7.2 Gendered Career paths

In a discussion of local career choices a group of Year 11 girls began by claiming that men dominated the local agricultural job market but on reflection acknowledged that even in the very physically demanding roles women were now represented:

Cressida: (16) It’s still the clichéd male jobs. You don't see women doing the wood chopping or the shearing.
Teagan: (16) But they do.
Cressida: Yeah, they do but they’re not as noticeable like men. You don’t see many women shearers or things like that.
Jessica: (16) My aunty’s a shearer.
Sharleen: (17) My aunty is a shearer too.
Kerren: (16) It’s mainly male.
LCP: Will it always be like that?
Cressida: I hope not.
Teagan: It's getting changed.
Sunny: (16) More women doing it.
Teagan: There are more women being assertive about what they believed.
Kerren: Yeah.
Sharleen: Like why can't they be a shearer? Why can't I chop wood?
Kerren: They can't say no.
Sharleen: Like if I decided I wanted to be a shearer and I can do it.
You can't say no. Like if I can do it. You can't say no.
Teagan: Exactly. Basically they're going to have to let you do it (003).

For many of the girls traditionally masculine occupations appeared to hold a position of higher status. Even their female role models tended to come from this domain.
“Women shearers are respected. Because they have to be strong women” (Sharleen, 17 years, 041).

Careers in Paterson in the past have been constructed along strict gender lines, but it appears that many girls are working around the social resistance to participate in traditionally masculine fields:

LCP: Would a girl consider a boy type apprenticeship here?
Serena: (16) I doubt it. There’s not a lot of [them] you know.
If you did it there would be stuff said... Then they would think they wouldn’t be able to do it. Like Jenna working with her dad. She does like welding and stuff but... as she gets older she will do that I think. Like she will go into her dad’s business, she will take over but she’s not game to do it now while... She doesn’t do metal but it’s more accepting to do wood. She does wood (072).
Serena acknowledges that there is pressure to protect the few apprenticeships for the boys and “stuff“ would be said if a girl broke with this solidarity. The girls recognise that change has not come about without struggle:

Sharleen: (17) People ragged on my mum when she started at the piggery. Because she was a woman she was supposed to be at home. One of the men out there gave her a really hard time. He’s a drunken alcoholic. She was the only woman working out there for a long time.
Janice: (17) Now there’s heaps of them.
Sharleen: Yes (041).

The career aspirations of the girls in Paterson now include some traditionally masculine fields:

Vanessa: (17) Agriculture, I’m going to Ag. College.
Susan: (17) I’m interested in the cookery industry in hospitality.
Karen: (17) Chef.
Mary: (18) IT.
Trish: (17) TAFE.
Karen: (17) I’m thinking of doing Accounting or teaching either maths or economics. I haven’t decided yet.
Serena: (17) I was going to be a chef in the army or riding for the disabled.
Gemma: (17) I was going to do business Admin and become a secretary or something like that. I have to get a driver’s license first (119).

The girls from Manywarra, a little town over an hour away from Paterson on the school bus, comprising mainly rural labourers, also demonstrated a wide diversity in aspirations despite their conservative backgrounds:

Janice: (17) I want to be a journalist
Kerren: (17) I want to do a course to start off with children's services Certificate 3.
Sharleen: (17) I’m going to TAFE.
Teagan: (16) I’m going to do a course from home just to get going. I need to get some money together.
Rebecca: (17) I’m going to Ag College.
Gwen: (17) I want to be a truck driver.
Sunny: (16) I’m going to work on a station in north Queensland.
Cressida: (16) I’m gunna do nursing.
Rachael: (16) I’m going to stay on my dairy farm (119).

According to the Manywarra girls, the aspirations of the boys in the town are more narrowly focused than the girls but they are encouraging of a boy who is breaking with tradition:
Janice: (17) Army, mechanics, builders, panel beaters.
Teagan: (16) To do with cars mainly.
Janice: A lot of them do IT[information technology] and chefs and stuff though.
Kerren: (16) Mitch wants to be a sound technician.
Teagan: Yeah and he’s really good. He does music and he’s really good (119).

Manywarra with a population of only 500 provides a case study focus for a further examination of rural youth culture.

6.7.3 A Gender Case study: Manywarra “shemales”

The young people from Manywarra did not have easy access to the same capital as the residents of the township of Paterson. They coped with greater isolation and generally lower incomes. According to the High School Deputy Principal young people from this little town coped with many social challenges.

Oh yeah, because the people of the town are a lot of unemployed and whenever there’s a break up it’s, “Mum’s shacking up with someone in a Manywarra place”. It’s a real Peyton Place. I mean you can have your opinions but you don’t voice them in Manywarra, it goes against the mass (David, 45s, 088).

The girls from Manywarra describe their town as “more bushy”. Their engagement with masculinist behaviour appears to be amplified by their isolation. Sharleen, a Year 12 student claimed that traditional gender norms did not apply to her group of friends:

We are not so much depicted as male and female.
We are shemales. We are together.
We don’t care what they think, we do what we want (Sharleen, 17 years, 041).

Sixteen-year-old Sally expresses this sentiment another way:

I suppose I’m more of a bloke than a girl. I get out with the guys, like we all sort of mesh together. Just hanging out with them like going fishing with them and what not. During the summer we all go fishing, what else, playing sports with them instead of sitting around doing nothing, which is what some of the girls do (Sally, 16 years, 081).

The cultural and symbolic capital associated with yabbying in a wedding gown is echoed here as the outdoor physical lifestyle is celebrated. Country rock singer Becky Cole expressed a similar sentiment in a concert when she told a story about a place in Queensland called Dalby “Where the men are men and so
are the women” (Cole, 2007). Sharleen notes that being “country” equates with being “a man”:

Sharleen: (17) I was originally from the city and I moved here. When I go back they say ‘oh you are so country, you are like a man!’ And I say ‘I am not man-like at all’.
Janice: (17) Because people think country and they think blokes.
Sharleen: Yeah that’s it. That’s exactly it! [General assent talking over each other].
Janice: Because you drink beer.
Sunny: (16) Because you know, you don't care.
Cressida: (16) You’re doing it for you.
Sharleen: You don’t put up with other people’s crap.
Sunny: You stick up for yourself.
Cressida: You do what you want.
Janice: You do what you want to do.
Sharleen: You are not a girly idiot who giggles and . . . at everything. And jump around and everything. Just annoy ya. (041).

Acceptance by the boys is highly valued and behaviours that are characterised as feminine are denigrated:

Jessica: (17) I hang around with boys more than I hang around with girls.
Sharleen: (17) I spend heaps more time with boys. And it has always been like that. Girls bitch and moan too much. That just gets so annoying.
Janice: Yes it is very annoying.
Sharleen: I get used to bitching and then I go back to my boyfriend and he says ‘will you just shut up! Get over it.’
Janice: We go out camping with the boys.
Sharleen: We grub in and muck around.
Janice: We run around in the mud.
Sharleen: Boys out there appreciate it.
Janice: (17) They don't care.
Cressida: (16) They respect you for it.
Janice: They don’t think you’re not ladylike.
Cressida: They have known us so long, we are just friends.
LCP: Do you think country girls are more confident?
Jessica: Yeah more out there and more crazy.
Sharleen: Well, we have had to put up with the boys’ crap ever since we were little.
Cressida: They are just idiots.
Jessica: They just think they are so good (041).

The youth identities under construction in this site are demonstrated to be contradictory and diverse as the boys are positioned in this exchange as variously good fun, valued critics, companions, “idiots”, full of “crap” and arrogant. The girls see the intimacy of their small town as a catalyst for the development of confidence
which is measured by their capacity to cope with and mete out, the locally endorsed harassment. They note that the sparse population and isolated nature of their township facilitates easy social connection:

*LCP: What is it about country boys that makes you more assertive?*

Jessica: (16) Because we have known them.
Sharleen: (17) You are all isolated, you all know each other.
Cressida: (16) It is a very small town.
Sharleen: We know each other so well that we just serve it back.
Jessica: If the boys give us a serve we give it back.
Cressida: Everyone used to be shy around each other, but we just got to know each other so well.
Jessica: We are not inhibited by each other.
Cressida: We are more closely connected, so we are not so isolated.
Jessica: If you were in the city you would be more spread out.
Cressida: Living close to each other and seeing each other more often you develop close relationships.
Sharleen: It is like we see each other every day.
Jessica: Because we live in a smaller area it is not far to walk to a friend’s place.
Sharleen: Like in the city you would have to get taxi or a train or something. We don't have to organise dates, we just say how “We were going down the river do you want to come?" We just bump into each other. We know where each other is going to be. There is only certain spots where you will be (041).

In several conversations about isolation young people articulated this idea that it would be harder to make social connections in the city than the country. Youngsters from farms found it easy to locate their peers at the popular swimming spots and those who lived in the towns had easy access to their neighbours. Paradoxically they believed that they were less isolated because of their isolation.

This low density population does however leave them exposed to greater surveillance:

Mathew: (16) I reckon on a ratio we’ve got more police than there are to people... but our police aren’t on 24 hours a day. Like I’ve got a friend in Melbourne and he tells me he can drink and drive in Melbourne and he will not get 100% get caught but he will come back here they’re ‘on ya’ like that.

Chelsea: (17) Because they can see you. They constantly keep driving around. In the city there’s constantly cars driving around so they’re not as suspicious (004).

The community surveillance which kept the young people safe also impacted on their privacy:
It is so days of our lives. It is so gossip. If I go out and I don’t get home till the morning I will walk in the door and my mum will be able to tell me where I have been because one of the ladies has got on the phone and said ‘I’ve just seen your daughter walking out of this house’. So your Mum will know everything, you can’t hide anything so you might as well just tell them (Sharleen, 17 years, 041).

These issues will be explored further in the following chapter.

The girls attribute some of their extroverted behaviour to the culture of drinking which is promoted by the boys:

Sharleen: (17) Men think we should be quiet and pretty and they should just be out there smoking and manly. This is what the guys do. If we’re out just talking the guys go “get a beer in ya!”; they make us talk and then we talk too much and they tell us to shut up. But as soon as we have a couple of drinks in us we talk. If we go to a party and we’re not drinking they feed it to us, and we get really opinionated and really loud.

Jessica: (16) We get fiery.

Sunny: (16) We drink just socially.

Kerren: (17) We drink a fair bit.

Sunny: We get drunk on social occasions.

Kerren: The Ball was the worst I woke up in the bushes, scratches on my legs, big chunks out of my legs. I tripped over a stick coming out to you. I’ve still got a scar (041).

Country rock singer Becky Cole was so impressed by the drinking culture of “country girls” she was moved to write them an anthem. In this popular song she celebrates many of the qualities articulated by the girls from Manywarra:

**Girls out Here**

You don’t mess with the girls out here,
It’s a wild and crazy chick frontier.
We tell it straight don’t take a backward step from anyone.
Graduates of hard knock school,
The Bundy flows like rocket fuel.
Say it loud and clear you don’t mess with the girls out here.
We’re not your average beauty queens, you won’t find us in magazines.
Those movie stars don’t know how much they miss.
We’re not out to change the world, we’re just hard living country girls.
If you don’t like that you know what you can kiss.

Becky Cole live @ Lizottes (Cole, 2007)

Toughness, endurance, courage, “hard living”, rum and a rejection of the media beauty myth characterise the femininity celebrated by these rural girls. Cole’s songs illustrate that the Manywarra culture is not an isolated case. Her concert on the
Queensland coast taps into a cultural vein that runs all the way down to the Victorian border.

The girls’ risk taking behaviour includes drinking and dangerous driving practices:

Sunny: (16) We’re damn stupid. We drive when we are drunk.
Kerren: (17) Jumping off the wall.
Jessica: (16) We jump off walls into rivers.
Kerren: With sticks and logs in it.
Sharleen: (17) But you have got to do something for excitement.
Sunny: We drive around unlicensed.
Kerren: We!?
Sunny: But that’s only ‘cause there’s no cops.
Jessica: But we also drive very dangerously. Like losing it on the dirt road.
Sharleen: That was because I overcorrected thank you very much! It wasn't my fault.
Jessica: She nearly rolled her mum’s car the other day.
Cressida: (17) But the boys take more risks, like Wayne.
Jessica: He was driving fast along this road that was curvy he was taking it at 170 kms. It was bitumen but it was curvy as.
Sharleen: It wasn't that... He was trying to get to 180 and the corners come up a bit quick.
Cressida: We take more driving risks because we are cocky.
Jessica: Yeah we are but we drink more.
Cressida: We drink heaps more than city kids.
Kerren: We drink every weekend if not more.
Jessica: We have had city kids moved here and they go “Do youse drink?” It is more like “Do we ever stop!”
Sharleen: I went to the city and the boys were bragging about how much they could drink. And I am like: Oh, so how much can you drink in one night?” And one of them turns around and goes “Oh about 12 cans”. And I am like “Oh my God! our boys can polish off a slab a night!” (babble of amused laughter). Come on! I can drink more than city girls and, come on! I can’t outdrink anybody here.
Jessica: We probably do. We can drink more than city kids (041).

The bravado expressed here may link to the masculinised identity described earlier as the “shemales”. This identity is constructed in counterpoint to a perceived “city” image where females do not drink heavily or take physical risks. Because of the isolation and lack of public transport rural youth emphasise the importance of driving prowess as a valued form of cultural capital. This prowess is at times measured by the capacity to survive extreme driving situations.

The Paterson girls believe that they have much more freedom than “city kids”. They believe they are safer and less constrained. Despite their bravado in discussions of
their drinking habits they believe that alcohol is implicated in the self harm that has occurred in their group and they feel helpless to prevent this. They do not see alcohol as a causal factor, it is merely the catalyst to an inevitable event. Alcohol reveals the “truth”:

Driving is a very important form of cultural capital for these young people. In a discussion of rural versus city driving skill the Year 12 students of Paterson High were divided:

Tom: (17) No I’m saying like country boys are better drivers but they’re not safer.
Neville: (17) That’s right.
Tom: If they wanted to be they could be.
Neville: Country boys are better.
Michelle: (17) They can burn around...
Tom: We are better drivers that’s, all I’m saying.
Ben: (17) You take more risks as drivers in the country, because there’s more freedom to take risks in your car than people in the city can.
Neisha: (16) The thing with country people, and I’m not going to say with males, is that a lot of them, a lot of people on farms are not learning the right way to drive. Like I’m not going to be sexist like I know girls who have grown up on farms too, they think they can get out on the main road and do whatever.
Susan: (17) City people are better drivers I think because they’ve had lessons.
Mary: (17) Country people know country roads better. Whereas city people when they come here are going to look like worse drivers.
Mathew: (16) You see the 100k sign on a dirt road you think you can go 100 K, but we know if we see a dirt road “oh that road doesn’t look as if you’re going to go 100 ks on it” and we slow down to 80 or something.
Susan: (16) Yeah, we know.
Tom: We’re more experienced but. We grew up on farms, we’re more experienced.
Neisha: You learn the wrong way but on farms.
Chelsea: (17) I used to drive around in fourth gear when I was about ten.
Neisha: Yeah, exactly.
Mary: You would sit on your parent’s lap and they’d change gears and that.
Jacinta: (17) You’d learn to drive in paddocks and on dirt roads.
Mary: You learn to drive in different conditions a lot more, like on dirt roads and when it’s wet and that sort of thing.
Susan: They’re a lot more aware of the hazards and that sort of thing than kids in the town and city are.
Neisha: I don’t think country people are more speed freaks than the city but because you’re out in the open road you think can do whatever you want.
Mary: They’re used to driving around on the dirt roads or whatever and they’ve been so empty, and no-one being there or whatever. That when they come into a town they don’t concentrate and they don’t like watch out for each other.
Neville: In the city you have to concentrate flat out and there’s cars, buses, motor bikes, pedestrians. (004)

In Manywarra, risk taking in cars appears to have been an important way of demonstrating loyalty. Cressida’s challenge to Sharleen’s reckless bravado is met with a fatalistic position which refuses to step back from a loyal support of Josh’s daredevil exploits:

**LCP:** How come if you’re taking risks and you’re in cars with drivers who are taking risks you feel safer (than city kids)?

**Sharleen:** (17) I feel safe.

**Jessica:** (16) Because they would never do anything to hurt us.

**Kerren:** They don't intentionally do it to hurt you.

**Sharleen:** Some of these boys have been driving ever since their feet could hit the pedals.

**Cressida:** I get very scared whether the person is experienced or not. I freak out.

**Sharleen:** I was with Josh when he was doing 180 and I was like, “oh, this is cool!” I was fine. I know that he’s not doing anything he can’t handle.

**Gwen:** One of my friends..

**Jessica:** You feel safer because you know they’re not.

**Sharleen:** Josh has been driving ever since his feet could reach the pedals and I would get in the car with him if he was absolutely paralytic and he could not walk because I know he would not let me in the car if he thought there was a chance that he would hurt me.

**Cressida:** I’ve been in a car with him before, I thought I was going to die.

**Sharleen:** No but I know he would never do anything that would intentionally hurt me.

**Cressida:** But he does some pretty stupid stuff.

**Sharleen:** Yeah but he wouldn’t do it if he didn’t think he could.

**Cressida:** But you never know one day when one wheel could slide out on him.

**Sharleen:** Yeah, but he’d never do it on purpose.

**Cressida:** But you never know.

**Sharleen:** Yeah well if you’re dead, you’re dead. I don’t care. I’m over it, right. If I was in a car accident and I died I’d die happy.

**LCP:** So how can you feel safer here then you do in the city?

**Jessica:** Because they have guns and knives and stuff.

**LCP:** You don’t have guns here?

**Jessica:** We do but we don't use them on each other.

**Sharleen:** It is not like we go around shooting each other (041).

Sharleen’s complicity in this act, which clearly puts her at risk, is described by Bourdieu as symbolic violence (see section 2.4.1). She “misrecognises” an oppressively deterministic situation as acceptable and behaves in a way that perpetuates the oppression.
The city/country divide provides reinforcement for the rural idyll which is highly valued by the young people of Paterson. They have all visited the city and they know that this perception is flawed but it serves to clarify their proud celebration of their local identity.

6.8 Heterosexism

The girls from Manywarra were quite comfortable to talk about matters of sexuality. Sex was not considered a big issue and sexual relationships in these groups were referred to in a very matter-of-fact manner:

LCP: What happens when a couple of the friends move into a sexual relationship?
Sharleen: You go from being a circle of really good friends to a circle of really good friends with a few people who are bonking (17 years, 041).

The girls did become agitated and distressed when recounting an incident of an apparent homophobic attack:

There was this guy in Manywarra and I'm serious they thought he was gay and they stole his keys to his car, locked him in the club and pissed on his car. He left. We don’t even know if he was gay. He didn’t try to bonk everyone in sight (Teagan, 16 years, 040).

None of the girls in this group appeared to condone this behaviour. They appeared to be shocked and saddened by it but there were many accounts of low level harassment “bagging” which appeared to police a normative heterosexual masculinity that passed without comment in the general discourse. Richard Roberts (1991) claims that the research of Round (1988), D’Augelli (1989), and Gross (1981) demonstrate a higher prevalence and intensity of “homophobia” and “heterosexism” being reported in rural communities. The youth cultural capital endorsed in the district of Paterson appears to conform to a heterosexist norm which is typically policed by homophobic harassment or attack.

Drew (054) and others presented football as the central credential of masculinity. A boy must be careful in choosing a car, a drink, a sport and especially an art form to participate in if he wished to avoid homophobic slurs. If a boy plays football he may safely indulge in the slightly feminised area of music but dancing is still too feminised for boys to acceptably participate in it:

LCP: If you stayed in Paterson and had a son, would you want him to be able to dance and paint?
Teagan: (17) If it's gonna stay the same as when I have kids in however many years, I want my son obviously to have, like a sensitive side and also to be able to play football, 'cause that's just the thing around here. That's the boys' thing… It's not common for them just to play music, they've got to play music and play football, cricket or something like that.

Cressida: (17) It depends what kind of dancing you're talking about.

Sunny: (16) Ballet (teasing, general laughter).

Cressida: Jazz or something? Like jazz ballet?

Teagan: Or like expressive dance? 'cause that'd be just weird (laughter). It's strange for males around here to do something like that. Everyone just goes like 'what's going on?' like they don't normally... like, it's a shock if people do things like that even the people who do accept it it's still shocking like they've done something like that.

Cressida: You don't expect to... girls are more accepting like we accept metrosexuals, but we don't accept... well we do, but males don't accept, can't accept, homosexuals. And because metrosexuals have so much alike with homosexuals they're just like 'I'm not going to accept him he must be gay' (003).

The girls believed that behaviour which blurred the boundaries between heterosexual and gay identities could not be accepted in their town:

In the city the 'metrosexuals', they go and have facials and get makeup put on. It was on 60 Minutes or A Current Affair. And they dress really nicely and go shopping and stuff. That just wouldn't be good here, because they'd be considered gay. No-one would like you, you'd get picked on (Michelle, 17 years, 011).

According to the girls a prescribed form of masculinity is policed by the boys through harassment:

LCP: Could a boy become a ballet dancer?

Teagan: He could do it but the boys would rag him out for it. 'Pretty boys'. You don't do things like that (Teagan, 16 years, 040).

These Year 11 girls saw football in their town and homosexuality as mutually exclusive:

Janice: (16) In Paterson that's just not the thing.

Kerren: (16) They're never actually openly gay.

Janice: No that is just not..., not the norm.

Kerren: If you don't want to be like... if you're a homosexual, and you just happened to play football well that's not the go. Because that's when you're going to get ridiculed and if you don't want to get ridiculed you just don't tell anyone, or you don't play football (003).

The term “gay” is at times applied as a pejorative term to police an acceptable masculine appearance where there is no reference to sexuality:
Bronwyn: (17) Some of our friends have gone down to Melbourne for uni or work, and they come back and they’re in really funky clothes, and most of the girls like it but then other girls are like, ‘it looks gay,’ or ‘that top’s too tight.’

Michelle: (17) There’s one boy in our Year, he wears tight shirts and a small white denim jacket. He’s not gay, he’s nowhere near gay, but I just don’t like it. It looks gay. I don’t like tight shirts on boys (011).

The term “gay” is also used by young people to add emphasis to a rejection or as a term of ironic endearment:

Wayne: A common insult is ‘you are gay’. It is just a bit of a put down really it is just like saying ‘you are a wanker’. They all say that sort of thing all the time. The word gay is just a swear word. It is normalised.

