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**Rural Masculinity, 1980-1995: Discursive Change in Rural New  
Zealand.**

A thesis presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree  
of Master of Arts  
in Geography at  
Massey University

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a social constructionist analysis of the construction of rural masculinity in New Zealand. As such, I have sought to link the major changes in the relationship between New Zealand farmers and the State since 1984, to a perceptible shift in the way that farmers conceptualise themselves.

Chapter One discusses the restructuring of the New Zealand economy since 1984. I concentrate on the changes to the agricultural sector and the way in which these changes have altered the relationship between farmers and the State. My aim is to background these changes, as I go on to discuss their cultural implications in later chapters.

Chapter Two is also a 'background' chapter in which I discuss the evolution of theories of masculinity, and place my reading of the construction of New Zealand rural masculinity in this context. I also outline the theoretical underpinnings of Social Construction Theory, and discuss its application in this thesis.

In Chapter Three, I perform a semiotic analysis of 85 advertisements from *New Zealand Farmer*, *Straight Furrow* and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*. My aim was to determine if the portrayal of farmers in these advertisements had changed in the 1980-1995 period, and I conclude that these portrayals had indeed altered in response to the economic restructuring of the rural sector.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I discuss and analyse the transcripts of the three focus-group style interviews that I conducted between December 1997 and February 1998. Throughout this chapter I compare and contrast my findings in Chapter Three with the responses of the farmers to my questions, as well as contextualising their responses in terms of the restructuring of New Zealand's agricultural sector since 1984. I then draw a number of conclusions about changes in the hegemonic discourses of agriculture in New Zealand.

For my parents Di and Paul,  
in appreciation of their generous support.



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## **Introduction**

This thesis is written within a relatively new stream of Geographical enquiry, in which the critical theory of Linguists and cultural theorists is used within a geographical frame. As such this area, which could be broadly described as 'Cultural Geography', has more in common with Sociology and critical Cultural Theory than it does with 'traditional' Human Geography such as Spatial Theory or Regional Geography.

I believe that the use of this approach has yielded valuable insights into the 'cultural geography' of rural New Zealand. I argue in this thesis that the economic changes in New Zealand society since 1984 have had a substantial impact on the self-identity of farmers, and have led to a unification of farmers around a set of values that are closely related to a neo-liberal economic rationality. These values are not new. It is important to note that the values of market orientated production have always been central to constructions of 'the rural' (Liepins 1996). I argue that it was only with the advent of the post-war 'indicative planning era', and the subsequent relationship between farmers and the state, that the hegemonic discourse of "farming as business" (see Walter 1995) began to lose currency and competing discourses found space to exist (see section 1.2.1).

These competing discourses are perhaps most clearly expressed by my research participants through the idea of the 'lifestyle'<sup>1</sup> farmer, whose first priority is ensuring that their farm produces food for themselves and their family. Commonly, farmers told me that in the current economic environment this is no longer possible. Farmers either have to achieve maximum production or leave the land, and sometimes even best efforts aren't enough. Therefore, I analyse such changes in the identity and practise of farmers as part of a 'cultural geography', which has created 'spaces' within which the hegemonic discourse of "farming as business" has been recentralised.

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term to describe farmers who enjoy farming for its own sake, as opposed to farmers who see farming as merely a means to an end. As a definition it is not intended to include part-time 'hobby' farmers.

In New Zealand, masculinity and farming are closely linked. Significantly, as authors such as Little (1997) from the UK, Mackenzie (1992) and Leckie (1996) from Canada, Walter and Wilson (1996) from the U.S. and Brandth (1994) from Norway have shown, this linkage is not confined to New Zealand. Farming as occupation is constructed in profoundly gendered terms in all of these countries. However, as Berg (1994) and Phillips (1996) argue, in New Zealand this gendered construction is not limited to the rural sphere. Instead, in this country, *national* identity is closely intertwined with constructions of 'the rural' so that "the 'true blue New Zealander' is a male *Pakeha* farmer who is practical, independent, and resourceful" (Berg 1994: 251, italics are the authors own).

The history of the evolution of these themes, in terms of the formation of a identifiable New Zealand identity, is discussed in Chapter Two. I argue that the main 'nation building' events that contributed to these themes are, firstly, New Zealand's relationship with Britain since colonial settlement. Secondly, the physical geography of New Zealand and the modification of the environment required to commence pastoral farming, and thirdly the various 'resource' rushes (such as gold and timber) and the transplanted (from Britain) masculine bias that such economic activity implied.

Therefore, in this thesis I draw especially on the work of Berg (1994), Liepins (1996) and Walter (1995), in order to create a foundation for my conclusions. Berg and Liepins, in particular, argue that the hegemonic discourses of agriculture in New Zealand are tightly intertwined with companion hegemonic discourses of national identity and masculinity. By studying the changes in agriculture since 1984 I also aimed to study changes in the hegemonic constructions of New Zealand masculinity. With this aim I began my research with a 'scoping exercise' which I discuss in the next section.

## 0.1 A Starting Point

The first part of my investigation into the advertisements in farming magazines was a simple *content analysis*. Content analysis is an empirical method that is designed to

produce an 'objective'<sup>2</sup>, measurable and verifiable account of the content of the advertisements. It involved counting significant features that were replicable across all the advertisements in my sample. I began my analysis from within the form of a content analysis, as I felt that this would serve as both a useful introduction, and as an overview of my research. In addition, I saw this analysis as complementing census data on the composition of the group 'farmers'.

Therefore, for my content analysis, I decided to record the sex and age of the people in the advertisements and to compare these figures to the farming population in general. By doing this I aimed to discover the numbers of male versus female farmers that appeared in the advertisements, and the respective ages of these farmers. Numerically, I expected this result to be heavily biased toward men. Hence, I also expected the results to confirm my idea that farmers were typically (re)presented by an unambiguously masculine stereotype.

The advertisements were selected according to the same criteria that I used in the semiotic analysis. These criteria were; that the advertisement must include a photograph of a person (or persons) as well as text, and that the advertisement must be at least one quarter page in size. Finally, I limited the number of advertisements to three per issue, and chose an issue from January, May and September in each year in my study period (1980-1995). Tables 0.1, 0.2, and 0.3 respectively, present a content analysis for *New Zealand Farmer*, *Straight Furrow* and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*.

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<sup>2</sup> Since this thesis is written from a critical theory perspective which acknowledges the *positioning* and *partial perspective* of the research (see Berg 1994: 246) the term *objectivity* becomes problematic. However, I use it here to describe the theoretical context of content analysis.



**Table 0.1** Results of content analysis for *New Zealand Farmer*  
(Total number of advertisements = 32)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	1	0
16-25	3	5
26-35	19	0
36-45	17	0
46-55	11	0
56-65	3	0
66+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 0.1 shows the gender, number and age of the characters in the group of farming advertisements that I analysed in *New Zealand Farmer*. The totals for male and female characters in the advertisements illustrate an approximate ten to one ratio of male to female characters. There is also a significant difference in the modal age of the male versus the female characters. Males most commonly appear as characters within the (estimated) 26-55 year old age group, whereas the women are represented in the (estimated) 16-25 year old age group. This was interesting, as it indicated a marked difference in the way that male and female characters were represented in the advertisements. For males, age looked to be used as an indicator of knowledge and experience, which is then usually tied into an endorsement of a particular product. In contrast, the female characters were most likely to be portrayed in a way which emphasised their physical attractiveness and, therefore, their age.

**Table 0.2** Results of Content analysis for *Straight Furrow*  
(Total number of advertisements analysed = 26)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	1	0
16-25	2	1
26-35	16	3
36-45	11	0
46-55	5	0
56-65	2	0
66+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 0.2 displays a very similar form to table 0.1. The same ten to one ratio is apparent, as is a repetition of the pattern whereby the majority of males appear in the middle age cohorts and the majority of females in the younger age cohorts.

**Table 0.3** Results of Content Analysis for *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*  
(Total number of advertisements analysed = 27)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	0	0
16-25	1	1
26-35	16	2
36-45	10	1
46-55	11	0
56-65	0	0
66+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>

Unsurprisingly, Table 0.3 echoes the results from tables 0.1 and 0.2. This outcome, with an approximate ten to one ratio of male characters to females characters and differences

in the median age of the male and female characters, was not unexpected. From my reading (see, for example, Berg 1994, Phillips 1995, Jensen 1996) the linkage between masculinity and farming is, as I explain in my second chapter, widely recognised and largely unchallenged in New Zealand (although see Liepins 1997 for exceptions). Hence, the almost universal choice of male characters to represent 'farmers' in the advertisements I studied is unsurprising. However, through my later investigations, the actual disparity between these statistics and my census data (in which significant numbers of *women* define themselves as 'farmers') sparked my interest. I wanted to know how the hegemonic discourses of New Zealand farming are gendered as masculine despite the demographic realities. Furthermore, I was interested in how the agricultural reforms since 1984 may have altered these discourses.

To enable a comparison between the content analysis above and the demographics of New Zealand agriculture, I selected key statistics from the 1996 census. Firstly, I compared census statistics for the number of male and female farmers in New Zealand with the number of male and female characters in my chosen advertisements. Table 0.4 (below) displays this census data.

**Table 0.4** Number of 'farmers'<sup>3</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>1986</b>	46923	12244	59167
<b>1991</b>	41122	10871	51993
<b>1996</b>	34266	10452	44718

Table 0.4 shows that women make up slightly less than one third of all people who are self employed in agriculture (defined here as 'farmers'). This fraction has increased from 1986 when women made up approximately 26% of all farmers, to approximately 30% of all farmers in 1996.

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<sup>3</sup> For table 0.4 I have equated 'farmers' with the census definition 'self employed agricultural workers'. Hence, the figures are approximate only.

Secondly, I compared the ages of farmers in the advertisements with census data. This data is displayed in Table 0.5 below.

**Table 0.5** Farmers under 35 years old

Year	Male	Female	Totals
1986	21063 (46923)	4974 (12244)	26037
1991	15874 (41122)	3544 (10871)	19418
1996	12123 (34266)	3072 (10452)	15195

Table 0.5 illustrates how farmers as a group are ageing. The figures for 'total number of farmers' are included in brackets for comparison.

In 1986, approximately 44% of all farmers were under 35 years old. By 1996, this figure had decreased to approximately 34%. The number of female farmers under 35 is, approximately, one quarter of the number of male farmers under 35 throughout the 1986-1996 period. This fraction is slightly less than the proportion of female farmers in total which, as table 0.6 shows, grew to almost one third in the 1996 census. However, the figure for the number of female farmers under 35 is significant in the light of the results from my content analysis, which shows how the female characters in the advertisements are almost invariably under 35. This portrayal of female farmers clearly does not fit with the demographic reality.

By comparing this census data with the results of my content analysis it becomes clear that there are powerful cultural factors which dictate the imagery of the category 'farmer'. For example, in the advertisements that I sampled there were just five women in *New Zealand Farmer*, four in *Straight Furrow*, and four in *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*. From the same advertisements there were 54 men, 37 men and 38 men respectively, hence only 10% of the people in the farming advertisements that I analysed were women. In contrast, the 1996 census showed that approximately 30% of all farmers were women, while in 1986 the percentage was approximately 26% (see Table 0.4).

It is also important to note the ages of the women and men in the advertisements in the light of the census data (see table 0.5). For example, in *New Zealand Farmer* all five women in the advertisements were estimated to be aged between 16 and 25. In contrast 47 of the 54 men in the advertisements were estimated to be aged between 26 and 55. In *Straight Furrow* one woman was estimated to be aged between 16 and 25 while the three others were estimated to be between 26 and 35. In the same magazine, 32 of the 37 men were estimated to be between 26 and 55. Lastly, in *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* the figures for women were; one aged 16-25, two aged 26-35 and one aged 36-45. For men in *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*, 37 of the 38 who appeared in the ads were estimated to be aged between 26 and 55. Therefore, it is clear that the modal age is significantly different between the male and the female characters in the advertisements I studied. Furthermore, it can be seen from the census data that these representations ignore demographic realities

In summary, the content analysis that I performed as an initial survey on each advertisement produced some unsurprising, but still significant, results. Women were predictably underrepresented in the advertisements that I analysed, their presence being consistent at around 10% of all the people in the advertisements. This is significant in the light of the 1986-1996 census data, which indicated that women made up between 25% and 30% of all farmers.

With this initial 'scoping exercise' complete, I began the task of a more in-depth analysis. For this, I chose to use semiotic analysis to 'read' the advertisements as 'texts'. I drew on the work of Fiske (1982) and Chandler (1994) in particular to inform my analysis, which I discuss in Chapter Three. My aim was to understand the gendered character of the advertisements which are aimed at farmers, through the analysis of a number of product advertisements that have appeared in three selected New Zealand farming magazines across the period 1980-1995. These magazines were *New Zealand Farmer*, *Straight Furrow* and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*.

In the wider context of this thesis, this window on farming culture also provides a window on masculinity. This is because, as I argue in Chapter Two, New Zealand masculinity is closely tied to the imagery and imaginary of farming. Therefore, by

studying representations of the culture of farming I am able to draw conclusions about the construction of rural masculinity.

In Chapter Four of this thesis I complemented my semiotic analysis with an analysis of focus group responses from farmers. I came to see these focus groups as 'adding' to the information that I had gained through my semiotic analysis of advertisements. The different methodology of focus group research allowed me to collect information which complemented and extended the results that I obtained through semiotics, and which then allowed me to draw further conclusions from my analysis of advertisements. Similarly, the advertisement analysis had the effect of guiding and helping to inform the insights that I had gained from the transcripts of my focus groups. In all, I conducted three focus-group discussions with between eight and eleven farmers per group. These farmers were all 'dry-stock' (primarily Sheep and Beef) producers from the lower North Island regions.

In keeping with the post-modern theorisation of my work<sup>4</sup>, and with the common use of focus groups in the Social Sciences, I acted as both researcher and moderator/facilitator in my focus groups. Hence, my aim was to see if the farmers themselves identified any economic and social change within the agriculture industry in the post-restructuring environment, and to investigate how these changes have altered their self perceptions. By understanding these self-perceptions, I hoped to be able to draw conclusions about rural masculine identities.

In summary, this thesis can be understood as a contribution to an understanding of the 'Cultural Geography' of New Zealand. As such, it draws on social construction theory to analyse the structurally induced change in the construction of rural masculinity in New Zealand. I have sought to link the major changes in the relationship between New Zealand farmers and the State to a perceptible shift in the way in which farmers conceptualise themselves. In Chapter One I begin this task by summarising and discussing the state-led restructuring of rural New Zealand.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Post-modern' in terms of the acknowledgement of partial truths and the subsequent denial of the existence a singular truth that is accessible to an 'unbiased' observer.

## **Chapter One: Rural Restructuring in New Zealand**

### **1.1 The Methodology of Restructuring**

In the context of my thesis, this chapter serves to map the transformation of the New Zealand economy during the 1984 -1995 period. My aim is to provide a basis for the arguments in the following chapters, which attempt to link this radical economic renovation to cultural change. Therefore, I will begin by presenting a short account of the economic changes since 1984.

The programme of economic change implemented in New Zealand since 1984 has been frequently documented in both academic writing and journalism (see, for example, Massey 1995, Roper and Rudd 1993). However, critical analyses of the same process are less common. Perhaps the most important attempts to rectify this situation are the works of Jane Kelsey (1993, 1995). Such comprehensive analysis is also a feature of the first and second editions of "Changing Places" (Britton, Le Heron and Pawson 1992; Le Heron and Pawson 1996 (second edition)). These books critically document the revolutionary change in New Zealand society since 1984.

According to Jane Kelsey (1995), New Zealand's structural adjustment programme centred on five 'fundamentals'. These were: liberalisation of domestic markets and trade; reduction of the size and scope of the state; monetary policy, driven by an overriding goal of price stability; labour market deregulation and de-unionisation of the workforce; and fiscal restraint, through broadening the taxation base and cutting state spending and social support.

Always intending these reforms to be wide ranging and impacting on all aspects of New Zealand society, the architects of reform spoke of 'restoring competitiveness', and of moving toward a 'flexible and efficient economy' (Britton et al 1992: 4). Whereas prior to 1984 the New Zealand economy was described as having, "levels of state intervention and regulation unparalleled in any western developed economy" (Massey 1995: xi), post-1984 this form of social democratic Keynesianism was rejected in favour of new- right neo-classicism. These goals in fact mirror the 'structural adjustment' programmes



imposed on heavily indebted third world countries by international lending agencies such as the World Bank. Paradoxically, in New Zealand's case this structural adjustment was implemented voluntarily by the fourth Labour<sup>5</sup> government who were elected in 1984. In 1990 the National party was returned to power and continued the reforms with renewed vigour.

In order to achieve these goals a number of policy measures were introduced. In short order the Government:

- removed import licensing;
- removed exchange regulations;
- reduced tariffs;
- removed price controls on almost everything;
- removed production and distribution controls in individual industries and services;
- deregulated finance markets;
- amended the Commerce Act to focus on efficient competition;
- repealed the Economic Stabilisation Act to limit ministerial powers of intervention.

According to conventional<sup>6</sup> economic theory, motivation for these policy changes stemmed from two main areas. Firstly New Zealand faced a structural economic crisis that had its origins in the 1970's. High levels of borrowing had been required to reduce the impact of the 1973 oil crisis. Furthermore, Britain's commitment to the European Community in 1974, and the subsequent saturation of this traditional market for agricultural goods, meant that further government intervention was required in order to remedy balance of payment deficits, inflation and economic stagnation (see Table 1.6).

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<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, the New Zealand Labour Party had represented the centre left and espoused policies which were consistent with Keynesianism.

<sup>6</sup> It is possible to do as Roper has done (Roper 1993), and theorise New Zealand's economic restructuring in Marxist terms. However, in this context I am recounting a capitalist analysis.



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Prior to this, the New Zealand economy grew prosperous through the export of primary produce to Britain, a relationship described by Roche (1996) as existing between the “mother country” and “Britain’s farm”. This ensured a high standard of living for New Zealanders. However, Britain’s restriction of entry to these traditional markets exposed the economy’s fundamental weakness of narrow specialisation.

**Table 1.1** Summary of New Zealand’s economic performance 1960-1984

	1960-68	1968-73	1973-84
<b>Real G.D.P (% change p.a.)</b>	3.1	5.1	1.3
<b>Balance of Payments (as % of G.D.P.)</b>	-1.4	-0.4	-6.0
<b>Unemployment (as % of workforce)</b>	0.2	0.3	2.4

source: Massey, 1995: 7.

Not only was this change in New Zealand’s trading situation having a significant impact on the terms of trade (the difference between our returns from exports and our outgoings to pay for imports), but this decline constrained the domestic economy as many industries were dependant on imported raw materials. Between 1973 and 1975 the price of imports almost doubled (Massey 1995: 14). These raw materials required overseas currency, which could only be earned through exports (Roper 1993). In essence, the benefits of domestic manufacturing, such as job creation and reduction of imports, were being offset by the trade deficit that was created as significant importing continued in the context of a decrease in the value of agricultural exports. Compounding this was the increase in the cost of imports after the first oil shock. By attempting to control the trade deficit through a system of import licensing and quotas, the government also negatively affected domestic producers, who required the importation of raw materials and capital equipment.

By 1984 these factors had produced, among many politicians and industry leaders, a

particular solution that Britton et al (1992) describe as the “simple restructuring model”. According to this model, economic woes are seen as external in origin, while most solutions are considered to be internal. Thus, the restructuring process was sold as a “once only”, finite process, which would cure the economic situation and allow the country to regain its once enviable economic position. However, the policy environment whereby such a form of neo-liberal economics came to be touted as the only solution requires further explanation.

If the first motivation for structural economic change was economic crisis, the second motivation came from the alignment of policy makers and politicians with the dominant form of international economic thinking current at the time. Bollard (1994, cited in Massey 1995: 65) argues that the Treasury had spent much of the latter part of the Muldoon era re-examining policy alternatives. In particular, he claims that officials were heavily influenced by new economic thinking from certain U.S. universities which has generally been described as the “Chicago School”. Specifically, this form of economic thought celebrated the adoption of *supply-side* economic policy in order to answer basic economic questions about distribution and production. Or rather, to leave the answering of these basic questions up to ‘the market’, and in the process deny that government has other than a negligible role in influencing the operation of the economy.

Allied to these ‘supply-side’ economic policies was a commitment to liberal ideas of *freedom*. Thus freedom came from the minimisation of government size and function, and the maximisation of the liberty of private firms and capital. Perhaps most significantly, the proponents of neo-classical economic theory also believed that in the ‘long term’ the economy, if left to its own devices, tends toward general equilibrium (Roper 1993). Instead of government being committed to social justice through the redistribution of wealth, the role of government became ensuring that ‘proper market signals’ were available and thereby ensure the efficiency of the economy. Therefore, any form of market failure or inability to achieve optimum economic outcomes must (by necessity) be the result of unnecessary or ill-advised interference in economic mechanisms by policy makers. Significantly, Keynesian (and, of course, Marxist)

economists claim that in fact the opposite is true.

## 1.2 Effects of Restructuring

The economic changes introduced after 1984 had undeniable short term costs. Although the economy continued to grow up until mid 1987, due to a combination of factors such as the 20% devaluation of the dollar in 1984 and the strength of the international economy in the late 1980's, after the 1987 sharemarket crash the economy moved into full scale recession (Massey 1995). This recession lasted until late 1991, and, in effect, output had declined continuously from mid 1986 to mid 1991 (ibid.). Whereas the average growth across OECD member countries was 20% for the period 1985-1992, New Zealand's economy shrank by 1% over the same period (Kelsey 1995). In effect, although New Zealand's G.D.P began to grow again from 1993, the lost ground from the previous period would not be recovered, leading to a situation whereby "the economy would grow at a level 12% below that which prevailed in 1984" (Kelsey 1995: 245).

