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**Author Address:** lcroft-piggin@csu.edu.au

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Rural youth identity formation in ‘glocal’ space

Lindy Croft-Piggin
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga

Abstract

As classroom teachers we are often aware of the different sub-cultural groups that young people move in and out of as they explore different youth identities. Our practice can gain much by paying closer attention to these groups. In this paper the stories of the rural youth in an isolated NSW township are explored to reveal the changing face of rural youth identity. Despite their isolated rural location and local dependency on agricultural industry, these young people appear to be shifting away from the music, clothing, manners, attitudes, cars and embodiment associated with the rural ute culture in favour of an urban/beach culture identity.

The stories from the young people in this study explore the features of the local rural Frigger and the new urban Skegg cultures. These stories illustrate the process of appropriation of both global and local signs and symbols in the forging of new cultures as these students construct resilient identities with a high level of social and cultural mobility. In this paper the key features of the Frigger and the Skegg sub-cultures are explored.

Rural youth culture

As they develop their habitual ways of relating to the world, young people respond to the material available to them from both external and local sources. The nature of this material will determine the popularity and social status of the young people. This material, so actively competed for in youth culture, in referred to by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) as social and cultural capital. It is the nature of this capital being traded, exchanged and aspired to that is examined in this study of a rural site. The material they call on for their identity construction is sourced from both close at hand and far away, as this rural youth identity is not only informed by its geographically isolated location but also utilises twenty first century technology to access images from around the world. Ideas, images, values and attitudes from the mass media and internet stand alongside the music, messages, costumes, language, posture and modes of transport developed as part of the Australian bush heritage. The signs and symbols associated with the rural Frigger identity have close connections with local history. Cyberspace provides, in effect, another physical location for sourcing further material for identity construction. The presence of the urban Skegg identity in a very small isolated rural township in western NSW, is testament to the level of penetration of these “glocal” identities. Roland Robertson coined the term “glocal” in 1995 to describe practices which occur in local settings which appear to be global or international in origin. The Skegg culture has appropriated signs and symbols from Australian surfing culture and American Rap culture to devise an auditory, visual and spoken language which, while less visible to the adult community, provides young people with new shared cultural significances. This new signification connects with the global but is also modified by the local.
The Paterson study
The young people in this study moved between the image of the Frigger and the Skegg as they negotiated their youth identities. Their practices illustrate the multilayered nature of identity and alert educators to the possibility of identity being plural, contradictory and contested. It is fruitful for educators to become attuned to the nature of the capital that young people are competing for. This paper offers insights into one example of youth sub-culture in a rural setting through the voices of the people from this small, isolated rural town. To protect their identity all names have been changed and the town will be known as Paterson.

The township of Paterson has a population of approximately 2,500. It was selected for this study because of a boys’ arts project initiated by the high school in 2001 and taken over by the community in 2003. The high school, which has about 300 students, has for several years experimented with a range of strategies to support boys’ education, when it lost the funding it relied on for supporting the Patterson Boys’ Project a large and vigorous community based committee stepped in to provide personnel, funding and management.

The data for this study was gathered between 2002 and 2004. Interviews with teachers, students, community members and Department of Education and Training officials were transcribed and analysed. These included 145 interviews with participants ranging in age from 5 to 80 years.

The Friggers
In this isolated rural location it is not surprising to find that one of the youth sub-cultural identities is tied to the image of the horseman or grazier. The Frigger image is identified with the country clothing provided by the iconic Australian company RM Williams. Friggers are potentially identified with the old Squattocracy. The term appears to originate with rural anti-establishment feeling. The socially elite polo players are referred to as “wankers on horseback” (Sue, 40yrs). 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. In the past many rural young people chose to identify with this image:

Anyone who plays Polo is a saddle Frigger (Sue, 40yrs).

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, 40yrs). 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. In the past many rural young people chose to 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, 16yrs).

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, 18yrs).
**The Skeggs**

The word *Skegg* originally referred to the fin of a surf board (1988, p. 928). The title *Skegg* appears to have been applied to surfers in the early 1980s in south eastern Australia. 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.