LCP: So there is no particular venom in the gay taunt?
Wayne: No, not amongst their own peers, no. Is it's just like the finger sign. You put your finger up to your mates. Sometimes it is serious, sometimes it is because blokes can’t go and put the arm around each other and say... you know. It's become a bit like the thumb up in the old days. It still has that lower meaning but it also has the general meaning. I have even had a girl do it, but I was baiting her, it was retaliation, it was cheeky (40s, 103).

The impact and interpretation of the taunt is entirely dependent on the social and cultural capital of the person targeted. This teacher is not offended at being called “gay” because of the context of the taunt.

Among the younger students the term appears to have taken on general usage. In some contexts the use of the term may even provide status to the user:

but it’s not...like they just say it. In English and all that stuff they say ‘Oh I don’t want to do that essay it’s gay’ (Kieran, 12 years, 107).

According to the older generation the term has become detached from its sexual connotation:

Dorothy: (40s) Breakfast is gay, everything is gay. My son didn't even know what gay meant!
Audrey: (60s) No. They had no idea what that means, no idea just everything was gay. The first time I heard it I just looked and thought geez do you know what you are talking about? And they didn't! (114).

Even though they are amused by this shift in current usage of the word “gay” these ladies believe that homosexuality is a danger to society:
Margaret: (40s) It’s against my beliefs so I would hope it wouldn’t happen but if it happened you deal with it when it happens, don’t you. I don’t believe it should be allowed but it happens so…

Audrey: (60s) I still can’t see when they’re father to children? (eyebrows raised, shrug of shoulders and head shaking) That’s my opinion, I’m like you, I don’t believe in it.

Margaret: I grew up in a Christian home and it’s very against Christian principle in my opinion. My home itself is not as Christian as what I was brought up in but I still have my beliefs and I think that’s what a lot of our society’s problems are. We’re allowing too many of these things to happen, and the more we allow them to happen the worse we’re gunna get.

Audrey: Exactly.

Dorothy: (40s) But now in our society it's the in thing to be gay (113).

Some Year 7 students stated a generalised rejection of homosexuality:

Jonny is a nurse. A nurse seems kinda funny for a boy. You think ―oh he might be gay‖. Like we just hate them (Harrison, 12 years, 107).

But this position was modified when the context was specified:

_LCP:_ Do you think it would be hard for a boy in Year 7 who thought that he liked boys better than girls?

Sebastian: (12) If he were our friend we wouldn’t like judge but if we don’t like him we probably would be into him.

Mark: (12) Like if one of our friends turned gay we would still be his friend (107).

Once more the social and cultural capital of the targeted person determines the nature of the engagement.

Girls do not feel they are subject to the same level of homophobic constraints:

Michelle: (17) I reckon the girls are different. If they [boys] touch other guys, that’s going to be classed as gay. But girls can get away with dancing with each other and touching each other. No-one sees it as being different, but as soon as a guy does it!

Bronwyn: (17) I heard a guy say the other day, “Other guys just don’t sleep in a bed with another guy”. Like, if a guy’s sleeping over, and they’ve got a double bed, the other guy just doesn’t sleep with him. They get another bed for them. Whereas girls sleep in each other’s beds all the time. And the guy said, “that’s just off limits, you just don’t go”. Why not? Even though it would be a bit scary (011).

They believed that sexual behaviour between girls would be a “turn on” for the boys and proposed lesbian kissing as a way of taunting them:

The boys would love a bisexual or a lesbian but not a gay. I reckon they want lesbians because they can’t have them. If they can’t have them then they want them. That’s why you kick ‘em in the guts and they chase after you! (laughter). They would love lesbians so they could watch. We’d be
fine with it. I’d be fine with it but I wouldn’t do it. Girls will kiss just to see the boys drop. But there is no way boys would do that (Teagan, 16 years, 040).

One of the girls baulked at the generalised discussion of homosexuality. She did not accept the generalising and homogenising of homosexual men but appeared to be comfortable to do this with heterosexual boys:

We’re stereotyping, because every gay is different. Homosexuals are all different (Jacinta: 17 years, 003).

The girls were aware of homophobic harassment in their community and they saw it as more of an issue for boys. They noted that teasing or taunting was an important mode of communication among their peers. It was a measure of social strength. The capacity to deal with “ragging” or harassment appeared to them to be an important life skill:

Janice: (17) But it would be more full on for a boy.
Sunny: (16) The boys here can be pretty cruel.
Kerren: (17) And they’re pretty old fashioned.
Sunny: Boys worry more about their self esteem.
Janice: Yeah, if a guy was a florist, right, and he was really sure of himself and he gave the boys as much serving as he got.
Sunny: They’d stop.
Janice: They’d stop. They’d give up. Because they’d grow respect for him if he stuck up for himself.
Sunny: Whereas if he didn’t stick up for himself and just let him keep on doing it they would keep on doing it.
Janice: They would lose respect for him because he is not sticking up for himself (044).

Chris is one of the higher status boys in Year 12. He has high levels of social capital and appears to have high cultural capital in the field of youth culture in Paterson. He explains that it is necessary to be vigilant to retain this position. He is conscious of the “unwritten laws” which govern the behaviour of a boy within his group. He is conscious of the arbitrariness of the limitations that they set on their behaviour:

I dressed as a princess for an 18th but I didn’t need to wear makeup or do my hair different. Even if you’re dressed up you don’t have to wear makeup so why[would you do that]? Dressing up is just fun, but makeup is female. You can wear it to cover something. Maybe let’s say I cut my face and I was in pictures you would wear makeup. Putting on a costume is OK but not to be female. We set our own limits in our minds. Whether we set them too high ‘cause that’s what we do or maybe we’re being too harsh, but there are unwritten laws, so you do it yourself. Nobody is saying ‘this is acceptable this isn’t’, so we say here (gesture of a barrier). Someone might say here. Like I said, unwritten laws (Chris, 17, 054).
Chris is determined to maintain the code that has been agreed to by his group. He is sensitive to the importance of context when evaluating behaviour but he is generally wary of violating the group’s code of masculine practice and signals that he would enforce these standards:

There are certain situations where I would go, yeah, dress up as a girl, wear makeup but there are certain circumstances where it wouldn’t be as funny. It is hard to explain. Some rock groups it is OK but others are dark and sick. It is a very female use… I heard this guy in an interview and I thought hmm a bit weird then I heard his music and I went ‘Whoa I don’t like it at all!’ He spoke very blokey, he spoke very well about his music about where he was going and stuff but his music was… not shocking like Marilyn Manson, more gruesome but.. For me if it is manly it is OK but if it’s boppy and wears makeup that is sick. If you are male you don’t do feminine things. True you can bend the rules but don’t break them. Well if you break them don’t expect to be thought of the same. If you wear makeup now I will think but why? You don’t have to; you probably shouldn’t (Chris, 17 years, 054).

Chris’s choice of the word “sick” to describe a singer using traditionally feminine signs and symbols in his performance, and his emphatic declaration that a male must not “break the rules”, speaks to the strong homophobic feeling among the boys from Paterson.

Students from Years 7 to 12 appeared to police a shared view of acceptable masculine behaviour. There were apparent homophobic overtones in the general discourse. A closer examination reveals fracture lines in this position. The code of conduct enforced by this group of young people is very sensitive to context.

*LCP:* What would happen to a local boy who was experimenting with his sexuality?

Kirrilly: (16) He’d be bagged again.

Danielle: (16) It would depend how far he wanted to go.

Kirrilly: (16) It depends on who it was and how serious he is.

Annie: (16) He’d get bagged a fair bit.

Danielle: It would depend on how popular he was before.

Kirrilly: Yeah. How respected he was. If the guys respected him they wouldn’t... 

Danielle: Yeah if the guys respected him they would sort of accept it a bit more and they’d want to join in sort of thing.

Kirrilly: Yeah it depends how respected the person is.

*LCP:* So if you are already in the power group you can do anything pretty much?


Danielle: Not quite

Kirrilly: It’s just more accepted than if you’re not. If you are considered a good person, pretty much respected so it’s not that bad. If they’re not respected they’ll probably get more of a hard time.
Danielle: Like if it’s a person that doesn’t talk very much or a person that gets straight A’s or something like that that’s not in the popular group. They’d talk behind their back.

LCP: Would you be surprised if there was a physical attack on someone who was maybe a bit quiet or something.

Kirrilly: I’d be very surprised.

Danielle: If it did happen, Even though the boys didn’t like it they would still not accept that.

Kirrilly: If they didn’t like someone because they were gay they still would not accept a physical attack. They would think that was going too far (119).

A closer examination of the story of the homophobic attack in Manywarra revealed that the young man was a newcomer to the district. The suspicion and animosity that he faced were no doubt exacerbated by the fact that he was an outsider. He had no opportunity to accrue the type of capital that is valued in this site. Changes in the global and local economy are forcing changes in the type of capital that will be valued in the site of Paterson in the future. As young people plan for future careers they must adjust to these changes.

### 6.9 Conclusion

The young people of Paterson demonstrate their capacity to respond to a rapidly changing social world with identity play that is flexible and sensitive to the future opportunities associated with each identity. This flexibility is demonstrated by a shift away from the popularity of the youth microcultural identity of the Frigger in favour of the more urban identity of the Skegg.

Sport is a central feature of the rural identities observed in the site of Paterson. Young people achieved high status through support for the local football code and the consumption of alcohol. Although this is true for both girls and boys a closer scrutiny reveals many gender differences in the identity play of girls and boys. Gender relationships will be further examined in the following chapter.

The Paterson Boys’ Project which offered creative and expressive opportunities to the Paterson boys was supported by a small number of boys who benefited from the skills it offered but the marginalised boys did not participate. The segregated nature of this program exposed it to accusations of “sexism”. The Project’s emphasis on physical exploits (rock wall climbing, physical theatre and skateboarding) and its association with the boys from the football team, also exposed it to accusations that it
was reinforcing a traditional “hegemonic” form of rural masculinity. In the following chapter these positions will be explored further.
Chapter 7. Digging in the fields: Analysing the stories of Paterson

In Chapter 5 a schema for identifying sites of identities construction was introduced. This visual schema provides principles for the analysis of the youth identity play in Paterson. In this chapter the youth activity in Paterson will be examined using the three sites of discursive space, social space and material space elaborated in the schema. The associations between these will be explored through an examination of the relationships in the intersecting space. This exploration will be informed by youth subculture literature. The Paterson Boys Project and the youth microcultures of Friggers and Skeggs will be examined exploring their relationship to the fields of ‘power’ and ‘gender’.

Using the theories of Bourdieu, the language, signs, symbols and discourse used by these young people in Paterson is examined to develop a picture of the identity options available to them. The interacting fields of practice in which youth habituses are structured are elaborated and described. An examination of the contribution of history and geography to this structuring will also be considered.

The capital that is being exchanged in the site of Paterson by the young people will be investigated and the stakes of these transactions speculated upon. The significant fields in Paterson will also be investigated to explore the relationships between them and the overarching or institutional fields of power and gender. Cross-field effects will be identified in order to investigate any constraints bearing on the interactions and representations, experiences and dispositions of the young people of Paterson.

7.1 The stories of Paterson

Despite its isolation and apparent homogeneity the stories from Paterson are characterised by diversity and a consciousness of horizons far away. The community leaders who initiated and supported the Paterson Boys’ Project believed that some change in the nature of the Paterson youth culture was possible and necessary. Their project mobilised a raft of strategies to attract boys to new creative activities. It appealed to a core group of boys and won the support of a large committed community team but it did not attract the marginalised youth and it did not offer a transformed gender identity. It did however support the youth microculture which was already beginning to transform the local culture from within. To understand the
stories of Paterson better the development of youth microcultures and social theories concerning them will be examined.

### 7.1.1 Youth cultural identities

We are, each of us, on the move and on the make, propelled from yesterday towards tomorrow; we are unruly sparks of meaning-making energy on a voyage through our lives.

For those of us concerned with the situations of childhood, of children and youth, recognising the vigorous boom and boost of that voyage is important. We note that there are questions that fuel the voyage – Who in the world am I? What in the world are my chances and my choices? These are questions of identity as well as geography – they are personal and idiosyncratic, and, as well, social and cultural, historical and political. Who am I in this world? What are my choices given what I find? What can I make out of all that I’ve been made? (Ayers, cited in Vadeboncoeur & Stevens, 2005, p. x).

As we have seen in Chapter 6 the young people of Paterson are vigorously grappling with these life questions. They are actively engaged in their own “meaning making” voyages. They speak about the choices available to them with remarkable clarity and they reflect on the place of Frigger and Skegg “in the voyage of their lives” with astuteness. The youth microcultures of Paterson demonstrate the capacity that young people have to improvise, like jazz musicians (Bourdieu et al., 1998), with the materials provided to them. They create new responses to the challenges of continuing their life “voyage” often beyond the horizons that are familiar to them.

These young people speak about “choices” and “identities” (plural). They are aware of material, structural and discursive constraints on their choices but they do not see their world as entirely deterministic. They are conscious of the mediating power of their gender and their location, reflexively responding to life’s options with an eye to improving their futures.

Benhabib claims that “culture has become a ubiquitous synonym for identity, an identity marker and differentiator” (italics in original Benhabib, 2002, p. 1). She writes:

> We should view human cultures as constant creations, recreations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between ‘we’ and the ‘other(s)’. The ‘other’ is always also within us and is one of us. A self is a self only because it distinguishes itself from a real, or more often than not imagined, ‘other’ (Benhabib, 2002, p. 5).

Her vision of culture creation resonates with the experiences of Sunny quoted earlier in this study. Sunny rejected the image of the “imagined other”, the Skegg,
positioning herself against it in her aspiration to become a jillaroo in Queensland, at the same time acknowledging “Skeggs are more ... I don't really know I haven’t exactly met one yet. They are more an idea that people have” (16 years, 045). The Frigger identity and the Skegg identity represent groups both imagined and real to be identified with or against in part or in whole. The young people of Paterson spoke about themselves and the “others” whom they measured themselves against with insight. They discussed their cultural choices in a way which seemed to share Benhabib’s position that:

Any view of cultures as clearly delineable wholes is a view from the outside that generates coherence for the purpose of understanding and control. Participants in the culture, by contrast, experience their traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools and material living conditions through shared, albeit contested and contestable, narrative accounts. From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather, it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it (Benhabib, 2002, p. 5).

For the young people of Manywarra, the township of Paterson represented a culture that was less “rural” and more “townie”. It provided a less rural horizon to look to for a source of “other” cultures. From Paterson High, the larger rural towns within the district and beyond provided cultures which looked towards other horizons, some to the outback and others to the cosmopolitan metropolis. From the vantage point of their computers the young people also looked beyond these horizons to find more material from which to develop “their traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools and material living conditions” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 5). For this particular group of young people the stories of Friggers and Skeggs have become part of their “shared, albeit contested and contestable, narrative accounts” of the “meaning making” voyage in Paterson.

In this examination of the stories of the young people of Paterson, the idea of identity as determined by socially or biologically prescribed roles or forces is rejected. In this study the shaping of identity is examined in discursive, social and material space as each of these sites is acknowledged as contributing to the identity options available to the young people. This analysis of the identity play in Paterson is informed by the idea that:

Prescribed roles and identities are replaced by the imperative to self-consciously and reflexively construct one's own identity (Bauman, 2000; Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). There is an increasing tendency to self-monitoring so that ‘we are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 75).
The young people of Paterson appear to be aware of the stakes in play in the game of identity formation. Bourdieu’s image of the active agent trading and negotiating the value of accrued capital supports this idea of individuals constructing their own biography. But this process of self construction is mediated by the constraining effects of the pre-reflexive habitus and the different points of view, and different capital valuing systems provided by individual fields of practice. The overarching fields of power and gender also produce cross-field effects (introduced in Chapter 2) within which identities are repeatedly negotiated and renegotiated. Paterson youth are constructing their identities in the context of a particular discursive space, social space and material space. Each of these contexts provides insight into the nature of the identity options and constraints in play in the site of Paterson.

Paterson’s young people move through a wide range of contexts as they construct habituses, or habitual ways of being in the world, that will fit them for their chosen futures. Some of the characteristics of these habitual ways of being will be explored in the following section. The place of the Paterson Boys project will be reviewed in the context of gender policies in schools and the Parliamentary Enquiry into Boys Education and the relationship of Paterson’s youth identity options to the overarching fields of power and gender will be investigated later in this chapter. But first the identity opportunities available through the youth microcultures of Frigger and Skeggs will be examined in the context of discursive, social and material place.

The first of these investigations will be carried out in the context of discursive space. The discursive space encompasses the signs and symbols used by young people in their daily lives, in their schools, sports, leisure activities and peer groupings. These signs and symbols provide young people with representations for ways of “being and doing” their identities. The discursive space includes the language of: music, fashion, the body, attitudes, objects and words. In Bourdieuan terms symbolic capital is an important form of currency in discursive space. This symbolic capital is exchanged for cultural and social capital in other contexts.

The second examination will be in the context of social space. Social space considers the spaces developed between people as they engage in the institutional activities of groups like families, schools, colleagues, clubs or class. Social capital and cultural capital are the significant stakes competed for in this context.
Material space is the third context through which we will examine the Paterson stories. It is here that we acknowledge the physical rural setting of this study and examine the stories of the participants for evidence of any impact from the material world including trade in economic and physical capital.

### 7.1.2 Surveying Paterson youth culture capital

Before embarking on a closer examination of the process of youth identities construction in Paterson it may be useful to survey the nature of the contrasting capital identified with the two microcultures of the *Friggers* and the *Skeggs*. The following tables identify the role of social, discursive and material space in contributing to the social, cultural symbolic and economic capital available to the young people of Paterson in the context of the two dominant microcultures.

The agricultural context of the site of Paterson has in the past provided a fertile ground for the development of the rural *Frigger* identity. Table 6.1 demonstrates that it is a site rich in *Frigger* capital.

The symbolic capital identified with the *Frigger* connects with a rural culture of the past. Politician Tim Fischer, former leader of the National Party and Deputy Prime Minister, celebrated this pioneering rural culture. His identification with it and his rural constituency was indicated by the wearing of the typical *Frigger* hat. Symbolic capital, like the hat, earned him valuable social and cultural capital, helping to sustain a long and successful political career. Identification with the past, however, means that the *Frigger* identity may also be read as one that is conservative and reactionary. The young people who rejected this identity looked to global sources for alternative capital:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 7.1</strong> Frigger microcultural capital exchanged in Paterson</th>
<th><strong>Discursive space</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social space</strong></th>
<th><strong>Material space</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
<td>Connections between people are reinforced and represented through a shared uniform of RM Williams boots, belts and tight jeans or jodhpurs, country music and activities like “circle work”</td>
<td>Sporting teams, clubs and volunteer groups (State Emergency Service, Bushfire Brigade, Country Women’s Association) identified with the Frigger culture sustain strong ties between groups of people</td>
<td>Geographic isolation fosters codependency, neighbours support each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Capital</strong></td>
<td>Boots, hats, belts, utes &amp; country music are identified with celebration of a sense of freedom and a belief in the safety of rural locations</td>
<td>RM Williams Boots, hats, belts, utes &amp; country music link rural young &amp; old people across Australia</td>
<td>The long, often rough roads support a culture of ‘ute’ driving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic Capital</strong></td>
<td>Boots, hats and belts identify with successful rural enterprises of the past</td>
<td>Groups share connection through a shared uniform, music and activities like “circle work”</td>
<td>Identification with the activities of horse riding and cattle work, emphasising outdoors, physical endurance and physical rural work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Capital</strong></td>
<td>Hard work is valued socially but is not necessarily renumerated</td>
<td>Both boys and girls are expected to work long hard hours when the seasonal tasks require</td>
<td>Clean air and open space carry some value</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Owning rural land carries cultural prestige.</td>
<td>Support is provided by the group for anyone in trouble</td>
<td>Improved land and good crop yields or wool clip may not provide financial rewards but are valued as an ‘economic’ improvement.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Good workers” are esteemed</td>
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<td>“Working the land” attracts social status.</td>
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### Table 7.2  
**Skegg microcultural capital exchanged in Paterson**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Discursive space</th>
<th>Social space</th>
<th>Material space</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagery gathered</td>
<td>The cosmopolitan street culture sets young people apart from the local rural</td>
<td>The skateboard park sets young people apart from those over their 20s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>from global contexts</td>
<td>image of the <em>Frigger</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>provides local youth</td>
<td>Some young people may have been isolated at first but a critical mass of</td>
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<tr>
<td>with international</td>
<td><em>Skeggs</em> is now present in Paterson</td>
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<td>signs and symbols</td>
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<td>connecting with a</td>
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<td>wider culture</td>
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<td>Beach &amp; street</td>
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<td>culture imagery</td>
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<td>connects rural youth</td>
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<td>with coastal &amp;</td>
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<td>cosmopolitan</td>
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<td>Global imagery</td>
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<td>identifies young</td>
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<td>people with pop</td>
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<td>culture identities</td>
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<td>like Eminem</td>
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<td>Young people connect</td>
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<td>with each other and</td>
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<td>global identities</td>
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<td>through: caps, baggy</td>
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<td>jeans, tee shirts,</td>
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<td>beach labels, skate</td>
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<td>shoes, rap music,</td>
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<tr>
<td>bike or skate riding</td>
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<td>Labels, caps, music</td>
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<td>and ‘skateboarder’ gait</td>
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<td>identify with a</td>
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<td>cosmopolitan street</td>
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<td>culture.</td>
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<td>Economic hardship</td>
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<td>associated with</td>
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<td>isolation, drought</td>
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<td>and rural downturn</td>
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<td>Hard work and study</td>
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*Symbols and Caps, baggy jeans, tee shirts, beach labels, skate shoes, rap music, bike or skate riding represent affiliation with the *Skegg* identity.*
Despite the geographic isolation of Paterson and the dominance of the agricultural industry the young people in this site have acquired a wide range of capital associated with the cosmopolitan identity of the Skegg. The social significance of these youthful identity choices has been examined by social theorists for many years. A review of some of these examinations may shed light on the functioning of the youth microcultures in this particular rural site.