Accompanying this recession was a severe fall in the number of people employed in the economy, with over 100 000 jobs being lost (7 % of the total workforce) between March 1987 and March 1992. According to Kelsey (1995), the goal of full employment was abandoned after 1984 because it was "unattainable, unaffordable and undesirable" in the eyes of policy-makers. Official unemployment peaked in 1992 at 11.1% or 215 000 people according to the Household Labour Force Survey, declining by December 1994 to 7.5%. The official number of people defined as 'jobless'<sup>7</sup> as at December 1994 stood at 11.6%. While by June 1995 official unemployment had fallen to 6.3% the jobless numbered 175 000, equal to 9.7% of the eligible labour force.

As could be expected, the burden of unemployment was not evenly spread, with both 'racial' and class differences clearly visible. Among Maori and Pacific Island men, 40%

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<sup>7</sup> Defined as those wanting a job but not actively seeking work, presumably due to the high level of unemployment.

of those aged between 20 and 59 were not employed according to the 1991 census, and the increasingly bifurcated labour market ensured that the opportunity for low or unskilled work remained minimal. Clearly, for a significant number of New Zealanders economic reform meant shouldering all of the associated social and personal costs of the loss of paid employment.

Many of the economic reforms, such as the sale of state assets and the reduction in government spending, were justified through an appeal to the need to reduce New Zealand's overseas debt. Partial success was achieved with a reduction in net foreign currency debt from 44% of net public debt at June 1991, to an estimated 22.7% at June 1995 (Kelsey 1995: 246). However, total foreign debt increased from \$12 billion to over \$67 billion in the decade to 1994 (*ibid.*), with the private sector becoming responsible for much of the increase as former state-owned assets were sold off. In essence, the reduction of debt, while partially successful, came only at the expense of a significant reduction of the state's earning potential.

Finally, perhaps the most telling outcome of the economic restructuring since 1984 has been the increase in income inequality. In 1993 the top 20% of households received 45% of all gross income, up from 30% in the late 1970's. It was predicted that their share would increase to 50% by 1997/1998 (Kelsey 1995: 258). Labour market reform and the pursuit of a neo-classical monetary policy have ensured that the brunt of restructuring has been borne by those least able to afford it.

In social terms, I argue that this wholesale restructuring of the New Zealand economy (what Kelsey (1993) terms the "rolling back of the state") has created a culture of self-interest and individualism. In the context of this thesis I also argue that this has had consequences for the self identity of farmers as they look to rationalise their economic position within a policy of shifting the burden of risk from the state to individual farmers.

### **1.2.1 Effects on Agriculture**

In the previous section I discussed the effects, rationale and methodology of the restructuring of the New Zealand economy. In this section I discuss the specific policies,

and the effects of these policies, on the agricultural sector.

Agriculture is New Zealand's primary export earner. Even in 1989, during the period just after the removal of subsidies, agricultural products constituted some 60% of our total merchandise export receipts (Sandrey and Reynolds 1990). At various times in New Zealand's recent history, it has occupied a variety of positions in the minds of policy makers and politicians. In the late 19th century, as refrigeration technology increased the range of farm durables available for export and the potential returns, agriculture dominated the political scene. This situation continued into the 20th century and perhaps culminated in the creation of producer marketing boards through legislation in the 1920's. (Britton et al 1992). These boards gave relatively stable solutions to three perennial problems: prices for the outputs of the production systems, environmental and marketing problems that threatened to disrupt farmer reinvestment, and the distribution of returns to investors at each stage of the chain (ibid.).

However, after World War II the government actively pursued a policy of promoting manufacturing in order to broaden the nation's economic base. This changed again in the 1960's as politicians once again looked to the "livestock, forestry and horticulture industries to generate the quickest and greatest export returns" (Britton et al 1992: 91). This period was termed the "Sectoral Indicative Planning" era and combined cabinet, farmers in the guise of the Federated Farmers New Zealand (the nation-wide agricultural interest group), and producer boards, in a unified effort to increase agricultural production for export. Hence, when the 1980's began farmers were, according to Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (1992), "at the top of the political pyramid".

Being at the top of the pyramid meant that, beginning in the 1960's, economic assistance was targeted toward farmers. By the 1980's there was a comprehensive package of government intervention policies in place which were seen as vital incentives to agricultural export production (Clove 1989). Clove identifies nine types of state intervention and assistance to agricultural producers. These included input and production subsidies, as well as a range of government controls on services. Table 1.2 lists these policies.



**Table 1.2** Agricultural intervention policies prior to deregulation

<b>Type of intervention</b>	<b>Chief Example(s)</b>
<b>Input subsidies</b>	Fertiliser subsidies Interest rate concessions Irrigation subsidies Electricity subsidies
<b>Production subsidies</b>	Supplementary minimum prices (S.M.P.'s)
<b>Development subsidies</b>	Livestock incentive scheme Land development loans
<b>Research and services</b>	M.A.F. health and research
<b>Producer board subsidies</b>	Interest rate concessions
<b>Tax expenditures</b>	Investment allowances Export incentives
<b>Industry control</b>	Town milk industry Egg industry
<b>Producer board legislation</b>	N.Z. Meat Producer Board Dairy Board Apple and Pear Board
<b>State ownership</b>	Rural banking and finance corporation [Rural Bank]

Source: Cloke 1989: 36.

The most direct agricultural subsidy was the Supplementary Minimum Price (S.M.P) scheme which was introduced in 1978 to guarantee minimum floor prices, and thereby encourage investment in livestock production. By 1983-84 the scheme was costing the government \$505 million, although this was unusually high in the history of the scheme because of the fall in world commodity prices at about the same time. The incoming Labour government, who did not have the same tradition of a rural support base as the National Party, was committed to change.

In addition to this ideological commitment, three empirical factors influenced the decision to restructure primary production. Firstly, the cost of supporting agriculture had become unacceptably heavy, with public on-farm income support and interest

subsidies on government loans amounting to \$2.5 billion between 1980 and 1985 (Pryde 1987: 10). Secondly, subsidies also increased land values so that many farmers who brought near the land price peak in 1983 were servicing unsustainable debt levels. Finally, with the state owned Rural Bank carrying 30% of total rural debt, the state was bearing an unacceptable proportion of this borrowing.

This concern that the state was exposing itself to an undesirable level of risk in the agricultural sector was underpinned by a broader ideological concern that this government intervention reduced agricultural efficiency. The Finance and Agricultural ministers issued a joint statement in 1986 which made these anxieties clear:

“The Government had effectively become the risk taker in farming. That form of support meant there was less incentive to look for greater efficiency in the farming sector. This put off necessary change in such areas as the processing sector which is now costing the farmer dearly. Farmers and the government picked up the bill for that inefficiency” (Moyle and Douglas 1986: 3, cited in Cloke 1989: 39)

I argue later in this thesis (see Section 1.2.2 and Chapter Four) that this transferral of risk from the Government to farmers has had far reaching effects on the identity of farmers, and that this has affected their relationship with the hegemonic discourses of agriculture.

Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (1992), speaking from within a wider political-economy framework, saw the ‘agricultural crisis’ in slightly different terms. They argue that the need for agricultural restructuring arose from global forces, which were expressed in New Zealand as a general balance of payments problem. They also understand that the agricultural crisis had its roots in New Zealand’s historical relationship to the increasingly fragile *second food regime*. This refers to a ‘regime of accumulation’ in food production which began after 1945 and centred on the meat and durable food complexes. The 1970’s saw a crisis develop within the *second food regime*, as the productivity of the food system outstripped effective consumption (see Friedman and McMichael 1989; Goodman and Redclift 1989, 1991; Page and Walker 1991; McMichael 1992; Friedman 1993; Le Heron 1993). Thus, New Zealand’s economy, which was based on agricultural exports despite various attempts to alter this structural reality (see above), was forced to restructure in order to accommodate a new regime of accumulation.



Of these two themes identified by Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (*ibid.*), the first can be seen as broadly similar to that used by the neo-liberal reformists who argued that the cure for New Zealand's balance of payment problems could be found by restructuring the national economy to increase efficiency. The rationale used was described above as the "Simple Restructuring Model" (Britton et al 1992). This model conceptualised New Zealand's economic woes as being external, while the solution to them was internal.

The second conceptualisation used by Roche et al (*ibid.*) is different in that it theorises the structural difficulties in the New Zealand economy as requiring a fundamental change in economic approach. Therefore, according to this view the basis of the New Zealand economy, the export of durable produce, will no longer be as profitable. Simply increasing efficiency is unlikely to have an effect, and may even worsen the structural crisis. Accordingly, the solution to New Zealand's economic crisis is also partly external, as the replacement of the second food regime with a third regime will perhaps allow new opportunities for profit for New Zealand producers. However, in practise the policy choices used to restructure New Zealand agriculture leaned heavily on the neo-liberal conception of the economy described by the "simple restructuring model". This neo-liberal policy had significant effects on farmers incomes (see Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3** Mean income per sheep and beef farm

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>1982-83</b>	<b>1983-84</b>	<b>1984-85</b>	<b>1985-86</b>	<b>1986-87</b>
<b>Total gross income</b>	105 374	104 775	132 623	105 400	109 400
<b>Total expenditure</b>	81 978	86 284	98 415	91 400	92 000
<b>Net Income</b>	23 396	18 491	34 208	14 000	17 400
<b>Net income in real terms*</b>	9037	6849	11326	4084	4372

Source: Cloke 1989: 42. (\* C.P.I adjusted).

The data in Table 1.8 suggest that farmers incomes were reduced as a result of the removal of subsidies. However, Cloke (1996: 309) argues that it is not correct to attribute this change in income solely to subsidy removal. Instead, he argues that it was

the wider macro-economic, non-agricultural, changes which “impacted most forcefully on the farm economy”. In particular, rising interest rates and a rising New Zealand dollar as government controls were removed, played a large part in reducing farmers’ incomes. This illustrates how the wider context of New Zealand’s economic reform is also important in examining rural restructuring.

In 1984, the New Zealand Treasury (cited in Cloke 1989: 39) presented a three point plan for economic management of land use issues, which accorded with their neo-liberal economic policy stance. Their three point plan is outlined below.

- (i) maintain an appropriate domestic cost and price structure by controlling inflation and public spending and dealing with the exchange rate.
- (ii) all price changes should be *relative* price changes which will signal emerging scarcities and surpluses.
- (iii) this macro-economic background is essential for agricultural *stabilisation*. Provided tax and other arrangements are neutral, there will be little need for the government to intervene in order to supplement the risk avoidance and hedging tactics of farmers.

As I discussed earlier, Treasury was committed to neo-classical economic theory and the associated belief that, if left alone, the market can provide the optimum economic outcomes. According to this model, negative economic outcomes can usually be traced to inappropriate decisions by economic actors, which are usually, in turn, due to clear market signals being obscured. Therefore, the three point plan can be understood in this context. It resulted in the previous interventionist regime of assistance to primary producers being abandoned from 1984; instead the aim was to improve efficiency by revealing market indicators to primary producers.

Table 1.4 is a timeline of the major changes in agriculture and the economy over the period of my study 1980-1995, in order to summarise the reforms and to place them in their historic context.

**Table 1.4** Summarised Timeline of New Zealand's Rural Restructuring

<b>1980-1983</b>	Comprehensive regulation of finance capital and external relations	Agriculture minister ranked third in cabinet.	Comprehensive regime of interventionist assistance to farmers	
<b>1983</b>	Rural land prices peak	C.E.R. signed	About 40% of farmers gross income comes from subsidies (M.A.F. 1994)	
<b>1984</b>	JUNE. Snap election... Immediate devaluation of dollar by 20%. New Zealand dollar floated Ending of SMP's announced. "Commercial" interest rates for producer boards introduced	NOVEMBER. Budget announcement of further subsidy removals C.E.R. expanded	Input assistance falls from \$73 million to \$23 million 1984-1986	
<b>1985-1987</b>	Input and output subsidies for agricultural commodities removed.	Output assistance falls from \$630m to \$42m 1985-1988.		
<b>1986</b>	JULY. Rural bank begin partial debt write-offs as part of the sale to FCL. G.S.T. introduced.	Nearly one third of the farming population march on Parliament.	Government assumes direct responsibility for producer board debt as part of deregulation	Environment Act mentions sustainability for the first time, implications for landowner sovereignty.
<b>1987</b>	Agriculture minister downgraded to 18 <sup>th</sup> in cabinet.			

Table 1.4 (Continued)

1989		Rural Bank sold to Fletcher Challenge for \$550 million		
1990	Economy Stagnates			
1991	Resource Management Act becomes law	Employment Contracts Act takes effect		
1992	Restructuring of State funded research			
1993-1995	"Economic recovery" heralded			

### 1.2.2 The farmer-state relationship

This thesis focuses on the relationship between economic restructuring and changing conceptions of rural masculinity. In this section I define the attitudes of individual producers in relation to both the state led restructuring outlined in the previous sections, and to the period prior to this restructuring.

In order to do this I will, firstly, examine the relationship between farmers and the state both prior to, and after, the state-led restructuring which began in 1984. Secondly, I include an analysis of the role of advocacy groups and other non-state (or distanced-from-state) organisations in the quantum shift that was New Zealand agricultural restructuring. This will shed further light on the farmer-state relationship.

Given that New Zealand's economy has, historically, been based on agriculture, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the post-war era farmers and government were closely entwined. The prosperity enjoyed by New Zealand's strong integration into the second global food regime meant that the claim by farmers to be the 'backbone of the country'

was more than just rhetoric. As Goodman and Redclift (1989a: 5) state, in the post-war era farmers believed that "by pressing their individual demands on government they were expressing national rather than sectional interest".

During this period New Zealand was governed by two political parties. From 1949-1980 the Labour party held power for six years only, making them a relatively minor player compared to the National party who held power for the remaining twenty-five. The relationship between the National party and farmers is therefore an important one in order to better understand the so-called 'indicative planning' era of agriculture-led export expansion.

During the 1950's and 1960's agriculture ministers were successively given high rankings in cabinet, reflecting both their high status within the party structures and also the perceived importance of agriculture within government. Reinforcing this is the 1961 Parliament, within which twenty-four out of forty-six National Party Members of Parliament were farmers or from rural backgrounds (Roche et al 1992). This figure is also representative of the traditional support base of the National Party. Therefore, the decision to proceed with the indicative planning measures of state support for agriculture occurred in a climate in which farmers interests were heavily represented in Parliament. The farmers belief that their interests were also national interests, was given political expression through the National Party's strong links to agriculture.

In the 1980s this connection between the National Party and farmers was, in effect, severed (see Table 1.5). This occurred in substance when the Labour party was elected in 1984. With its predominantly urban support base, and the subsequent domination of cabinet by ministers with a state sector rather than agricultural background, there was no longer the in-built support for farming within the Government.

**Table 1.5** Previous occupation of cabinet ministers (Based on Roche et al 1992).

	<b>National Party 1981- 1984</b>	<b>Labour Party 1984- 1987</b>	<b>Labour Party 1987- 1990</b>	<b>National Party 1991- 1993</b>	<b>National Party 1993- 1996</b>
<b>State Sector</b>	4	10	14	0	2
<b>Agricultural sector</b>	7	1	1	12	8
<b>Business Sector</b>	8	2	1	8	7
<b>Other</b>	1	7	8	0	3

Source: New Zealand Official Year Book 1981-1995.

The Labour Party traditionally drew its support from urban areas, and in particular its working class constituencies. However, the fourth Labour government, which was elected in 1984, also attracted the votes of the urban middle class as part of their reaction to the interventionism of the Muldoon administration. This group may have previously supported the National Party, but nonetheless endorsed the neo-liberal direction taken by the Labour government by re-electing them in 1987.

The 1984 election marked a wholesale change in the relationship between farmers and government. The previously favourite status that began in earnest in the 1960's with the indicative planning era was forgotten, as farmers became only one other, albeit important, productive sector.

McKenna, Roche and Le Heron (1998) argue that this change in status for farmers at the national level has resulted in two continuing areas of contention. These are:

1) *The public's mis-perceptions about the business of farming.*

As New Zealand's urban character has strengthened throughout the late 1980's and the 1990's, farmers have felt that their role as the 'backbone' of industry of New Zealand (and all that they feel this entails in terms of government and social support) has been underrated. For example in Focus Group Two one farmer said:

"I think that farmers in general have been looked down on by urban dwellers as

maybe country bumpkins that don't really know what they're doing, and I think that's totally wrong. Most of us here are running a farm that's probably worth a million plus, and I mean we've all got to do it reasonably well or otherwise we just don't survive".

This has affected their motivation to continue in what they see as a difficult and, at times, stressful job.

## 2) *The privatisation of risk.*

Farmers have also become concerned about the trend toward the privatisation of the risks involved in the production and sale of primary produce (see Section 1.2.1). This has resulted in the farmers themselves being directly affected by variations in the weather or by the inability to sell the produce at an acceptable price. This too has affected job security and motivation.

These conclusions lead on to a significant theme which I will explore in Chapter Two, as in the context of this thesis, it provides significant linkages between changes in the construction of rural masculinity and the restructuring of New Zealand agriculture. This theme is the economic, cultural and social relationships between farmers and the general public in New Zealand.

In the next section I will examine the role of the Federated Farmers and producer boards in this change in status.

### **1.2.3 The relationship between farmers and representative groups**

In this section, I am primarily concerned with the role and stance of the farmer's 'union' style organisation, the Federated Farmers of New Zealand (FFNZ). FFNZ offers perhaps the only official arena in which the opinions of farmers can be heard and expressed to government in a manner which can more or less be said to influence agricultural and horticultural policy. Prior to 1980 the lines of communication were strong, with farmers' opinions and government policy closely tied as government sought to boost export production. However, the post-1984 restructuring fundamentally changed this relationship.



The FFNZ is a national pressure group which formed out of a number of early farmers' interest groups to become one of the "strongest national pressure groups" during the 1960s and 1970s (Cleveland 1972: 83, cited in Roche, Johnston and Le Heron 1992). Membership reached 35 000 in the 1970's at a time when the linkages between the National Party, producer boards and farmers were at their strongest. This strong relationship was most obvious from the early 1960's as political interests converged with agriculture to create the formalised "Sectoral Indicative Planning" era which embraced the producer boards, the FFNZ and cabinet.

Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (1992) suggest that farmers organisations played a relatively ambiguous role in shaping agricultural policy both before and during the restructuring period. Furthermore, they claim that their influence on the pre-existing policy process was mostly indirect and circumstantial. Prior to the 1984 election FFNZ, through press releases, advocated for the reduction of inflation which they said was "the most serious constraint" (Roche et al 1992: 1759) affecting the farming sector, due to the inflation rate being higher than that of overseas trading partners.

After the election the Federation held its annual conference in late July, only two weeks after Labour's election win. At this conference a number of remits were presented which advocated regulatory change and, in particular, the removal of S.M.P.'s and the fixed exchange rate on the grounds that these measures insulated farmers from international price signals. However, there were also a number of remits calling for further regulation of the internal economy in order to improve the position of farming, such as the continuation of irrigation subsidies. Thus, as Roche et al (1992) argue, it is incorrect to interpret the remits at this conference as indicating that the FFNZ unreservedly advocated deregulation. However, the subsequent removal of subsidies and incentives by Labour was welcomed by FFNZ, even though by November of 1984 the Federation was claiming that farmers were bearing a disproportionate share of the burden of government cost-cutting.

The position of FFNZ regarding the removal of government assistance can therefore be regarded as being neither unreservedly for or against change. While initially supportive of the need to create stronger links between producers and international price signals, a



number of remits from individual provinces supported the continuation of the pre-1984 regulatory environment. Therefore, at the level of individual farmers, it is difficult to generalise their position in relation to FFNZ at the national level. While some farmers supported the removal of government assistance, some also did not. Hence, it is tempting to view the situation as one of established farmers supporting change, while younger or more indebted farmers supported the status quo (Roche, Johnston and Le Heron 1992). For these indebted farmers, the removal of subsidies had far greater effects. For example, Cloke (1996) argues that those farmers who survived the post-1984 period were not more efficient *per se*. Instead they were merely lucky or conservative in their decisions about what was an acceptable debt burden. Especially since the government, through subsidies, effectively underwrote high levels of farm debt.

### **1.3 The Global Context**

In the previous sections I have outlined the changes in New Zealand agriculture from a regulated, government supported industry to a deregulated industry which is tied in closely to the world economy. In order to make specific arguments regarding the New Zealand construction of rural masculinity, it is useful to compare the New Zealand farmer-government relationship to overseas systems.

I begin the comparison of the government-farmer relationship in New Zealand with the same relationship overseas by documenting subsidy levels. Table 1.6 shows relative levels of Government support for agricultural production in the late 1970s.

**Table 1.6** Direct Government support as a percentage of agricultural value-added in industrialised countries in the late 1970s.