The *Lexicon of Cadet language: Royal military college Duntroon in the period 1983 to 1985*, offers a succinct definition:

skeg(g) a surfer, i.e., an aficionado of surfboard riding (or one who seems to be such because of his long bleached hair and bronze-tanned skin): a cult figure (Moore, 1993).

*Tracks* magazines from April, 1984 supported this definition:

skeg/skeghead a surfer-one who rides a surfboard (p. 5)

and provided an elaboration in the August issue:

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' (Anonymous, 1984, 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 aisle high neck jumpers and beanies (Alistair, 34).

**Hats & Caps**

The appearance of the *Friggers* and *Skeggs* clearly sets them apart from each other. The hat is an important signifier:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Friggers wear cowboy hats.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>They wear their Akubras most of the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>A lot of <em>Skeggs</em> use the visors and stuff as hats so tennis visors and stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leticia</td>
<td>Sideways any way at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>The normal hats they wear backwards or sideways or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>You know the truckie hats? They have em like they just plonk them on their heads. They don't make them tight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arizona: Or they sit up- and it doesn’t matter if they are pointing out this way (12&13yrs).

Figure 1: Skegg

Figure 2: Frigger

The peaked cap of the Skegg in Figure 1, contrasts with the wide brimmed hats of the Frigger identity in Figure 2.

Each piece of clothing is recognised by these young people as significant:

- Leticia: 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: Usually the boys, if it’s hot they have the three quarter pants with the socks pulled up and skate shoes.
- Kelsey: They have their pants like down their bum
- 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: He’s got the visor thing coming out the front with the hood over the top (11&13yrs).

The looser clothing of the Skegg is associated with the free fluid movement of the skateboard or bike. The baggy pants, or “gangsta” pants are said to have originated in US prison culture where inmates gave up their belts as an act of solidarity with a fellow on suicide watch. This is an excellent example of Robertson’s ‘glocalisation’ as young people in isolated rural towns in Australia are emulating a fashion initiated by Afro-Americans in a Los Angeles “big house” where there were “a great number of jailbirds whose pants were falling off their arses” (Progger, 2006).

Skegg pants as shown in Figure 3 are baggy, often dragged down below the underpants line. This style is known as “sagging”.

Frigger pants as shown in Figure 2 are tight-fitting, often paired with a wide brimmed hat. This identity is associated with the music scene and is distinct from the Skegg identity.
The fashion of “sagging” the pants is an integral part of the embodiment of this identity as bloggers 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). 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 plumbers 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).

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.

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: Flat hair like Hat Hair, like all combed down.
Leticia: 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: You can tell by the baggy pants.
Arizona: The socks are Skeggy too. See he has them way up like sitting higher.
Sebastian: I like baggy pants and socks.
Arizona: If you go across the river 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 there 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 (12 & 13yrs).

**Boots & shoes**

Just as the hats set the two identities apart, the footwear also signals a strong contrast. The rural identity is indicated by the choice of boots whereas the Skegg is identified by the “skate” shoe.
Figure 4. Frigger Boots    Figure 5. Skegg “skate” shoes

Figure 4 illustrates the elastic sided or Blundstone boots which are the working boot of the Frigger, and the RM Williams riding boots which are the choice for formal wear. Figure 5. Shows that “skate” shoes are wide and flat. The loose elastic style lacing is designed to allow them to slip off easily as a safety feature for skateboarders.

Utes, Bikes and Skateboards

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 Skeggs 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, 15yrs).

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. (John 14 yrs)

There are people here who are into the utes, Friggers. But it’s not like at Hubtown (John, 17yrs).

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 free style and stuff on the motorbike. They do free style 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, 12yrs).

Friggers are known for their “circle work” in the farm utility. Franny has returned to her rural town as a youth worker and is sensitive to youth practices:

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).

Luke participates in both Frigger and Skegg activities and differentiates the two:
Friggers, 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: 15yrs).

The *Skegg* culture is identified with “the street”:

*Skeggs* are skater people and street people (Teagan, 16yrs).