### 7.2 Youth identities in discursive space

The Friggers and Skeggs of Paterson draw on a number of complex signs and symbols to construct and signal unique identity choices. The development of culturally coded practices, such as those of the Friggers and Skeggs, is not a new phenomenon. Cultural studies scholars have identified youth cultures in a similar vein to those of the Friggers and the Skeggs dating back to the seventeenth century. According to Bennett and Khan Harris:

A case in point here is Pearson's (1994) account of the London ‘apprentices’ of the 17th and 18th centuries who (according to Pearson), ‘were thought of as a separate or subculture ... various attempts were made to regularise conduct of apprentices, banning them from participation in football games, playing music, or drinking in taverns’ (p. 1166; see also Pearson, 1983, pp. 190-4). A similar scenario is described by Roberts in relation to the Northern Scuttlers, a 19th century gang based in neighbouring cities of Manchester and Salford in north-west England. As Roberts (1971) explains, the Scuttler ‘had his own style of dress – the union shirt, bellbottom trousers, the heavy leather belt, picked out in fancy designs with the large steel buckle and the thick, iron shod clogs’ (p. 123). A non British comparison is provided by German youth theorist, Detley Peukert, in his study of the Wilden Cliquen (‘wild crowds’) of 1920s Germany. As Peukert (1983) notes, in addition to stylistically distinctive clothing, these youth groups also wore ‘coloured bracelets, earrings and tattoos’ (Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 3).

Mid twentieth century sociologists took a keen interest in the discursive space of these groups of people. They described these groups as “subcultures” and examined them to discover the ways that they functioned.

#### 7.2.1 Youth subculture theory

According to de Kloet (1998) the term subculture was coined in the 1940s. The Chicago School of sociologists studied what they saw as marginal behaviours in the urban setting of Chicago. They gathered detailed data on subjects like the hobo, skid row, the negro family, the Jewish ghetto, musicians, doctors and waitresses.
This city-centric view of subculture which focused on the marginal, often referring to “deviance” or “delinquency” was overshadowed in the field of youth culture studies by the work at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (CCCS). In the 1970s this group produced a number of seminal works including the two major publications: *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall & Jefferson, 1975) and *Subculture, The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige, 1979). Hebdige’s theorising of style introduces the idea of the coding of “mundane objects” such as hats, socks, jeans and music. He refers to the “hidden messages” which are traced out as “maps of meaning on the glossy surfaces of style” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 18). The young people at Paterson High demonstrated their skill in reading the “style” of Friggers and Skeggs even when “the map” was obscured by the school uniform.

The Birmingham school focused on the semiotics of working class youth cultural practices. Its scholars explored youth language, dress, embodied practices and popular cultural taste. They examined the unintended meanings of objects as well as the intentional ones. They provided a precedent for the decoding of the appearance of both ordinary and extraordinary behaviour:

Signification need not be intentional, as semioticians have repeatedly pointed out. Umberto Eco writes ‘not only the expressly intended communicative object … but every object may be viewed … as a sign’ (Eco, 1973) … the conventional outfits worn by the average man and woman in the street … these choices contain a whole range of messages…(they are distinguished by their relative invisibility, their appropriateness, their ‘naturalness’). However, the intentional communication is of a different order. It stands apart – a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself. It gives itself to be read (Hebdige, 1979, p. 101).

Through the eyes of the Birmingham school, Friggers and Skeggs are represented as gathering the gait and clothing of the horse rider or skateboard/bike gymnast, the music and argot of the paddock and the beach or the urban street, with which to build a culture and identity to present to the world. The semiotics, or discourse of the ordinary are described by Bourdieu as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989), providing the mechanism for the formation of groups and a focus for this study as it explores the youth practices in the discursive space of Paterson. When a new teacher arrived in Paterson from Hubtown, a town which favoured the Frigger image she explained that she was used to wearing the familiar RM Williams clothing to work and to town. In Paterson this symbolic capital was not privileged in the same way and in this
context she felt “like a bloody alien” in her Frigger clothing (Miss Riley, 20s, 131). Even though she had only travelled an hour away Miss Riley had moved to a new cultural location. Many of the young people of Paterson identified with the symbolic capital of the Skegg, not the Frigger. Miss Riley was not wearing any of the signs or symbols of the Frigger culture when she was interviewed for this study. She was constrained by the new culture.

Willis (1998) explains that “style and fashion are about experimenting with identity and making personal statements.” He reports one young woman saying “if I try something on and I know I like it, then I know I’m that kind of person” (Willis, 1998, p. 209). This experimentation is illustrated in this study of Paterson by the girls who observed that “You can choose which bit” (Danielle, 16 years, 119) of the various identities available to them that they wanted to try on. Teagan claimed that: “They do that all the time. They ride a skateboard with a cowboy hat on. And we can wear Skegg clothes with our cowboy boots and our hat” (16 years, 119). The young people of Paterson engaged in the identity play that the inherited and acquired store of cultural and social capital gave them access to. Some confidently experimented with a range of signs and symbols; others, like the girls from Manywarra appeared to believe themselves restricted to a limited palette.

The subculture theory from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (CCCS) has been criticised for focusing on groups as if they were essential entities. Hodkinson notes that Clarke (1981) and Bennett (1999) charge the CCCS theorists with focusing on youth subcultures as “fixed and bounded symbolic structures”, which had the effect of “underemphasizing internal diversity and instability at the same time as failing to account sufficiently for the flows of differentially committed young people across group boundaries” (cited in Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 136). Luke, the boy from Year 10 who hunted pigs with one group of friends and partied and met girls with another, illustrates the way that the young people of Paterson moved in and out of groupings. In such a small community it was inevitable that there would be many “instances of contact between its members and the participants of certain other groups” (Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 136). Just as Hodkinson found with his study of the “Goths”, with the Friggers and Skeggs there was also “some variation in level of commitment among insiders” (cited in Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 136).
Bourdieu’s theoretical analysis of discursive space focuses on the exchange of what he refers to as symbolic capital. For him, the negotiations between boys as they compete to gain cultural and social capital is often evident through representations of symbolic capital. Bourdieu points out that symbolic capital and symbolic power play an important role in the formation of groups and it is through these groups that the highest status capital is exchanged.

Paterson is a small community and one of the motivating forces for the development of the Paterson Boys Project was a concern that its young people did not have access to a rich enough culture (Frances 002 & 079). Conversations with Paterson young people demonstrate that the discursive space which they inhabit is in fact quite rich. The discourses that they engage in may not be accessible to the older generation but they furnish cultures that function to provide young people with greater social mobility. This becomes apparent as identity constructions are explored in the context of social space.

### 7.3 Youth identities in Social Space

The writers from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (CCCS) go further than simply observe the potency of the semiotics of style. They also explored youth cultures in terms of counter-hegemonic struggle. They saw the stylistic characteristics of each subculture as “a code by which the members communicate with the ‘straight’ world” (Tait, cited in Tittley, 1999, p. 4). The relationships between subcultures and other cultures were seen as power struggles. Bennett explains the shift in focus from the Chicago school’s emphasis on describing marginal localised groups to an examination of cultural practices in terms of class:

> With the publication of Resistance Through Rituals in 1976, however the emphasis shifted away from issues of localities and community towards a macro perspective on class in which youth subcultures were interrelated as spectacular indicators of the ongoing class struggle in British society ... The CCCS reworked this model of subcultural deviance as a means of interpreting the stylistic responses of working-class youth in post-war Britain which, it was argued, represented a series of collective reactions to structural changes taking place in British post-war society (Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 5).

Typical of this literature is Willis’s Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs (1981) which focused on the way that working class behaviour was reproduced by working class boys. It made a valuable contribution to the examination of the role of education in the construction of youth identities. In the
early 1990s studies of pop culture, often used as a synonym for youth culture, focused on the idea of “resistance”. The trope of rebellious youth was popularised to describe the characteristics of youth cultures. Stuart Hall in his essay *Notes on deconstructing the popular* describes popular culture in terms of consent and resistance. He refers to a “double stake in popular culture, the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it” (Hall, 1994, p. 442).

In time this focus on “resistance” attracted criticism. Gitlin accused the youth culture theorists of:

scavenging the clubs, back alleys, and video channels for a ‘resistance’ they are convinced, a priori, must exist. Failing to find radical potential in the politics of parties or mass movements, they exalt ‘resistance’ in subcultures, or, one step on, in popular styles, or even, to take it one step further--in the observation that viewers watch TV with any attitude other than devoted rapture.

‘Resistance’--meaning all sorts of grumbling, multiple interpretation, semiological inversion, pleasure, rage, friction, numbness, what have you--is accorded dignity, even glory, by stamping these not-so-great refusals with a vocabulary derived from life-threatening political work against fascism…Hegelian to the core, this line of thought agrees that somewhere in the culture ‘the resistance’ must exist (Gitlin cited in Kleinhans, 1994, p. 3).

Gitlin’s attack on the subculture theorists’ search for evidence of resistance is colourful but makes the point that an interpretation of cultural practice which focuses determinedly on finding “resistance” may well distort the view of the practice. Hall’s focus on a power struggle within popular culture appears to exclude the possibility of new microcultures developing nested within a number of other cultures, which in some fields may be considered hegemonic and in others marginal or oppositional. The logic of resistance or protest fails to provide an adequate explanation for the development of the complex cultures of the Friggers and Skeggs. These microcultures appear to coexist with powerful sport, football and school cultures each of which has their place in the identity constructions of these young people.

In the twenty-first century it is particularly problematic to see youth culture as a response to the “mainstream” or in conversation with “the straight world” as these entities become increasingly difficult to identify. As McCracken (cited in Tittley, 1999) has noted:

The mainstream is losing its centrality. Increasingly we live in a world of coincident communities, a great swamp of possibilities. There is no mainstream. There are many streams. The ‘dominant meaning systems’ are
coming undone. It is less and less clear what 'rituals of resistance' might resist (p. 3).

The target audience for the performed identities in Paterson does not appear to be the “straight” world, if this is represented by the adults, as the adults interviewed were not familiar with the Frigger and Skegg identities. If they were the target audience they were not conscious of it. The Frigger identity did not “resist “the culture of the adult world, in many areas it reinforced it. However the Skegg identity did appear to be more rebellious.

7.3.1 Paterson Youth in Social Space

The social context provided by family structures and institutional structures, particularly the school, exert a daily influence on young people. In some instances young people referred to the Skegg identity as representing a reaction to the dominant adult identity. This position supports the subculture theorists’ reading of youth culture as “oppositional” to adult culture:

Basically I think a Skegg is someone who doesn't listen to their parents. And just runs around the town because they got nothing better to do (Annie, 16 years, 098).

Some participants saw the urban Skegg image as in turn rejected by the adult community:

A lot of parents look down their nose at people like that, (Danielle, 16 years, 119).

Nonetheless in the school setting the Frigger image was the marginal identity. As Luke and Vanessa demonstrated:

Like tomorrow when I wear my big akubra to school I’m not sure how the others will react (Vanessa, 18 years, 047).

There is only three or four [Friggers] in our year and one girl. ... It’s hard. I always got bagged. Got called a shooter for a year (Luke, 15 years, 133).

The fact that in a class of 30, two girls who identified as Friggers chose not to attend the Year 12 farewell also illustrated the degree to which the rural Frigger image has become marginalised among these young people. The correlation between this identity choice and this self-imposed isolation warrants further investigation. The devaluing of the formalities associated with the completion of schooling may indicate a disruption of the schooling process at an earlier stage associated with identification with the less favoured microculture.
Frigger and the Skegg may be analysed in terms of their “rebellion against the dominant culture” in the spirit of the Birmingham school subculture theory but to do so is to impose a narrow totalising lens on practices that are diverse and flexible. These microcultures may indeed provide a pathway for young people to articulate alternative views to those of their parents but a simplistic view of power imposed from a dominant culture from “above” upon a rebellious younger generation distorts the complex process of exchange which may be surfaced through alternative views. Even the most conservative parent in Paterson would be aware of the limitations of the “cowboy” culture in this period of rapid change. The evidence from Paterson supports McCracken’s conclusion that:

The surface commotion of the teen world comes from a deeper, more systematic process of innovation that is throwing off a variety of types of teen, each with its own ideas, values, and ideologies. These types are well defined, easily read, consistently maintained, and policed with some vigour. Were peer pressure or protest the real cause of teen plenitude, none of this would be necessary, all of it would be gratuitous (cited in Tittley, 1999, p. 2).

There was little evidence of a spirit of rebellion or revolution in these young people. They were critical of some particular aspects of their home community but generally they spoke of it with warmth and pride. The Friggers and Skeggs appear to represent two youthful innovations from this rural place. They are dynamic and expressive. The young people do not appear to be motivated by oppositional or rebellious drives to develop these new cultures. They are aware of the imperative to leave their safe supportive home town to find employment and further education so the identity play they are engaged in seems more likely to be an expression of this consciousness than an act of rebellion.

In fact the PBP activities which included skateboarding, physical theatre, a film club and rock musicians, endorsed and reinforced the non-rural Skegg culture. Svetlana Kilmova’s observations of the impact of the rate of change on youth culture formation in her study Youth, Socialisation and Social Change (Tittley, 1999, p. 5) may explain this apparent support for change provided by the parent community:

The rate of change in society also impacts on the creation of subculture groups. In societies with slow pace of social change the transition to adulthood goes smoothly and youth are similar to their parents. There is a unity and a solidarity between the coming generation and the generation of parents. In societies undergoing rapid social change a smooth transition to adulthood is no longer possible and there is a strong dissimilarity with parent generations. Here an individual cannot rely on their parents identity.
patterns as they no longer fit into the social context. Because youth realise that they cannot learn from past experiences, they search for new identities that are relevant. Again this shows the positive role youth play in the creation of their culture (Kilmova, cited in Tittley, 1999, p. 5).

The adults of Paterson may no longer be in a position to offer appropriate identity patterns for their young people to replicate but the supporters of PBP were actively supporting them in the development of a new more resilient culture. Even though the Skegg microculture of Paterson appears to be quite dissimilar to the parent culture, a level of solidarity with them is demonstrated through the development of the PBP program.

### 7.3.2 PBP: A semiotic pathway to urban realities?

The Skegg identity is an urban identity. A version of its symbolic codes may be found in metropolitan settings around the world. The young people who acquire these codes may access sites of great economic and social activity. The Frigger image provides a cultural code more sympathetic to the rural setting. Perhaps it is this identity that urban youth aspire to as they escape from their city jobs to go hunting or join the Deniliquin “Ute Muster”.

According to the literature, for some time girls in rural places have achieved higher educational credentials and greater mobility than boys, (Alston & Kent, 2003). The traditional habituses of the Paterson youth are informed by this. As the ABS data (Chapter 1) demonstrate, rural males in Paterson have in the past been able to access stable jobs and rural masculine identities with educational levels as low as Year 8, whereas girls who leave school early have been very limited in their employment potential. This may explain some of the anxiety around boys’ education in Paterson as these opportunities for boys are vanishing. Girls have been urged over time to develop a habitus which involves the valuing of education; boys on the other hand have continued to measure their identities against a template that privileges manual achievement and physical prowess. The school and community leaders who initiated the Paterson Boys’ Project (PBP) expressed a concern for the “narrow” views of many of the Paterson boys. They spoke about “aggressive behaviour” and the need to develop a capacity for “creative expression”. They felt that their boys were “missing out” on something:

In the beginning, firstly I think that prior to PBP this town, or this district, was pretty much a cultural graveyard (Frances, 30s, 002).
Although several people with leadership responsibilities spoke against the aggressive culture of football, there was no suggestion that the local masculine culture should actually change. PBP was intended to add some new skills and widen the world view, organisers did not speak about transformation or disruption of current gender norms. The traditional masculine was still referred to as the most desirable identity. The girls who aspired to be shearers, woodcutters, footballers and piggery workers appeared to do so to demonstrate their “equality” (section 5.1.6). Community leaders, including members of PBP worked hard to ensure that their children had a secure place in the football culture. Rural masculinity was not under assault from PBP, it was rather being encouraged to broaden its horizons.

### 7.3.3 Microcultures and class

The Frigger and Skegg images do not translate into social class in a straightforward way. Some Paterson youth identified the Frigger image with “the snobs” because of the high cost of the signature boots, hats and belts. Its polo playing squatocracy roots also identify it with an elite. However Luke and the girls from Manywarra appear to view the image as the choice of the “battler”. It was not the identity choice of the higher status Paterson youth. The Frigger girls made reference to the capital inherited from their families in terms of a farming or jillarooing heritage in explaining their allegiance to the identity. This heritage may also have limited their access to alternative identity choices. All of the participants associated the Frigger identity with hard physical work and it was not necessarily identified with academic qualifications for boys but did not appear to restrict the girls.

At the 21st birthday party of a female university student who identified with the Frigger image, her allegiance to this identity was celebrated in the hayshed setting, the music and a cake decorated by a Frigger boot. A “bucking bronco” (a 44 gallon drum with a saddle on it, suspended between four posts by rubber inner tubes) was set up in the hay shed for the partygoers to ride. Those boys who were keen to ride were dressed in cowboy shirts, big hats, jeans and boots; they were farm hands, builders, plumbers, stock handlers, welders and roustabouts. The girls were dressed in jeans and boots and supported each other in riding the “bucking bronco” waving their hands in the air with bravado. They boot scooted with practised delight to Country and Western songs such as John Denver’s “Thank God I’m a Country Boy” singing aloud with other songs like “She’s My Bootscooting Baby”.

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These girls were university students studying pharmacy, nursing and education. The boys from the School of Pharmacy, who wore Tee shirts and running shoes, did not participate in the buck jumping. It appeared that the girls may enjoy the identity play of the Frigger without bearing a cultural capital cost but the boys seemed to be more closely identified with traditional rural masculine activities. This possibility warrants closer investigation.

The Skegg image was favoured by the highest achieving boys at Paterson High School, as well as by the youngest rebels. It was closely identified with the exploration of music and was generally coded as masculine. The young people claimed that the music that the Skegg identity was constructed through offered these rural young people an opportunity to “broaden their horizons”:

The Skegg image does not appear to be tied in any clear way to social class. Its association with the cosmopolitan identifies it with corporate enterprise but its origins in street culture, prison culture and surf culture detach it from any straightforward link to the market place.

### 7.3.4 Relationships to the field of power

The cross-field effect of the overarching field of power is at all times acting upon the social practices of Paterson. As young people compete for popularity and adults pursue economic advantage they respond to the shifts in capital value affected by the field of power.
The community and school personnel who initiated PBP held leadership positions in Paterson. Their high status was slightly threatened by the government funding bodies when they imposed an evaluation of the program. This threat was averted by a successful application for alternative funding. The boys who participated in PBP were generally high status, enjoying popularity with their peers and approval from the adult community. The “legitimised authority” which they held in this field served to intimidate the “boys at risk” cited as the reason for the initiation of the program in the first place. Some community members also referred to the leadership of PBP as elitist.

The relationship of PBP to the field of power was a very unstable one. The institutions responsible for funding may be seen as representative of a level of power but were at times supportive and at other times critical of the program. The relationship of the youth microcultures, Friggers and Skeggs, to the field of power is more stable as the discourses of these cultures open up access to cultural acceptance and possible employment in specific rural or urban sites. PBP supports the Skegg culture by providing conditions which favour its particular type of habitus. Organisers appear to hope that it will improve access for some young people to the field of power which is dominant in larger population centres.

The identity opportunities offered in the social and discursive space of Paterson are at all times also subject to the influence of the material space available in this site. The following section explores the qualities of the material space of Paterson.

7.4 Youth culture in Material Space: rural habituses

The people of Paterson have for generations depended on the local rural setting for their livelihood. This relationship with agricultural production has cut deep into the psyche of this community. It is the source of the celebration of outdoor physical activity and achievement. Kenway and Kraak (2002) have observed the significance of the relationship between rural people and their geographic location:

Their economies have usually emerged specifically from their natural assets, their geography. In all such places, pockets of people share the economic imperative to make the specificities of their location fulfil their economic and social needs. Their economies have historically been finely tuned to harnessing nature through culture. The options they make available to local people and outsiders are in many ways enriched, but also limited by their geography (2002, p. 6).
The young people of Paterson do not react to their local setting in a uniform way. Some were passionate about saving the local forest:

Our river red gum forests are dropping branches and droopy leaves but they don’t flood it. But this agricultural community would have to agree to give up some water for them. It needs better management. They just need to agree to take action. It needs to be flooded every few years. We can see the impact (John, 16 years, 050).

While others blamed people from the city (who are identified as Skeggs) for taking irrigation water away from the farmers to promote environmental flows:

I hate cities. I don’t like the people. They are really pig-headed. They really give me the shits. Like they say how no farmer should have water and stuff like that. They really shit me driving around in all those Skegg clothes. I don’t really like Skeggs at all. They think they’re really good (Luke, 15 years, 133).

Cherilyn saw the tension between the environment and agriculture in gendered terms:

Oh shit yes. Blokes just can’t stand to see trees just, willy-nilly, hanging around. If you gave a bloke a chainsaw in this school and said you can cut down two trees, I’ll lay odds they’d find the two great biggest ones. The mentality of it would be to take the two biggest. They wouldn’t just take that one out near the fence ‘cause it mightn’t survive. Their mind would no more think I’ll take those two there because they’re small and they mightn’t survive (089).

Paterson habituses are informed by powerful relationships to the local environment but this is by no means uniform or stable. The state of the river and the local wetlands are a focus for heated community conflict.

7.4.1 Youth identities formed in isolation

The isolation of Paterson has also contributed to the “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66) that has developed in this place. The young people reported feeling very safe in this small community because they knew they were always being watched. It was reported in section 1.1.4 that young children enjoyed “the freedom of the street” and in section 5.7.3, that the movements of youth around the town were closely monitored by public observers. Young people described this culture of scrutiny as being like a soap opera. Comment on their activity was referred to as “so Days of Our Lives” (Teagan, 17 years, 040). This constant surveillance was seen as both a strength and a constraining influence on the development of their autonomy:
What is the best thing about being part of this community?

Amanda: (20s) You know everyone. Wherever you go you know you are going to know everyone. And everyone looks out for you in that aspect.

What is the worst thing?

Kerren: (17) That everyone knows everything you do. You can't get away with anything.

Amanda: (20s) Everyone knows everybody. Everyone knows everyone’s business. It can be both [a good thing and a bad thing]. It can be gossip and it can be people looking to look after you (084).

The isolation is also associated with the development of close friendship circles:

Everyone used to be shy around each other, but we just got to know each other so well. We are not inhibited by each other. We are more closely connected, so we are not so isolated. Living close to each other and seeing each other more often you develop close relationships (Teagan, 17 years, 040).