Country	Government support (%)	Country	Government support (%)
<b>Australia</b>	3	<b>Norway</b>	23
<b>New Zealand</b>	8	<b>Switzerland</b>	27
<b>Austria</b>	11	<b>Finland</b>	35
<b>Spain</b>	11	<b>Japan</b>	38
<b>United States</b>	14	<b>EC</b>	42
<b>Canada</b>	14	<b>Sweden</b>	45
<b>Norway</b>	23		

Source: Blandford 1990: 399

Agricultural subsidies peaked in New Zealand in the 1983-84 financial year as a result of depressed world commodity prices. However, as Table 1.6 shows, the efficiency of New Zealand agriculture ensured, in the 1970's at least, that the level of direct government support as a percentage of output was not abnormally high by World standards. New Zealand farmers' influence in government prior to restructuring, led to a level of support that maintained farmers incomes at high levels compared to the post-1984 environment (see Table 1.3). Clearly then, the connections between farmers and government are significant in the global context, as evidenced by the higher levels of government subsidy in other countries. In comparison, Table 1.7 shows the decline in overall producer subsidy equivalents in New Zealand, and the increase in other selected O.E.C.D. countries, from 1982-1986.

**Table 1.7** Percentage of producer subsidy for all agricultural products.

Year ended December	Average 1979-1986	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
<b>Australia</b>	10	7	12	12	10	9
<b>Canada</b>	28	35	46	45	38	32
<b>European Union</b>	37	40	46	48	47	48
<b>Japan</b>	64	68	65	66	71	70
<b>New Zealand</b>	24	5	5	4	3	3
<b>United States</b>	21	20	23	21	21	23

Source: Cloke 1996: 310

In the post-1984 restructuring of agricultural production, New Zealand went against world trends by significantly reducing overall government support (see Table 1.7). Therefore, the situation in New Zealand is unusual among O.E.C.D. countries in that the agriculture/government relationship had been reworked in the 1980's to the *detriment* of farmer returns. This must be seen in the context of the world farm crisis of the 1980's, as the continual efficiency gains in global food production led to a world commodity price slump. While other countries chose to artificially maintain farmers incomes during this period, New Zealand chose to restructure the relationship between the agriculture sector and government. In addition, the wider macro-economic changes compounded the effects of subsidy removal, as interest rates and the New Zealand dollar both rose sharply. Thus, in New Zealand farmers not only had to contend with lower returns due to subsidy removal, but also higher debt servicing costs and lower returns due to the high dollar.

This slump in commodity prices also marked the end of the "second food regime" (see Friedman and McMichael 1989; Goodman and Redclift 1989, 1991; Page and Walker 1991; McMichael 1992; Friedman 1993; Le Heron 1993) which had dovetailed with New Zealand's historical specialisation as a producer of durable agricultural goods. Therefore, the change in New Zealand's external trading conditions combined with a particular brand of neo-classical economic thinking which was dominant at the time, led to the almost complete withdrawal of government subsidisation of agriculture. This

withdrawal of government support is in contrast to most other O.E.C.D. countries who have maintained or even increased support for agriculture despite continued low prices for agricultural commodities.

New Zealand's position of geographical isolation and unique historical development as a specialised food producer for a colonial power, contribute further theoretical perspectives to this agricultural change. New Zealand is unusual in that it is a country on the economic 'semi-periphery', yet during the post-war boom it developed production and consumption patterns similar to those of 'core' nations<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, relatively high export returns allowed for the construction of comprehensive health and welfare services which again were similar to, if not even more wide-ranging, than countries at the economic core. Therefore, the end of the post-war 'long-boom' had economic impacts which were more far reaching and substantial for New Zealand due to our status on the semi-periphery. Being a semi-peripheral nation, reliant on agricultural production, meant that we did not have a manufacturing sector which was large enough to cushion the impact of the collapse of the second food regime (see Section 1.2.1).

New Zealand's geographical isolation has also made integration into the beginnings of the "third food regime" (see Le Heron and Roche 1991; Roche 1992) costly. This new regime is said to be based on the trading of 'fresh' foods such as fruit and other perishables. Hence, for New Zealand producers who want to realise new opportunities for diversification and greater profits, the transport costs to the main markets in the northern hemisphere are significant. Our geographic isolation can therefore be said to reflect and, at the same time, help reinforce our position on the edge of global production systems.

In summary, this brief look at agricultural subsidies overseas shows how New Zealand

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<sup>8</sup> The terms "periphery" and "core" stem from the "core-periphery" model, which is most closely associated with the work of Friedmann (1966). This model attempts to explain the spatial organisation of human activity based on the unequal distribution of power in economy, society and polity. The use of the terms "core" and "periphery" in this thesis is intended to refer to the role of New Zealand within the global economy, and in particular New Zealand's specialisation as an agricultural producer.

charted a different course from most other countries after 1984. State support for agriculture was withdrawn at a time of reduced profits on a global scale for agricultural production. Therefore, the relationship between Government and farmers in New Zealand is significantly different in comparison to most other countries, especially since the New Zealand economy was heavily dependent on its integration in the second food regime. Furthermore, New Zealand's economic status as a geographically isolated country on the semi-periphery of the World economy has meant that continued integration into the global food economy, in the form of the emerging "third food regime" (ibid.), has entailed significant costs. The profitability of the traditional agricultural exports of durable goods has thus been steadily eroded while, in contrast to other countries, government support has also been reduced.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

The aim of this Chapter has been to outline the changes in the New Zealand economy, with special reference to agriculture, in order to provide an empirical basis for the following chapters which link this process to changes in the construction of rural masculinity. With this aim in mind, I began by investigating the economic/political changes in New Zealand since 1984, and by documenting the shift from a Keynesian economic approach to one of neo-classical liberalism. This section provided a background to the following sections which looked in greater depth at the differences in agricultural policy between the indicative planning era and the post-1984 period.

The changes in economic emphasis have impacted especially harshly on farmers because, as explained in Section 1.3, the withdrawal of government support came at a time of accelerated structural change in the global market for agricultural goods. In addition, the wider macro-economic changes compounded the effects of subsidy removal, as interest rates and the New Zealand dollar rose. Thus, in New Zealand, farmers not only had to contend with lower returns due to subsidy removal, but also had higher debt servicing costs and lower returns due to the high dollar.

Unlike many other O.E.C.D. countries, farmers have had to bear much of the cost of this

structural change themselves, to the extent of enduring historically low real returns. Despite this, agriculture is still New Zealand's primary export earner. Even in 1989, in the period just after the removal of subsidies, agricultural products constituted some 60% of our total merchandise export receipts (Sandrey and Reynolds 1990).

Some of this production can be attributed to the way that, prior to this restructuring period, the government actively pursued a policy of promoting the livestock, forestry and horticulture industries. This period was termed the "Sectoral Indicative Planning" era and combined cabinet, farmers, in the guise of the Federated Farmers New Zealand, and producer boards in a unified effort to increase agricultural production for export. Therefore, when the 1980's began farmers were, according to Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (1992), "at the top of the political pyramid".

Being at the top of the pyramid meant that, beginning in the 1960's, economic assistance began to be targeted toward farmers. By the 1980's there was a comprehensive package of government intervention policies in place which were seen as vital incentives to agricultural export production (Clove 1989). However, later in this decade the connection between the Government (National Party) and farmers was, in effect, severed.

The subsequent reduction in government support for agriculture was underpinned by a broad ideological concern that government intervention reduced agricultural efficiency. On a material level it also stemmed from a concern that the state was exposing itself to an undesirable level of risk in the agricultural sector. The Finance and Agricultural ministers issued a joint statement in 1986 which explicitly argued for the transferral of risk from the state to farmers (see section 1.2.1). I argue that this transferral of risk has had far reaching effects on the identity of individual farmers, and that this has affected their relationship with the hegemonic discourses of agriculture. Specifically, I believe that farmers have empowered a "farming as business" paradigm, at the expense of a "farming as lifestyle" paradigm (see Chapter Three)

Contributing to this has been the wholesale restructuring of the wider New Zealand economy (what Kelsey (1993) terms the "rolling back of the state") which created a culture of self-interest and individualism (Kelsey 1997). In the context of this thesis I

argue that this has had consequences for the identity of farmers, as they internalised their economic position within a policy which shifted the burden of risk from the state to individual farmers.

McKenna, Roche and Le Heron (1998, see Section 1.2.2) argue that the change in status for farmers at the national level has resulted in two continuing areas of contention. These are, firstly, the public's mis-perceptions about the business of farming and, secondly, the privatisation of risk. Both of these changes have affected farmers' job security and motivation. I go on to argue in Chapter Three that this has resulted in the empowerment of a hegemonic discourse of farming which Walter (1995) terms "farming as business". This has been a consequence of a shift in identity from farming in the 'national interest' to one of individualism and farming for 'personal gain'. This shift in identity has been a by-product of a deliberate change in policy by the New Zealand government since 1984.



## **Chapter Two: Masculinity**

This chapter forms a theoretical background to the social construction of specific masculinities. Its purpose is to link Chapter 1, which provided the empirical information on agricultural restructuring, to the third and fourth chapters which seek to illustrate how such an economic event has changed the social realm of farmers' lives. Thus, what is required is a theoretical basis which provides a framework of meaning, so that change in rural masculinity can be understood in the context of agricultural restructuring.

I begin by recounting the evolution of theories of masculinity in order to place this thesis in its scholarly context. Secondly, I discuss the basis for this thesis which is social constructionism, and the way in which this approach dictates how I have formulated my research. Thirdly, I describe how specific masculinities can be tied to a certain place and social context, while illustrating how this has occurred in the production of an identifiable New Zealand rural masculinity. Lastly, I use these theories to provide more or less concrete linkages between rural restructuring and changes in the social construction of rural New Zealand masculinity.

### **2.1 Theorising Masculinity**

#### **2.1.1 Psychoanalysis**

In the twentieth century the first attempt at a theoretical understanding of the processes which formed a specific male gender identity was the work of Freud. Connell (1995) argues that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Freud was the first person to question the assumption that 'masculinity' was the result of natural processes.

With the advent of the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century and the subsequent change in production relations, a patriarchal organisation of society was reinforced. Associated with this change was the idea of 'natural' sexual difference in terms of employment, household production, the state, sexuality, violence and cultural



institutions (Walby 1990). Hence, it was thought that the identity of males was purely the result of nature, and was thus unchanging and inviolable. Freud introduced the possibility that masculinity was at least partly the result of nurture (as opposed to 'nature'), and was, above all, the product of identifiable social processes. Psychoanalysis, such as that practised by Freud, thus allowed for enquiry into the composition of masculinity, and it is this realisation which, in turn, created a space for theories of social constructionism that I discuss later in this chapter.

Freud's ideas were developed in three stages. Firstly came the initial statements of psychoanalytic principles. For example, the idea of an unconscious mind that influenced the conscious, and of the construction of adult sexuality and gender through a long unconscious process, marked the beginnings of psychoanalysis. Hence the unconscious mind could be studied through dreams and symptoms, and Freud's identification of an "Oedipus complex"<sup>9</sup> came to be a formative moment in the creation of a gendered identity.

Secondly, this creation of a gendered identity was further complicated through an architectural approach to gender. This involved the extension of the oedipal complex idea to include a narcissistic pre-oedipal stage, as well as the interrelationship between a boy's desire for the father and his identification with women. Therefore, the creation of a gendered identity came to be seen as multi-dimensional, and humans as being "constitutionally bi-sexual so that both masculine and feminine currents co-existed in everyone" (Connell 1995: 9).

Thirdly, Freud developed the concept of the "super-ego" which was formed in the aftermath of the oedipal complex by internalising prohibitions from the parents. Freud

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<sup>9</sup> The Oedipus Complex refers to a theory propounded by Freud in 1925. It postulates that in the first years of infancy "boys concentrate their sexual wishes upon the mother and develop hostile impulses against their father as being a rival, while girls adopt an analogous attitude"; thus "a child's first object choice is an incestuous one" (quoted in Esterson 1993: 137). Although Freud had little in the way of evidence for the theory he nonetheless believed that, in combination with the *castration complex*, the Oedipus Complex should be seen as the key to every neurosis. Thus, failure to master the Oedipus Complex and its incestuous attraction leads to mental illness.

considered that the super-ego had both gendered and sociological dimensions, so that it became the means by which culture obtained mastery over individual desire. This “super-ego” was the agency which unconsciously judged, presented and censored ideals. As such, the concept allowed for the influence of society in the formation of identity.

Thus, the work of Freud came to represent the first beginnings of a theory of the patriarchal organisation of society, and of the transmission of these ideas between generations through culture and the construction of a masculine identity.

Freud’s psychoanalysis was built upon by others and was notably extended in some areas by Alfred Adler about the time of the public split between the two in 1911. Adler’s work started from Freud’s idea of polarity between the masculine and the feminine, but emphasised that the feminine side is devalued in culture and associated with weakness. Thus children of both sexes, being weaker than adults, are forced to inhabit the feminine position. This leads to a personality which is submissive, while at the same time the child is striving for independence within their own life. Hence the adult personality exists under tension caused by the internal contradiction between masculinity and femininity.

Adler had formulated an idea which was not far removed from the feminist critique of masculinity that emerged, at least in popular thought, from the first wave feminist movement<sup>10</sup> in the 1960’s. However, despite these promising beginnings, conventional psychoanalysis abandoned such a multi-dimensional critique and between 1930 and 1960 moved far to the right on most issues (Connell 1995). In the 1960’s a recovery of the radical position was led by Juliet Mitchell and Luce Irigaray who were influenced by the work of Jacques Lacan. These theorists, as psychoanalysts, rejected masculinity as empirical fact and instead constructed masculinity as being the occupant of a *place* in symbolic and social relations.

Therefore, Psychoanalysis has provided us with the means to critique essentialist ideas about the formation of gender identities. However, it leaves open the question of how

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<sup>10</sup> The ‘First Wave’ feminist movement centred around describing the effects of gender inequality. It is most famously connected with the Western feminists of the late 1960s, although a geographical focus on First Wave feminism did not occur until the mid 1970s (Pratt 1994).

we can theorise the social factors which, although external to the individual, impact upon the formation of a masculine identity. As Connell (1995: 21) says:

“Ultimately the worth of psychoanalysis in understanding masculinity will depend on our ability to grasp the structuring of personality and the complexities of desire at the same time as the structuring of social relations, with their contradictions and dynamism’s”.

In the next part of this chapter I will outline Gender Role theory, which is the first attempt at theorising these social relations.

### **2.1.2 Gender Role Theory**

Role theory originated in the late 19th century and was based on a ‘scientific’ doctrine of innate sex difference (Connell 1995: 21). As such it has inspired an “enormous volume” (ibid.) of follow-up research, usually within psychology, dedicated to proving or disproving the claim that sexual differences exist in areas such as mental capacity, emotions, attitudes and personality traits.

In essence, these early beginnings of Gender Role theory ignored much of the work I discussed in the previous section. As psychoanalysts sought to discover how gender identities were produced, gender role theorists worked from a position of ‘natural’ difference. Therefore, according to the gender role theory paradigm, the fact that a person had either male or female sexual characteristics was statistically significant in predicting and prescribing their psychological traits. The overwhelming findings of research based on this assumption was that such sexual differences were either non-existent, or fairly small, for almost every psychological trait measured (Connell 1995: 21).

While this conclusion does not mean that sexual difference is *never* statistically significant in determining psychological traits, it is certain that the differences are much smaller than the societal inequities between men and women would suggest (ibid.). For example, differences in responsibilities for child care, monetary incomes and access to social power have all been at some time justified on the basis of sexual difference in psychological traits. What gender role research has proven is that the foundation of such

claims would hardly be important if we were not culturally cued to exaggerate it.

This conclusion may well have led to the abandonment of gender role theory research if it was not for the incorporation around the 1950's of the idea of a *social role*. This term refers to either a specific or, more commonly, a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex. Hence there are only two 'sex roles', these being male and female, and in this context masculinity and femininity become the internalised expression of a person's sex role.

Jay (1981) links this dichotomous distinction between male and female to the work of Durkheim<sup>11</sup>, which in turn is based on the basic laws of formal logical thought as formulated by Aristotle. Thus, through the phrasing of this dichotomy in terms of Aristotle's Principle of Contradiction (nothing can be both 'A' and 'Not A'), everyone is *either* male or female. Furthermore, Jay (ibid.) argues that this means that there is no third possibility, with sex being a continuum biologically but not socially.

Therefore, *social* roles were seen as the cultural elaboration of biological sex differences. As Jay (1981) argues, this does not mean that biological characteristics are definitive. Rather, sex role theory argues that the enacting of a sex role is linked to a biological structure rather than to social relations. This is illustrated by the case of the transgendered person who, in western culture at least, is assumed to have a biological basis for changing their apparent 'sex'. Because sex is not a continuum within the social realm, transgenderedness is carried to its logical conclusion when the person has the option of surgery in order to correct physical differences between their chosen and assigned sexual characteristics. Therefore, sex role theory associates the choice of occupying a masculine or feminine social role with the person's biological structure, and then overlays this with the rigidity of the social definition of male and female.

While acknowledging this, the construction of the internalised *social* sex role is understood as a social process. Since the role norms are socially defined, masculine and feminine identities are able to be changed by social processes. This will happen

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<sup>11</sup> Emile Durkheim, 1915: *The elementary forms of religious life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain, George Allen and Unwin, London.

whenever the agencies of socialisation such as the family, school, or mass media transmit new expectations. In the 1960's and 1970s, with the onset of "first wave" feminism (Bowlby et al 1989), the definition of the feminine sex role was challenged and the emphasis was placed on achieving 'equality' of opportunity between the masculine and feminine sex roles. In accordance with sex-role theory efforts were made, and often continue to be made, to expand the possibilities within the female role by increasing the range of career opportunities, and by providing positive role models for young women.

However, as was shown by second wave and then third wave feminism (*ibid.*), sex-role theory is unable to engage with issues of power. Power structures underlie all sexual inequalities, yet sex role research concentrates on reforming gender norms rather than examining the way in which such norms operate and are reproduced. As Pleck (1981, cited in Connell 1995) argues, the concept of a sex role identity prevents individuals who violate the traditional role for their sex from challenging it. Instead they feel personally inadequate and insecure. Therefore, the concept of an identity which is defined by a sex role acts to dampen social change.

Sex role research is grounded in a specific frame of reference which requires that there be a biological basis for the creation of a masculine identity. Using such a methodology to investigate masculinity is limited by this relationship between sexual difference and social role. This is because the social power structures that accompany this social role become partially naturalised, and are only able to be critiqued within the structure of 'natural' difference. An uncritical adoption of this framework must accept (or ignore) the way in which the 'natural' masculine sex role is privileged over the 'natural' feminine role.

Nonetheless, the creation of gender identity is still considered to be the result of social processes, which leads to the strategy of striving for equality of opportunity between males and females through the alteration of gender norms. It was only with the advent of radical-cultural feminism in the 1960s that the feminist critique focused on the reality of what 'equality' meant. It was found by researchers to be profoundly gendered, so that the masculine norm remained unchanged while the feminine norm was devalued as women aspired to societal privileges traditionally captured by males (Tong 1998).



In the first two parts of this section I have considered early traditions in theorising masculinity. Psychoanalysis began with the work of Freud in the early 20th century, and was the first theory to reject the idea that masculinity was an empirical fact. Instead, masculinity was defined as a constructed identity that occupied a particular position in symbolic and social relations. However, this construction of identity was theorised as occurring within the individual, and was seen as the result of the person's interaction on a *subconscious* level with either of their parents. As a result, Psychoanalysis was unable to take into account the *conscious* factors which shaped masculine and feminine identity on the social level, such as school, work and the mass-media.

The second theory which I have outlined is that of the sex role. Although developed alongside Psychoanalysis, sex role theory is based on an essentialist framework which constructs masculinity as being partly the result of biology. However, this theory *does* allow for the shaping of a gendered identity on the social level, through such influences as school, work and the mass-media, as mentioned above.

In the next section I will outline an alternative framework for the analysis of masculinities which I use in this thesis. This framework is entitled *Social Constructionism*.

### 2.1.3 Social Construction Theory

In this section I propose to give an introduction to social construction theory, which is the basic theoretical framework of my thesis. I begin with a series of assumptions that are necessary in order to label the research as 'social constructionist'. These are based on the work of Vivien Burr (Burr 1995).

Assumption 1) *A critical stance toward 'knowledge'*:

This means that the researcher must take a critical stance toward 'taken-for-granted' ways of understanding the world. They must also be critical of the idea that observing the world allows for an unproblematic understanding of its nature, and of the view that conventional knowledge is based on objective, unbiased observation of the world. In terms of this thesis, social constructionism entails that I take a critical view of essentialist

constructions of masculinity such as those within psychoanalysis and sex role theory. Similarly, categories such as man/woman are to be regarded with suspicion, since they may not necessarily refer to real divisions and their importance may be culturally specific.

Assumption 2) *Historical, cultural and geographical specificity:*

If it is not possible to develop an understanding of the world from objective, unbiased observation, then it follows that the understandings we do have are historically, culturally and geographically specific. As a Geographer, I am especially interested in the latter. This leads to my questioning of the way that the intersections of space and place produce cultural difference. Therefore, not only are ways of seeing and understanding specific to particular cultures, places and periods in history, but they are *products* of that culture, place and period. Their particular form depends on the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time.

Assumption 3) *Knowledge is sustained by social processes:*

The conclusion that stems from the cultural, geographical and historical specificity of knowledge is that it is inappropriate to talk of any form of objective 'truth'. As Jackson and Penrose (1993) argue:

“many of the categories that we have come to consider ‘natural’, and hence immutable, can be more accurately (and more usefully) viewed as the product of processes which are embedded in human actions and choices”.

Thus, social construction theory rejects the view that some categories are ‘natural’, and bear no trace of human intervention. The problem with ‘naturalness’ is that things which are ‘natural’ are assumed to be beyond the realm of human influence. This leads to them being treated as pre-given and, hence, unalterable. Rather, social construction theory argues that versions of ‘knowledge’ are fabricated through the daily interaction between people in the course of their social lives. Thus ‘truth’ is not able to be referenced against any external reality, since it is a product of social processes and interactions, rather than of objective observation of the world.