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, 15yrs).

**Sub-cultures and status**

The Year 7 students in this study 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: I was just thinking about that. I’ve got a lot of friends in[another town]. It was just like that.

Leticia: All the toffs.

Arizona: Yeah that’s what you’d wear, but it’s also a *Frigger* culture over there.

Leticia: 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

Leticia: ’Cause it’s expensive.

Arizona: 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.

Leticia: *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 (12 yrs).

They also pointed out the importance of location and context in establishing the status and acceptability of an image.

Jan: When you’re a *Skegg* you’re one of the cool people

Sean: Yeah and if you’re Posh you’re not cool.

Kieran: *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 (12 yrs).

A Miss Riley who had only recently arrived in the township of Paterson felt that her *Frigger* image was not comfortably received in the town:
I feel like a bloody alien when I wear my riding boots into town (20s).

Miss Riley considered the term *Frigger* insulting but she was aware of a generalised use of the term 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. 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).

In the neighbouring town the *Frigger* identity is quite high status but the township of this study is identified more with the image of the *Skegg*.

**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’. As the image of the *Skegg* displaced the *Frigger*, country music was often the focus of derision. Manywarra is a very small rural community not far from Paterson, which houses rural workers:

> 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, 15yrs).

Seth: The [*Friggers*] clothes are the RMs (both snigger).
Brad: 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 Brookes 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: (aughing). yeah (15yrs).

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, 21yrs).

Music and skating set David apart from the dominant Frigger culture that he grew up with:

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, 21yrs).

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, 21yrs).

Migrating between cultures

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. (Luke, 15yrs).

At times this movement between the two identities has caused him problems but he appears to be maximising the potential of both images:

Luke: 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.

LCP: Why did you choose the party this time?

Danielle, Teagan and Sunny rejected the notion of the sub-cultures representing a town and country divide. They compared the youth identities in Manywarra and Paterson deciding that the two identities were available to both rural and town dwellers as young people selected the image of their choice:

Danielle: They’re [Skegg]s more party going. Every weekend they go and get drunk.
Teagan: But then there is 2 different sub-cultures in the Manywarra as well.
Sunny: 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 (16-18yrs).

The girls concluded that their particular locality and culture provided them with great social flexibility as they could move fluidly between the two sub-cultures:

Danielle: You can choose which bit
Teagan: 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 (16-18yrs).

The youth sub-cultures 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.

Counter culture or cultural development?

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 micro-cultural identity of the Frigger in favour of the new identity of the Skegg.

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. 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”.

Friggers and Skeggs may be analysed in terms of their “rebellion against the dominant culture” in the spirit of the early youth subculture theorists like the Birmingham School (Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004), but to do so is to impose a narrow totalising lens on practices that are diverse and flexible. These sub-cultures may indeed provide a pathway for young people to articulate alternative views to those of their parents but the evidence is that the adult community supported the young people in their search for new ways of relating to the world. The community initiated a major youth program which promoted rock music and arts activities and actively developed a skate park and rock wall climbing site to support its young people. 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).

Contrary to early youth subculture theory, 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.

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 youth arts programs were actively supporting young people in the development of a new more resilient culture. Even though the Skegg sub-culture of Paterson appears to be quite dissimilar to the parent culture, a level of solidarity with them is demonstrated through the development of these programs.

As they develop their identity, young people respond to the material available to them from both external and local sources, based on the material they already have in the form of inherited social and cultural capital.

Global-local positions are mobilised reflexively by young people alongside other markers of difference (gender, race, social status) in the production of distinct youth cultural strategies that not only reflect young people's origins, but also help to negotiate their presents and imagine their futures (Pilkington cited in Bennett & Khan-Harris, 2004, p. 133).
The identity 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, Kraak, & Hicky-Moody, 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” (1985, 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.

As rural teachers become more sensitive to the local place based needs of their students they must also factor in the impact of these connections with communities which are neither local nor visible to most of the adult community. Rural education must now attune itself to identities forged in both global and local space. It must be sensitive to this new “glocal” context.

Reference List