Connor lives on a farm some distance from the township of Paterson. He also emphasizes the importance of relationships in dealing with isolation:

If something breaks down you just ring around to see if someone else is going into town. We just help each other out. We've got about four neighbours. Because in the country you just know everyone. In the city you hardly know your neighbours, because you never see them (Connor, 9 years, 035).

Despite its inhibiting impact the “informal social support” celebrated as characteristic of Paterson youth culture has been identified as an important predictor of youth well being (McGrath, Brennan, Pat, & Barnett, 2009). Because of this social support the young people do not feel isolated. They have also developed social activities which are consistent with the celebration of the outdoors physical identities traditionally valued in this place:

Edith: (15) I don’t think that we are isolated actually.
Kate: (15) We have a lot of fun being here. Some things like bonfires and going swimming and channel surfing that’s fun for us; ‘cause we don’t know any different that’s the way we’ve been brought up. It’s better fun there than the pool (091).

The isolated border location of the town has amplified the sense in these students of being ‘other’ to the mainstream students. The rural/city divide is highlighted by the
sense that the curriculum they study is also focused in a place that is ‘other’ to their experience.

Nerolie: (17) There are very few Year 12 lectures and study days available for us and there’s lots of travelling involved in getting to them. I mean in Sydney they have weekends that they can go to them. And they can sit in on lectures and access information from like the huge State libraries and stuff. Our closest school is 80kms away. Even if we want to get study guides the ones around here are for VCE not HSC. We have to go a long way away to get basic resources. It would be good if we had the same curriculum.

Jimmy: (17) Everything is just so far away. We went to Sydney at like, great, great expense and there were other people who..

Rochelle: (16) There were like Year 11s attending lectures and when we were in Year 11 we never went to anything like that, but there was a heap of Year 11s.

Jimmy: Yeah we were about a year late (004).

As they come to the end of their high school career these young people have become more conscious of cultural capital which they cannot access because of their geographic isolation. Once more they saw personal relationships as a compensation for this disadvantage. They believe that they have privileged access to:

Nerolie: One-to-one teaching.
Jimmy: Less people means more time with the teacher.
Nerolie: And it’s a bit more personal. They will put in a bit more time if they know you’re struggling. They will cater for your problems. Like they will cater it down a few levels.
Esther: (16) And it’s much more personal, like most of the teachers we know.
Rochelle: Even like the library, they know your name.
Jimmy: Everyone knows everyone, you know what everyone’s like.
Esther: Even the canteen ladies know what you like.
Rochelle: Everyone tries to help each other out. Like if something’s wrong they help you out and that (004).

7.4.2 Paterson youth identities in ‘glocal’ space

The identities developed by a young person will bear the marks of gender, race, social status and origin. It will also bear the marks of its connection with the global, the metropolitan and the cosmopolitan. The young people of Paterson make frequent reference to “the city” in their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of their home. They see the city as a place of great promise and great threat. The young people of Paterson demonstrate a consciousness of the possibilities of both the alluring and the ugly face of the metropolis. From the
safe distance of their home space they appropriate some of the sonic and sensory imagery of the metropolis, actively engaging in its “vibrant trade” in culture (Kenway et al., 2006). The capital of the metropolis may be usefully traded in centres as small as Paterson or as large as New York. Geographic isolation no longer prevents young people from accessing this rich market place. Robertson’s term “glocalisation” was coined to describe this process of transference of ideas. He claimed that:

Similar processes of glocalisation are taking place universally, without an overall guiding body. Examples of this are the establishment of great numbers of nationalisms with similar characteristics, or the world wide spread of suburbanization (Featherstone, Lash, & Robertson, 1995, p. 5).

Robertson’s description of “global institutionalization” (1995, p. 5), may well refer to the process of transfer of cosmopolitan identity markers to isolated rural locations. His elaboration of this process could be read as a description of the process of the displacement of the Frigger identity with the Skegg:

This stretching of social relations over time and space involves first, the dis-embedding or absence of tradition and local activities and artifacts and then, the re-embedding (or 'presencing') of activities and artifacts from far away in that same local context (Robertson, 1995, p. 25).

In the location of Paterson the young people have “disembedded” the wide brimmed hats, riding boots and tight jeans of the Frigger identity. In their place they are importing auditory, visual and linguistic material which connects them to communities of young people across the globe. This connection is explicitly illustrated by the photographs in figures 7.3 to 7.6. Images 7.4 and 7.6 were taken on the streets of London, England, the young men bear a striking resemblance to those depicted in 7.3 and 7.5 which were taken in a township not far from Paterson.
In both sites the boys are wearing dark baggy clothes, dark “skate” shoes and caps as they practise their skateboard and bike skills.

These young men in both rural NSW Australia and London, England display their pushbike skills in unregulated public spaces, wearing baggy jeans or long shorts and dark tee shirts. The semiotics explored by the young people of Paterson connect them with cultures located on the other side of the world. The clothing and activity of the young men in London matches the Skegg identity observed and described so eloquently by the Year 7 girls of Paterson High. The process of moving to this new identity in the rural context is illustrated by images from the quintessentially rural site of the Henty Rural Machinery Field Days. Most people were dressed in tight
jeans, boots, collared shirts and wide brimmed hats or farmers’ caps. Checked patterns in blues, reds and pinks were common and stalls selling every type of rural clothing or accessory were doing a busy trade. The young people depicted in Figure 7.7 stood out as unique in this setting.

Figure: 7.7 Young people at the Henty Rural Machinery Field Days, 2008

These young people at the rural machinery field day in the small rural township of Henty, typify the rural youth identity play elaborated in this study. They do not wear hats or boots, their hairstyles and adornments are experimental and playful. Henty field days are attended by thousands of people and they are in essence a celebration of rural identities, those foregrounded in these illustrations however demonstrate a shift away from rural representations. The rural young people depicted here are experimenting with identity play that will enable them to move into sites of urban or cosmopolitan culture, a major theme of the study of Paterson.

7.5 Youth identities in overlapping spaces

Social spaces do not exist in isolation. Most spaces overlap others and many interact. In Paterson the highest valued symbolic capital was gained in the interconnected social, material and discursive space of sport. Through sport physical and social contact is maintained, cultural symbols are exchanged and reinforced and group and individual identities elaborated and forged.
7.5.1  *Sport: A field practised in social, material and discursive space*

One of the main avenues for accruing social capital and the invaluable supporting networks in Paterson which enable young people to deal with the problem of isolation is sport:

And the trust you have with each other is really good. The boys are all really into their sporting groups and they like that sort of thing. They always do things together. They are all really close (Jenna, 15yrs, 072).

This closeness and interdependency may work well for many of the young people but it intensifies the isolation for those young people excluded from the inner circle:

Because you have the same small clique of people and if you are not in that group it is very hard for kids to break into it. It is very hard for kids to keep bashing their head against the same wall. In a big community you can avoid those kids, you don’t have to deal with them. But in a small town you see them down the street, you see them at sporting events you see them in every activity you go to. It creates a real problem for kids who aren’t the cool kids (Brendan, 30s, 097).

Brendan highlights the importance for young people of acquiring enough of the right type of capital to be considered “cool”. The isolation which intensifies some friendships narrows the range of capital that is considered legitimate in this small field. For those who have focused their attention on the wrong type of capital the cost can be high. At fourteen years of age Fred is worried that he is not accruing enough capital in the valued field of football:

I’ve never really liked football. Although now, looking back, I should have started playing it when I was young. Football … I’ve never really been interested in it, and for most people it is pretty important (Fred, 14 years, 109).

Sue has a similar concern for her son Tom. She recognises that rock music is a source of some youth cultural capital but she is anxious that this capital is not as highly prized as that acquired through football:

Tom is quite talented with the guitar and he’s not good at football. So I hope it will be enough (Sue, 30s, 022).

Sport is a field which has cross-field effects with schooling, family and the wider society. Capital acquired through sport, especially football is traded with high value, in all of the other youth fields.
7.5.2 Football: Transportable and transposable capital

Football appears to be the most successful field for acquiring the status of “coolness”. It is so highly prized that adults who dislike or disapprove of the game still ensure that their sons and daughters have access to the field, if not the game, encouraging “foothy tipping” competitions and a show of support for the local team. The few young men who choose to be seen in the street on Saturdays rather than at the game are breaking with a very entrenched social code. They are viewed with great suspicion “you just wonder, what they are up to, you know” (Brad, 40s, 020), and even fear.

But the parents will say don't go out on the streets and don't hang around with those people because they roam the streets (Teagan, 16 years, 119).

Although some young people identified the Skegg image with a defiant boycott of the Saturday games, most of the young people in Paterson combined a passion for football with the development of a variety of youth microcultures. Both Friggers and Skeggs played footy:

Yeah we all play footy. We all do the same thing, we’ve all got our different way we are but we all do the exact same thing (Steve, 18 years, 009).

Football provides symbolic capital that can be traded in a very wide field of practices. It is not tied to the local geographic site but association with a rural site may gain credit in the field of practice of football as players from “the country” are highly prized. The potency of cross-field effects from football is well illustrated by the Queensland project called “Domestic violence, it's not our game”. This project was initiated in Normanton, a town of 1,500 people on the Gulf of Carpentaria with:

a reputation not only for giant crocs, but also something even more disturbing, the highest rates of domestic violence in Queensland (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 1).

The link between football and aggressive behaviour was addressed directly by this project which urged young men to “leave your big hits on the field” (McCutcheon, 2008). It offered the local football team, The Stingers a sponsorship deal which was conditional on a strict code of conduct. In the words of the local organisers and football players:

Anne Pleath: The boys had to commit to not committing domestic violence, so it was pretty much a three strikes and you're out policy, exclusion and suspension from the games.
Sorren Owens: A few boys, you know, in the team already had a few domestic violence charges and that, and since this came in, not a problem with them.

Peter McCutcheon: There's been none?

Sorren Owens: None, none at all, hey. I think a lot of them like playing football than bashing up their missus and that (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 1).

The program was such a success it led to an advertising campaign and won a national crime prevention award. The symbolic capital of football was enlisted to transform a social pattern which had in the past been reinforced by the culture of the game. Journalist Peter McCutcheon is convinced of a significant cross field effect from this football project as he observes that:

It changed a lot of people in Normanton, not only footy players, but the whole township. It just works and it diffuses its way down through all the levels of the society in that small town (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 1).

The Clontarf Aboriginal Academy in Western Australia which was started in 2000 by former AFL Coach Gerard Neesham uses the same logic to bring school-refusing boys back into the education system (SBS News, 2007). Given the evident potency of the field of football it is not surprising that the young people of Paterson work so hard to achieve its capital. Although some girls are agitating for a girls’ competition so that they too may be able to play, most girls are content to gain their capital through the role of commentating. Girls and marginalised boys provide an essential gaze for the construction of this field. This role appears to be sufficient for the girls to acquire status but does not position the boys as well as involvement in the activity of playing. There is a marked gender differential in the nature of symbolic capital that young people must acquire to achieve status in the field of sport. This is an area that warrants further investigation.

### 7.6 Youth identities in interacting spaces

The social, material and discursive worlds of young people are interconnected, overlapping and interacting. It is not enough to consider the identity implications of these spaces in isolation; a holistic picture requires the consideration of the relationships between the fields. The diagram in figure 6.8 (p.290) illustrates the interaction between the material, social and discursive spaces of Paterson. Structural constraints imposed by social institutions — such as the school — impact on the material world of young people in the form of uncomfortable school bus travel, small school furniture, restrictive architecture, regulating timetables, classroom groups
divided by gender or test scores. Parents and authority figures watch over young people differentially, imposing freedom and constraint according to gender and perceptions of conformity. The social space is expressed in the discursive space in the form of school uniforms, awards and badges. Institutions determine the signs and symbols that will be honoured and the mode of communication that will be privileged. The institution of the family also imposes expectations of prescribed and proscribed behaviours according to the roles engaged in within different fields of practice. In the school setting the roles of son, daughter, cousin, sister and brother may be called on to support normalising practices. The discursive world is apparent in the material world through the embodied expression of young people. Body piercing, tattoos, hair styles, gait and posture demonstrate commitment to a particular discursive position. The manner in which young people ride, drive, drink and play football also demonstrates a relationship between the discursive world and the material world as material and discursive space overlap.

As young people explore different fields of practice, the identity options available to them in each of these spaces shift and the type of capital that is valued and transacted will change. The cultural capital valued in the discursive space in the field of practice of schooling may not be highly valued in the field of practice of youth culture. School awards intended to signify success may carry negative value in the field of practice of youth culture. The school uniform, a semiotic reference to school conformity, is subverted through modifications which may only carry significance in the field of practice of youth culture. Frigger boots and belts, Skegg shoes and “hat hair” signal identification with one of the youth microcultures. This act may contribute to the store of cultural and social capital accrued in the field of youth culture without impacting on the cultural exchange occurring simultaneously in the field of practice of schooling. The overarching fields of power and gender are also in play in all fields and the capital available to young people in material, discursive and social space is always subject to the cross-field effect of gender.
Bourdieu points out that within the context of the “structured space of possibilities” habituses are formed through a “capacity for structured improvisation” (Calhoun et al., 1993, p. 4). Within the constraints of each space, according to the capital held at any one time, choices are made which inform the development of the habitus and furnish the nature of the identity options available. The dispositions of the young people of Paterson have been developed in a rural context under the influence of both global and local discourses. Many factors have contributed to the development of the habitus which “at every moment filters such influences” (Wacquant, 1998). Within the context of the influences illustrated above, individuals exercise their own “regulated improvisation” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 6). They may all share common space but the capital they have inherited and acquired, positions them in society. “The system of dispositions people acquire depends on the positions they occupy in society, that is, on their particular endowment in capital” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 6).
This position is sensitive to the cross-field effects of the overarching field of gender. Girls and boys may inherit or acquire similar stores of capital but they will not trade at the same rate or even on the same markets because of the effects of gender.

7.7 Gendered Identities

The habituses formed in the site of Paterson are clearly marked by gender. The material, social and discursive spaces of Paterson provide quite different resources to those identified as boys and those identified as girls. The PBP program which focused on the identity needs of boys unwittingly amplified this differential. Even the microcultures developed by the young people are marked by gender differences.

The CCCS saw youth subcultures as gender segregated. In *Hiding in the light*, Hebdige (1988) asserts that:

> Girls are still quite relegated to a position of secondary interest, within both sociological accounts of subculture and photographic studies of urban youth. The masculinist bias is still there in the subcultures themselves. Subject to stricter parental controls than the boys, pinioned between the twin stigmas of being labelled ‘frigid’ or a ‘slag’, girls in subcultures, especially working class subculture, have traditionally been either silenced or made over in the image of the boys as replicas (Hebdige, 1988, p. 27).

McRobbie claims that youth subculture research of the 70s and 80s was dominated by male researchers, male youth and male norms and values (McRobbie & Nava, 1984). Her work in 1975 with Jenny Garber on “Girls and Subcultures” addressed this feminine vacuum, claiming that girls:

> are absent from the classic subcultural ethnographic studies, the ‘pop’ histories (like Nuttall, 1970), personal accounts (like Daniel and McGuire, eds., 1972), or journalistic surveys (like Fyvel, 1963). When they do appear, it is either in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women … ‘dumb, passive teenage girls, crudely painted’ or they are fleetingly and marginally presented (Hall & Jefferson, 1975, p. 209).

McRobbie endeavoured to redress this situation. She noted that much of the girls’ subcultural activity focuses on the home, family and romance; “bedroom culture”. Her study with Garber identified a strong “teeny bopper” culture among pre teenage girls which involved the decorating of bedroom walls with posters of pop idols, and the use of the sitting room to play records, read magazines and watch TV programs such as “Top of the Pops” (cited in Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 7). She analysed girls’ teen magazines finding that they addressed girls as informed, intelligent consumers, neither “dupes nor dopes” (p. 6).
In a society which privileges the public over the private (Oakley, 2002) these domestic subcultures were still subordinate to the more visible masculine forms. The irony of this uncritical reproduction of stereotypes in a so-called “counter culture” has not gone unremarked:

Whitely (1998) among others has shown, the position of women within the 'counter culture' was clearly subordinate (p. 167), and in this respect the 'alternative' culture did not so much threaten established values as reproduce them (Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 31).

This demonstrates once more the inadequacy of a youth culture theorisation which focuses on the idea of resistance or counter culture. Thornton’s study of Dance Club culture continued the Birmingham school’s focus on youth culture as a reaction to the mainstream but she also proposed to:

investigate ‘the hierarchies within popular culture’ through an empirical examination of the systems of social and cultural distinction that divide and demarcate contemporary culture, particularly youth culture (Thornton, 1996, p. 7).

Where the young people of Paterson referred to “coolness” as the indicator of cultural and social capital, the young people in Thornton’s study referred to “hipness”. Thornton noted a gender differential in the way that these young people managed the acquisition of capital within this culture:

If girls opt out of the of the game of ‘hipness’, they will often defend their tastes (particularly their taste for pop music) with expressions like ‘it’s crap but I like it’. In so doing they acknowledge the subcultural hierarchy and accept their lowly position within it. If, on the other hand, they refuse this defeatism, female clubbers and ravers are usually careful to distance themselves from the degraded pop culture (Thornton, 1996, p. 13).

Thornton went further to propose that the mainstream culture, which the youth subculture was described as opposing, was a feminised culture. She proposed that:

the characteristics of the mainstream they repeatedly disparage and subordinate in speech are those of a feminine working class minority (Thornton, 1996, p. 166).

In her examination of hierarchies within what she calls subcultural capital, Thorton has underlined what she sees as the subordinate position often occupied by young women.

The role of girls in the culture of the Friggers and Skeggs also appears, on the surface to be subordinate. These youth cultures are both associated with risky physical exploits; riding horses/utes, skateboards/bikes. The appearance is coded
masculine and status is acquired by physical skill and feats infrequently engaged in by girls. This question of gender and status will be explored further.

7.7.1 Skeggie Girls

In his discussion of the skateboarding culture, which informs the Paterson Skegg culture, Iain Borden claims that it is:

A totalising urban subculture, complete with its own graphic design, language, music, magazines, junk food, and codes of behaviour. It postulates certain attitudes towards matters of gender relations, race, sexuality and masculinity (Borden, 2003, p. 1).

An “urban subculture” has been taken up with great vigour in the rural place of Paterson. The most outspoken informants on the features of the Skegg culture were girls but they did not see themselves as authentic representatives of this culture. The female Skegg portrayed in a play called “Skate” which the PBP sponsored to tour to Paterson, was discussed by the Year 7 boys:

‘Cause that just showed that girls can be Skegg as well as boys. Girls skate. I wouldn’t judge a girl different that knew how to skate or anything. Other people might (Sean, 13 years, 107).

Sean’s observation that people might “judge” a girl who engaged in the physical exploits associated with the skateboard image may explain why the Paterson girls chose to be “only a bit Skegg”.

Swain’s (2002) study of the way young people use clothing to fashion their identities in the school setting also identified a gender differential. In his examination of ten to eleven year-olds, he found that:

pupils use clothing as a means of gaining recognition, of generating common bonds and sharing interests and intimacy within the peer group cultures (Swain, 2002, p. 54).

He also found that:

There is a specific concentration on boys’ cultures, and it is argued that clothing and footwear was used as an important component in the construction, negotiation and performance of masculinity. Certain items and brand names acquired a specific, symbolic value. Pupils tempted to dress and conform to the school rules or regulations run a high risk of being stigmatised and subordinated. These pupils are also partly controlled by homophobia (Swain, 2002, p. 60).

Gender appears to have a significant mediating effect on youth identity expression. In the language of Bourdieu symbolic capital is acquired, developed and transacted in the
context of these youth microcultures and interpreted through gender. The nature and quantity of cultural and social capital held by an individual will determine the way that they relate to the symbolic capital of a youth microculture. The diversity of responses generated by these variables is amplified by markers of difference from other fields such as gender. The micro-cultural behaviours available to the girls of Paterson demonstrate the impact of gender difference on youth culture. The Year 7 girls actively reflect on the ways that the boys enact their Skegg identities, elaborating with enthusiasm and excitement the detail of the Skegg image, but they reflect that, in the context of Paterson, girls do not take on this image for themselves. Their role appears to be that of observer. They provide the informed gaze for which the boys perform. The girls do not participate in the risky manoeuvres on skateboards or bikes which the boys use to gain distinction within their community. Many of these exploits are undertaken in segregated groups. Perhaps girls gain their distinction through their capacity to recognise and acknowledge the signs and symbols which encode the Skegg identity. The appearance of the Skeggy girl echoes that of the boys. They favour the same beach brand labels but the clothing does not have to serve the same functional purpose of flowing loosely around them to emphasise the speed and skill of their manoeuvres; it often hugs the feminine form. The identity play appears to be segregated as girls stopped to chat to the boys in the skateboard park but rarely participated in the activities.

*Figure 7.9 Girls and boys engaging in the relational activity of the Skegg culture.*
In Paterson the activities of the Skegg microculture appear to be segregated. Reflection on the segregated rituals observed in other cultures may shed light on the practices of the Paterson Skeggs.

Diane Bell (1993) observed the segregated rituals and ceremonies of the Australian Aboriginal people of the Warrabri district in the Northern Territory. She noted strong links between the ritual worlds of men and women, even though “under the Law, men and women have distinctive roles to play” (D. Bell, 1983, p. 182). She claimed that, “In both sets of rituals there is a celebration of the central values of the society.” Bell challenged the anthropological view of Aboriginal women as “second class citizens” which was prevalent prior to her work. She presented women as “makers of their own social reality” (D. Bell, 1983, p. 298). In her exploration of the social rituals of this particular group of people, she observed that the culture she was recording was not frozen in time but was subject to “the necessary and continuous process of reinvention” (D. Bell, 1983, p. 183). A ritual process which appeared to outsiders to entrench a rigid, segregated social world was, according to Bell (1983), actually providing a mechanism for stability in a context of change. The segregated practices of the Paterson Skeggs are not ordered by the Aboriginal Laws of the Dreaming, but they are regulated by unarticulated social laws which have the same effect. Something like the “distinct fields of action and thought” which Bell (1983) observed in an indigenous community appear in the regulation of social reality in Paterson. It may be observed that in the Skegg culture:

Men and women alike are dedicated to observing the Law which orders their lives into complementary but distinct fields of action and thought: in separation lies the basis of a common association that underwrites domains of existence (D. Bell, 1983, p. 182).