Acknowledging that knowledge is sustained by social processes is not to deny the need for some form of categorisation. Instead it means challenging the idea that some categories are more fundamental ('essential', 'natural') than others.

Assumption 4) *Knowledge and social action go together:*

These negotiated forms of knowledge and understanding could obviously take a wide variety of different forms which, therefore, leads us to talk of numerous possible 'social constructions' of the world. It is important to realise that each of these different constructions also invites a different form of social action. For example, if masculinity and femininity are viewed as being partly the result of biological difference, then it makes sense to accept a specific division of household labour which sees women as responsible for child-care. However, if such gender roles are socially constructed, then the household labour of women becomes less 'natural' and more a matter of social convention. Thus, descriptions or constructions of the world sustain some patterns of action and exclude others.

From these four points it can be seen that social constructionism differs in a number of important respects from previous approaches to psychological and social research. Perhaps the most important point is the way in which social constructionism challenges 'essentialist' views of personality and social difference. By this I mean that social constructionism rejects the idea that there is any 'natural' category of masculinity. Instead, masculinity is seen as the product of human actions and choices, and is thus able to be studied with a view to discovering its formative processes within society. As a result, my study of rural masculinity assumes that it is possible to establish direct links between the farmers' personal identity and their social situation.

Another important aspect of social constructionism is the way in which it is possible to learn how specific constructions have been empowered as particular categories. In the case of rural masculinity, the particular construction of the rural male that is hegemonically powerful has the effect of empowering those farmers who conform to this construction. Necessarily, those who do not conform are disempowered, and it is only by discovering how the hegemonic power of a particular construction is maintained that



the particular category can be disempowered or its power appropriated to achieve more equitable ends (Jackson and Penrose 1993).

Since, according to social construction theory, knowledge and social action go together, specific social constructions also sustain patterns of social action. Therefore, by identifying the ways in which particular social constructions are created it is also possible to identify the way in which social action is sustained. This makes the linkage between social constructionism and equity clear. Since specific social constructions sustain patterns of social action, by studying these social constructions we make it possible to increase equity through the disempowerment or appropriation of the power of particular social categories.

This discussion has outlined the basics of social construction theory and has attempted to show how it is appropriate as the basis of my thesis. While radical in concept compared with previous theorising about masculinity, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, it offers exciting possibilities for transforming society as the linkages between particular social constructions and power differentials become clearer through research.

## **2.2 Constructing a Dominant (Hegemonic) Masculinity**

In the previous section I attempted to show how the theoretical underpinning of my thesis, social constructionism, was a radical break with previous approaches to the study of masculinity. However, psychoanalysis and sex role theory are not totally removed from the social constructionist approach, since social construction theory has extended the anti-essentialist critique of psychoanalysis. In addition, social construction theory explores social factors in the creation of gender identity in much the same way as sex role theory. In this section I show how the social constructionist approach leads to conclusions about the power relationships between different constructions of masculinity.

One of the key ideas in this thesis is the documentation of a specific construction of masculinity that forms part of a common identity for farmers. Therefore, I must

recognise the diversity of possible constructions of this masculinity, but as Connell (1995: 37) argues, this on its own is not enough. I must also recognise the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relations constitute a politics of masculinity that, as discussed in the previous section of social constructionism, empower some men and disempower others as they construct their identity from within different 'brands' of masculinity. This realisation leads to the idea of a *hegemonic* masculinity.

The term hegemony was derived from the prison writings of Antonio Gramsci, in explanation of the way in which citizens willingly give their assent to forms of government which limit their freedom. David Ley (Ley 1994: 243) defines hegemony as:

"the capacity of a dominant group to exercise control, not through visible rule or the deployment of force, but rather through the willing acquiescence of citizens to accept subordinate status by their affirmation of cultural, social and political practises and institutions which are fundamentally unequal".

Linked to an understanding of power such as Foucault's, in which active repression is a signal of a *breakdown* in power relations, the idea of hegemony is a useful concept for understanding the social order.

Relating the idea of hegemony to masculinity is a process of identifying different masculinities, and then examining the power relations between them. Many studies of masculinity indeed show such a structure of power relations within an institutional context (see, for example; Walker 1988 or Skelton 1993), or within a wider context at the national level (see, for example; Pleck 1993, Berg 1994, Williams 1994, Phillips 1996, Mayer 1996, Jensen 1996, Law 1997). It is worth looking at some of these studies in detail.

The book by J.C. Walker (1988) entitled *Louts and Legends* follows the fortunes of four groups of young men for five years, starting with their last years of attendance at an inner-city Australian boys high school. In the book Walker identifies, among others, four distinct groupings among the students; the Footballers, the Handballers, the Greeks and the three friends who are interested in theatre and art. By identifying these groups the author also makes clear the power relations between them. The footballers are dominant in the social context of the school, and the three friends are subordinate in the terms

prescribed by the working class masculinity of the footballers. The Handballers and the Greeks are somewhere in between these two groups in the social hierarchy.

Therefore, Walker is describing the appearance of a hegemonic masculinity that dominates socially, not through structured or physical dominance, but through the perceived status of the footballers' culture and values. However, this particular form of masculinity is not given the same status outside the school. As Walker makes clear, the students' fortunes in the job market cuts across the relationships formed at school. Hence, while the footballers may be hegemonically dominant at school, which in turn is linked to wider social attitudes, the institutional context of the school gives added weight to their superior status, a weight which is not replicated in wider society.

In New Zealand Jock Phillips and Kai Jensen have addressed the issue of nationalised male identity. Their books are entitled "A Man's Country?" (Phillips 1996) and "Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature" (Jensen 1996) respectively. Phillips follows, chronologically, the development of New Zealand masculinity since early settler times, focusing on the interplay between the needs of the colonial state and the hegemonic masculinity operating at the time. As such it can be seen as one of the few contributions to the field of empirical study of New Zealand masculinity. Also, by illustrating the differing constructions of masculinity that possessed hegemonic power, Phillips shows how masculine identity is itself constructed within society in order to meet a certain set of requirements defined by an interest group. Thus, whether the requirements are dominated by the state, as Phillips argues is the case in New Zealand, or maintained by the participants themselves as identified by Walker in the Australian school, certain constructions of masculinity are empowered hegemonically to achieve political ends.

Jensen's book confines his analysis of New Zealand masculinity to literary and intellectual culture from the 1930's. He argues that male New Zealand writers in the post World War Two era linked national identity to the ordinary working man or soldier, and attempted to merge artistic activity and manliness in a new ideal, the *whole man*. This construction of a particular masculine identity required intellectual and artistic endeavour to be prefaced with robust experience of some form of 'real' masculinity, such

as that experienced by the ordinary working man or soldier. This requirement, Jensen argues, forged a literary and intellectual culture which was powerful for thirty years, and which discouraged female writers.

Once again, the idea of hegemonic power can be used to understand the way in which a particular masculine identity such as the literary tradition described by Jensen, can become dominant. In this case it was the structuring of the discursive tradition of New Zealand writers and intellectuals, rather than the needs of the state as identified by Phillips (1996), that stimulated the emergence of a particular masculinity. The work of Berg (1994), incorporates a similar understanding of hegemonic masculinity. Berg argues that the New Zealand intellectual tradition, in Human Geography at least, privileges empirical investigation at the expense of theoretical research. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity in academia works, in the same way as Jensen argues with reference to New Zealand's literary tradition, to lend additional status to research which is based on 'fieldwork' or actual experience.

Berg (*ibid.*) also discusses the tradition of New Zealand masculinity which underpins this privileging of empirical over theoretical research. Drawing especially on the work of Phillips (1980, 1987) and James & Saville-Smith (1989), Berg links the social relations of 19th century colonial life to the identity of a "true blue New Zealander". Nineteenth Century New Zealand was dominated by exclusively male communities in the rural and frontier regions. This led to the development of a particular kind of masculinity that valued the independence gained through the possession of multiple skills, which were necessary in these frontier communities.

Later, as New Zealand began to 'settle down' at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a fear grew that the 'taming' of the frontier was also leading to the 'taming' of the Pakeha male. The urbanisation of the New Zealand population was seen in a negative light as cities were thought of as places where men lived a 'soft life', as they were inhabited by office workers and not 'productive' farmers and labourers. The combination of such thinking resulted in "the fear that the New Zealand male was losing his manliness" (Phillips 1980: 227, cited in Berg 1994). The message here was that cities and towns were for women while the frontier was the true place for the 'kiwi bloke' (Berg 1994: 251).

Berg (ibid.) goes on to argue that such a 'frontier' discourse<sup>12</sup> continues to underpin present-day constructions of the New Zealand Pakeha male as being fiercely independent, practical, and capable of dealing with anything that comes along. Thus, the "true blue New Zealander" is a "kiwi battler". This term refers to a male Pakeha farmer who is practical, independent, and resourceful, and who tames the frontier and contributes to capitalist production through ingenuity and hard work. In this way, the historical context of New Zealand has created and maintained a *hegemonic* form of New Zealand masculinity.

In the context of this thesis it is also especially important to note that Berg (1994) argues that this hegemonic New Zealand masculinity has an unspoken discourse of heterosexuality. He references Phillips (1987) when describing heterosexual relations as being a key aspect of New Zealand masculinity, since Phillips argues that the kiwi male is not only practical, independent and resourceful, but also a *family man*. This conclusion is also reached by James and Saville Smith (1994), with reference to the promotion of a "cult of domesticity" (ibid.: 32) by the New Zealand state at the end of the 19th Century. I reference this claim later in my thesis as it becomes clear that the majority of respondents in my focus groups are married.

A further example of this creation of masculine identity through hegemonic power is found in an article by Christine Williams (1994) entitled "Militarised Masculinity". This article describes a hegemonic masculinity in the USA, that operated through the glorification of men who have the 'right stuff'. The right stuff is the will, energy and brute strength to compete in violent struggle with other men. In turn, this construction relies on a warrior image, which is created through Hollywood movies and other depictions of the military or paramilitaries in mass entertainment. Therefore, the hegemonic power of this kind of masculinity is created with reference to a specific discourse, in which the association between the military and masculinity is essentialised.

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<sup>12</sup> "Discourse" can be characterised as a framework of meaning that encompasses particular combinations of "narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practises, each relevant to a particular realm of social action" (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 8).



As with the other examples that I have described above, this hegemonically created dominance has the effect of empowering those males who conform to the hegemonic identity.

The idea of the creation of a hegemonic masculinity is important to this thesis, as it allows for an understanding of the power relations between differing masculine identities. As Berg (1994) argues, the hegemonic masculine identity in New Zealand is strongly linked to farming and the “Kiwi Battler”. For example, Christie (1991) in his book *Leaving the land: a case study of farmers who left the land 1987-1989*, describes the New Zealand farmer in glowing terms as being a “jack of all trades”. This ‘typical’ farmer has expertise in a wide variety of traditional farming skills, as well as skills in finance, political analysis, and philosophy. The white male who tames the frontier and is resourceful, independent, practical and capable, is seen as the “true blue” New Zealander. Thus, New Zealand farmers who conform to this identity become hegemonically empowered.

It is this creation and hegemonic enforcement of a particular stereotypical farmer who, it is argued, represents ‘New Zealanders’, that I wish to explore with reference to the effects of rural economic restructuring. Hence, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is important for understanding the mechanics of this process.

### **2.3 Linking Masculine Identity and Economic Change**

This thesis relies on linking the economic change that occurred within the rural sector from 1980-1995, to possible changes within the masculine identity of farmers. Therefore, I wanted a theoretical basis for my underlying assertion that change in the *economic* framework of New Zealand farming would also lead to change in the *social* framework and, subsequently, that this would induce change in the construction of rural masculinity. For this, I turned to the work of Robert Connell (Connell 1995). Connell outlines a three-way categorisation that can be used to theorise changes in the social expression of masculinity. For the purposes of this thesis I chose to use Connell’s definition of *production relations* as a way to link the restructuring of the rural sector in

New Zealand to changes in the hegemonic construction of rural New Zealand masculinity.

Connell (ibid.) describes *production relations* in terms of the capitalist imperative of the gendered accumulation of capital. Within a capitalist economy that embodies a patriarchal structure there is a gendered division of labour. Necessarily, this results in a gendered accumulation process, which in turn leads to Men having far greater economic power than Women. Changes in this accumulation order, due to resistance by Women or thorough the vagaries of capitalist accumulation, lead to challenges for masculine identities. These challenges then create the potential for change in the social construction of masculine identities.

In this manner, the changes in these *Production Relations* lead to changes in the fabric of masculine gender identity. My aim in this thesis is to use these ideas as the 'glue' to attach economic change, which has been documented by Geographers among others (see Chapter One), to change in hegemonic New Zealand rural masculinity.

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing the major themes of masculinity research in the early to mid 20th century, Psychoanalysis and Gender Role Theory. I then explained the theoretical perspective that I have chosen for this thesis, which is Social Constructionism. This theory originated in the 1980's under the umbrella of the Poststructuralist/Postmodernist movement (Burr 1995). The four main tenets of this theory are: firstly, that we must reject the supposition that we can unproblematically know the nature of the world through observation; secondly, that we accept our ways of understanding the world are historically and culturally specific; thirdly, that we understand our knowledge of the world is sustained by social processes; and finally, that we acknowledge these socially constructed understandings in turn create a specific kind of social action.

These tenets fundamentally inform this thesis and are especially important in explaining my link between economic restructuring and change in masculine identities. If

masculinity is seen as the product of human actions and choices, it is then able to be studied with a view to discovering its formative processes within society. As a result, my study of rural masculinity investigates the links between the farmers' masculine personal identity and their social, cultural and economic situation.

I also link farmers' masculine personal identity to the social, cultural and economic environment through the work of Connell (1995). Connell describes *production relations* in terms of the capitalist imperative of the gendered accumulation of capital. Within a capitalist economy that embodies a patriarchal structure there is a gendered division of labour. Necessarily, this results in a gendered accumulation process, which in turn leads to men having greater economic power than women. He argues that changes in this accumulation order, due to resistance by Women or through the vagaries of capitalist accumulation, lead to challenges for masculine identities. These challenges then create the potential for change in the social construction of masculine identities. Following this line of thought, I understand the process of economic restructuring that has been pursued by the New Zealand state since 1984 as one such change in the capitalist accumulation order. Therefore, I argue that it can be understood as contributing to change in masculine identities.

If these masculine identities are social constructions then it is possible to learn how specific constructions have been empowered as particular categories. In the case of rural masculinity, a particular construction of the rural male that is *hegemonically* powerful has the effect of empowering those farmers who conform to this construction. Necessarily, those who do not conform are disempowered, and it is only by discovering how the hegemonic power of a particular construction is maintained that the particular category can be disempowered, or its power appropriated to achieve more equitable ends (Jackson and Penrose 1993).

As I have previously discussed, hegemony was the term given by Gramsci to describe the way in which people willingly gave their assent to forms of government which were oppressive. Relating the idea of hegemony to masculinity is a process of identifying different masculinities, and then examining the power relations between them, and many studies of masculinity indeed show such a structure of power relations. I used the work



of Walker (1988), Berg (1994), Williams (1994), Phillips (1996), and Jensen (1996) as specific examples.

In Section 2.2 I went on to discuss the form of New Zealand hegemonic masculinity identified by Berg (1994) in more depth, as in Chapter Three and Four I compare this construction with the findings from my semiotic analysis and focus groups. Specifically, Berg discusses the tradition of New Zealand masculinity which underpins this privileging of empirical over theoretical research. Drawing especially on the work of Phillips (1980, 1987) and James & Saville-Smith (1989), Berg links the social relations of 19th century colonial life to the identity of a “true blue New Zealander”. Nineteenth Century New Zealand was dominated by exclusively male communities in the rural and frontier regions. This led to the development of a particular kind of masculinity that valued the independence gained through the possession of multiple skills, which were necessary in these frontier communities.

Later, as New Zealand began to ‘settle down’ at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a fear grew that the ‘taming’ of the frontier was also leading to the ‘taming’ of the Pakeha male. The urbanisation of the New Zealand population was seen as negative, and such thinking resulted in “the fear that the New Zealand male was losing his manliness” (Phillips 1980: 227, cited in Berg 1994).

Berg (ibid.) went on to argue that this ‘frontier’ discourse continues to underpin present-day constructions of the New Zealand Pakeha male as being fiercely independent, practical, and capable of dealing with anything that comes along. Thus, the “true blue New Zealander” is a “kiwi battler”. This term refers to a male Pakeha farmer who is practical, independent, and resourceful, and who tames the frontier and contributes to capitalist production through ingenuity and hard work. In this way, the historical context of New Zealand has created and maintained a *hegemonic* form of New Zealand masculinity.

In Chapters Three and Four I go on to discuss how I think that this hegemonic form has been moderated by the economic restructuring of the agricultural sector in New Zealand since 1984. I begin this task in the next chapter by analysing a number of advertisements from farming magazines.

## **Chapter Three: Textual Analysis**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Robert Sack (1992:107) argues that advertising is the “Language of Consumption”. Given Geography’s recent interest in the world of consumption (for example, see Thrift 1987, Sack 1988, Knox 1991, Jackson 1991, Glennie and Thrift 1992) it is interesting that there has been relatively little work on the relationship between Geography and advertising. Work that has been done overseas in this area includes that by Burgess (1990), Daniels (1993), Jackson (1994) and Jackson and Taylor (1996), while in New Zealand work has been done by Mansvelt (1996), Honeyfield (1997), Kearns and Barnett (1997), and Law (1997), but the area is by no means extensive. Hence, as Jackson and Taylor (1996) argue, this lack of interest in the “language of consumption” is significant given Geography’s long-standing interest in iconography, and its more recent interest in questions of representation (for example Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Barnes and Duncan 1992, Daniels 1993, Duncan and Ley 1993).

In the context of this thesis, it is also significant that there are relatively few examples of geographical analysis based on the gender issues that arise through the use of sexual stereotypes in advertising. Work that has been done in this area includes that by Jackson (1994), Jackson and Taylor (1996), Liepins (1996), Law (1997), Honeyfield (1997), and is much of which guides this thesis.

On reflection, this narrow field is less surprising given that issues of ‘race’, class, and gender, within a post-modern framework, have only been an obvious part of Geography since Jackson (1989) proclaimed the advent of a ‘new’ cultural geography. This ‘new’ form of cultural Geography is more closely aligned to social theory, than to biology and history (see Introduction). In particular, the new cultural geography broke from previous definitions of cultural geography, such as that based on the work of Carl Sauer (Sauer 1952, 1966) and the ‘Berkeley School’. Therefore, this thesis is intended to be part of a relatively new area of Geographical research on the cultural and Geographical effects of advertising which, in turn, is part of a ‘new’, ‘post-modern’ Cultural

## Geography.

My aim in this chapter is to extend our understanding of the gendered character of advertising, through the analysis of a number of product advertisements that have appeared in three selected New Zealand farming magazines across the period 1980-1995. In the wider context of this thesis, this window on farming culture also provides a window on masculinity. This is because, as I have argued in Chapter Two, New Zealand masculinity is closely tied to the imagery and imaginary of farming. Therefore, by studying representations of the culture of farming I am able to draw conclusions about the construction of rural masculinity.

As a form of mass media, advertisements become an important part of communication due to their wide ranging effects on social interaction. In semiotic terms, this extensive social interaction also has significant effects on the relationship between culture and the individual. Hence, the analysis of advertisements aimed at farmers also, as I argued earlier in this thesis, provides a window on farming culture. This is because communication, and therefore advertising in the capitalist world, is an essential part of any culture. Advertising as the “window on consumption” (Sack 1992) is therefore also a window on culture, through the interpretation of signs and codes.

The magazines I have studied are firstly, *New Zealand Farmer*, a semi-broadsheet newspaper which is aimed primarily at Sheep and Beef farmers; secondly, *Straight Furrow*, a newspaper produced by FFNZ which is aimed broadly at all farmers and has a more explicit political content; and thirdly *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* which is the official publication of the New Zealand Dairy Board. This is a magazine style publication aimed specifically at dairy farmers. The circulation of these publications according to the New Zealand Audit Bureau of Circulation's is 13 892, 91 130, and 22 727, respectively, as of 1998.

### 3.1 Research Methods<sup>13</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to conduct an analysis of farming advertisements. To achieve this aim, the primary methodology I use is *semiotics*, which is defined in simple terms as ‘the science of signs’.

The roots of semiotics as a field of inquiry lie in linguistics, and in particular the work of Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913). Leading modern semiotic theorists include Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco and Julia Kristeva; however the academic threads are difficult to disentangle from *structuralism*, whose major exponents include Claude Levi-Strauss (for example 1969, 1983) in Anthropology and Jacques Lacan (for example 1977, 1981) in psychoanalysis.

The term ‘science’ when applied in a definition of semiotics is misleading. As James Monaco points out (Monaco 1981: 140), semiotics “is definitely not a science in the sense that physics or biology is a science”. With the exception of *content analysis*, (see the Introduction to this thesis) semiotics does not employ quantitative methods, and often involves a rejection of such approaches. However, as Bergelin argued (Bergelin 1968, cited in Woollacott 1982: 93),

“there is no reason that the item which occurs most frequently is the most important or the most significant, for the text is clearly, a *structured* whole, and the place occupied by the different elements is more important than the number of times they recur”.

The *Semiotic* study of advertising therefore involves the discovery of what could perhaps be termed a ‘second order’ of meaning, rather than the ‘face value’ meaning which is used by quantitative analysis. Hence, it is inherently culturally situated, because the order of importance for any particular sign (the ‘second order’ of meaning) is determined by its cultural context.

Unsurprisingly, outcomes from such a study are unlikely to be able to be ‘proven’ in any ‘scientific objective’ sense. However, this does not render the results unusable, rather it

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<sup>13</sup> The use of the term “methods” is not meant to imply that the set of procedures that I use to analyse texts can ‘discover’ a singular truth (see Berg 1996:101).

demands that the researcher fully acknowledge the situatedness of their reading in the research text. As John Fiske argues (Fiske 1982: 118):

“Semiotics is essentially a theoretical approach to communication in that its aim is to establish widely applicable principles... It is thus vulnerable to the criticism that it is too theoretical, too speculative and that semioticians make no attempt to prove or disprove their theories in an objective, scientific way”.

The challenge for the researcher is, therefore, to maintain the relevance of their findings. Instead of aiming for the production and strengthening of *universally* applicable laws the researcher attempts to make widely applicable, though at all times *contextual*, findings. This context is provided by the acknowledgement within the research text of the researcher’s unavoidable cultural background. The findings of semiotic analysis aim to show how certain views, actions or depiction’s are present within a certain *cultural context*. Since *culture* is the important variable it is never assumed that the findings will be replicable within a different cultural context, the goal is only to show that such views, actions or depiction’s exist within a specific geographical and temporal frame.

In Appendix A I discuss the theory and methodology of media analysis known as Semiotics. Based on this theory, the next section explains my analytical process and relates this to my initial expectations of the content of the advertisements. Following this, I present the results of my analysis of advertisements in three farming publications during the period 1980-1995. These magazines were, *New Zealand Farmer*, *Straight Furrow*, and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*.

### 3.2 Analytic Themes

The central analytic theme of this thesis is the change in the construction of a rural New Zealand masculinity, over the period of accelerated rural restructuring after 1984. To this end, I have employed two techniques which allow for the analysis of advertisements. Firstly, I performed an empirical ‘content analysis’ of the advertisements to provide some overall data on their central subjects and typical layout (see my introduction). I included comparable census data with the numerical results of the content analysis to give an overall picture of the make-up of the advertisements.

Secondly, I performed a semiotic reading which allowed for a temporal analysis of the advertisements. As the 'findings' section of this chapter shows (see Section 3.3), I did not find large differences between the pre-1984 advertisements, and the post-1984 advertisements. However, a set of common threads emerged, which echoed many of my expected themes.

Much of the research into masculinity and advertising (for example Jackson 1994, Jackson and Taylor 1996, Liepins 1996, Law 1997, Honeyfield 1997, Nixon (no date)) is based around the connection between a specific construction of masculinity and the consumption of a particular product. With few exceptions, these products have typically been valued more for their image creating qualities than their functionality or use value (for a greater exposition on this "culture of the sign" see, for example, Baudrillard (1988) or Sack (1992)). These analyses of luxury and image associated items such as, for example, alcohol (see Jackson 1994) or men's fashion (see Nixon *ibid.*) are able to analyse the way in which the image of the product confers an image on the consumer via consumption.

However, as Wernick (1991) argues, traditional forms of masculinity see consumption of some goods, such as clothes and personal items, as belonging to a feminine identity. I have argued that rural New Zealand masculinity is strongly aligned to these "traditional" forms of masculine identity (see Chapter Two). In New Zealand these "traditional" forms of Pakeha masculinity have stemmed from the colonial past.

Berg (1994) argues that this traditional discourse continues to underpin present-day constructions of the New Zealand Pakeha male as being fiercely independent, practical, and capable of dealing with anything that comes along. Thus, the "true blue New Zealander" is a "kiwi battler", the White *Heterosexual* Man who tames the frontier and contributes to capitalist production through ingenuity and hard work.

This present-day existence of a hegemonic New Zealand masculinity with such "traditional" roots also has implications for advertising. I argue that the negative portrayal of the city impacts upon the consumption of goods and services for 'traditional' New Zealand males. As I argued earlier, 'traditional' men, (for example, farmers) see



consumption of some goods, such as clothes and personal items, as belonging to an urban, and therefore feminine, identity. This feminine 'city' identity is rejected as being inappropriate.

Hence, I argue that advertisers in the publications I studied recognised that it was inappropriate to market their products in the same way as items which were designed to appeal to a predominantly urban audience. As Pawson (1997) argues, the restructuring of the New Zealand economy in the post-1984 period created a "world of consumers" (ibid.: 17) in which the symbolic meaning of products became as important as their inherent qualities. For example, the clothing and alcohol studies of Nixon (no date) and Jackson (1994) that I discussed above. In contrast to this, the advertisers that I studied appealed to their consumers through the *absence*, rather than through the *presence* of obvious product-consumer associations. This is closely tied to the way that New Zealand farmers identify with an image of "traditional masculinity"; by omitting overt product-image associations advertisers are acknowledging the identity of their target audience.

As a result, many of the innovative visual associations that may be expected in order to link personal image and a consumer product were absent. Instead, the vast majority of advertisements in the print media that I studied utilised a formulaic association between the farming expertise of the user who was portrayed in the advertisement, and the product itself. This was a way of establishing the credentials of the product. Such an association was usually expressed through the use of product endorsements. In turn, the establishment of that expertise was usually done by referring to one (or more) of four factors: firstly the farmer's experience on the land in terms of time spent farming; secondly, the size of their land holding; thirdly, the productive output of their farm; and finally, recognised awards such as "Share-milker of the Year" or "Young Farmer of the Year" that had been awarded to the featured farmer.

The reliance on this formulaic advertisement composition and subsequent consistency between advertisements made it possible, and comparatively easy, to analyse a relatively large number of advertisements using a table of 'key issues'. The headings for this table drew heavily on the work of Fiske (1990) and Chandler (1994) and were as follows:

### 1) *Description*

This heading allowed for a short verbal-style description of the advertisement layout and the main characters in the advertisement for possible later reference.

### 2) *What are the important signifiers and what do they signify?*

(Who are the people in the advert? What are the nature and quality of their relationships?)

This heading allowed for a more detailed description of the people in the advertisement including: their physical size and positioning in the context of the advertisement itself and other people in the advertisement, their clothing, their age, their sex, and their 'racial' grouping. Also important was the headline and text of the advertisement, in terms of the creation of a particular imagery and way of reading the other signifiers. My aim was to provide data for the analysis of commonly used signs in the rural community.

### 3) *Paradigmatic analysis* (binaries, genre, theme, central opposition)

(The 'set' of signs, from which a number are selected for the particular advertisement)

This heading allows for a description of the way in which various signs are combined to produce a cohesive 'feel' for the advertisement. For example, in the farming advertisements that I analysed there was often a clear relationship between 'nature', as represented by farm stock or the farm itself, and 'culture', as represented by the persons in the advertisement. Other important syntagmatic combinations included farm technology and the person, and the text and headline of the advertisement as mentioned above. The paradigmatic analysis of signifiers is especially useful because it allows for an analysis of their power structure.

### 4) *Intertextuality*



This heading allows for the analysis of the meaning of the text through its references to other societal texts. For example, many of the advertisements that I analysed drew on wider perceptions of the role of women in the home and workplace, which in turn drew on assumptions of 'gender role'. The orientation of farming toward a goal of maximum outputs through minimum inputs, which was implicit in all the advertisements that I analysed, also drew on a separate text that portrayed farming in capitalist terms. Whereas category three (Paradigmatic Analysis) allowed for the analysis of the relationship between signs, this category (Intertextuality) allows for a deeper analysis that acknowledges the poststructuralist idea that each text exists in relation to other texts.

In the next section I will describe my findings under the same headings as I used above.

### **3.3 Findings**

#### **3.3.1 What are the important signifiers and what do they signify?**

The total number of advertisements that I analysed was 85. Of these a general template for content, layout and subject quickly emerged that was followed by the vast majority of advertisements. As described above, this template involved the use of product endorsements by farmers, whose expertise was usually verified by referring to one or more of four factors. These factors were: time spent as a farmer, the size of their land holding, the productive output of their farm and recognised awards such as "Share-milker of the Year" or "Young Farmer of the Year". Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3<sup>14</sup> are reproductions of some typical advertisements illustrating this 'template'. Within this familiar format there were a number of important signifiers. Firstly, the 'farmer' in the advertisements deserves some discussion.

As my content analysis shows the 'farmer', as pictured, was overwhelmingly a white,

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<sup>14</sup> All Figures are reproduced at the end of this chapter.

middle aged male. He was more often than not wearing a checked shirt, jeans or work trousers, and a hat, and as such he conformed to the stereotypical and 'common sense' media portrayal of a farmer. This also dovetailed with the responses from farmers in my focus groups. In these groups, farmers were keen to present themselves as 'no-nonsense', and as being unaffected by appeals to personal image within the advertisements. Hence, 'the farmer', as portrayed in the advertisements, was obviously intended to represent the target audience. This has serious implications in light of the census data which indicated that approximately one third of the people who identify themselves as 'farmers' are women (see Chapter One).

Significantly, this portrayal of the 'typical farmer' (see, for example, Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7) was consistent throughout my research period (1980-1995) in terms of sex (male), approximate age (30-50) and 'race' (New Zealand European/Pakeha). As I argued in Section 3.2, this is consistent with the 'traditional' conception of New Zealand masculinity that is argued to be hegemonically powerful (see, for example, Berg 1994, Phillips 1987, 1996).

The second important signifier was the land itself. I argue that this signifier represents the concept of 'nature' as part of a conceptual binary, with the other half being 'culture' in the form of the farmer. Consistently in Western thought, the 'culture' half of the binary has been privileged over 'nature' (Jay 1981, Bordo 1986, Seidler 1991, see also Section 6.3). According to Plumwood (1993) this domination of culture over nature stems from a 'complex dominator identity', which she then defines as a 'master subject'. Thus, a 'master subjectivity' was built into western science and philosophy which then accommodated human order and control over other spheres of life. The product of this subjectivity was the nature/culture dualism which, "implied a hierarchy that pitted nature both against and *beneath* human who was henceforth justified in treating nature as an object, as background to - and instrument of - human purposes" (Anderson 1995: 277).

This hierarchical relationship is reproduced often in the advertisements that I analysed, as a relationship is set up between nature, as represented by farm animals and the land itself, and culture, as represented by the farmer. For example, Figure 3.3 features a farmer, in classic 'wild west' pose, ready to kill parasites in his stock. In this advertisement

‘nature’ is there to be tamed by a combination of technology and mythologised western masculinity.

Related to the culture versus nature binary is the placement of farm technology, which also operates as a signifier in the advertisement. Machinery such as farm bikes, utility trucks, tractors and cropping machinery operate as a marker of the ‘culture’ part of the nature/culture binary while also playing an important role as a marker of rural masculinity. Authors such as Berg (1994) argue that men’s hegemonic power is reinforced through the linking of women with the ‘nature’ part of the binary, and men with ‘culture’<sup>15</sup>. By doing this men become associated with rationality, reasoning and scientific thought, while women become associated with ‘nature’ linked traits such as emotion and irrationality. Hence, the linking of masculinity and machinery is an important part of associating men with the dominant side of the nature/culture binary, which then has the effect of reinforcing masculine hegemony. This positioning of machinery such as farm bikes, tractors, utility vehicles, and milking plants, alongside the male farmer was another consistent signifier throughout the advertisements that I analysed (see, for example, Figures 3.1, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8).

### **3.3.2 Paradigmatic analysis**

From the description of the main signifiers above, it becomes possible to identify a farm advertisement paradigm. Such a ‘paradigm’ refers to a semiotic analysis of the common signifiers in the advertisements, and attempts to describe the set of signifiers from which those which are used in the farming advertisements are chosen.

These choices of signifier from within a ‘paradigm’ of signifiers that prescribes the characters age/sex, sexuality, clothing and activity create a distinct rural space that, “serves to designate a way of understanding, operating within, and producing that rural space (Lefebvre 1991: 47-8). Halfacree (1995) terms this paradigm the “rural idyll”, which he then defines as, “a hegemonic social representation whose meaning has overlaid

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<sup>15</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this topic see Rose (1993, Chapter 4).

a more or less distinct rural space” (ibid.: 51).

In the case of the farm advertisements which I have analysed, I believe that the “rural idyll” is closely aligned to the hegemonic discourses in New Zealand of both masculinity and farming. Thus, as theorised by Liepins (1996), the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in New Zealand combines a white, bourgeois, heterosexual masculinity with ideas of farming as an activity based on scientific knowledge, productivity, market orientated economics, and physical labour.

The representation of this discourse, and the constructions that flow from it, are represented in the advertisements by a number of signifiers. I discuss these below.

**1) Age/sex.** The disparity between the modal age for the men and women in the advertisements I studied (see Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4) illustrates one way in which women are valued in the paradigmatic environment of the advertisements. For women, bodily appearance is more strongly connected with identity than it is for men (MacDonald 1995). This connection between body and identity is therefore reflected/constructed in male attitudes of female attractiveness. Younger, rather than older, women are likely to appear in the advertisements in order to appeal to the predominantly male audience.

In contrast, a man's age is often equated with ability or knowledge, therefore the older ‘farmer’ is usually in the advertisement as the bearer of *expert* knowledge. This is illustrated by the number of older men in the advertisements and the almost complete absence of women over 35. For example, as Table 3.1 and 3.2 show, there weren’t any women who I estimated to be aged over 35 in either *New Zealand Farmer* or *Straight Furrow*.

**Table 3.1** Results of content analysis for *New Zealand Farmer*  
(Total number of advertisements analysed = 32)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	1	0
16-25	3	5
26-35	19	0
36-45	17	0
46-55	11	0
56-65	3	0
66+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 3.2** Results of content analysis for *Straight Furrow*  
(Total number of advertisements analysed = 26)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	1	0
16-25	2	1
26-35	16	3
36-45	11	0
46-55	5	0
56-65	2	0
66+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>

I argue that the absence of women aged over 35 is linked to the expectations of the audience who constitute the group 'farmers'. This group is approximately two thirds male (see Table 3.3), which means there are strong linkages for women between their age and their sexual desirability in the eyes of the dominant 'male gaze' (see Mulvey (1989) or Rose (1997)). Traditionally the act of looking has been empowering and has been a form of subordination of the subject of the gaze (Neale 1983, cited in White and

Gillett 1994: 23). Women that did appear in the advertisements in a more clearly defined capacity were likely to be occupying traditional female roles such as caregiver or assistant.

**Table 3.3** Farmers under 35 years old

(The figures for 'total number of farmers' are included in brackets for comparison).

Year	Male	Female	Totals
1986	21063 (46923)	4974 (12244)	26037
1991	15874 (41122)	3544 (10871)	19418
1996	12123 (34266)	3072 (10452)	15195

Hence, aside from being underrepresented in relation to their numbers within the farming community (see Table 3.3), I argue that the women who do appear in the advertisements are often present because of their sexual appeal rather than as subjects of knowledge.

One possible exception to this observation is in *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*. As can be seen from Table 3.4, two out of the four women are estimated to be between 26 and 35 while one woman is estimated to be between 36 and 45. I believe that this points to an observable difference between dairy farming and dry stock farming. In dairy farming the farmer is more often portrayed as being in partnership with their husband or wife, both in the articles and the advertisements of the magazine. This is presumably a function of the lifestyle in which a routine is established around the twice-daily milking of cows. Hence, the assistance of a partner is more necessary in order to spread the fixed workload than it is with the variable routine of dry-stock farmers. This translates in the advertisements to both partners being portrayed as more equal, and likewise both partners being portrayed as 'farmers' more often than in dry-stock farming.

**Table 3.4** Results of content analysis for *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*  
(Total number of advertisements analysed = 27)

Age (estimated)	Number (Male)	Number (Female)
0-15	0	0
16-25	1	1
26-35	16	2
36-45	10	1
46-55	11	0
56-65	0	0
66+	0	0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>4</i>

**2) Sexuality.** I argue that the under-representation of women in farming advertisements is linked to the cultural definition of the New Zealand ‘farmer’. As I have discussed previously in this thesis, with reference to the work of Liepins (1996), a hegemonic white masculine subject (see Rose 1993 p6-10) is incorporated into these rural texts. Integral to this hegemonic masculinity is the assumption of heterosexuality (see Section 2.2). Hence, this normalisation of male-female relationships within rural texts leads to the appearance of male-female partnerships in farming advertisements, and the disappearance of homosexuality. This assumption of heterosexuality is expressed most clearly in the way that women are always portrayed with male partners, and almost never on their own or with other women. Likewise, male farmers are always portrayed with female partners. For example Figures 3.2 and 3.10 show how these male-female relationships are typically presented within the Dairy industry.

**3) Clothing.** The way the farmers were dressed in the advertisements clearly identified them as being part of rural masculine imagery, and also tied them in with the discursive construction of agriculture as an activity requiring hard physical labour. Accordingly, the farmers often wore checked shirts, and jeans or work trousers. They also wore hats, and on their feet were either gumboots or work-boots. In contrast, other professionals in the



advertisements such as farm advisors or veterinarians had different clothing which obviously identified them as being non-farmers. This clothing included items such as lab-coats, ties and street shoes. For example, Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 show the appearance of 'typical farmers' in the advertisements that I studied.

**4) Activity.** Often in the advertisements the farmers were pictured whilst engaged in farm work such as tending to stock, using farm machinery, or performing farm maintenance, for example, Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.10 and 3.11. I argue that these activities associate the farmers with the masculine signifier of technical machinery (see Edwards (1990) or Brandth (1995: 127), as well as the privileged 'culture' half of the 'nature/culture' binary. In addition, I argue that by portraying the farmers in active work, the advertisers are making a distinction between rural work and urban work. This is important for appealing to farmers' own construction of themselves as being hard working, physically active producers, in contrast to urban workers who are seen as sedentary 'paper shufflers'. For example, in Focus Group Two one farmer said:

"I've got to be careful what I say here because I know there's an Aucklanders here (laughs), but really when you think about it there's a lot of people in this country who shuffle paper from one desk to another, and they get an income and a wage from it, but they actually don't achieve any real wealth for the country".

This illustrates the contrast that farmers see between themselves, as primary producers, and 'Aucklanders', who represent the service industry. I argue that advertisers in rural publications recognise that they must be careful to appeal to this self construction of farmers as 'wealth earners'. One of the ways they do this is to illustrate their advertisements with photographs of farmers doing physical work. Another way is to stress the productivity and efficiency of these farmers. For example in Figure 3.8 the headline reads "INCREASE COW THROUGHPUT EFFICIENCY!", which refers to the ability of *Alfa Laval* milking equipment to increase production. As the size and wording of this headline shows, efficient production is seen as being vitally important to dairy farmers.

In summary, the semiotic paradigm of the advertisements I studied can be seen to be

closely aligned with the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in New Zealand. Thus, as theorised by Liepins (1996), this discourse combines a white, bourgeois, heterosexual masculinity with ideas of farming as an activity based on scientific knowledge, productivity, market orientated economics, and physical labour.

This is expressed most obviously within the four categories that I have chosen above. Thus, the characters in the advertisements that I studied were most likely to be middle aged males wearing checked shirts, jeans and work-boots, who were photographed whilst engaged in some form of farm work.

### 3.3.3 Intertextuality

This farm advertisement 'paradigm' utilises a limited number of signifiers. Often a 'preferred reading' of these signifiers will be invoked through the implicit linkages that some of the signifiers have to other signifiers, and to other texts that the target audience will be familiar with. This process is termed *Intertextuality* (see Section 3.2), and it allows the advertisements to convey a meaning which is multifaceted, but at the same time likely to be decoded in the same way by all the members of the target audience.

For example, many of the advertisements that I analysed drew on wider perceptions of the role of women in the home and workplace, which in turn drew on assumptions of a 'gender role'. As the findings from my content analysis showed (see Introduction), women were largely absent from the advertisements that I analysed. Those women who did appear were usually in 'traditional' female roles such as support person, homemaker/caregiver, or assistant. The few exceptions to these 'gender role' assumptions were more likely to appear in advertisements aimed at Dairy farmers (see Figures 3.2, 3.10). I argue that this under-representation of women in farming advertisements (see Section 3.3.2) is linked to the cultural definition of the New Zealand 'farmer'.

Liepins (1996: 5) argues that this cultural definition utilises multiple hegemonic discourses: "agricultural discourse constructs agriculture as an activity based on scientific knowledge (Kloppenbergh 1991, cited in Liepins *ibid.*), productivity and market

orientated economics, and physical labour". In addition, she argues that agricultural discourse incorporates the discourse of a hegemonic "white masculine subject" (see Rose 1993: 6-10). According to Liepins (*ibid.*), this means that certain qualities, work, and politics are portrayed within rural texts as being "truly" masculine, thereby excluding or limiting alternative masculinities and femininities in agriculture. I argue that this "true" masculinity is often referenced in the advertisements that I analysed via intertextual links. For example, some of the advertisements that I analysed contained references to military combat. Typically, such advertisement used a headline which referred to the way in which the advertised product would work. For example, "shoot to kill - worms don't stand a chance" (*New Zealand Farmer*, September 11, 1980: 65), and "ICI spring offensive" (*New Zealand Farmer*, September 11, 1980: 72). These usages of combat imagery in the advertisements is presumably intended to give the product some of the assumed properties of combat such as effectiveness, mercilessness and a favourable outcome in terms of the death of the pest.