The Skegg displays that are observed by girls may be understood as “mixed ceremonies”. The girls are outsiders to these manoeuvres but they report on them in terms similar to those described by Bell (1983), noting the appearance of the participants rather than the mechanics of their physical exploits. Bell’s (1983) account of the role of Aboriginal mixed ceremonies may once more shed light on this contemporary social practice:

Thus mixed ceremonies have the dual function of permitting monitoring of the activities of the opposite sex and of providing a forum for display of the ritual worlds of each sex. Attendance and participation, no matter how limited, at the rituals of the opposite sex allow each to obtain a mental map of the physical layout of the ritual area of the other and of certain ritual
procedures. In ritual, male and female assert their unity in the Law which underwrites their separateness (D. Bell, 1983, p. 183).

Bell (1983) rejected the reading of women’s rituals as subordinate to men’s. She examined and illustrated the ways that the women in her study could claim “I’m boss for meself” (D. Bell, 1983, p. 7). The Skeggie girls of Paterson may appear to be subordinate to the boys who actively enact the rituals of their microculture but they were the most eloquent informants about the signifiers of this group. They appeared to be the ones with:

The power to conserve or to transform current classifications in matters of gender, nation, religion, age, and social status, and this through the words used to designate or to describe individuals, groups or institutions (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

Bourdieu elaborates the symbolic power of the “gaze” emphasising the reciprocal relationship of the observer and the observed:

Thus, the gaze is not a simple universal and abstract power to objectify, as Sartre maintained: it is a symbolic power whose efficacy depends on the relative position of the perceiver and the perceived and on the degree to which the schemes of perception and appreciation that are bought into play are known and recognised by the person to whom they are applied. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 65)

Bourdieu’s (1989) discussion of symbolic power focuses on the importance of “words” in the reinforcing or transforming of groups. The Year 7 girls who catalogued the features of Skegg appearance passively modelled by a grinning Year 7 boy appear to have been endorsed by the Skegg group to “impose recognition”. They wield “symbolic power” which is “the power to make things with words” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). They appear to have acquired symbolic capital without the need to engage in the physical actions associated with the masculine version of the Skegg.

Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. In this way, the power of constitution, a power to make a new group, through mobilisation, or to make it exist by proxy, by speaking on its behalf as an authorised spokesperson, can be obtained only as the outcome of a long process of institutionalisation (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

It appears that some of the Year 7 girls have achieved the status of “authorised spokespersons”. This power to “make worlds”, or groups, through “words” that appears to have been endowed upon some of the Paterson girls is not an act of creation detached from the material world. Bourdieu goes on to claim that:

It is only if it is true, that is, adequate to things, that description makes things. In this sense, symbolic power is a power of consecration or
revelation, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there.... a group, a class, a gender, a region, or a nation begins to exist as such, for those who belong to it as well as for the others, only when it is distinguished, according to one principle or another, from other groups, that is, through knowledge and recognition; connaissance et reconnaissance
(italics in original, Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23)

The gaze of the Skeggie girls provides the essential function of recognising the representations in the performances of the boys. According to Bourdieu (1989) this is not a subordinated role. On the contrary:

The power to impose and inculcate a vision of divisions, that is, the power to make visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is political power par excellence. It is the power to make groups, to manipulate the objective structure of society (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

It appears that through the youth microcultures of Paterson the “objective structure of society” is being manipulated to provide greater social mobility for these young people. Girls and boys appear to have access to this process through different avenues but further examination of these related groups is needed to determine if this is indeed the case. These young people are engaged in segregated activities but they are developing identities in relation to each other. The music, language, clothes and manners of the Skegg, or slightly Skeggie girls and boys sets them apart from the rural image of the Friggers.

7.7.2 Frigger girls

The uptake of the Frigger culture is also characterised by a gender differential in Paterson, but here it is the girls who favour this microculture. The young men made an effort to distance themselves from the culture of ute driving and Country and Western music. Even boys from the small rural town of Manywarra derided the image of the Frigger.

No. There’s a lot of people up in Manywarra that listen to all this cowboy stuff. I don’t really like it (Glen, 18 years, 009).

Glen sees the Frigger image as a generational choice. It is the identity of the older men of his town:

Yeah, I know a heap of them. Me uncle is a prime example. Especially at Manywarra ‘cause it’s such a small town. There’s no young Aussie blokes around here (Glen, 18 years, 009).

There is evidence of a shift in the privileging of rural identities in Paterson. Traditionally a rich farmer was the highest status person in this district. Farmers are
still referred to occasionally as “snobs” or “toffs”, but now the girls reason that, even
in the good times the rural life is a hard one and there is no security:

Sunny: (16) You marry a farmer and you are stuck here.
Jessica: (16) Not if he’s rich.
Sunny: And you get to work the land for the rest of your life. And
you can’t be rich all the time. Like you have to have a drought
and you’ve got nothing. It’s not a sure thing (046).

With its symbolic reference to the historical rural elite of the squattocracy, the
Frigger image highlights the now elusive identity of the prosperous rural class. The
expensive RM Williams jodhpurs, boots, hats and belts set this group apart from the
rural workers with their checked flannelette shirts (flannies), Yakka trousers and
elastic-sided work boots.

The outdoors rural image was celebrated by two small groups of Paterson girls.
Vanessa described the Frigger image as “easy”. Friggers were characterised as “hard
working” so it supported the aims of girls who wanted to study hard:

We are rice farmers. I have lived on my parents’ property all my life. I want
to do a Bachelor of Agriculture at Dookie, major in commerce and then take
over the family farm. I want to travel and do a few other things before then
(Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

Vanessa believes that the world of the Frigger offers opportunities to girls because
the world is changing. As the status of farming drops and aspirational boys desert the
industry, girls like Vanessa are seizing the opportunity to fill the breach:

Historically males have had more power in this community but I think that
is shifting. In terms of agriculturally it is females going off and getting the
higher education. I know through my friends the girls go to university and
the boys go back to the farm. It is shifting, becoming more 50/50. Because
girls are going into professions and boys are going back to the farm, men
don't have as much power as they used to (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

ABS data supports Vanessa’s observation that girls achieve a higher level of
education than boys in the rural context. As a property owner she sees herself as the
authentic representative of the rural image.

There’s the ‘wanna be’ city boys who drive around in utes and they’ve got
no idea and there’s the real country people who have a real love for the
country and they’ve got respect and being off the land they know that I
know what I’m talking about and you get accepted, because they know you
can do it.
She also acknowledges the other group of girls who identify as Friggers. These girls are the children of agricultural workers and live in the rural township of Manywarra:

But Manywarra has a more tough sort of culture. There’s not many feminine type people (Vanessa, 17 years, 047).

These girls recognised that the Frigger image was subordinate to the Skegg image in their school community and they noted that Friggers required hard, constant physical work to perform their identities, but this was the best fit with the cultural and social capital that they had acquired from their home culture:

- If you can’t work you may as well not be there.. it’s not exactly Calamity Jane but..my Mum used to do it [Jillaroo-ing] and I’ve always wanted to do it, (Annie, 17 years, 047).

Females gain recognition through rural physical work.

- Around here if you want to do something it doesn’t matter who you are if you get in and do it you’ll get commended for it. It doesn’t matter if you’re a girl. Most girls around here would get in and do the sheep and do the cattle and do the tractor. A lot of girls do tractor work. So their hands aren’t all smooth. (Neville, 16 years, 050)

The young people believe that Paterson women can “make it” in the masculine world:

- Girls can do a lot more things. Susan Smith was in the A grade cricket team (John, 16 years, 050).

And they are often partners in the breadwinning role:

- There’s a lot of double incomes around here and the women can often earn more (Neville, 16 years, 050).

The young people may see a future where females have greater autonomy and “power” but Cherilyn, an older woman, believes that Paterson is still a male dominated culture:

- … still here all the teachers here who are married to farmers and stuff like that, still here it’s the blokes who make the decisions on what goes on regardless of who brings home the pay packet. It’s still they who are seen as the hard worker and the hard doer and the bloke who provides for them. So women are still being provided for (Cherilyn, 40s, 089).

The persistent subordination of the feminine to the masculine in rural society identified by social researchers (Voyce, 1994; Brandth, 1994 ; Pini & Price, 2005) particularly in the context of the family farm, supports Cherilyn’s perception.
Trish is a health worker. She regards shifts in the gender relationships and economic structure as problematic for some men:

A lot of rural men have lost their place because the women have to go out to work. They feel guilty and angry. They are stuck in this place that makes them angry. A lot of them don’t want to leave this community either. A lot of them go away and come back and there’s no spot for them any more (30s, 021).

The hard physical labour of the agricultural worker still appears to be respected, affirmed and prioritised in this site, but it does not necessarily fit boys for a successful future in Paterson. A traditional masculinity is still part of the habitus of many of the young people of Paterson but the urban Skegg image is providing a new interpretation of this masculinity.

7.8 Paterson Youth, gendered cultural capital

The symbolic and cultural capital that is sought by the young people of Paterson appears to be gender differentiated. While some of the Year 11 and 12 girls aspire to the role of shearer, logger, and jillaroo, most of the boys are shying away from this emphasis on the physical outdoors.

There is evidence that the younger girls are more interested in the urban image of the Skegg than the rural image of the Frigger but the behaviours associated with a female Skegg appear to focus on the identification of representations rather than physical actions. The Skegg image appears to be the dominant one in the High school setting:

Then you get to Year 9, every one of them is a Skegg. And like them boys that I was talking about they’ve got.. they’ve like got the jeans and the Skegg shoes and everything but they’re not as Skegg but then a year above them every one of ‘em is a Skegg (Kieran, 13 years, 107).

The Paterson Boys’ Project reinforces the dominance of the urban Skegg image. Its organisers may not have been conscious of the stakes in play in this field of youth practice but the Skegg culture does appear to furnish the young people with a social code that will enable them to blend into a more cosmopolitan setting. The Frigger image, which is not supported by PBP, provides a code for mobility deeper into the rural plains further north or further west of Paterson. By familiarising themselves with both codes some Paterson youth ensure their mobility over a wide terrain. They are not ‘escaping’ their beloved home town but moving out to new opportunities and/or challenges. The aspirational parents and educators promoting PBP appear to
be endorsing the *Skegg* image with an eye to encouraging their boys to look to the metropolis for their futures rather than developing their rural roots.

The girls and boys of Paterson construct their identities in the same spaces but these spaces do not offer them access to the same capital. The social, cultural and economic capital available to boys is quite different in nature to that which is available to girls. In some fields of practice this advantages the boys and in others it advantages the girls.

### 7.8.1 Field, habitus and youth identities

The fields of practice of the *Frigger* and the *Skegg* appear to be fields nested within the larger field of youth peer relations. Some young people may use them as an opposition to their parents’ culture while for others they may help them to reproduce their parental culture. Luke was actively resisting his mother’s plans for him to continue his studies and used the representation of the *Frigger* as a sign of this rebellion. Sunny on the other hand acknowledged the *Frigger* image as a reproduction of the jillarooping history of her mother.

Young people construct their identities with material gathered from a range of fields, or contexts. Although he uses different language Pease (2002) recognises the role that participants in a field play in the formation of that field:

> People do not have objective interests as a result of their location; rather, they formulate... their interests and they do so within the context of the available discourses in situations in which they are located and that they co-produce. (2002, p.107, italics in original cited in Messner, 2004, p. 4).

The location of Paterson has provided a number of sites for these young people to contribute to as they “formulate their interests”. In the process of this self formulation they are also modifying the location itself providing an important safety valve for a site under enormous pressure from a rapidly changing ‘outside’ world.
7.9 PBP and Gender Literature

The preceding examination of Paterson youth microcultures illustrates some of the forces at work on young people in the material, discursive and social spaces of Paterson as they do the complex work of forging identities. A closer examination of the Paterson Boys’ Project reveals yet a further dimension.

Theories and policies of gender education were in a state of flux during the period of the PBP program. The submissions to the 2000 House of Representatives Inquiry Into Boys’ Education demonstrated the breadth and depth of the literature in gender education in Australia and the contested nature of this field. The submissions to this inquiry support the idea that there is a need to attend to the educational requirements of boys but the PBP may not be considered appropriate support by some of the researchers who sent submissions to the inquiry.

At the time of writing this document, gender education in NSW exists in a policy vacuum. A draft policy, Boys’ and Girls’ Education Policy was proposed to replace the previous Gender Equity Strategy, but it had not been granted ministerial approval when there was a change of minister. This policy would have endorsed the intention of PBP to “develop partnerships with their communities to implement programs” (Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate, 2006, p. 1) but it emphatically includes both boys and girls in all of its goals. The Boys: Getting it Right report (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002) does not place such an emphasis on the relational nature of gender. It would endorse the PBP emphasis on male role models and mentoring and would applaud the use of physical outdoor activities.

The Inquiry highlights problems that boys have in literacy achievement, school retention, Tertiary Entrance Scores, admission to Higher Education and suspension and exclusion concluding that:

The assumption over recent decades appears to have been that girls have urgent educational needs to be addressed and that boys will be all right. The committee believes that the evidence seriously challenges this assumption and believes that change is essential (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002, p. xvi).

The PBP committee also aspired to achieve change but it is not clear that these changes are the same as those endorsed by the House of Representatives. The Boys: Getting it Right report (Commonwealth of Australia & Boys' Education Lighthouse
Schools Programme, 2003) goes on to explain that, although “young men still enjoy better access to full time employment” than women (p. xvii), changes in the labour market “demanding better communication and interpersonal skills” may erode this advantage in the future.

The second area of change noted in theBoys: Getting it Rightreport is that of policy. The document notes that there have been many changes in the status of women and the structure of families over the past twenty years. It claims that the federal policyGender Equity: A framework for Australian schoolshas advantaged girls and cast boys in a negative light. It recommends that the policy must change to provide support for boys in adjusting to a changed world (Commonwealth of Australia & Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme, 2003).

In its exploration of pedagogy and curriculum, the report describes the learning styles and assessment preferences of boys in a unitary essentialised way. It endorses the “real world relevance” of programs like PBP emphasising the need for “hands on” physical activities. PBP conforms to the report’s description of activities which the report characterises as favoured by boys. The report also calls for modification of assessment strategies which rely too heavily on literacy skill which is characterised as “feminine”.

The discursive and social context of boy’s education programs in Paterson were responsive to the ebb and flow of gender policies and philosophies in the NSW education system. The identity options available to young people in Paterson were coloured by exposure to these forces. The House of Representatives Inquiry, which happened at the same time as PBP, highlights the identity issues raised in this arena.

7.9.1Hands - on physical activities

In a summary of theBoys’: Getting it right reporton theBoys’ education Lighthouse Programwebsite, it states that:

- Need more explicit teaching than girls and early diagnosis of problems;
- Like to be shown steps towards achieving success, so structured programs with clear objectives and simple instructions work best;
- Work best in short, challenging, hands-on teacher-directed classroom activities with physical involvement rather than group work;
- Respond to relationships with teachers who are consistent and attuned to boys’ sense of justice (Commonwealth of Australia & Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme, 2003, p. 5).

Submissions by Rollo Browne, Richard Fletcher and Peter West cited in Hansard (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000), and Training and Development Programs provided in NSW by Ian Lillico ("Raising Cain," 2006) endorse the position that boys have unique learning styles and social needs. They promote the modification of pedagogy and assessment to be more “hands-on” and practical to appeal to boys. These programs act upon the construction of an ‘essential’ boy. They ignore the evident differences between boys and focus on a constructed ‘average’ or ‘normal’ boy. They do not accept the researchers’ claim that a “normal boy” does not actually exist (Collins et al., 2000; Lingard et al., 2002). The differences between boys which result from the effects of class, ethnicity, age, ability and location are ignored in this process. Research has demonstrated that these factors may in some cases have a much greater impact on the educational achievement than the gender of the learner (Collins et al., 1996; Kenway, 1997b; Lingard et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2001; Willis, 2004).

The young men who provided leadership at Paterson High and acted as polished advocates for PBP would undoubtedly find the claim that boys need “structured programs with clear objectives and simple instructions” patronising and demeaning. The claim of the universal appeal of “hands-on” activities and a homogenous learning style for boys is not supported by the PBP experience. If this style of learning is universally appealing to boys why did PBP have difficulty attracting the less confident and disengaged boys in Paterson and why were the girls so attracted to the activities? Paterson boys and girls spent much of their leisure time outdoors engaged in physical, often demanding activities but the activities offered by PBP did not have universal appeal to the boys. It was acknowledged by several of the organisers that the target boys did not get involved. Many girls on the other hand expressed enthusiastic interest and some irritation at their exclusion.

The rejection of group work as a strategy acceptable to boys is also brought into question by the Paterson experience. One of the most highly valued features of PBP by the boys, was the group work and cross-age friendship groups it fostered. The Year 8s who ran physical theatre workshops at the primary school did so as a team.
The displays and workshops were developed by groups. The prized “male bonding” was pursued through group activities. Football is lauded as a place of “group bonding”, “teamwork” and “mateship”. The image of boys as “competitive rugged individuals” may have been appealing to some of the committee but it is not supported by the Paterson evidence. It also seems unlikely that boys have developed a monopoly on a “sense of justice” (Commonwealth of Australia & Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Programme, 2003, p. 5).

Paterson is a very small apparently culturally homogenous community. Nonetheless this site provided examples of a range of masculinities and femininities. There were many ways of being a boy or a girl and educational strategies which assumed an essential singular masculinity privilege one group and isolate others.

Education policies which respond to the men’s movement’s essentialist view of the learning needs of ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ are problematic but a narrowly interpreted, essentialist feminist point of view is similarly problematic. Oakley’s clarion warnings of “the systematically patriarchal working of social institutions”(Oakley, 2002, p. 218) have alerted a generation to the capacity for social organisations to oppress and marginalise. Education policies have in the past few decades endeavoured to respond to this consciousness, but a narrow rendering of this theoretical position may lead to a distorted view of the process of gender identity construction. Oakley observes “patriarchal oppression” in every aspect of human endeavour in the developed western world.

Behind this lies an historical alliance between a capitalist economic system and a patriarchal social system which has produced masculinity in the form of living creatures called men. Men walk the earthshouldering this burden and perpetuating its evil. Women collude in this: femininity, also socially constructed, fits women for the role of accepting, and even emulating, what men do (Oakley, 2002, p. 219).

Many of the conversations with girls in the study of Paterson appear to illustrate the feminine capacity to accept, and even emulate, “what men do”. Many of the girls from the rural working class township of Manywarra boasted of being so much like men that they called themselves “shemales”. The education program devised to support boys positioned the local girls to see the masculine as the privileged gender at the same time as it was portrayed as “at risk”. Many women and girls “colluded” with this project championing the achievements of the boys and the spirit of the program. But many others decried the “sexist” nature of the activities and rejected the premise of the project that the local boys were in need of special attention. In the
first meeting with the Year 12 students, a group of girls dominated the interview eloquently claiming that their exclusion from the activities was unjust and unjustified; several boys supported their position. Some teachers expressed a similar position. One in particular, as noted in Chapter 6(6.3.5), was vigorously outspoken describing herself as “outraged” (Jane, 40s,130). Oakley claims that: “The notion of patriarchy gives us a theoretical framework for understanding the nuanced experiences of our everyday lives” (Oakley, 2002, p. 218). But her application of this notion which focuses on a binary divide is far from “nuanced”:

[patriarchy] describes the tone of the culture, its internal structure of power relations. While it’s about material reality, it’s also about the psychic representations in our heads. In the interplay between these two, human beings are always in danger of finding themselves locked in the defining embrace of their gender, either as people (men) who are alienated from a sensitivity and connectedness to others, including the planet, or as people (women) who loiter on the margins, struggling with their consciousness, and often against the idea that institutionalised social exclusion has anything to do with the way we feel (Oakley, 2002, p. 218).

In this study the “embrace of gender” is indeed demonstrated to be “defining” in many ways but it is also demonstrated that there are a wide range of ways of being gendered. As masculinity and femininity are discovered to be multiple a binary divide between “evil” masculinity and “oppressed” femininity provides a very inadequate description of the identities constructed in Paterson. Some boys were observed to be “loitering on the margins” of acceptance into Paterson youth culture and some girls demonstrated a high degree of mastery in accruing the cultural and social capital most valued by this cohort of young people. The “defining embrace” of gender in the classroom needs to be problematised for both boys and girls, but it should not be assumed that exclusion or pre-eminence in some activities necessarily demonstrates the subordinated position of particular femininities or masculinities. The criteria for judging dominance and subordination needs to consider both the macro and micro contexts and the capital dividends available to participants. The Skegg culture is a case in point here as girls appear to be marginalised in the skateboard park but by providing an informed gaze for the representation of the Skegg identity they take on a position of power within the culture. As the discourse of “dominance and subordination” has at times informed educational policy decisions, great care needs to be taken in assessing these positions.
7.9.2 Limiting messages about gender

A NSW Department of Education and Training gender equity consultant expressed grave concerns about some of the popular boys’ programs which inspired PBP:

It is a problem because in schools people read the paper and they decide they will go off and do something they have read about. They respond to the media rather than to research, and the Men and Boys program at the University of Newcastle do an awful lot of promotion … It is one area where there’s a lot of people selling their services and I think people are not critically looking at the services. They are buying it and paying a lot of money. There are a lot of programs like that in schools, even programs that take boys out of the classroom (Anna, 55s, 134).

Anna has observed a number of boys’ education programs; she spoke of misgivings she had about projects similar to PBP:

We would say they are actually reinforcing the very things they need to change because they are talking about a particular type of masculinity, which they are reinforcing by the beating drums, the ‘I’m tough, the provider, I can survive.’ They are reinforcing the problem. Certainly when we look at behaviour problems in schools, when boys have been given programs, commercial programs, or even just taken out and taught martial arts skills. When this was done in a particular school for all of Year 8, the suspension rates went up in Year 8! These schools say they are evaluating but this evaluating involves asking the boys in an exit survey ‘did you like this?’ And they love it. They are saying ‘This is a great program, the kids love it.’ But over the year suspension rate statistics have gone up, I wonder why? (Anna, 55s, 134).

The Boys: Getting it right report on the Inquiry into the education of boys observed that the senior curriculum requires greater literacy skills than it used to. It postulates that:

This is a result of attempts to reduce the barriers to girls’ participation in subjects like physics, chemistry and mathematics, where assessment now includes extended response questions requiring verbal reasoning and written responses (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002, p. 2).

This evidence of the privileging of girls over boys is used to support appeals for a shift away from “verbal reasoning and written responses” to more “short, challenging, hands-on” activities to appeal to boys. This position is at odds with the report’s recognition that the labour market is increasingly requiring literacy skills. It is falling foul of the “discourse of difference” which is so focused on the comparisons between girls and boys that it loses sight of other contexts and shared needs. Literacy skills are dismissed as feminised by some boys’ rights advocates and are acknowledged by others as essential for progress in the 21st century. The
Parliamentary enquiry was severely handicapped by its anxiety about the “feminised” nature of education. At one point the acting chair of the committee, Mr Sawford, complained that even the:

Language we are using in this debate about education of boys and girls is feminine rather than masculine (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000, p. 349).

This appears to be a reference to the word gender. This term which has been used in education policy to move away from the binary exclusionary terms of “boys, girls, women and men” appears to have become associated with the ideas of feminism and therefore suspect. The word “gender” came into use in medical and educational journals as theories of gender construction challenged the biologically deterministic position represented by the use of the word “sex” to refer to the social identities of individuals. According to Canadian medical journal editor Kerry Jones, the style manual for the editing of medical journals has recently reverted back to the word “sex” to refer to identities rather than the word “gender” demonstrating an increasing sensitivity to the association of the word with feminist thought (K. Jones, 2008).

In her presentation to the House of Representatives standing committee Lyn Yates pointed out that:

On straight facts and figures, I would identify that the groups who most lose out from school would be boys and girls from poor backgrounds, from rural backgrounds and Aboriginal girls and boys (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000, p. 321).

Despite this and similar evidence from Lingard (February, 2001), Mills (February, 2001) and Beckett (November 2000), and strong argument from representatives of the NSW DET (November 2000) and education unions (November 2000), the final report continues to present an essentialised view of boys as a single unified group sharing common learning styles and social needs and the significance of the differences between groups is ignored. The young people of Paterson demonstrated very clearly that even in an apparently small homogenous group there is a remarkable diversity in ways of doing and being gendered.
7.9.3 Harassment and Homophobia

The Boys: Getting it Right report is also silent on the topic of sex-based discrimination and harassment, including homophobia, a significant focus of the NSW draft Boys and Girls’ Education Policy. Homophobic taunting was identified as commonly associated with creative pursuits in Paterson and may have been a contributing factor in deterring the ‘at risk’ boys from participating in PBP. Lingard (February, 2001), Mills (February, 2001), Martino (November 2000) and Palotta Chiarolli (November 2000) all raised this issue with the Committee or the House of Representatives Enquiry into Boys Education. In response to Mills (p. 643), emphasising the importance of considering “misogyny and homophobia in relation to boys’ education”, the acting chair Mr Sawford stated:

That is not to say that these problems do not exist, but sometimes, I think, people think that maybe they are being overstated and that perhaps there are better ways of describing problems like that rather than by using that horrible term ‘homophobia’, which divides people (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2001, p. 644)

Lingard pointed out to the Committee that “homophobic put downs” were very often ways that boys related to other boys and Martin Mills went on to explain:

An important point there is that it is homophobic abuse as a controlling mechanism to be a normalised type of boy. It is not necessarily directed at boys who do identify as gay. It is actually a controlling mechanism to ensure you behave. It is a policing mechanism to ensure that you behave in a particular way that is identified with a normal or normalised form of masculinity (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2001, p. 644)

The young people of Paterson identified taunting, “ragging”, or “bagging” as the principal mode of communication between them. The normalised behaviour that this reinforces is characterised by “toughness” and a capacity to “take it”. Both girls and boys use the term “gay” in both playful and serious attack. In one instance a girl used the term in a retaliatory rebuff to a teacher who conformed to the local context by accepting this as a suitable response to teasing (103). Plummer’s research (2001) identifies the role of homophobic taunting in prepubescent youth as a powerful normalising device:

Homophobic terms like ‘poofter’ and ‘faggot’ have a rich developmental history and play a central role in adolescent male peer group dynamics. Homophobic terms come into currency in primary school. When this happens, words like poofter and faggot rarely have sexual connotations.
Nevertheless far from being indiscriminate terms of abuse, these terms tap a complex array of meanings that are precisely mapped in peer cultures, and boys quickly learn to avoid homophobia and to use it decisively and with great impact against others. Significantly, this early, very powerful use of homophobic terms occurs prior to puberty, prior to adult sexual identity and prior to knowing much if anything, about homosexuality. An effect of this sequence is that early homophobic experiences may well provide a key reference point for comprehending forthcoming adult sexual identity formation (gay or not) because powerful homophobic codes are learnt first (Plummer, 2001, p. 15).

Plummer challenges the view developed by R.W. Connell that homosexuality is socially positioned as a subordinated form of masculinity among a range of masculinities in the current Western gender order (Connell, 1995). He claims that:

The evidence gathered by the present research suggests another way of viewing the relationship between homosexuality and masculinity. The everyday patterns of homophobic terms indicates that poofers and faggots are positioned in opposition to multiple forms of masculinity, not as one subordinated member in a field of masculinities. However, rather than being constructed as an integer boundary between masculine and feminine, homophobia marks an intragender boundary between masculine stereotype and male other… Thus homophobia targets anything that signifies a lack of allegiance to the collective expectations of male peers – it is much more than heterosexism or a variant of misogyny or a ‘simple’ prejudice against homosexuals (Plummer, 2001, p. 21).

In the Paterson context the young people claimed that homophobic harassment was to be meted out differentially according to social capital. The young people of Paterson pointed out that “cool” or “popular” young people would not be harassed if they engaged in non-normalised behaviours. They differentiated quite clearly in their expectations of those with stores of endorsed social capital and those without. Involvement in sport, especially football and also alcohol consumption were identified as ways of achieving high status social and cultural capital. Conversely, involvement in dance, visual art or academic achievement may cost the participant. As Danielle points out, a boy could not experiment with his sexuality if:

Like if it’s a person that doesn’t talk very much or a person that gets straight A’s or something like that that’s not in the popular group. They’d talk behind their back (17 years, 119).

Whereas a popular boy would be supported. Mark and Sebastian claimed that once they were inside the friendship circle, they would not be “judged” and they would still “be his friend” if they “turned gay”(107 section 5.8).
Normalising harassment is moderated according to the status of the target. If the young person has accrued an appropriate type and quantity of social and cultural capital ‘deviant’ behaviour will be tolerated. If not they will be taunted:

Danielle: (17) It would depend on how popular he was before.
Kirrilly: (17) Yeah. How respected he was. If the guys respected him they wouldn’t.
Danielle: Yeah if the guys respected him they would sort of accept it a bit more and they’d want to join in sort of thing.
Kirrilly: Yeah It depends how respected the person is. (119)

The homophobic attack on a young man reported by the girls in Maywarra was an attack on an “outsider”. He had only recently arrived and had not had time to achieve any protective social capital.

7.9.4 Which Boys will do PBP?

In the conversation between David and John cited earlier (050), David’s concern with the dominance exerted by the ‘cool’ boys in PBP reveals the hierarchical nature of youth culture in Paterson. The problems that Paterson educators had in attracting boys ‘at risk’ also demonstrates a wider application of the ‘which girls, which boys?’ position proposed by Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000). Their examination of gender related underperformance and disadvantage, which drew on earlier work by Epstein (1998), Dwyer (1995), Teese (1995) and Davies (1989a, 1989b), demonstrates that education does not distribute life chances evenly within genders. Even in the small mono-cultural school of Paterson High, a range of groups of boys existed and their power within the school and hence their life chances were not homogenous. Concern for the future of marginalised boys continues to motivate the principal and staff of Paterson High and the committee of PBP Inc.

In Bourdieuan terms within the field of practice of PBP, social and cultural capital is not evenly distributed. Some boys did not have sufficient capital to participate in the activities while others were enabled to take a dominant role. Young people well supplied in social capital are referred to as ‘cool’ or ‘popular’ and they enjoy significant freedom from constraints, while others select from a narrower range of capital for the constructions of their “feel for the game” of life in Paterson (Bourdieu, 1990).


7.9.5 **PBP in material, discursive and social space**

The funding of PBP ‘materially’ impacted on the programs available to the boys in Paterson thereby impacting on all students as timetabling arrangements and class composition affects both girls and boys. Discussion of the controversial evaluation of PBP impacted on both the ‘discursive’ and the ‘social’ space of Paterson as the word “sexist” became popularised and students grouped according to allegiance to the PBP program. The town monument project altered the physical landscape of the town. This material impact was paralleled by a discursive impact as it reinforced a traditional rural masculinist discourse and was celebrated as the creative expression of a group of Paterson boys. The activities of PBP also offered opportunities for new social connections as boys were grouped across ages and introduced to new interests. These new connections also impacted on girls as the sisters, friends and classmates of these boys. The initiation of the PBP program in Paterson had an impact on the material available to young people for the construction of their identities in material, discursive and social space. The gender education policies, which informed the program and impacted on its funding, contributed to the identity opportunities available.

7.10 **Conclusions**

Like most rural centres the site of Paterson is undergoing significant change. The material space has been transformed by drought and rural downturn. The discursive space has been transformed by a revolution in electronic communication, and the transformation in social space which has characterised the late 20th century is leaving an indelible mark. In this context the pressure from cross-field effects from without and competition for capital from within has begun to fracture some fields of practice and offer opportunities for transformations in the habituses of the inhabitants of Paterson. The young people of Paterson illustrate the iterative process of identity construction through thoughtful improvisation within the constraints of a range of fields of practice. The impact of the cross field effect of gender in this rural site is apparent, as gender differentiated identity markers identify youth microcultures and characterise the PBP program.

The cross fertilisation between the capital valued in rural culture and that valued in urban culture is also highlighted as it was observed actively in play in the development of new fluid identities. The interaction and interdependency of material,
social and discursive spaces as sites for the improvisational development of identities highlights the complexity of the processes of identity construction. The PBP program demonstrates this complexity as the identity play of Paterson boys and girls is informed by the program and resonates with gender education policies.

The stories of the young people of Paterson have revealed a great deal about the process of building identities through the youth microcultures of Friggers and Skeggs, the Paterson Boys’ Project, music and sporting activities. There is much here to inform educators in both rural and urban settings.
Chapter 8. Fields and Reflections

The first chapter of this thesis introduced the site of Paterson as an isolated rural place which had traditionally offered steady employment opportunities for its residents in the agricultural sector. Data was presented to illustrate changes in rural employment which have pressured the local young people to seek futures away from Paterson. Historical data revealed that in the past many boys in this site had not achieved high levels of educational qualifications and favoured vocational certificates over schooling and university credentials. The arts context of Paterson was explored establishing a gendered background for the boys’ arts initiatives developed by Paterson High School and taken up as a community project. At first glance Paterson appeared to be a homogenous culture focused on agricultural pursuits. The rural social research literature explored in Chapter 4 and the history of gender education policies and practices in Chapter 5 highlighted the issue of change in rural social, economic, cultural and educational climates. This provided a context for the reading of the stories of Paterson in Chapter 6. These stories were examined under the microscope of Bourdieuan social theories, outlined in Chapter 2, revealing a rich process of symbolic and cultural capital transaction in a rural site that appeared highly attuned to the interweaving of urban roots with rural roots.

Through the lens of Bourdieu the simple picture of Paterson as a homogenous rural idyll has refracted as it has emerged through the stories of the many voices of Paterson. Instead of a simple monoculture of young people with shared aspirations and social origins what has appeared is a complex pluralistic community of diverse young people with varied goals and backgrounds. The simplified view of Paterson, and the boys’ program presented in Chapter 1 has been “troubled” (Butler, 1990) by a close examination of the cultural, social and symbolic capital valued by the young people in this site. The rural youth identities evident in Paterson emerged as complex, fluid and varied. The simplified picture of under credentialed boys has been “troubled” by the exploration of gender differences in employment which demonstrated that boys currently enjoyed better employment and earning opportunities than girls. This picture was in turn “troubled” by the observation that for some boys this has led to a culture of early school leaving and school disengagement unlikely to sustain them into the future. The image of the
oppressively homophobic rural site was reinforced by some data but “troubled” by the conversations about the capacity for popular youngsters to flout these norms. The picture of girls as a group advantaged by the schooling process enjoying a high level of tertiary graduation was also “troubled” by the stories from Manywarra of girls who saw little prospect of a future for themselves in a profession and chose to enact hypermasculinist behaviours characterised by heavy drinking, risk taking, football playing and dangerous driving. Some of these girls hope to “stay behind” in Paterson but both girls and boys who identified with the Frigger identity talked about going “up North” and Becky Cole’s musical celebrations of rural Queensland as a “wild and crazy chick frontier”(Cole, 2007) identifies contexts which support feminine identities alienated from school culture.

The literature of rural social research elaborated in Chapter 4 which dealt with the question of gender and rural youth notes that, changes in the rural economy have also brought changes in rural gender roles and rural identities. For rural educators, these observations provide challenges at several levels as rural schools are buffeted by the impact of drought, agricultural downturn and economic upheaval at the same time as they struggle to respond to tensions and shifts in education gender policies. The complexities of these “gender wars” as they are articulated at the school policy level, are elaborated in Chapter 5. The ideas of Bourdieu, Lingard and Rawolle have been offered to provide a support for educators seeking to understand the social forces at work in their school communities. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field provide a language for examining the habitual ways of behaving in the range of social organisations observed in the youth culture of Paterson. The idea of social, cultural and economic capital, which may be represented by symbolic capital, provided this ethnography with a lens for identifying the stakes which are valued in the competition for capital in the youth culture of Paterson. Lingard and Rawolle’s ideas of cross-field effects, which build on the ideas of Bourdieu, also provide a means for examining the influence of the interaction of fields. These ideas are used to probe the relationship between the field of youth culture and the overarching fields of gender and power. In an examination of the stories from Paterson in material, social and discursive, space, the social forces at work in Paterson emerge as powerful and dynamic. A setting which appeared to favour tradition and resistance to change emerged as one which in fact nurtured and supported the development of transforming identities.
The boys’ education strategies initiated in Paterson are demonstrated to have developed in a setting characterised by gender tensions at a time of changing rural gender roles. In Chapter 5 the boys’ strategy is placed in an historical context as the development of gender policies and strategies in NSW schools is outlined. The Paterson Boys’ Project emerged at a time when equity programmes were on the defensive and the essentialist position of the men’s movement had established a voice in education circles. In this study of identities construction in a rural setting, many questions about the issue of gender are highlighted. The rural social research literature outlined in Chapter 4 notes that although rural women carry considerable responsibility for the economic survival of rural households, often participating in traditionally masculine roles, the position of the feminine still appears to be often subordinate to the masculine. This focus on subordination is brought into question by the observation in Chapter 7 of the critical role of the feminine gaze in naming and identifying the symbolic capital signifying youth culture group identities. From an apparently subordinated position it is observed that these rural girls appear to be acquiring highly valued cultural and social capital. Social researchers’ understanding of the idea of subordination may need to be rethought if the girls engaged in the youth microculture of the *Skeggs* are achieving status within the social group without engaging in the same physical activities. Further work is needed in this area to explore the whole question of gender subordination and dominance and its consequence in the classroom. If the masculine and feminine do exist in a reciprocal relationship, where in some contexts, like the skateboard park, the feminine may be subordinate, while in others, like the literacy classroom, the feminine may be dominant, then the idea of a universal, omnipresent, oppressive patriarchy (Oakley, 2002) is not sustainable. If the boys’ culture is dependent upon the gaze of the girls then the relationship may not be one of simple and unintended dominance and subordination. A further investigation of these issues would be of great interest to educators with a concern for the role of gender in schooling.

### 8.1 Rural youth identities construction

The data presented in this study demonstrated that young people in Paterson had a range of identity resources available to them in both the physical, material world they inhabited as well as the social and discursive worlds they moved through and contributed to. This study has explored a range of sites in Paterson highlighting the identity options available there. The breadth of this material becomes apparent when
it is summed up in a series of tables. The Paterson boys’ project provided a range of identity opportunities for Paterson young people:

Table 8.1  Identity material available in Paterson Boys’ Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project popularised a discourse of ‘boys at risk’.</td>
<td>Mixed aged friendship groups of boys were formed.</td>
<td>Boys acquired physical theatre skills &amp; performance opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The town monument project was interpreted by the boys involved as an opportunity to demonstrate engineering, not artistic skills.</td>
<td>Masculinity was reinforced as the desirable identity.</td>
<td>Girls were positioned to provide an essential audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The town monument illustrated the historical dominance of masculine imagery in Paterson culture.</td>
<td>A feminist message of the marginalisation of the feminine was reinforced.</td>
<td>Mixed messages around the loss of funding left boys feeling guilty at the exclusion of girls but also asserting their need for ‘male bonding’ while girls affirmed their claim on equity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school, which provided the initial context for PBP, offered an important opportunity for social connection for many of the young people of Paterson. It offered an antidote to the isolation of their home farms, but it is also characterised by a culture that privileges lexical skills over practical skills in contrast to the local culture. The site of the school provided a range of different identity opportunities:

Table 8.2  Identity material available in the site of the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The formal language of school culture divides and homogenises</td>
<td>Groups divided according to academic ability and age</td>
<td>Opportunity to gather in groups and meet other young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The signs and symbols of middle-class white Australian culture privileged</td>
<td>Groups divided by bus travel and sporting activities</td>
<td>School uniforms indicate age grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National flag celebrated</td>
<td>Sport &amp; academic achievement privileged</td>
<td>School furniture often a poor ‘fit’ for large boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniforms, badges, awards and ceremonies endow status</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bus travel divides students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The site of football emerged as a pervasive presence in both the school and community setting. Capital gained in this field of practice reappeared as valuable in a number of other fields demonstrating a powerful cross-field effect. This site provided a wealth of opportunities for the moulding of identities:

Table 8.3  Identity material available in the site of football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A language of rules &amp; regulations</td>
<td>Ritual practices hold affinity groups together</td>
<td>Football skills, values &amp; attitudes celebrated in &amp; beyond the site of Paterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ‘footy supporters’ lexicon and signs &amp; symbols</td>
<td>Differentiated affinity groups in relationship with both insiders and rival supporters</td>
<td>Football supporters travel long distances and endure difficult weather and uncomfortable grounds to demonstrate loyalty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rural working class township of Manywarra demonstrated the diverse nature of the identity options available to Paterson young people. Although the school population is small the students of Paterson High are drawn from a range of rural sites consequently their life experiences may be more varied than it appears on the surface:

Table 8.4  Identity material available in the Site of Manywarra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimate knowledge of local activities</td>
<td>Enforced close contact between girls and boys ‘Shemales’ close network connected by celebration of alcohol consumption, bravado &amp; horsemanship</td>
<td>Isolated location Long bus trip requires physical endurance and enforced affinity Lower incomes limit aspirations Hard rural labouring including piggery work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse of ‘townie’ &amp; ‘country’ kids.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identities are linked to degrees of isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dominance of the agricultural industry and the celebration of the rural landscape by Paterson young people should have provided a fertile ground for the youth microcultural identity of the Frigger to flourish:
### Table 8.5  Identity material in the site of *Frigger* microculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The language of Country &amp; Western music</td>
<td>Boys do ‘circle work’ in ‘utes’ &amp; play football for the local team (girls are beginning to do these things too)</td>
<td>Identity markers of ‘Utes’, motor bikes, guns, leatherman or pen knives, RM Williams branded boots, wide brimmed hats, belts with big buckles, shirts with collars, provide practical support for rural activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language of agriculture</td>
<td>Support a regional or state football team</td>
<td>Boys are careless about physical appearance &amp; health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The signs &amp; symbols of Country &amp; Western music</td>
<td>Manage machinery &amp; physical tasks independently, often alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gait &amp; embodiment of ‘cowboy’ culture</td>
<td>Enjoy country &amp; Western Music, beer or “Bundy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discursive practices of agriculture</td>
<td>Would not be associated with: reading, movies or theatre, the arts, beach brand names, cosmetic products, masculine jewellery, tattoos or piercing</td>
<td>The surprising popularity of the cosmopolitan image of the <em>Skegg</em> is testament to the reach of imagery originating in international sites:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8.6  Identity material in the site of *Skegg* microculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Space</th>
<th>Social Space</th>
<th>Material Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The language of skateboarding culture</td>
<td>Boys do gymnastic manoeuvres with skateboards or bikes (girls rarely participate)</td>
<td>Skateboards, BMX or mountain bikes, ‘Skate’ shoes, caps or visors, a ‘hoodie’, baggie jeans, beach label tee shirts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lexicon of Rap music</td>
<td>‘Hang around’ in groups and Avoid work</td>
<td>Boys &amp; girls change their hair colour with dyes, their bodies with tattoos and piercing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The signs &amp; symbols of surf &amp; skateboard culture</td>
<td>Enjoy: loud music, cruzers, movies, graffiti, body piercing, brand names, break dancing, downloading music, downloading movies, chat and MSM</td>
<td>Both boys and girls use products in their hair or on their bodies and adorn their bodies with jewellery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The <em>Skegg</em> identity rejects association with: the ute culture, Country and Western music, domestic duties, child care, aged care, RM Williams clothing</td>
<td>Skateboard park unregulated, freeform activity. No formal rites of membership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These tables gather together some of the influences impacting on identity observed in this study. It is not an exhaustive list, but rather an overview of the identity material available to the young people of Paterson. It points to the concerns and issues elaborated throughout this study.

The young people of Paterson perform their identities in these and many other sites as they engage in fields of practice negotiating the transition from school children to young adults. Capital gathered in one site may resonate positively or negatively in another under the influence of cross-field effects. Identity construction is multiple and multilayered as young people inhabit several spaces simultaneously in different fields of practice. The youth microcultures of the Friggers and the Skeggs provide an illustration of the processes of identity play and identity formation. The interaction of football, the Paterson Boys’ Project and local small town affiliation groups with the youth microcultures demonstrates the complex, multilayered nature of identity formation. These tables illustrate the interweaving of the social, discursive and material worlds as sites for the gathering and representing of identity options.

8.2 Paterson and Social Theory

In this study a number of ideas from the theories of Pierre Bourdieu are called upon and developed. His social critique of the judgment of taste, *Distinction* (1984a), examines the social use of art and culture in linking and excluding people in social groups. Bourdieu elaborates the hierarchical distinctions achieved through identification with particular cultural objects. His examination focuses on the French class system but he claims that it is possible to:

> identify, behind the specific institution of a particular society, the structural invariant and, by the same token, the equivalent institution in another social universe (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. xii).