The second intertextual reference which was widespread in the farming advertisements was the use of references to rugby. "Rugby", as a sport, originated in English public schools near the end of the 19th Century and is named after one such school. It played an important role in such schools as its physical nature was thought to aid in "toughening up" school-boys, an aspect which was central to the aim of these schools at the time. The physical aspects of the game also coincided neatly with the masculine culture of pioneer New Zealand, and the playing of the game has been linked to the needs of the colonial state (Phillips 1996). Thus, rugby not only enjoys a strong public following, thereby making the best players household names, it is also seen to be the game of choice for the 'Kiwi Battler' (see Section 2.2) due to its strong social aspect and physical nature.

In the advertisements that I analysed, rugby was usually referenced by using ex-All Blacks to endorse a product. Presumably this endows the product with an enhanced reputation, due to the perceived personal qualities of the famous rugby player. If the typical rugby player is a 'Kiwi Battler', then it follows that the most skilful rugby players must possess the qualities needed to be a 'Kiwi Battler' in greater measure. This is

especially true if the All Black is also a farmer. For example, Figure 3.3 features farmer, and former All Black Captain, Ian Kirkpatrick.

The orientation of farming toward a goal of maximum outputs through minimum inputs, which was implicit in all of the advertisements that I analysed, also drew on a separate text that portrayed farming in capitalist terms. I argue that this text is aligned to the “conventional/farming as business” paradigm (Walter 1995). As I argue in the next section, this “conventional” farmer is an innovative, progressive, aggressive and highly productive *business manager*. This “conventional”, business orientated narrative can be seen as similar to Liepins (1996) conception of the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in Australia/New Zealand, as both feature productivity and stress the role of technology/science and good management in defining ‘successful’ agriculture. The great majority of the advertisements that I analysed drew on this text of “farming as business”.

The advertisements that I analysed also contained intertextual references to conceptions of ‘the land’. As I discussed in Section 3.3.1 ‘nature’ is part of a conceptual binary, with the other half being ‘culture’ in the form of the farmer. Consistently in Western thought the ‘culture’ half of the binary has been privileged over ‘nature’. This inequality is reproduced often in the advertisements that I analysed, as a relationship is set up between nature, as represented by farm animals and the land itself, and culture, as represented by the farmer. For example, Figure 3.3 which features Ian Kirkpatrick (ex-All Black Captain) photographs him in classic ‘wild west’ pose, ready to kill parasites in his stock. ‘Nature’ is there to be tamed by a combination of technology and mythologised masculinity. Another example is in Figure 3.13, which features a photograph of a rural landscape under a dark storm cloud. In this photograph nature is portrayed as powerful and threatening, yet from the headline (“Farming in the 90’s is tough...”) it becomes clear that farmers are able to succeed despite the power of these natural elements. Therefore, in this example constructions of ‘nature’ are referenced to illustrate how capable farmers are.

Lastly, the text and headline often indicate what Stewart Hall (Hall 1973: 134) calls a “preferred reading”. This means that, whilst still being signifiers in themselves, the headline and text of the advertisement guide the way in which the other signifiers, as

mentioned above, can be understood. For instance, some headlines emphasised that farming was 'hard' work. By referencing other texts and signifiers, this work also became masculinised. For example; "Valbazen is working as hard as you" (Figure 3.4) is the headline for an advertisement that pictured a male farmer using the product. A second example in *New Zealand Farmer* was an advertisement with the headline "We're not here to make daisy chains" (Figure 3.9), which chose a close-up photograph of a stubbled male face as the central part of the advertisement. This second advertisement indicated a preferred reading through the emotive headline, which emphasised the need for farmers to be physically and mentally tough, as well as drawing on the utility vehicle as an indicator for the 'culture' part of the nature/culture binary.

In summary, intertextual references are commonplace among the advertisements that I analysed. The most common form of these references was to link the advertisement with wider discourses about gender, masculinity and a binary opposition between nature and culture.

### 3.4 Changes in the Discourse of Agriculture

This thesis seeks to find discursive change within rural New Zealand. Hence, understanding the New Zealand discourse of 'the rural' is important in order to study this change. In the previous section I discussed the work by Liepins (1996) who interpreted rural discourse with specific reference to Australia/New Zealand. Work similar to this has been done by Walter (1995), who conducted his analysis in the United States. Both authors give important insights into the discourse of rurality in New Zealand. By understanding this discourse I sought to understand changes in its fabric.

In her article Liepins (1996: 5) argues for the existence of a hegemonic discourse of agriculture:

"This (agricultural) discourse constructs agriculture as an activity based on scientific knowledge (Kloppenber 1991), productivity and market orientated economics, and physical labour".

In addition, she argues that this agricultural discourse incorporates the discourse of a hegemonic "white masculine subject" (see Rose 1993: 6-10). According to Liepins



(ibid.), this means that certain qualities, work and politics are portrayed within rural texts as being “truly” masculine, thereby excluding or limiting alternative masculinities and femininities in agriculture. Thus, the hegemonic form of masculinity in which men are white, bourgeois, and heterosexual is combined with the hegemonic form of agricultural production which is said to be based on *science*, *productivity*, *market economics* and *physical labour*. This results in a tightly circumscribed definition of ‘the farmer’, which is then hegemonically empowered through reference to wider social discourses.

Walter (1995) identifies one such discourse of agriculture in the United States that he terms the “American agrarian myth”. He argues that this myth is based on historical conceptions of the U.S. as being a New World democracy founded on the hard work and values of its rural population. The important elements of this myth include the farmer, the farm family, values of independence and democracy, harmony with nature and, in contrast, the urbanite and “urban” values. Thus, while the rural lifestyle was inherently good, urban living was seen as unnatural, not least because all non-farm occupations or populations were dependent on the farmer for their sustenance.

This conclusion is similar to that reached by Berg (1994) with reference to New Zealand which I discussed in Chapter Two. Berg draws on the work of Phillips (1980) who argues that the urbanisation of the New Zealand population in the late 19th and early 20th century was seen in a negative light, since cities were thought of as places where men lived an unmasculine existence. Thus, Berg concludes, the message here was that cities and towns were for women, while the frontier was the true place for the ‘kiwi bloke’ (1994: 251). Berg (ibid.) goes on to argue that such a ‘frontier’ discourse continues to underpin present-day constructions of the New Zealand Pakeha male as being fiercely independent, practical, and capable of dealing with anything that comes along. I argue that this ‘frontier discourse’ can be understood as New Zealand’s own version of the “agrarian myth”. As such it underpins the hegemonic discourses of New Zealand identity and New Zealand masculinity.

Walter (1995) goes on to argue that, according to the American agrarian myth, the successful farmer should:

“work hard to demonstrate his virtue by producing as much as possible to feed

a hungry world, and that he should have complete economic independence and be able to make economic decisions free from external interference.”

In doing this, the farmer is also a skilful problem problem-solver and user of technology, both as a steward of the land and as a highly productive provisioner of the ‘hungry world’.

Within the frame of this agrarian myth technology use is driven by agricultural science, with its historic emphasis on research and development of labour-saving and production-maximising technologies (Walter 1995: 57). This, argues Walter (*ibid.*), has had the effect of reinforcing the image of the modern, progressive farmer as being a master of technology and a technological innovator, while still being fiscally conservative. Therefore, the original agrarian myth of the good farmer (hardworking, religious, intimately involved with land, family and community) has been modified to one of the successful farmer being an innovative, progressive, aggressive and a highly productive *business manager*.

However, the internal contradictions of the agrarian myth, manifested in modern agriculture by the tension between maximising production and farming in harmony with nature, are said to have given rise to, “at least two common and often competing pictures of agriculture: farming as way of life and farming as business” (Walter 1995: 57). The way-of-life story is said to rely on images of *family, community, hard work, bucolic simplicity, and closeness to the land*, while the business-oriented farming narrative emphasises the American farmer’s *productivity, technological sophistication, management savvy, and independence*.

Walter goes on to argue that these companion narratives are not equally powerful within modern agriculture. Instead, he argues that they can most easily be understood with reference to the paradigm debate between conventional and alternative (or sustainable) agriculture. “Conventional” agriculture can be understood as part of the “farming as business” narrative while, in contrast, the “alternative” paradigm tends to privilege, or at least grant parity to, beliefs and values associated with “farming as a way of life”.

I argue that the conventional/business and alternative/way of life alliances can usefully be



understood as two halves of a binary opposition<sup>16</sup> within which the “conventional/farming as business” paradigm is privileged at the expense of the “alternative/farming as way of life” paradigm. Therefore, the “alternative” farmer who, within the modern agrarian myth, is seen as a businessman who balances profit needs with such non-economic goals as environmental quality, family life and community vitality is devalued at the expense of the “conventional” farmer (Walter 1995). For example, in my Focus Groups (see Section 4.2) ‘alternative’ goals such as “farming in an environmentally friendly way” and “working for/taking part in the rural community” were ranked lower overall than ‘conventional’ goals such as ‘receiving maximum personal income’ and ‘becoming more skilled at farming’. As I argued above, this “conventional” farmer is an innovative, progressive, aggressive and highly productive *business manager*.

This “conventional”, business orientated narrative can be seen as similar to Liepins’ conception of the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in Australia/New Zealand, as both feature productivity, and stress the role of technology/science and good management (“business orientated”, “market economics”, management savvy”) in defining ‘successful’ agriculture. Yet, in contrast, Liepins definition also incorporates “physical labour”, an element which seems closest to “hard work” in Walter’s “farming as way of life” definition, and which includes connotations of “bucolic simplicity” and “closeness to the land”. Thus, I argue that Liepins’ understanding of the Australian/New Zealand hegemonic definition of agriculture cannot be understood as being analogous to either Walter’s “farming as way of life” or to his “farming as business” narratives. Instead the Australasian discursive frame must be understood as a combination of both of these discourses/narratives. This came through in my Focus Groups (see Section 4.2) when I asked farmers to rank their goals. The highest ranked goals were not consistently those which could be aligned with the ‘conventional’ paradigm. For example, in Focus Group One the goals “Providing for your children’s future/Having the best possible family life” were ranked second out of nine (see Table 4.2).

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<sup>16</sup> *Binary opposition* draws on the work of Umberto Eco (for example Eco 1965). See Appendix A.

For the purposes of this thesis, understanding agricultural discourse in New Zealand as being a combination of both the “farming as way of life” and “farming as business” discourses allows useful understandings of discursive change since 1984. I argue that the New Zealand discourse of agriculture can be understood as consisting of a binary opposition within which the “farming as business” half is privileged. While the New Zealand ‘agrarian myth’ (see above), with its emphasis on “independence” and “management savvy” would seem to indicate that this hierarchical form of the binary has always operated, I argue that the restructuring of the rural sector since 1984 has seen the “farming as business” paradigm gain greater currency. I also argue that this discursive change is a response made by farmers to the reduced currency of the New Zealand ‘agrarian myth’ within wider New Zealand society in the post-1984 period.

### 3.5 Changes in the Advertisements 1980-1995

In this thesis I have argued that the linkages between hegemonic masculinity and the hegemonic discourse of farming are rooted in the ideas summarised in the work of Connell (1995), which I discussed in my earlier chapter on masculinity (see Chapter Two). This idea was that *production relations* are an important determinant of gender identity within a capitalist society. Therefore, I believe it is New Zealand’s economic origins and the history of rural restructuring in the 1980’s, which I summarised in Chapter One, that allow a geographical, historical and cultural understanding of Connell’s ideas as economic conditions altered post-1984. New Zealand’s colonial past, and the subsequent ties to the ‘Mother Country’ as “Britain’s farm” (see Roche 1996), led to the creation of a strongly male-orientated culture that provided the starting point of this association between the dominant agricultural and the dominant masculine discourses.

Thus, I chose to focus on a semiotic analysis of the main signifiers, the overall paradigm, and the intertextual references within the advertisements that I analysed, in an attempt to find some evidence of significant change in the hegemonic discourse since 1980. Understanding this change then allowed me to link rural restructuring and changes in

rural masculinity.

The formulaic content of the majority of the advertisements gives important insights into the identity of the intended audience. As Walter (1995) argues:

“mass media narratives provide ample material and motivation for social learning, in which individuals respond to situational cues and desired outcomes in their own environments with what they have learned from others (social models) are appropriate behaviour or beliefs...

...mass media models, by virtue of having being selected for presentation to mass audiences, appear to be more credible than most everyday, directly experienced models (Bandura 1973, 1977). Thus the farm magazines successful farmer narrative potentially exerts even more influence over readers' expectations of themselves than their own flesh-and-blood neighbours”

Thus, advertisements can be seen as powerful and important influences on the social behaviour of the intended audience, even to the extent of being more influential than the recipient's peer group.

In section 3.2 I argued that, in the advertisements I studied, the devices used by the advertisers to influence this intended audience were different to those used in advertisements for “image related” products such as alcohol and clothing, largely because “image” is linked to the feminised urban. The present-day existence of a New Zealand hegemonic masculinity with “traditional” roots means that this feminine ‘city’ identity is rejected as being inappropriate.

Therefore, I argue that the *absence* of conventional associations between personal image and the advertised product illustrates how farmers themselves construct their personal identity. They are necessarily ‘hard men’ who reject the trappings of the city life, which they see as fostering unnecessary consumption and luxury, and instead replace it with a business rationality in keeping with their role as ‘expert’ rural producers. I argue that the advertisers recognise that representing the hegemonic construction of rural identity means portraying their characters as conforming to this rejection of ‘unnecessary’ consumption.

In Focus Group One a farmer makes this clear:

“I don't know about the others but unless I'm in the market to be buying something you don't take any notice of the adverts (murmured agreement from

other farmers). It's probably a generalisation but town people might be more consumer orientated, so they're looking for somewhere to spend their money".

Another farmer added:

"Farmers probably follow a budget too, so if it doesn't allow them to buy the brand new tractor this year they ain't going to be looking at tractor adverts".

This ties in to New Zealand's post-1984 rural restructuring, as government policy makers created a rural sector which operates in an environment of minimal government subsidy. In response, farmers have come to stress their ability to survive within such a strictly defined financial frame and, have linked this ability to their superior financial skills.

Thus, in overall terms, the effect of rural restructuring and the corresponding loss of influence at the cabinet level for farmers (see Chapter One) has been the intensification of the use of stereotypical characters in rural advertising. As farmers have taken on board the messages of restructuring, such as the need to bear their own risks and to operate as independently as possible, they have responded to this by aligning themselves more closely to Walter's (1995) "farming as business" paradigm. This conclusion is reinforced by Liepins (1996), who argues that scientific knowledge, productivity, and market orientated economics are fundamentally a part of the New Zealand discourse of agriculture.

I argue that this has been recognised by the advertisers in rural publications, and that the characters in the advertisement have become progressively more aligned to the post-1984 construction of farming. This claim is difficult to substantiate, but I believe that evidence is available within my analysis of the advertisements. For example, the prevalence of banking and insurance advertisements in the post-1984 period is one indicator of this phenomenon. Table 3.5 illustrates the numerical differences in the placement of banking and insurance advertisements.

**Table 3.5** Frequency of Banking/Insurance advertisements in my sample.

<b>1980</b>	<p>1) <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter</i>, January 1980.  “Why stand in a queue?”. An advertisement for Farmers Mutual Insurance Group.</p> <p>2) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, January 1980.  “Why stand in a queue?”. An advertisement for Farmers Mutual Insurance Group.</p>
<b>1985</b>	
<b>1990</b>	<p>1) <i>New Zealand Farmer</i>, January 1990.  “Everything you ever dreamed of from a farm finance package”. An advertisement for A.N.Z. Bank.</p> <p>2) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, January 1990.  “Once physical effort paid off. Now fiscal matters matter more”. An advertisement for “Supergro” fertiliser.</p> <p>3) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, January 1990.  “Everything you ever dreamed of from a farm finance package”. An advertisement for A.N.Z. Bank.</p> <p>4) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, May 1990.  “‘How would ‘Kiwi Keith’ manage a farm in this day and age?’” An advertisement for A.N.Z. farm finance.</p> <p>5) <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter</i>, May 1990.  “The most important men in our million dollar industry don’t wear a suit to work”. An advertisement for Alfa-Laval milking equipment.</p>

Table 3.5 (continued)

1995	<p>1) <i>New Zealand Farmer</i>, January 1995.          “Inside the coat there’s a banker, but inside the banker there’s a farmer”.          An advertisement for National Bank rural managers.</p> <p>2) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, February 1995<sup>17</sup>.          “I keep my own records and ‘Cash-Flow’ works as a backstop”. An          advertisement for Wrightson Finance.</p> <p>3) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, February 1995.          “Right from the very start”. An advertisement for Farmers’ Mutual Group.</p> <p>4) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, February 1995.          “Inside the coat there’s a banker, but inside the banker there’s a farmer”.          An advertisement for National Bank rural managers.</p> <p>5) <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter</i>, January 1995.          “Everything you ever dreamed of from a farm finance package”. An          advertisement for A.N.Z. Bank.</p> <p>6) <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter</i>, January 1995.          “Inside the coat there’s a banker, but inside the banker there’s a farmer”.          An advertisement for National Bank rural managers.2) <i>New Zealand          Farmer</i>, September 1995.</p> <p>7) <i>New Zealand Farmer</i>, September 1995.          “What is the best way to cover seasonal shortfalls?”. An advertisement for          B.N.Z farm banking.</p> <p>8) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, September 1995.          “What is the best way to cover seasonal shortfalls?”. An advertisement for          B.N.Z farm banking.</p> <p>9) <i>Straight Furrow</i>, September 1995.          “You tend to stick with those who have your own interests at heart”. An          advertisement for Wrightson Finance.</p> <p>10) <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter</i>, September 1995.          “What is the best way to cover seasonal shortfalls?”. An advertisement for          B.N.Z farm banking.</p>
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<sup>17</sup> I analysed the February 1995 rather than the January 1995 issue of *Straight Furrow* due to the absence, whether by design or accident, of the January issue.



This table is indicative only, since it is not based on a comprehensive survey, yet it can be seen from Table 3.1 that there is a marked difference between the number of advertisements in 1980 (2) and 1985 (none), compared to 1990 (5) and 1995 (10). I believe that this indicates significant differences between the pre and post rural restructuring phases.

As I discussed in Chapter One, prior to 1984 the farm finance market was partially state owned, with the Rural Banking and Finance Corporation (Rural Bank) being the major player in this market. The Rural Bank offered farmers a subsidised interest rate (Clove 1996), so farmers recognised that the Rural Bank was their best option for farm finance. This meant that there was little point in commercial banks competing and buying advertising space in rural publications. However, in the period after 1989, when the Rural Bank had been sold to *Fletcher Challenge*<sup>18</sup> (see Le Heron 1991), the market was opened to commercial banks. I argue that this provides some explanation for the increase in advertising by Banks and Insurance companies.

This change in the structure of the rural banking sector, and the subsequent change in the number of advertisements, also illustrates a change in the way that advertisers constructed the characters in their advertisements. Financial knowledge and skill have become more important for farmers as, in the restructured rural environment, they are required to make banking and insurance decisions that are less obvious than before. This was recognised by advertisers who began to construct the characters in their advertisements using different signifiers. More obvious examples of this can be seen in two advertisements from the 1990s. Firstly, Figure 3.11 is an advertisement from *Straight Furrow* in January 1990.

The headline in Figure 3.11 reads, "Once physical effort paid off. Now fiscal matters matter more", and features two contrasting photographs. The first photograph is a black and white illustration of a farmer using a horse-driven plough. This is contrasted by a full colour photograph of a man in a tie using a computer. The association here is obvious, but probably all the more powerful for being so. Prior to rural restructuring all

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<sup>18</sup> *Fletcher Challenge* is a New Zealand based multinational company.



that was required to be a successful farmer was a knowledge of traditional methods of production. However, in the restructured environment farmers must be skilful in the use of modern technology and be able to compete with their urban (tie-wearing) equivalents.

This is one example of the way that the advertisers reflect (and also construct) the changes in the construction of rural masculinity since 1984. My second example is Figure 3.12, which is an advertisement which appeared in *New Zealand Farmer* and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* during January 1995, and in *Straight Furrow* in February of the same year. The headline in figure 3.12 reads: "Inside the coat there's a banker. But inside the banker there's a farmer". The advertisement is dominated by a photograph of a young Pakeha male, who is wearing an 'oilskin' coat and a leather hat. As with Figure 3.11, the inference is clear from this photograph and headline: despite the man being a rural bank manager who is based in an urban environment, he is also a farmer who is familiar and comfortable in the rural environment.

The headline and the photograph in the advertisement convey an idea of partnership and co-dependency between the banker and the farmer, on both the farming and farm-finance levels. Yet prior to 1984, the rhetoric of independence and success through hard physical labour seemed to indicate that farm banking was somewhat irrelevant to farming success; as a farmer in Focus Group One commented, "then it was all head down and arse up, but it's a different philosophy now". A further example of this is provided by Figure 3.5 which features the headline; "Sometimes its not a matter of working harder ...just smarter". The implicit message is that farming now requires intellectual as well as physical effort.

However, farmers (and therefore farm advertisers) are careful to not play down the amount of physical effort and toughness that is still required of them in the post-restructuring era. By portraying the farmers in active work, the advertisers are making a distinction between rural work and urban work. As I argued earlier, this is important for appealing to farmers' own construction of themselves as being hard working, physically active producers. This 'rural producer' contrasts with urban workers who are seen as sedentary 'paper shufflers' (Focus Group Two). For example, in Figure 3.13 storm clouds and gumboots become signifiers for the farmers since farmers are 'outdoors' and

are faced with arduous natural phenomena, while urban workers are indoors. This contrast reinforces Berg's (1994) idea of a 'frontier discourse' underpinning New Zealand masculinity, which valorises the rural at the expense of the urban (see my discussion in Section 2.2).

The headline in Figure 3.13 links this rural 'toughness' to the restructured rural sector in an obvious way. It reads, "Farming in the '90's is tough, so are these new 4x4's", where the "4x4's" are a new design of gumboot which are intended to cater for '90's farmers. Therefore, while I have argued that the constructed identity of farmers since 1984 has stressed their multiple skills, it is also apparent that traditional attributes such as physical strength and toughness are still seen by farmers as being important.

A third, more subtle, example of this alignment of the characters in the advertisements becoming more aligned to the post-1984 "farming as business" construction of agriculture is illustrated by Figure 3.14. This full page advertisement for A.N.Z. Bank farm finance features a photograph of former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Keith Holyoake with the slogan "How would 'Kiwi Keith' manage a farm in this day and age?"

Sir Keith Holyoake was Prime Minister in 1957, and then from 1960 to 1972, making him New Zealand's third longest serving Prime Minister. This period coincided with the peak of the post-war economic boom, which contributed to his reputation as a skilled and popular leader. He was also the archetypal 'Kiwi', having been born in the Wairarapa and later become a farmer in the Motueka district, while building a reputation as an excellent sportsman (McLaughlan 1995), before representing Motueka and then Pahiatua in Parliament.

The first paragraph of the text of the advertisement reads:

"Remembering the particular skills with which 'Kiwi Keith' managed this country, we've no doubt he'd still manage a farm more than competently today. Although perhaps a little differently"

Thus, the advertiser is trying to link the sound economic management of New Zealand by Prime Minister Holyoake to the sound economic management that is required by today's farmers. The second paragraph goes on to link 'Kiwi Keith's' astuteness, and therefore

the astuteness of today's farmers, to the need for these farmers to seek the help of the A.N.Z. bank. It reads:

"For example, being an astute person, he'd recognise the need to use the skills and strengths of others to supplement his own"

Thus, in comparison to the two previous advertisements that I discussed, the message here is less obvious but still similar. All three advertisers emphasise the way that farming has changed and, consequently, the need for "today's" farmer to have sound financial skills.

This conclusion is similar to that reached by Brandth (1995) with reference to the portrayal of gender in tractor advertisements in Norway. This work investigates changes in agricultural masculinity by exploring the links between technology and masculine identity. Brandth concludes that, as the tractor is becoming more computerised and more comfortable, new images of masculinity are evolving. In simple terms, she argues that the ideal of the farmer as a strong, dirty, manual mechanic is giving way to a more business-like masculinity. In New Zealand, I have argued that a similar process is taking place. However, I believe that change due to the evolution of technology, such as that discussed by Brandth, is comparatively less noticeable than the changes which can be attributed to the economic restructuring of the rural sector since 1984.

In this New Zealand example, the apparent irrelevance of New Zealand farmers' claim to be the 'backbone of the country' since 1984 has, I believe, had the effect of re-aligning farming with the "conventional" construction of agriculture at the expense of the previous constructions which were linked to the idea of 'national interest'. The rejection of this 'national interest' approach, (which was represented by the post-war 'indicative-planning' era), by Government in the period since 1984 has seen farmers adopt more 'market orientated' and 'productivity' based rhetoric's. As the farmer in Focus Group Two argued:

"I think that farmers in general have been looked down on by urban dwellers as maybe country bumpkins that don't really know what they're doing, and I think that's totally wrong. Most of us here are running a farm that's probably worth a million plus, and I mean we've all got to do it reasonably well or otherwise we just don't survive".

This comment illustrates the underlying philosophy of the farmer in terms of his relationship with wider society. He is anxious to reject any ideas that I (as a non-farmer) may have regarding the 'business' of farming and reinforces this by referring to himself and the other members of the focus group as 'million dollar' farmers. As a 'million dollar' farmer the added implication is that he is skilled in farming and finance.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that the linkages between hegemonic masculinity and the hegemonic discourses of farming are rooted in the ideas summarised in the work of Connell (1995), which I discussed in my earlier chapter on masculinity (see Chapter Two). This idea was that *production relations* are an important determinant of gender identity within a capitalist society. Therefore, I believe it is New Zealand's economic origins and the history of rural restructuring in the 1980's, which I summarised in Chapter One, that allow a geographical, historical and cultural understanding of Connell's ideas as economic conditions altered in post-1984 New Zealand. New Zealand's colonial past, and the subsequent ties to the 'Mother Country' as "Britain's farm" (see Roche 1996), led to the creation of a strongly male-orientated culture that provided the starting point of this association between the dominant agricultural and the dominant masculine discourses.

Thus, I chose to focus on a semiotic analysis of the main signifiers, the overall paradigm, and the intertextual references within the advertisements that I analysed, in an attempt to find some evidence of significant change in the hegemonic discourse since 1980. Understanding this change then allowed me to link rural restructuring to changes in rural masculinity.

Liepins (1996), with particular reference to Australia/New Zealand, suggests that rural discourse draws on hegemonic discourses of both masculinity and agricultural production. Thus, the hegemonic form of masculinity within which men are *white*, *bourgeois*, and *heterosexual* is combined with the hegemonic form of agricultural production which is said to be based on *science*, *productivity*, *market economics* and

*physical labour*. Walter (1995) also identifies competing definitions of agriculture within North American farm imagery. He defines these competing discourses as the “farming as business” paradigm and the “farming as way of life” paradigm. In this chapter I have argued that the “farming as business” discourse, with its emphasis on *productivity, technological sophistication, management savvy* and *independence* has been ‘re-invigorated’ and ‘re-centralised’ within New Zealand agriculture in response to the changes since 1984. This has led to a shift in self-identity from ‘hard working’, ‘true-blue’ New Zealanders, to one of farmers as ‘million dollar’, highly skilled business men.

I went on to argue that the conventional/business and alternative/way of life alliances can usefully be understood as two halves of a binary opposition<sup>19</sup> within which the “conventional/farming as business” paradigm is privileged at the expense of the “alternative/farming as way of life” paradigm. Therefore, the “alternative” farmer who, within the modern agrarian myth, is seen as a businessman who balances profit needs with such non-economic goals as environmental quality, family life and community vitality, is devalued at the expense of the “conventional” farmer (Walter 1995). For example in my Focus Groups (see Section 4.2) ‘alternative’ goals such as “farming in an environmentally friendly way” and “working for/taking part in the rural community” were ranked lower overall than ‘conventional’ goals such as ‘receiving maximum personal income’ and ‘becoming more skilled at farming’. As I argued above, this “conventional” farmer is an innovative, progressive, aggressive and highly productive *business manager*.

This “conventional”, business orientated narrative can be seen as similar to Liepins’ conception of the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in Australia/New Zealand, as both feature productivity, and stress the role of technology/science and good management (“business orientated”, “market economics”, management savvy”) in defining ‘successful’ agriculture. Yet, in contrast, Liepins definition also incorporates “physical labour”, an element which seems closest to “hard work” in Walter’s “farming as way of life” definition, and which includes connotations of “bucolic simplicity” and “closeness to

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<sup>19</sup> *Binary opposition* draws on the work of Umberto Eco (for example Eco 1965). See Appendix A.



the land” (Walter 1995). Thus, I argue that Liepins’ understanding of the Australian/New Zealand hegemonic definition of agriculture cannot be understood as either analogous to Walter’s “farming as way of life” or to his “farming as business” narratives. Instead, the Australasian discursive frame must be understood as a combination of both of these discourses/narratives. This came through in my Focus Groups (see Section 4.2) when I asked farmers to rank their goals. The highest ranked goals were not consistently those which could be aligned with the ‘conventional’ paradigm. For example, in Focus Group One the goals “Providing for your children’s future/Having the best possible family life” were ranked second out of nine (see Table 4.2).

However, evidence for a broader discursive change can be seen in the way in which the general content of the farm advertisements that I analysed has undergone a subtle change during the 1980-1995 period. While the use of (largely) the same signifiers has allowed me to identify a semiotic *paradigm* for the advertisements, which describes the way in which the typical signifiers are combined and related, in overall terms the advertisements have reflected the way that farming risk has become privatised in the post-1984 period (McKenna, Roche and Le Heron 1998). The response to this by farmers has been to (re)construct themselves as ‘businessmen’, the equivalent of their city cousins, yet at the same time superior due to their role as physically active ‘producers’, rather than sedentary ‘paper shufflers’.

I argue that one example of this is the increase in the number of Banking and Insurance advertisements in 1990 and 1995 in comparison to 1980 and 1985. The restructuring of the rural finance industry had opened the market for commercial farm financiers, but the advertisements used by these commercial providers reflected the way that farmers had changed their identity to accommodate these structural changes. As my focus group respondents made clear (see Chapter Four), farmers now saw themselves as rural ‘businessmen’, and were keen to adapt to the structural environment by taking on the rhetoric of this construction. The advertisements that I used as examples (Figures 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14) illustrate this change in an obvious manner.

Significantly, the portrayal of the ‘typical farmer’ (see, for example, Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6,

and 3.7) was consistent throughout my research period (1980-1995) in terms of sex (male), approximate age (30-50) and 'race' (New Zealand European/Pakeha). As I argued in Section 3.2, this is consistent with the 'traditional' conception of New Zealand masculinity that is argued to be hegemonically powerful (see, for example, Berg 1994, Phillips 1987, 1996)

On a wider level, this also corresponds closely to the findings of Liepins (1996), whose research area and approach were similar to my own. Liepins found that, in a number of advertisements featured in farming magazines in both New Zealand and Australia, the characters featured in the publications overwhelmingly matched a hegemonic definition of rural masculinity. The corollary of these typical male representations, is that women are marginalised and are constructed in ways that are socially subservient. For example, women are often assumed to be responsible for domestic labour. Because this labour is constructed in opposition to masculine work, Liepins (*ibid.*) argues that women are usually absent from farming advertisements. My findings, in both my focus groups and in my semiotic analysis, reinforce this conclusion.

In the next chapter I will contrast these findings on the textual representation of rural masculinity with the results of my focus groups with farmers.



Figure 3.1: *Straight Furrow* (May 8th 1995), 48 (17), page 13.

# “Good. Good. Good.”



That's how Alberto mixed cropping failed. No, the Copeland wanted up his experience with new Gaucha machines.

Gaucha seed treatment is an innovation in pest management.

The new active ingredients in Gaucha provides protection against grass grub for optimum establishment.

Such was the case on the Copeland farm after almost two years. No more reports of seedling loss, no more grass grub and then "Good."

He was just as pleased with the ease of using Gaucha as with the effectiveness and pest control by grass grub.

Gaucha seed treatment is simple, application was good for.

Using Gaucha seed treatment and all Gaucha track of seedling loss was good.

Gaucha is an effective even better product.

For seed.

Gaucha - the new dimension in pest control.



Seed Treatment  
Bayer Insecticide  
**Gaucha**



**Bayer**

Registered Trademark of Bayer AG, Germany

**Figure 3.2:** *Straight Furrow* (May 8th 1995), 48 (17), page 27.



Bryn & Marise James, BNZ National Sharemilkers of the Year 1994.

## Share in the profit

Bryn and Marise James of Taranaki are profiting from what they describe as "farming on the edge". Winning the 1994 National Sharemilker of the Year award has brought them prizes and rewards worth thousands of dollars. More importantly, they've profited from farming at the limits of an all grass system by achieving top commercial results - a 22.6% return on equity before tax. Results like that don't happen by chance. The James' success is based on farming with figures, where careful consideration and scrutiny of all the options precedes effective decision making.

When it comes to breeding, the James have chosen the profit option - Premier Sires. "We've been with Livestock Improvement Premier Sires right through," Bryn says.

"It's a value for money issue." Choosing Premier Sires as the most profitable breeding option is no surprise. The majority of New Zealand dairy farmers use Premier Sires from Livestock Improvement. Premier Sires consistently offers the highest Total BI bulls with proven reliability and is the most economical way to breed high producing, easily managed, efficient herds that deliver increased profit.



So while awards are reserved for only a few, all farmers can share in the profit by using Premier Sires.

*Proud sponsors of the Sharemilker of the Year competition.*



Figure 3.3: *New Zealand Farmer* (September 14th 1995), 117 (36), page 6.

"When it comes to worm treatment, I naturally use the most effective product within my rotation drenching programme. But what's also important is cost."

"Valbazen has always been my No 1 choice. I've found it to be a most cost effective treatment that gives me a broad spectrum protection."

"The concentrated formula means 30% more doses from the same pack, and over a year, that can add up to some pretty major savings."

"With Valbazen Extra and new Valbazen Combo, I now have a four year annual drench rotation programme and protection against the onset of resistance."

"Ask your rural stockist about it, and don't forget the free drench gun with 2 x 20 litre packs."

"Give 'em a shot of Valbazen"

Ian Kirkpatrick, former All Black and Grubbs sheep farmer.

**FREE GUN**  
With every 2 x 20 litre packs sold.



# NOW VALBAZEN GIVES YOU DOUBLE THE CHOICE FOR YOUR ROTATION PROGRAMME

**EWES DOCKING  
DRENCH**



**Pfizer Animal Health**

MSD Animal Health Division, a Division of Pfizer Inc. 247112, Valbazen. Registered trademarks of Pfizer Animal Health.

**NEW VALBAZEN® COMBO**  
DUAL PROTECTION  
AGAINST PARASITES  
DUAL PROTECTION  
AGAINST RESISTANCE

"This season I'm using the ultimate in combination drenches because it combines the two successful drench families, omeprazole and levamisole."

"So any worms resistant to one will be wiped out by the other."

"Valbazen has proven broad spectrum protection against all major parasites, including adult liver fluke. Now it has levamisole as well for dual effectiveness against resistance."

"With Valbazen Combo, I'll also enjoy the benefits of minerals including selenium and Valbazen Combo will extend my drench rotation programme for another year."

"Ask your rural stockist about it, and don't forget the free gun with every 20 litre pack."

"With Valbazen Combo, one shot kills the lot."

Ian Kirkpatrick, former All Black and Grubbs sheep farmer.

**FREE GUN**  
With every 20 litre pack sold.





Because SmithKline have been working close to the New Zealand farmer it became apparent there was a need for a sheep and cattle drench that controlled not one or two, but all worm problems.

For both sheep and cattle, the drench would have to effectively control Roundworm, Lungworm and Tape.

Aid control of Mature Liver Fluke.

And destroy Worm and Fluke eggs.

If a drench could be developed to tackle these worms it would, in effect, mean no doubling up with other drenches, no extra expense, no problems.

SmithKline responded with Valbazen.

And the results have been so good that in just two short years you have made Valbazen one of New Zealand's fastest growing sheep and cattle drenches.

Valbazen. The drench for healthy and good looking stock, that works, just as hard as you.



Smith Kline & French (N.Z.) Limited, 1 Ngare Ave, Epsom, Auckland.  
Licensed under the Animal Remedies Act 1967. Tel: 3386 3566

NZ FARMER, May 22, 1980



Figure 3.4: New Zealand Farmer (May 22 1980), 101 (10), page 8.





# HERE'S THE BIG NEWS IN SMALL BALERS



## The RC121 Round Baler

The new RC121 Round Baler from AIC International has got versatility, reliability and simplicity bed down in one.

### Big on Reliability

We've proved it! Before release, we tested two RC121's New Zealand wide on a variety of crops in all conditions. They produced 6000 bales, totally trouble-free. That's performance you can depend on.

### Big on Versatility

The RC121 gives you a big choice of bale sizes — 4R wide and anything from 2ft to 6ft in diameter. Its dual spring density control ensures bales are compact and well formed. And wider belts produce fully lined, firm bales with better edges.

Different crops are no problem either. The RC121's open throat design bales them all, wet or dry.

### Big on Simplicity

The RC121 couldn't be easier to use, even for inexperienced operators. Standard equipment includes a safety clutch, bale counter, electric twine control and bale size indicator.

*See your AIC International branch or dealer for a better deal*

**AIC INTERNATIONAL**

BRANCHES AND DEALERS NATIONWIDE



Figure 3.6: *Straight Furrow* (January 23 1985), 43 (43), page 5.

**Figure 3.7:** *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* (May 1990), 55 (11), back cover.



At Alfa-Laval, we have developed and continue to develop products of the highest quality - products that produce results for the farmer, and are supported by an advanced dealer network. A network that is committed to ensuring prompt, knowledgeable and efficient service.



**ALFA-LAVAL**  
"On the farm — where it counts!"  
Head Office: Sandwich Road, Hamilton.  
P.O.Box 10-241, Hamilton.



Figure 3.8: *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* (May 1985), 60 (11), page 56.

# INCREASE COW THROUGHPUT EFFICIENCY!

## Alfa-Laval has the answers

- **EXPERT ADVICE...**  
Alfa-Laval can give you expert advice on all your milking equipment requirements. Alfa-Laval offers a complete, professional approach to planning your new shed or shed improvements.
- **RELIABLE, PROVEN EQUIPMENT...**  
Alfa-Laval milking machinery is the fastest on the market. Thousands of farmers have proven the value of their reliable Alfa-Laval products, and improved their own profitability.
- **LOCAL BACK-UP SERVICE...**  
Alfa-Laval provides expert after-sales back-up service close to you. Your Alfa-Laval serviceman is only a phone call away.
- **CENTURY OF EXPERIENCE...**  
With a century of product development and growth behind it, Alfa-Laval offers the technology to meet modern farmers' needs.



Planning your new shed or extensions with Alfa-Laval is easy... here, agent David Perry (left) discusses shed requirements with Putaruru farmer Peter Young.

**Contact your local Agent NOW!**

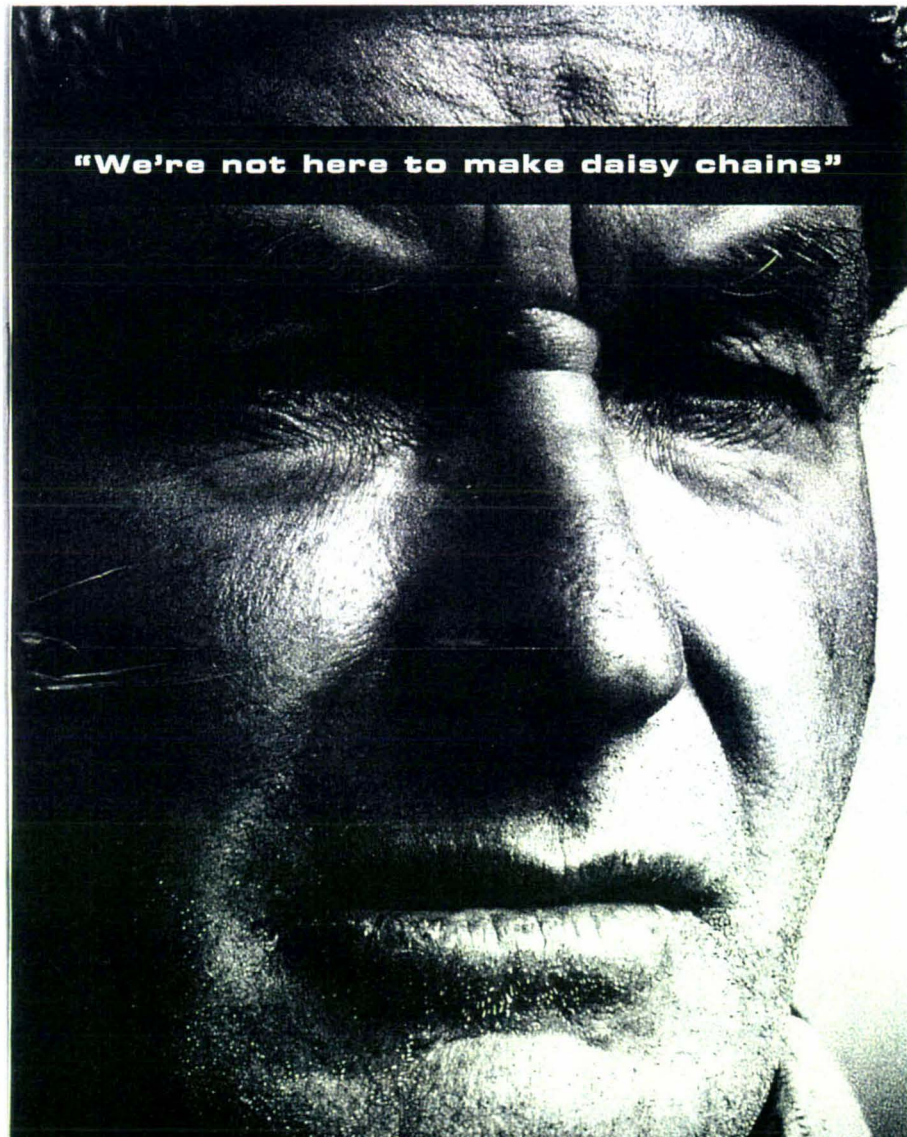
*Choose carefully, choose quality!*

# ALFA-LAVAL


ALFA-LAVAL (NZ) LTD P.O. Box 10-241 Hamilton Phone (071) 496-020

GHS/COM 1983

Figure 3.9: *New Zealand Farmer* (September 7 1995), 117 (35), page 43.



**"We're not here to make daisy chains"**



Hard work? Navara can take it. Look underneath. A welded six cross-member chassis. Handles whatever you throw at it. Single cab, double cab, 2 or 4 wheel drive. Petrol or Diesel. See your dealer. End of story.

**NISSAN**

**THE TOUGHEST UTE DOWN UNDER. NAVARA**



# What's the best way to cover seasonal shortfalls?



Every farmer's needs are different depending on the type of farm and varying seasonal requirements.

The Bank of New Zealand offers a Farm First Overdraft that lets you smooth your cash flow between your high income months and the rest of the year.