The world illustrated by Bourdieu appears to be organised in a class-differentiated hierarchy which functions across a number of fields of practice. A Paris-centric picture of the world structured by a pervasive hierarchy in the form of class is illustrated through an examination of “taste”. He claims that:

> The capital city is – no pun intended – the site of capital, that is, the site in physical space where the positive poles of all the fields are concentrated (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 125).
Bourdieu’s confident claim that capital cities host all of the most highly valued capital is problematic in a non-urban context. The rural site provides fields of practice which value capital which does not fit neatly into Bourdieu’s traditional class structure and cannot be found in the Capital cities. The hegemonic position of metropolitan culture has been disrupted by the postmodern challenges of the 21st century. The city has been repositioned as, a site of social disintegration and alienation. Its indelible carbon footprint gives evidence of the unsustainable nature of its practices. Bourdieu’s modernist acceptance of the inevitable dominance of the culture of Paris rings hollow in the context of an Australian post colonial rural town. The residents of Paterson celebrate their ready access to rural capital such as a sense of freedom and safety, the wide open spaces, fresh air, mobility, relationships with animals and access to the natural world. Having said this, viewed through the lens of economic capital, urban sites increasingly offer the most likely opportunities to progress financially. The Paterson ethnography chronicles the supplanting of the rural *Frigger* image, once favoured by the highest status young people, by the metropolitan *Skegg* image. This shift from the dominance of rural signs and symbols to the dominance of cosmopolitan ones among many young people also illustrates the processes of group making through the exchange of cultural objects expounded by Bourdieu.

The desirable *Skegg* image is identified with urban, or coastal locations but it was not clearly coded by class as Bourdieu’s material has inferred that it would be. The identity play in Paterson appeared to move beyond a preoccupation with elitist hierarchies. Cultural capital which may endow prestige in one field appeared to be either worthless or a liability in another. The *Frigger* image which was identified with polo playing and the prosperous rural elite could be read as higher status in some contexts than the *Skegg* identity, with its links to U.S. rap, prison and beach culture. The *Frigger* identity which supported success in the township of Paterson in the past is no longer as useful to those who wish to prosper there. According to the young people of Paterson it is still valued in the field of practice of “cattle stations up north” but the *Skegg* identity is associated with application to a broader range of fields. The relative status of these identities can only be read contextually. Bourdieu’s idea of a hierarchy which is sustained across all fields was not evident here. His idea of groups made through the negotiating of social, cultural and symbolic capital is however supported by this study.
Bourdieu’s (1989) explanation of the process of group making through the inherited and accrued capital, usefully describes the process observed in the youth microcultures of Paterson. The popular cultural objects which constituted the symbolic and cultural capital exchanged in the social, discursive and material places of Paterson appeared to function in the same way as the literature, music and interior design explored in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984a). The “structural invariant” (p.xii) highlighted in *Distinction* appears in the Paterson study as the process of the formation of habituses, configured in the context of particular stores of capital. The idea of the habitus as an habitual way of being which is formed in a state of “freedom within constraints” (Wacquant, 1998), provides the Paterson study with a model of identities construction which moves beyond essentialism and determinism. Bourdieu’s ideas enable the consideration of gender and rural identity formation in the site of Paterson sensitive to constraining influences and alert to the potential for improvisational choices which enable change.

Bourdieu’s (2000) ideas about the relationship between physical sites and social structures are also invaluable to this study. Through the concept of “site effects” (Bourdieu, 2000), the link between the geographic location of the site of Paterson and the social development of the young people there may be acknowledged and elaborated. The place of the physical, material world in the formation of some of the capital transacted by young people in their process of identities construction is highlighted, and the range of influences on the iterative formation of the habitus, or “feel for the game” of life, is acknowledged.

The material world is not put forward as the sole site of identity play in Paterson. The contribution to identities construction which occur in the social and discursive spaces of Paterson are also elaborated. The signs and symbols indicative of the youth microcultures of the *Frigger* and the *Skegg* are identified in the material, social and discursive spaces of Paterson. They are also evident in the overlapping spaces between these places where it becomes apparent that in the overarching field of gender, capital is valued differentially. The experiences of a boy in the material, social and discursive place of Paterson can never be the same as that of a girl. The symbolic capital transacted by boys and girls is demonstrated to be gender differentiated; consequently the types of habituses that are formed by boys and girls will be marked by difference. This should not be read as further evidence of inevitable subordination as it may be that the symbolic capital held by a girl
translates into the same, or superior, social or cultural credit to that held by a boy. There was evidence of subordination of some boys and some girls in some fields of practice but the site of Paterson illustrated the heterogeneous nature of young people where some girls, in some fields, hold higher status than some boys and vice versa.

This study illustrates the fractures that can occur in a field enabling change in the habitus as a response to pressure from cross-field effects. The shift away from the Frigger culture and the improvisational development of a new local Skegg culture by the young people of Paterson demonstrates the flexibility within constraint which Bourdieu has postulated. The pre-reflexive qualities of the habitus render it durable but the tensions within a field, as agents compete for capital and the pressures from beyond a field, from other fields, enable responsive change to occur.

8.3 Paterson and Gender Education Policy

The Paterson Boys’ Project was initiated at a time when educational policies on gender were characterised by “feminist agendas on the defensive” (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001). The strategies favoured in the project appear to be replicating the girls’ programs of the 1970s and 80s which emphasised “sex-role socialisation, sex stereotyping, self esteem and role modelling” (Kenway, 1997a). The people of Paterson referred to the benefits of male role models and the importance of encouraging boys to have better self esteem. The PBP programme claimed to challenge the stereotype of the aggressive male and sought to foster the creative expressive capacities of boys. Perhaps some of the enthusiasm for PBP was based on a belief that these sorts of programs had ‘advantaged’ girls in the past. It is curious to note that the strategies of challenging stereotyping through self esteem promotion and alternative role models for girls were abandoned in the early 1990s. These strategies were replaced by an emphasis on the construction and reconstruction of gender within school cultures and across the curriculum. Ironically the strategies that were abandoned as gender educators began to recognise the importance of focusing on boys as well as girls in the area of gender construction, are the ones that boys’ advocates are often electing to take up in support of boys in the 21st century. We appear to have learnt little from 40 years of gender education.

The education bureaucrats from the NSW DET Gender Equity Unit, the PBP organisers and the members of the House of Representatives Parliamentary Enquiry into Boys’ education were all working to achieve some sort of change in boys’
education at the start of the 21st century. These groups appeared to share a concern for the educational success of boys but their understanding of what would constitute ‘success’ may not have been shared. They did not seek the same changes.

8.3.1 Which change? Whose change?

Educators in Paterson were concerned that some boys were not engaging with academic schooling. They were concerned that the nature of the workplace was changing and that some rural boys, who favoured practical tasks over academic, may be left behind. According to the Boys: getting it right report (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002) the enquiry focused on changing education policies and schooling practices to make them more sympathetic to the perceived needs of boys. It referred to boys as an homogenous group with a common learning style and a shared value system. It proposed institutional changes that could meet what it identified as essentialised needs. It did not consider that there may be different types of masculinity. The teaching strategies that it advocated may appeal to some boys but may alienate others. Its emphasis on reinforcing the type of masculinity which favoured practical “hands on” tasks would do little to support the boys of Paterson whose practical “hands on” rural jobs were in decline.

The pro-feminist boys’ advocates on the other hand called for schools to:

problematise dominant constructions of masculinity (Carrington, Mills, & Roulston, 1999).

They envisaged change in both institutions and the individual as in every context they asked:

How can boys be encouraged to relinquish the social advantages which accrue from the pursuit of hegemonic constructions of masculinity? (Carrington et al., 1999).

The Paterson Boys’ Project did not address the power relationships between masculinity and femininity or between different types of masculinity. It did not seek to shift the power relationships around rural masculinity; it rather sought to expand the behaviours available within rural masculine identities. At first glance the change that was sought by PBP appeared to focus on the areas of gender and the arts. An alternative reading of the practices of the Paterson Boys’ Project could interpret it as a response to the perceived threat to rural identity which was manifesting in a gender
differentiated form, as jobs for rural boys vanished. Paterson educators and community members may or may not have recognised a gender advantage for some dominant boys but their focus was not on this issue. Their concern appears to have been with the narrowness of the types of masculinity favoured in the site of Paterson, and the possible consequence of this for the future career paths of boys. The introductory message from PBP stated that PBP was:

about building self esteem and giving males opportunities for self expression which may develop into career options. (PBP advance publicity school newsletter).

Rural boys face a new challenge with a projected ongoing decline in masculine rural employment. PBP appeared to be striving to broaden the field of practice of hegemonic rural masculinity to include “creative, expressive activities” potentially linked to the workplace. It was open to a charge of reinforcing the subordinated position of the feminine by excluding the girls, but the organisers explained that rural girls appeared to be outperforming boys at school and finding employment in the professions and service industries. This ignores the “which girls?” question. It was reasoned that the needs of girls and boys could be dealt with separately. The relational nature of these identities and the position of girls who “stayed behind” were not initially grappled with.

It is difficult to identify any changes in the gendered behaviours of the boys of Paterson as a result of this program but it may be argued that the program supported important changes in the youth culture.

8.3.2 Paterson capital exchange rates

The teachers and community members of Paterson who developed and supported the PBP strategies expressed a desire to alter the culture of Paterson. They described it as “a cultural desert” and actively sought to ensure that Paterson youth enjoyed the same cultural opportunities that they perceived to be available to young people from the city.

The town monument project which was conceived and initiated by two women from the city featured imagery from rural industry. The symbolic capital accrued in this activity was associated with the Frigger microculture. This was the most difficult PBP activity to complete, and the young men involved in it distanced themselves from it as an artistic endeavour, claiming that it was entirely the teacher’s idea and
that they contributed engineering, not artistic skill. The other varied activities in the project were quite different. The physical theatre, monocycling, movie making, cartooning, rock wall climbing, rock concerts and a play called “Skate”, were all spoken of with enthusiasm and pride. The symbolic capital available through these activities is associated almost exclusively with the Skegg identity. In 2003 when a local committee took responsibility for producing a strategic plan for the project they set themselves nine goals. These included:

1. Undertake the Rock Climbing Wall project
2. Reinvigorate the ‘Flic heads’
3. Support the Youth Dynasty Committee
4. Run Break/Rap Dancing Workshop
5. Improve the Skateboarding Facility
6. Run Film Making workshops
7. Continue to develop the pavilion
8. Develop opportunities for physical theatre performance
9. Run PBP Day as part of Year 5 to 8 transition program (PBP Strategic Plan, 2003, p.4)

These goals are powerfully identified with the Skegg culture. The organisers of the PBP program may not have been conscious of the symbolic capital associated with the programs they supported. The terms Frigger and Skegg were not familiar to most of them, but the activities they endorsed strongly supported the accruing of capital associated with the Skegg image. The emphasis on skateboarding, monocycling, rock bands and movies brought into Paterson ideas and images which may support the transition of these young people from their rural setting to more cosmopolitan settings. The activities of PBP reinforced the youth identity play around the image of the Skegg, thus contributing to the development of greater social mobility for its participants.

The girls could not participate in PBP but they provided an informed gaze, noting all of the symbolic capital associated with it. Both boys and girls from Paterson are actively involved in selecting and constructing complex identities which will fit them for flexible futures. Those who choose to go further west will call on the capital that they have accrued that is associated with the Frigger image; those who move into a more cosmopolitan setting have furnished themselves with an embodiment, language, clothing and musical culture that will enable them to fit into these new locations. As they have observed, they “can choose which bit” they wish to focus on to build durable identities which are flexible enough to cope with the inevitable changes ahead.
The Paterson study alerts educators to the value of examining the nature of the identity options available to their students. The symbolic capital that is transacted in the process of habitus development provides a pointer to the cultural and social capital valued by these young people. According to Bourdieu if this capital is at odds with the focus of the school curriculum young people will not engage:

Scholastic success mainly depends on inherited cultural capital and on the propensity to invest in the educational system (and that the latter varies with the degree to which maintained or improved social position depends on such success) (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 122).

The boys who participated in PBP appear to have accepted it as a pathway to “improving or maintaining” their “social position”. Presumably the boys who did not participate did not have the “propensity to invest”. The cultural capital they held did not give them access to this pathway to an “improved social position” through this educational program.

The small, isolated community of Paterson is revealed as an heterogeneous group characterised by contrasting youth microcultures, responsive to pushes and pulls from urban culture and rural culture, and gendered social practices. The young people demonstrate sensitivity to the tensions within and between fields as they seize the opportunities available in these sites of fracture to bring about change. This was the change supported by PBP. In Paterson signs, symbols and embodiment have been introduced from cosmopolitan sites to furnish new cultural identities for richer rural futures.

8.4 Gender Education Policy

The Paterson ethnography chronicles the wide range of identity options available to the young people in a very small school community. It speaks to education policy writers of the absurdity of presuming an homogenous norm exists in any school. The Paterson study illustrates that young people are subject to a diverse range of pressures from the material, social and discursive worlds which shape and are shaped by the representations of selves formed in them.

When education policy writers fail to consider “which” boys and girls they need to address then they presume that one size will fit all. Generalised policies are in danger of privileging some students and marginalising others.
The recount of the Paterson Boys Project illustrates the difficulties faced by schools trying to interpret and implement policies which are flawed because of the tensions among and between conflicting theories. Gender education policies have reflected the state of turmoil in gender theory development over the past 20 years. A return to the development of separate girls’ and boys’ policies runs the risk of ignoring the relational nature of gender and the heterogeneous nature of these two groups. It is also puzzling that separate policies should emerge at a time when medical science and the courts have recognised that a precise difference between these two identities is not always clear. PBP demonstrated very clearly that any policies, programs or practices for boys in schools will have a significant impact on girls. It is not possible to deal with questions of gender in terms of two essential isolated entities.

8.4.1 Paterson and Boys’ Education Practice

In a major Australia-wide study Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000) observed that socioeconomic status made a more significant difference than gender to Year 12 performance and school participation. They highlighted studies which showed that education differentially distributes life chances and choices according to differences within, as well as between, the genders (Collins et al., 2000, p. 60). They demonstrated emphatically that the impact of gender on educational performance should not be examined in isolation from “other independent variables” (Collins et al., 2000, p. 3).

These findings were supported by further reports by teams led by Lingard (Lingard et al., 2002) and Munns et al (Munns et al., 2006) and others in the years that followed the release of this report. Nevertheless there has been a resurgence of programs in that time which presume that boys have a uniform, essential way of being and unique homogenous learning needs requiring “simple instructions” and “short, challenging, hands-on teacher-directed classrooms” (Commonwealth of Australia & Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Programme, 2003, p. 5). Lillico (2005), Fletcher (1999), Biddulph (1997) and West (2001) run popular training and development programs in schools across every state in Australia predicated on a belief that boys are a singular essential type of person. Meanwhile most of the Food for thought and action Gender Equity Strategy kits (NSW Department of School Education, 1997), provided to schools across NSW lie idle. There is an imbalance in the support available to schools in the area of boys’ education.
One of the reasons for the resurgence of segregated classroom practices and schooling strategies that have been called into question in academic circles may be the inaccessibility of much of the gender education material produced by the pro-feminist and gender equity lobby. A DET gender equity consultant explained that “there were lots of good resources but they needed to be properly trained to actually use them” (Anna, 55s, 134).

As Lingard and Douglas (1999) pointed out, the strategies advocated in these kits appear to be feminised and position boys and male teachers to feel guilty. By contrast the men’s rights groups have produced a large quantity of accessible material characterised by a seductive appeal to “commonsense”.

The concerned citizens of Paterson are not unique in their efforts to support their boys. Many communities and educators are actively pursuing programs that they hope will make a difference to the life chances of boys but many of these programs appear to reinforce ideas about masculinity that are at best unhelpful to both boys and girls and at worst destructive. As a first step to pursuing positive supportive gender programs in schools we must first critically evaluate the gender norms represented by our schools recognising that there are many masculinities being constructed in our complex cultures and that policy statements and classroom practices need to reflect this. Policies and programs which reinforce a binary exclusionary vision of gender gloss over the differences between different types of masculinity and femininity. They emphasise a divisive discourse of difference, ignoring the interaction of class, ethnicity and gender which have been demonstrated to impact significantly on the classroom (Collins et al., 2000; Kenway et al., 1997; Teese et al., 1995).

**8.4.2 Paterson findings for gender educators**

The most important finding for gender educators from the Paterson study is the centrality of the “Which boys? Which girls?” discourse. In a single site a wide variety of habituses is in construction, and circumstances which may favour some will be unacceptable to others. Masculinity and femininity in Paterson are demonstrated to be plural, not singular, and the program which was designed to speak to masculinity in this site unintentionally endorsed one type of masculinity leaving other types more marginalised. For educators the Paterson study affirms Wyn and White’s (1997) finding that: “the challenge is to develop policies which are
based on the different realities of young people’s lives, rather than on a fictional mainstream” (cited in Shucksmith, 2004, p. 52). Paterson has a small population but the habituses formed there are characterised by diversity, not homogeneity. The outcomes of PBP also demonstrated that it is not possible to run a program for boys without impacting on the girls. As Diane Bell (1983) pointed out, males and females are in a reciprocal relationship with each other, and the girls of Paterson were acutely aware of their exclusion from PBP.

One of the reasons for the development of PBP was a concern about the consequences of rural restructuring for rural boys. Ni Laoire (2001) has pointed out that change to hegemonic masculinity as a result of global shifts in the agricultural industry pose a threat to “certain groups of rural men, such as the marginal farmers and the isolated” (Ni Laoire, 2001, p. 232). Her findings alert rural educators to the variety of masculinities in rural spaces and cautions researchers against generalising a threat to a specific masculinity across all rural masculinities. Ni Laoire (2001) refers to the cost to rural men of the changes which threaten traditional hegemonic masculinity identifying this with the high rural male suicide rate. In Paterson the loss of irrigation water allocation and the associated decline of the rice industry have placed enormous stress on local traditional masculine identities. This may explain the shift in youth cultural identity away from the rural image of the Frigger towards the urban image of the Skegg. The capacity of rural young people to respond to changing circumstances to develop more flexible habituses than those that they have seen around them is well illustrated by the Paterson data. The reciprocal nature of the relationship of the girls and the boys in the Skegg culture problematises Ni Laoire’s (2001) claim that particular forms of masculinity may be challenged leaving patriarchal power intact. As we have already noted, the straightforward position of feminine subordination in this youth microculture is not clear.

Villa (1999), Leipins (2000a), Oldrup (1999), Evans and Ilbery (1996) have all claimed that in rural sites traditional archaic patterns of gender relations persist. The stories from Paterson illustrated many types of masculinity and femininity. Despite the local dominance of the agricultural industry, the isolation of this community and the small size of its population the “traditional, archaic” rural masculinity recorded in the literature was not the dominant norm among young people. The masculine was however often portrayed as dominant (or hegemonic). It is tempting to read the rural gender relations in Paterson through the lens of oppressive patriarchy. There is still
much in the Australian rural culture to challenge in terms of the oppressive marginalising of the feminine, but Oakley’s interpretation of patriarchy as the cause of all “evils” conceals more than it reveals. Pini (2004) has pointed out that in a field of multiple masculinities, some masculinities are subordinated to others. Oppressive relations between different types of femininities and different types of masculinities need to be considered as well as the oppressive relations between the masculine and the feminine.

The young man who may, or may not have been homosexual, who was driven out of Manywarra (Chapter 6 section 6.1.5) illustrates an extreme of the marginalised masculine. Mills (2004) and Plummer (2001) have pointed out that homophobia is a mechanism for policing masculine behaviour. Hubbard (2000) and Little (1999) outline links between the pressure for the continuance of the family farm and a pervasive hetero-normativity in rural sites, which feeds homophobia. The young people of Paterson acknowledge this problem. They offered support for the normalising of the dominance of a heterosexist position in their culture but at the same time they explained that anyone with an adequate store of a legitimate type of capital will be protected from this pattern of behaviour. The “popular” boys need not conform to this normalising pressure. The young people claim that the policing of acceptable gender behaviours, often through homophobic harassment, or “bagging”, is moderated according to the level of popularity of the person. The type and quantity of social capital acquired by an individual appears to be critical in determining their social mobility and quality of life chances. Bourdieu’s ideas of social, economic and cultural capital provide a useful lens for observing the complex process of identity play in rural youth culture. The representations available to these young people are constrained and enabled according to the habituses they have developed in a range of fields.

The fields of practice in play in the small town of Paterson illustrate many of the tensions at work and opportunities available to the young people there. The tensions within each field as a result of the competition for the capital being traded in the field and the tension from without caused by the relationships between fields provide powerful mechanisms for change in this community. Cross-field effects are always in play as the overarching fields of power and gender provide a context for the activities in the smaller fields of practice of the young people of Paterson. As a consequence of the presence of these two fields, girls and boys in Paterson do not have the same
experiences within their shared fields of practice. Any capital that they may have accrued or inherited will be valued through their gender and their relative positions in the dominant field of power. The girls and boys of Paterson often engage in similar activities but they accrue different capital as a result, they also appear to gain similar capital through engaging in different activities. The highest status girls in the Skegg culture did not play football, ride skateboards or play rock music. The highest status girls in the Frigger culture however did drive utes, work sheep and fix machinery. Educators have the challenge of recognising these social differences without homogenising or essentialising the groups as a consequence.

8.4.3 Paterson findings for rural educators

International rural social research demonstrates that Australia, among many other countries, is facing a time of rapid transformation in the social conditions of those people who live in rural sites. Under pressure from the global economy the small family farms which were “hegemonic” in the research literature (Brandth, 2002) are struggling to provide the next generation with a livelihood and durable social and cultural capital. Rural young people are grappling with the challenge of a culture that has traditionally privileged hard physical outdoors work and a workplace that no longer requires this. Rural girls have for some time looked beyond the farm gate for their futures. They have had to recognised that:

a rejection of the prospect of working in agriculture means parallel rejection of the prospect of living in the countryside (Dahlstrom, 1996, cited in Gidarakou, 1999, p. 147).

Rural girls have endeavoured to “educate themselves out” of the countryside. Gidarakou (1999) observed this trend in Greece and Ni Laoire (2001) in Ireland. The Paterson data demonstrates that here too:

Men predominate among those who stayed in rural areas, and they tend to have fewer educational qualifications and less social mobility than the predominantly female migrant group (Ni Laoire, 2001, p. 220).

In the past many men in Paterson have managed to find a living after leaving school as early as Year 8 (see Chapter 1, Figure 7), while many girls have gone on to seek tertiary qualifications. The organisers of Paterson Boys’ Project appear to believe that this gendered pattern is no longer sustainable; both boys and girls need to seek higher levels of qualification and arm themselves for social mobility as there is little likelihood of employment or further education in their hometown. They must prepare
themselves to move away. Dramatic rural restructuring in the early 21st century has left unqualified young people at considerable risk, so rural educators face the challenge of engaging these young people, providing them with access to the wider world while honouring their loyalty to their rural roots.

Ni Laoire’s research into rural male suicide suggests that by supporting young men in the process of identity shifting PBP may well have addressed a vital need. In her summing up of the factors contributing to rural male suicide she found that:

> For many men, the struggle to maintain identity (and control) in a changing rural society involves dealing with isolation, spatial confinement, lack of support networks, declining self esteem and a challenge to one’s very identity (Ni Laoire, 2001, p. 233).

The participants in Paterson identified sport, particularly football as the site for reinforcing support networks in the past and for the demonstration of “control”, but times are changing. Music and skateboarding or push biking may be more important for the next generation to illustrate their global/local identities. “Control” may be demonstrated by the execution of spectacular physical exploits on bikes or skateboards or even the dance floor.

### 8.4.4 Paterson findings for arts educators

Despite the Arts Council’s finding that rural males were the most disengaged arts users in Australia (Costanoura, 2000), the isolated community of Paterson enthusiastically embraced the idea of an art exhibition for men and proudly boasts a town monument created by the young men of the school. This enthusiasm for masculine arts did not however translate into young men identifying themselves with the image of the artist. The young town monument sculptors were at pains to indicate that their involvement was an engineering role not an artistic one. The Paterson boys were much less reticent when it came to the area of music. In both the home and the school young people were provided with easy access to music and music culture. The youth microcultures in Paterson were characterised by identification with particular types of music. Music provided a powerful discursive significance for these young people and was associated with demonstrations of both individualism and group identities.

The arts activities promoted by the PBP program were selected to support the physical outdoors masculinity endorsed by the community. Physical theatre,
skateboarding, monocycling, cartooning, movie making and rock wall climbing did not threaten the dominant masculinity of Paterson but they did connect with a non-rural culture and support change in the youth identity options. The youth microcultures of Paterson do not appear to be constructed in opposition or resistance to the parent culture, in the mode of the Birmingham schools subculture theory (Hebdige, 1979). Rather they appear to grow out of, and with the support of, the parent culture.

Paterson is not the only rural town to turn towards the arts. Gibson and Klocker claim that as a part of this “cultural turn”:

Regional economic policy-makers are increasingly interested in the contribution of creativity to the economic performance of regions and, more generally, in its power to transform the images and identities of places (Gibson & Klocker, 2005, p. 93).

Just as the Paterson Boys’ Project promoted the idea of diversifying job opportunities for boys through a focus on the arts, Gibson and Argent claim that in other regional areas the “creative industries are being cast as a potential way of promoting cultural activities and jobs for young people” (2008). They go on to conclude that:

While formal job-creation may be limited, creative industries could mitigate some of the impacts of youth migration to cities by enriching regional social life and mediating perceptions of the advantages and drawbacks of rural versus urban life (Gibson & Argent, 2008, p. 135).

The nature of the cultural capital available to some of the young men of Paterson appears to have been affected by the introduction of the Paterson Boys’ Project. Further research would be needed to investigate the impact of this focus on the arts on the cultural capital available to girls and to those boys who did not participate in the program and to investigate the long term impact of the project on the participants.

8.5 Sport

One of the most important fields of practice for the accruing of high status cultural and social capital in Paterson is the field of sport. The coverage of women’s netball in local papers and newsletters may signal a slight improvement in the representation of rural women in sport in Paterson since Alston’s 1996 research but the status of netball and many masculine sports other than football is still subordinate. It is important to note that girl’s netball may be lower status than football but it is higher than soccer or basketball. A focus on the subordinated nature of girl’s netball to
boy’s football may overdraw the gender inequity in this field and overlook the importance of the marginalised masculinities which also became apparent in this site. The young men who were unable or unwilling to participate in Australian Rules football expressed great difficulty in accruing legitimised capital which could be transposed across fields. This became particularly clear when boys arrived from other sites with skill in another code and had to deal with the devaluing of their hard earned capital. The anxiety in the voices of the young people remind us of the stakes in play here:

And he found that he was in this Catch 22 where there was a lot of pressure to be good and he said ‘I can’t be good at the sport because I have never played it! (Kerry, 35s, 077).

Both boys and girls in Paterson worked hard to gather symbolic capital in the field of practice of football. The social, discursive and material space of the Australian Rules football competition provided them with capital that continued to hold its value across a wide range of geographic sites and social spaces. According to the young people of Paterson, the field of practice of football is also a site for the construction of alternative masculine identities. Young men who gain enough capital in this field are permitted to break with some of the masculinist strictures evident in other fields. This possibility warrants further investigation. The capacity for girls to achieve status in this field by providing an informed gaze is also a phenomenon worthy of further research. The role of football in rural youth identities construction in the new century appears to be a very rich field for rural social researchers of the future.

Educators need to be alert to the fact that cross-field effects also occur between the fields of practice of sport and school and youth microcultures. The capital accrued in the sporting field transfers very favourably into the other two fields. Capital associated with schooling however may disadvantage some young people in other fields. Paterson High School highlighted the universal status of football, exploiting its popularity in its rewards and sanctions protocols. PBP was marketed as an activity which was supported by the football team. Organisers felt that the boys who were becoming disengaged would be attracted to the program if high status boys endorsed it. This proved not to be the case. The program was characterised by many as “elitist” and the boys who benefited from it were identified as already holding high status.

Sport, music and Skegg culture appeared to be gendered fields of practice in Paterson providing valuable capital for some boys but offering less access to girls. This
apparent “subordination” of the feminine to the masculine may need closer scrutiny as the apparently subordinated position of girls in the Skegg culture emerged as a reciprocal relationship on closer examination. The gendered practices of youth microculture may provide fresh insight into the nature of the subordination of the feminine in Paterson and other sites of youth identity development.

8.6 World Making

The ruptures in the field of practice of rural youth culture caused by cross-field effects in social, discursive and material space of gender, power, global economic shifts and changing farming practices, provide the fractures in the field that are necessary for changes in habitus to occur. New capital becomes available and old capital loses its value and legitimacy. The once prized capital associated with the RM Williams brand name signifying allegiance to a prosperous rural elite has lost its potency for many young rural men as the prospect of gaining economic prestige from this capital has become severely limited. Some girls see this as providing an opening for them to enter a field once closed to them.

In Social space and symbolic power Bourdieu (1989) refers to the process of forming and identifying social groups as “world making”. In Paterson, in the Skegg site, it appears that some boys are making worlds by engaging in bike and skateboard manoeuvres and participating in music culture associated with identities from beyond Paterson and participating in football codes which carry significance in a range of other sites. The girls are making worlds by recognising and naming the groups, “by speaking on its behalf as an authorised spokesperson” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). The role of “naming” played by the girls is not of lower status or of minor significance. According to Bourdieu this is the only way that a group can come into existence:

A group, a class, a gender, a region, or a nation begins to exist as such, for those who belong to it as well as for the others, only when it is distinguished, according to one principle or another, from other groups, that is, through knowledge and recognition; connaissance et reconnaissance (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

The importance of the role played by the girls in recognising and elaborating the signs and symbols of the Friggers and Skeggs is clarified by the theories of Bourdieu. He emphasises the importance of legitimated agents having the capacity to “speak publicly” about a group:
The class (or the people, the nation, or any other otherwise elusive social collective) exists if and when there exist agents who can say they are the class, by the mere fact of speaking publicly, officially, in its place, and of being recognised as entitled to do so by the people who thereby recognise themselves as members of the class, people or nation, or any other social reality (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 24).

The reciprocal nature of the relationship between the members of a group (in this case boys) and those legitimised to speak about and on behalf of the group (in this case girls) is emphasised in this situation. Seen through this lens the Paterson girls who may have appeared subordinated in youth culture, because they are not actively engaged in skateboarding, bike riding or circle work, may in fact be in a position to acquire the same or similar cultural and social capital as the boys engaging in the physical exploits required of their group. The “world making” engaged in by some girls may give them dominance over some forms of masculinity despite the masculine “patriarchal dividend” (Connell, 2002). If it is the case that girls and boys accrue and negotiate capital in different ways this may explain the apparent gender inequities observed in some rural social research. It may provide a fresh way to view findings like those of Fabianson, who observed in his study of a town very similar to Paterson:

The two communities in this study have male dominated industries, mining and farming where physical strength is valued. The diversity and number of sports and leisure activities focusing on physical sports are indicative of the community culture. The research indicates that the communities support and cater for young male residents to a greater extent than for young females, thus enhancing young males’ involvement in community groups and organisations. The young males had a substantially higher participation rate in all kinds of sporting clubs and organisations (Fabianson, 2006, p. 58).

The girls may not need as many “physical sports and leisure activities” as the boys as their engagement in accumulating capital appears to occur in different settings to the boys. The role of observing and identifying group membership identified in Paterson may be linked to Fabianson’s claim that:

The findings indicate that females are more socially inclusive and community focused. They maintained community social capital structures to a higher extent (Fabianson, 2006, p. 58).

This area warrants closer examination. There is a need for further research into the gendered nature of “world making” and the reciprocal roles of identity performing and identity naming.
8.7 Research Implications

This study of a small group of rural young people has highlighted several areas that might be explored further by future researchers. The importance of further investigation of the role of the feminine gaze in group identities construction and its implications in our understanding of the ideas of dominance and subordination has already been raised. An examination of the relationship between school culture and youth microcultures may also yield useful insights for educators. It would also be valuable to examine the extent to which youth microcultures are local and unique to place, to identify cultural shifts and explore the forces at work to promote the development of new cultures. The theoretical schema used here to describe identity formation in the context of material, discursive and social space constitutes a contribution to Bourdieuan theory. This schema needs to be further explored to test its strength, durability and usefulness.

In addition, the stories of the young people of Paterson raise several issues worthy of further investigation: the central place of “bagging” and homophobic language in Paterson youth culture, the potency of the cultural capital of music in rural youth culture, the relationship between “popularity” and degrees of homophobic harassment or levels of pressure to conform to local norms, the risk taking behaviour of low status girls, the centrality of sport and football culture which resonated so strongly in the school with cross-field effects, the place of alcohol consumption as an identity marker for rural youth. Research is needed to establish the extent to which the mechanisms used by the young people of Paterson, to gather rich materials for the constructions of durable identities, is in use in other fields. This ethnographic study raises many questions that may be fruitfully pursued by future researchers.

The study was not without its limitations, of course. Paterson High is a small school – the methodological advantage of this was that it was possible to speak to all of the students in the senior years; the disadvantage is that the data source is small. It was difficult to get permission notes back from the younger high school students so the data from this group represents the voice of the interested enthusiasts rather than a random sample. The questionnaires administered early in the research did little to inform the study as their administration was closely supervised by staff and students believed that their responses were being scrutinised by the school.
The *Frigger* and *Skegg* identities were identified halfway through the data gathering phase after the Year 12 students had gone, so some opportunities for the direct observation of the relationship between the youth microcultures and school education were missed.

This study provides a snapshot of a particular time and place. The social processes at work there may be unique or they may be typical of many places. Further investigation is needed to determine the extent to which findings in this site may be generalised to other social locations.

### 8.8 Conclusions

Roland Robertson coined the term “glocal” to describe practices which occur in local settings and appear to be global or international in origin (Robertson, 1995). The *Skegg* identity which combines outdoor physical riding skills valued in the local setting with music and clothing informed by US prison and street culture. This identity appears to typify a “glocal” practice of the 21st century. Even though they live in a reasonably isolated site the young people of Paterson appear to have access to a wide range of signs, symbols and discourses to furnish their identities. The history and geography of Paterson have privileged outdoors, physically active habituses which appear to have been relatively durable, but the dominance of agricultural iconography appears to be weakening. In both London and Paterson boys gather in public sites to represent their youth microcultural identities. The caps, shoes, shirts, “hoodies”, bikes, skateboards, jeans and shorts may well be produced in the same factories in China. The music they enjoy has common features, the sentiments expressed reflect similar values. Armed with this international language, isolated rural youth may gain access to sites well removed both physically and culturally from little towns like Paterson.

The young people pictured in Figure 8.1 and 8.2 share the same costume and bike or skateboard skills but these young people live thousands of kilometres apart. By supporting the development of the *Skegg* culture in Paterson the PBP program enabled some of its young people to acquire the necessary capital for engaging in fields far away from their rural home. The Paterson *Skegg* culture does not have the same emphasis on graffiti art as its cosmopolitan cousins but in every other respect the family resemblance is very strong.
Figure 8.1 A skatepark in a township South of Paterson 2007 illustrating Skegg clothing and activities.

Figure 8.2 Southwark London 2008 illustrating the common threads in youth culture across the globe.

These images illustrate some features of a “glocal” world. It is from sites like these that a generation of rural young people will gather material to construct identities, to develop “a feel for the game” of life.

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. The Paterson Boys’ Project was developed in the context of shifting allegiances in the local youth identity and growing tension in the area of gender education policy. The effects of other fields on schooling practices is illustrated by this project. The tensions that surfaced in Paterson over the issue of funding for the Paterson Boys’ Project and bubbled up nationwide with the House of Representatives Parliamentary Enquiry into Boys’ Education, is crystallised in the state and federal gender equity policies. These policies require a shared understanding of the ideas of “success” in education and “equity” in education. It is difficult to see how consensus can be achieved in this instance.
The most vigorous advocates for the boys’ movement have been principals from elite boys’ schools. These schools promote competition and strive to select the “best” students, teachers and resources. “Success” in a competitive culture is concerned with winners and losers. The concept of “elite” and “the best” refer to a hierarchy which the school is implicitly and explicitly supporting. Any equity policy will struggle by definition to sit comfortably within this logic. A gender equity policy, which challenges the hegemony of the type of masculinity on which some elite boys’ schools depend for their survival, is never going to be a good ‘fit’ with the culture of such schools.

Teachers in isolated rural schools may be discouraged by research highlighting the educational disadvantage of students from Australia’s rural sector. The resilient young people from Paterson remind us to ask “which” rural students are struggling and “which” ones are succeeding. As they work to eliminate any obstacles to the educational success of rural students’ teachers can be encouraged by Obama’s observations that:

What's remarkable is not the number of minorities who have failed to climb into the middle class but the number who succeeded against the odds (p. 249)…

You won’t hear these men and women ... point to discrimination as an excuse for failure. In fact, what characterizes this new generation of black professionals is their rejection of any limits to what they can achieve (Obama, 2006, p. 241)

Obama was examining different issues of identity but the confident determination that he observed among young people disadvantaged by the colour of their skin was also evident among some of the young people of Paterson disadvantaged by their geographic and cultural origins. Identities that are multiple and responsively created provide building blocks for resilience. As Obama has observed we know that apparently disadvantaged young people can and do take what is available to them in the material, social and discursive world to construct flexible identities for the new century. “That knowledge gives us something to build on” (Obama, 2006, p. 249).

8.9 Paterson’s fertile fields – past, present and future

One of the first stories from the site of Paterson was the newspaper article from 1906 describing the traffic of new faces into town in anticipation of the wool shearing season. The Friggers of Paterson would still share the joke with the writer as he describes the shearers “gazing lovingly” at their bedroll (matilda) before bolting for
the nearest pub. Alcohol consumption continues to hold an important place in Paterson youth identity play. The reference to “Our lovely roads” would still resonate with most residents of modern day Paterson as the state of their roads has always been anything but “lovely”. The “new chums” struggling to “swing their billy as professionally as they can and try to look as unconcerned as if they were doing the block at midday” would still raise a smile from the locals as ‘outsiders’ who don’t understand ‘the bush’ or ‘the river’ frequently stumble when they come to Paterson for recreation. The last face introduced in this article is that of the “city slicker”. It is this face that may be getting a changed reception in modern Paterson. The man from the city is introduced in 1906 as a separate species:

Another species of the genus homo is ‘Jonnie’ sent from the city as a bookkeeper at some outback station. Here we have a man of some importance who carries no matildas, he only carries airs which he proceeds to exhibit for the enlightenment of the boarders wherever he may have the bad fortune for them to be putting up for the night. We will watch for his return as he may carry matildas back and under strange influence he may be more of a man when he next proceeds through town (E. McConnell et al., 1996, p. 9)

“Jonnie” from the city is greeted with wry cynicism. His “book learning”, “airs” and dependence on others to carry his luggage is sneered at. These qualities are clearly identified as un-masculine as the writer asserts that “he may be more of a man” after experiencing life on an outback station. Paterson’s Friggers may still support most of these attitudes but the Skegg identity is opening up new possibilities. The “airs” of the city boy may represent values, attitudes and voices that have not previously had a hospitable reception here but are welcomed now by the novelty hungry Skeggs. The “book learning” he represents may be critical for the future generations of Paterson. The gender identities which narrowly define the masculine in terms of physical independent self reliance, which is learnt through enduring the physical hardship and isolation of an outback station, may have been transferred to the football field or skateboard park, or it may at last be under challenge. The hierarchical notion implicit in the term “more of a man” may prove to be a durable one but this may also be facing gradual erosion. The Paterson rural identity we glimpse in 1906 is the ancestor of the masculinist culture that constrains the formation of the Paterson habitus today. Educators who wish to be attuned to the resonance of the present need also to attend to the echoes of the past as they are sensitive to the rural and urban contexts that refract and reflect these echoes into the future.
Appendix 1. School Culture Survey

Student Questionnaire - Patterson High School

Now we would like you to think about the place where you live. Again, this is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. We want your opinion. Your answers will be used by Charles Sturt University for research. They will not be seen by anyone else. Your name is not required.

First please answer these questions: Fill the correct circle like this ○

Your Year level    7    8    9    10    11    12    Boy ○ or Girl ○

Each statement starts with A RURAL COMMUNITY IS A PLACE WHERE (Something happens to you, or you feel a particular way). You have to think of Rural communities are places where ... before each item for it to make sense, for example, Rural communities are places where ... I feel important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A RURAL COMMUNITY IS A PLACE WHERE:</th>
<th>(fill in one circle in each line)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. boys and girls are treated equally.</td>
<td>Definitely Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Definitely Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. there are more things to do for girls than for boys.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. boys have to be tough to be accepted.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. boys like girls who are smart.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. single-sex classes work well for boys.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. boys can express their feelings openly.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. being good at sport is important for girls.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. girls like boys who are smart.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. girls have to be tough to be accepted.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. boys are encouraged to express themselves through the arts.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. boys get most attention.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. you can’t act “differently” and be accepted.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. learning to be “creative” is a waste of time for boys.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. boys have a better chance of success.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. girls like boys who are “sensitive”.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. girls like boys who are sporty.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. you have to be an “outdoors person”.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. being good at sport is important for boys.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. it is hard for a girl to be a leader.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. mates can’t always be trusted</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. single-sex classes work well for girls.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2. Discussion Starter on *Frigger* and *Skegg* Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frigger</th>
<th>Skegg</th>
<th>Frigger</th>
<th>Skegg</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shear a sheep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ride a horse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drive a tractor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sing a song</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kick a footy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change a nappy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bake scones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change a tyre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fix the car</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check the oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mend a sock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sew a button</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron a shirt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Throw a ball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swim the river</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drive a car</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back a trailer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make tea/coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook a BBQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wear a cap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wear a wide hat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move sheep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write a letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wear a flannie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colour their hair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pierce their ears</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get a tattoo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink beer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink bundy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink wine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink a Cruiser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get drunk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drive a ute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ride a motor bike</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do circle work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shoot a gun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build a garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk to old people</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Be polite</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Take vitamins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Which boys, Which girls do these things?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frigger</th>
<th>Skegg</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be self sufficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paint a picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chop wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love rap</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about sex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoke drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Babysit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do their deb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work really hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need company</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go to a play</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carry heavy things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lose their temper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listen to loud music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listen to pop music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love country and western</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read good books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love the movies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuddle children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about footy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about weddings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoke cigarettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visit a nursing home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wash the dishes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be a bit violent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweep the floor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wear brand name clothing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Look after their mates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do what they think is right</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do what their mates say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Put up with pain</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Help people in trouble</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree with their mates</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Look after their health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Remember birthdays</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Study for exams</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk to old people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow the crowd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think for themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get body piercing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3. Glossary

Aspirational:
Those aspiring to improve their social status through education.

Bagging or to Bag:
A youthful colloquial term to tease or harass.

Billy:
Any container, often makeshift, for boiling water for making tea.

Bloke:
Australian colloquial term for a fellow, a man.

Blundstones:
Tradename for popular elastic sided leather working boots affectionately referred to as “blunnies”.

Bundy:
A colloquial term for Bundaberg rum, a favourite drink associated with the bush ute culture.

Deniliquin ute muster
An annual attempt to break a world record for the largest parade of legally registered utility vehicles (see below) in the world. The world record bid is held as part of the annual Play on the Plains Festival in the rural town of Deniliquin NSW, Australia. The current record stands at 7,242. The Festival also features ‘circle work’ championships, ‘Croc’ encounters, blade shearing exhibitions, whip cracking competitions, bull riding exhibitions, lawnmower races, wood chopping exhibitions, a blue singlet count, a Holden “Grunt off” and a “Best Bundy Campsite” competition.

Matilda:
Australian colloquial expression for a swag (see below).

Muster:
To assemble (troops, a ship’s crew, livestock etc.), as for battle, display, inspection, orders, discharge, shearing, branding, etc.

Outback station:
A large rural establishment for raising sheep or cattle in remote sparsely inhabited marginal farming country.

Ute:
Utility truck. A small truck with an enclosed cabin and a rectangular tray for transporting goods. The tray has sides and is sometimes covered by a tarpaulin.

Squatter:
Someone who settled on crown land to run stock, especially sheep, initially without government permission, but later with a lease or license.

Squatocracy:
Rich and influential rural landowners historically descended from the early squatter class.

Swag:
A bundle or roll carried across the shoulders or otherwise, and containing the bedding and personal belongings of a traveler through the bush.
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