## Total business advantages

Bank of New Zealand Farm First is designed to meet all your financial requirements in one simple, flexible package. Farm First also recognises and rewards the total business you have with us.

Learn as well as deposits, like your Farm First Call Account, all day a part. You simply add up the amounts you owe and the amounts you have in savings to come up with your Bank of New Zealand group balance.

You qualify for an immediate 100% rebate on your overdraft facility fee if your group balance with the Bank is greater than \$50,000.

You also earn interest when your cheque account balance is in credit and your group balance is greater than \$50,000.

You have access to your funds through your chequebook, by phone and by card. There are two transaction fee options: either a monthly bank fee that works as a set pays method, or a fixed monthly fee that allows more certainty in your financial planning.

## You're in control

A Bank of New Zealand Farm First Overdraft gives you the flexibility to cover seasonal fluctuations in farm income and unforeseen circumstances.

## With a Bank of New Zealand Finance Manager

Finance Manager you can discuss your needs and the amount of credit you require for working capital on proposed income.

Call a Finance Manager at any branch of the Bank of New Zealand or phone 0800 502 903 any time between 9am and 5pm weekdays.

It could be the best way to cover your seasonal shortfall.

0800 502 903



*tailoring banking to your needs*

Normal lending criteria and an establishment fee of up to \$2,000 may apply.  
A requested inspection is available from any branch of the Bank of New Zealand.

Figure 3.10: *New Zealand Farmer* (September 7 1995), 117 (35), page 22, 23.

Figure 3.11: *Straight Furrow* (January 25 1990), 45 (49), page 19.



Once, physical effort  
paid off.



Now, fiscal matters  
matter more.

Farmers who use it — recommend it.

The face of farming has changed significantly over the years. The old ways are changing. There's a new breed of farmer, more at home with technology their fathers never even dreamed of, than they are with traditions that go back generations.


Even basic essentials like fertilisers have changed. Supergro, made by Farmers Fertiliser Ltd., is the result of on-going trials and developments undertaken to guarantee the country's farmers only the most efficient and cost effective fertiliser possible. We are not resting on our laurels. Further developments are underway, and farmers in *all* regions will benefit as a result.

So, even though less physical effort is required of today's progressive, successful farmers, more attention to fiscal matters is demanded. And Supergro pays dividends. Talk to your local Farmers Fertiliser rep. about your requirements.

Supergro. Made by Farmers Fertiliser Limited.



Figure 3.12: *New Zealand Farmer* (January 18 1995), 117 (2), page 39.



*Inside* the coat there's a BANKER.  
But inside the banker *there's a farmer.*


Search the surface of one of our  
VERVE PASSPORTS and you won't  
find a city person with a lifetime  
of training. Instead, you'll find  
somebody with a REAL affinity for  
the land and for the people who  
live off it.

Somebody who knows first-hand  
what it's like to be a farmer.  
Somebody who understands the  
special requirements that farmers  
have of their bank.

At THE NATIONAL BANK we have  
over 300 specialist Rural Managers  
dedicated to farm banking, to  
lending and to farmers. Because at

THE NATIONAL BANK we believe that  
it's only by understanding farming  
first that we make a better bank  
for farmers. And it's what makes  
good sense to talk to us.

If you'd like to talk to one of our  
Rural Managers, call your nearest  
NATIONAL BANK branch.



**The National Bank**  
The thoroughbred among banks

A registered prospectus may be obtained from any branch of The National Bank of New Zealand Limited. That Bank's approval is subject to the Bank's usual banking criteria apply.



**Figure 3.13:** *New Zealand Farmer* (May 3 1995), 117 (17), page 14.

# FARMING THE '90'S IS TOUGH, SO ARE THESE NEW 4X4'S.

New Zealand farming has changed — and we've changed with it. The heavy use of farmbikes, deer and new exotic animal farming, with an increasing need for long wear, for comfort and protection, have led New Zealand farmers to ask us for new products like these — the mid length **4x4's**, **REBELS** and the knee length **4x4's**, **WARRIORS**.

Starting with the traditional Skellerup quality hand built construction, our designers, orthotics specialists and farmers like you have helped develop these 4 X 4's — with many new features designed to cope with today's farming

- extra protection on top of the foot and ankles
- additional inner sole cushioning for all day comfort
- a unique moulded mud grip/release sole unit
- Skellerup's unique tyre formulation rubber and natural rubber impregnated fabric construction — better than anything in the market

**REBELS** and **WARRIORS** still remain important and proud names to New Zealand farming and will continue to be so. But we knew it was time for a new generation gunboot. You know you need really tough products for today's hard working conditions — these 4 X 4's will meet the challenges of the 90's. You can get them at all major rural suppliers.

**SKELLERUP RURAL**  
**WORK IT HARD**

SHIELD PROTECTION PANELS ON TOP OF FOOT AND HEEL

ANKLE PROTECTION PANEL ON REAR HEEL OF FOOT

UNIQUE TYRE FORMULA RUBBER FOR EXTENDED LIFE

MULTI LAYER NATURAL RUBBER IMPREGNATED FABRIC CONSTRUCTION

THE UNIQUE Moulded MUD GRIP MUD RELEASE SOLE

New Zealand farming has changed — and we've changed with it. The heavy use of farmbikes, deer and new exotic animal farming, with an increasing need for knock wear, for comfort and protection, have led New Zealand farmers to ask us for new products like these — the mid length **4x4 POWER** and the knee length **4x4 MARATHON**. Starting with the traditional Skeltenip quality hand built construction, our designers, orthotics specialists and farmers like you have helped develop these 4x4's — with many new features designed to cope with today's farming.

- extra protection on top of the foot and Achilles
- additional inner sole cushioning for all day comfort
- a unique moulded mud grip/release sole unit
- Skellerup's unique tyre formulation rubber and natural rubber impregnated fabric construction — better than anything in the market.

**RedBands** and **Pearse** still remain important and proud names to New Zealand farming and will continue to be so. But we knew it was time for a new generation gumboot.

You know you need really tough products for today's hard working conditions — these 4 X 4's will meet the challenges of the '90's. You can get them at all major rural suppliers.



**SKELLERUP RURAL**  
**WORK IT HARD**

SHOED PROTECTION PANELS ON TOP OF FOOT AND HEEL

ANGLE  
PROTECTION  
PAD ON  
INNER SIDE  
OF BOOT

UNIQUE  
TYPE FORMULA  
BLUNDER FOR  
EXTENDED LIFE

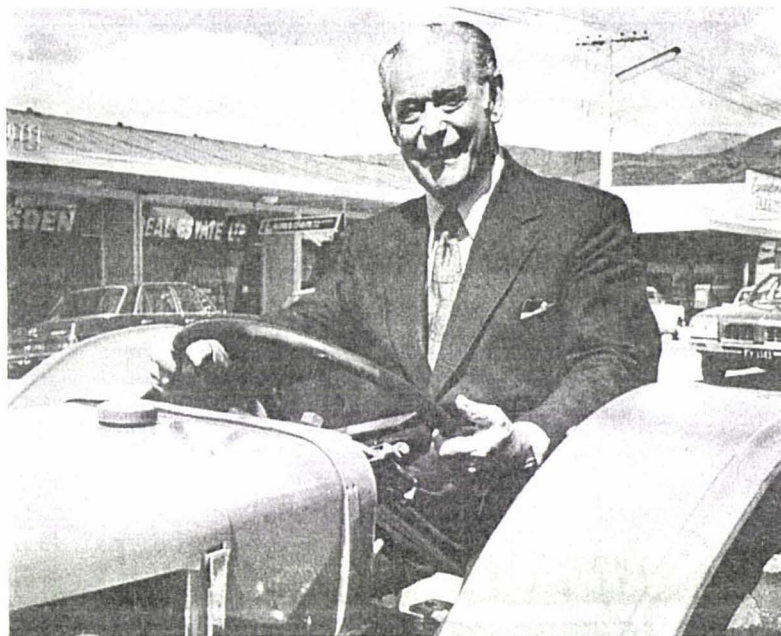
MULTI-LAYER  
NATURAL  
RUBBER  
IMPREGNATED  
FABRIC  
CONSTRUCTION

THE UNIQUE  
MOULDED, MUD GRIP  
MUD RELEASE SOLE





Figure 3.14: *Straight Furrow* (May 9 1990), 46 (7), page 5.



## How would 'Kiwi Keith' manage a farm in this day and age?

Remembering the particular skills with which 'Kiwi Keith' managed this country, we've no doubt he'd still manage a farm these days competently today. Although perhaps a little differently.

For example, being an astute person he'd recognise the need to use the skills and strengths of others to supplement his own.

Which is where we at ANZ Bank believe that our services come in. At ANZ we can provide all the financial skills so let you run your farm as you should. As a business.

We can provide you with a total Farm Finance Package. The key to understanding the package is simple: the word Flexibility.

Take the Farm Equity Credit Line for

example. With it you use the equity you have in your property to provide funds, refinancing and repaying to suit your needs.

Flexibility also means being able to borrow funds for farm purchase or expansion for a term of 20 years. As you see, better, more, most banks only offer 15 years. Hardly flexible!

And with our Interest Reduction Facility we not only give you the opportunity to use surplus funds to reduce your loan but the consequent tax advantage, but you can also release the money if you need it.

So, is that flexible? Remember, that's the key to the Farm Finance Package. The flexibility to use your money to meet your needs. As simple as that.

If you'd like to find out more about the ANZ Farm Finance Package send in the coupon below.

Our banker will come in and see you for an ANZ Manager. He'll hand over booklets to see you if only to show how flexible.

For information on the Flexibility of ANZ Farm Finance Package, please send this coupon to:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SEND ME: ANZ Farm Finance Package Booklet  
ANZ Farm Finance Package Booklet  
**ANZ FARM FINANCE PACKAGE**  
Contact details on ANZ Farm Finance Package Booklet

## **Chapter Four: Focus Groups**

### **4.0 Introduction**

Jackson and Taylor (1996: 365) argue that audience response to advertisements is often a crucial factor when interpreting the effect and meaning of the signifiers contained within them. With this in mind when I designed my thesis research, I planned a number of 'focus group' type discussions with the target audience of the advertisements. On first reflection, these focus groups were designed to allay my own fears, and those I felt from other people, of my semiotic reading being totally 'ungrounded' in an empirical reality. Later, I realised that, from a post-modern perspective, theory is said to inform the collection of the data itself, rather than being a 'tool' which can be applied to data which has been collected through 'theory-free' observation. As writers such as Sayer (1989, 1991) have argued, data which is supposed to be 'theory-free' is often privileged over that which is 'theory-laden' because the former is assumed to be more representative of 'reality'. In common with writers such as Berg (1994), I argue that this 'reality' is also informed by theory.

Thus, during later reflection I came to see my focus groups as 'adding' to the information that I had gained through my semiotic analysis of advertisements. The different methodology of focus group research allowed me to collect information which complemented and extended the results that I obtained through semiotics, and which then allowed me to draw further conclusions from my analysis of advertisements. In the same way, my semiotic analysis had the effect of guiding and helping to inform the insights I gained from the transcripts of my focus groups.

With this in mind, I proceeded to conduct three focus-group discussions with between eight and eleven farmers per group. These farmers were all 'dry-stock' (primarily sheep and beef) producers from the lower North Island regions. The results, which I discuss in Section 4.2 of this chapter, lend weight to my conclusions in the previous chapter, which analysed the advertisements themselves. In terms of the way in which the farmers read the advertisements, I was also interested to note that advertisements are often reworked,

resisted or altered during their consumption.

#### 4.1 Recruitment

Initially, I intended to advertise for participants for my focus groups in the *Evening Standard* (Palmerston North) newspaper. However, through consultation with friends, other students and interested academic staff, I became sceptical that this method would prove workable.

Firstly, I doubted that the advertisement would provide me with sufficient numbers of participants, and secondly, I doubted whether the advertisement would provide me with participants from my desired demographic. Since this thesis is primarily concerned with the construction of rural masculinity, it was important that the participants in my focus group were, as much as possible, representative of the 'typical New Zealand farmer' demographic. The advice I received indicated that sufficient numbers of appropriate participants were unlikely to come forward when they had to respond to an advertisement.

The third problem that the advertisement method posed was logistic. The participants in my focus group would all have to arrive at the same time and at the same location. This requirement, given the wide dispersal of farmers as a group and the time of year (summer), as well as my inability to provide any tangible incentive, seemed unrealistic. As a result, I decided to 'piggyback' my focus groups on to pre-existing farm based discussion groups.

"Piggybacking" (see Krueger 1994), refers to solving recruitment and logistical problems by conducting the focus group amongst the members of an already established group. In my case I 'piggybacked' on to existing farm-based discussion groups. These pre-existing groups were co-ordinated by (paid) farm consultants.

The purposes of these existing farm discussion groups were to keep farmers 'up to date' with technical developments in farming, to help farmers make better decisions through discussion with the group and the consultant and, last but not least, to facilitate social

interaction (consultant 1, pers. comm. 1997). According to the consultants, these attractions were enough to persuade nearly all the farmers in the group's catchment region to attend. In turn, the farmers paid for the consultant to co-ordinate the group. Both of the consultants, who co-ordinated the groups that participated in my research, were employed by *Agriculture New Zealand*<sup>20</sup>.

The first focus group near Eketahuna was co-ordinated by a consultant from Masterton, while the second focus group was in Takapau, and the last focus group near Pongaroa were co-ordinated by a consultant from Dannevirke.

These consultant-guided discussion groups were based on farms. They usually consisted of the group convening at a members' farm, the selection of which was rotated around the group, at 12 or 12.30pm. After lunch, and after an initial briefing/discussion in an area such as a woolshed, the group would utilise four wheeled farm bikes or four wheel drive utility vehicles to travel around the farm. This 'field-trip' was directed by the owner/manager of the farm, and allowed for the sharing of opinions on various aspects of the farm land and livestock as they occurred at points along the trip. In particular, it allowed the co-ordinating consultant to view the farm and offer their opinion.

To conduct my research I arrived at the beginning of the discussion group meeting, and was allowed to address the farmers for a limited time during the initial lunch/briefing stage. In the first focus group I was able to conduct a five stage investigation consisting of: introduction/consent (see Appendix B); a written questionnaire; an identification of farming priorities prior to and post rural restructuring; a ranking of the farming skills required to be a "successful"<sup>21</sup> farmer prior to and post restructuring; and a discussion on how the farmers 'read'<sup>22</sup> farming advertisements. However, in the second and third

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<sup>20</sup> This organisation was formerly a part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and operated on a semi-commercial basis. However, as part of the overall philosophies of agricultural restructuring post-1984, the M.A.F. consultancy services were commercialised and became *Agriculture N.Z.*

<sup>21</sup> I went into the first focus group with a rather loose definition of a "successful" farmer. When I was challenged on it I firmed it up to become "a farmer who was achieving their goals".

<sup>22</sup> The term "read" is intended to work on two levels. Firstly, whether or not the farmers actually looked

focus groups the consultant did not allow me as much time to address the participants, so I was only able to complete the first, second and fourth stages.

In the next section I will discuss Focus Group One.

## **4.2 Focus Group Responses**

### **4.2.1 Focus Group One**

This first focus group was conducted on the 11th of December 1997 on a farm near Eketahuna. The venue was a woolshed.

This focus group was the most successful of the three that I conducted. I feel that this can be attributed to a combination of factors. One factor was that the participants in this focus group were members of a discussion group which had a different co-ordinating consultant than the other two groups. This consultant was more accommodating in terms of the time that I was allowed to address the group, which made the discussion more relaxed and in-depth. However, on reflection, the most important difference was probably the age of the participants. These participants in this first group were mostly middle aged, which meant they had a better idea of the changes farming had been through since 1984. This, in combination with the greater time available, allowed them to reflect and give their opinion more readily than those farmers in the second group who were a similar age, but did not have the same opportunity to speak. In this first focus group I was able to ask four verbal questions, whereas in the second and third focus group I was only able to ask two.

The second part of all three of my focus groups was the completion by the participants of a written questionnaire (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was designed to give me

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at the advertisements and, secondly, whether they agreed that the *portrayals* of farmers were an accurate representation.

some basic information about the focus group participants in order to compare this information with the census data that I discussed previously in chapter one. Complimenting these data were questions two, three and four of the questionnaire, which were designed to give me an impression of the socio-economic 'class' of the respondents. Next, I also asked some questions that were aimed at gauging the participants initial opinions of farm orientated newspapers/ magazines, and of the advertisements contained within them. The results are contained in tables 4.1, 4.4 and 4.6.



**Table 4.1** Focus Group One(Near Eketahuna, 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1997)

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5
Years farming	20	11	27	26	34
Farm owner?	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Total area	202ha		219ha	344ha	320
How did you learn farming?	learnt by doing, university	learnt by doing, agricultural college, open polytechnic courses	learnt by doing	learnt by doing, training farm, farm cadet (5 yr.), short courses.	Learnt by doing
Read farming magazines?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?		I read the free ones.	<i>N.Z.F., Straight Furrow</i>	<i>N.Z.F.</i>	<i>N.Z.F. (second hand)</i>
Opinion of magazines?	sometimes worth reading	always worth reading	always worth reading	always worth reading	always worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	sometimes read them	often read them.	often read them	sometimes read them	often read them
Partner work on the farm?	N/A	no	part-time	no	does accounts
Partner <sup>23</sup> work off the farm?	N/A	no	part-time	part-time	no
Age	36-45	25-35	36-45	36-45	46-55
Marital status	never been married.	married.	married	married	married

<sup>23</sup> This term was undefined in the questionnaire. I intended for it to mean "spouse", and I assume that most of the respondents understood it in the same way.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Respondent	6	7	8	9	10
Years farming	18	29	25	32	17
Farm owner?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Total area	410ha	469ha		76ha	250ha
How did you learn farming?	university	learnt by doing	learnt by doing (worked on a farm all my life)	learnt by doing	learnt by doing
Read farming magazines?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?	<i>N.Z.F., Straight Furrow</i>	<i>N.Z.F., Stagline, Deer Farmer</i>	<i>N.Z.F.</i>	<i>Wilson and Associates Weekly Report</i>	
Opinion of magazines?	sometimes worth reading (some articles)	always worth reading	often worth reading	don't know	often worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	hardly ever read them	often read them	sometimes read them	sometimes read them	hardly ever read them
Partner work on the farm?	no	yes		N/A	part-time
Partner work off the farm?	no	no		N/A	full-time
Age	46-55	46-55	46-55	46-55	36-45
Marital status	married	married	no longer married	never been married	married

Table 4.1 shows the responses to the questionnaire from the first focus group. From initial impressions, two main things are evident when this information is compared to the representations in the advertisements I analysed in the last chapter. First is that, like nearly all the characters in the advertisements, all the members of the discussion group are male. This is despite three out of the 10 respondents saying that their partners worked on the farm<sup>24</sup>. Secondly, the farmers are all in their middle to later years. These

<sup>24</sup> This statement presumes the farmers are heterosexual. However, I believe that this would be accurate for the vast majority of farmers, given their hegemonic status within New Zealand masculinity (See

findings match closely with the representations of farmers in the advertisements that I analysed (see Chapter Three).

On a wider level, they also correspond closely to the findings of Liepins (1996), whose research area and approach were similar to my own. Liepins found that, in a number of advertisements featured in farming magazines in both New Zealand and Australia, the characters featured in the publications overwhelmingly matched a hegemonic definition of rural masculinity. This hegemonic masculinity took two forms, one was a masculinity focused on assertiveness, education and authority, while the other constructed farmers as active, physically strong and managerially decisive. The corollary of these typical male representations, is that women are marginalised and are constructed in ways that are socially subservient. For example, women are often assumed to be responsible for domestic labour. Because this labour is constructed in opposition to masculine work, Liepins (*ibid.*) argues that women are usually absent from farming advertisements. My findings, in both my focus groups and in my semiotic analysis, reinforce this conclusion.

Further considerations from the data include:

- \* Most of my focus group respondents are married and are, therefore, likely to be in a heterosexual relationship. This corresponds to the hetero-normality of the hegemonic definition of New Zealand masculinity (see my discussion in section 2.2) which, in turn, is strongly connected with rurality.
- \* Nearly all of the farmers read some sort of farming publication. This shows that the representations in the magazines that I analysed are widely consumed and, therefore, especially powerful.
- \* There was a mixed response to the “how often do you read the adverts” question. Responses ranged from “hardly ever” to “often”. Despite this, it seems fair to generalise that most of the farmers who read farming magazines do take some notice of the advertisements.
- \* Most of the focus group owned their own farms. The size of most of these properties

ranged from around 200 hectares up to 400 hectares. Thus, in crude Marxist terms, most of the farmers could be considered to be part of the 'petit bourgeoisie'.

- \* Nine of the ten participants in this focus group considered that they learnt farming "by doing", and four out of ten stated that they combined this with some formal education such as at a University or Training Farm. This is significant because it reinforces the traditional rural stereotype that, as Berg (1994) argues, classified farmers as being *resourceful, independent, practical and capable*. Thus, formal education was seen as superfluous to being a successful farmer.

This rejection of formal education is also demonstrated by the way that the "Jack of all Trades" (Christie 1991: 1) has numerous skills but little formal training. Instead, the traditional rhetoric that surrounds farming stresses the need to 'get stuck in', and become successful through manual skill and effort (see my discussion in Chapter Two). This rhetoric is interesting in light of the discussions which I recorded in my three focus groups. In these discussions the farmers, while not rejecting the need for physical toughness, were keen to emphasise their role as 'businessmen', and the way that this required them to make full use of their mental as well as physical ability. As Christie (ibid.) makes clear:

"Today these skills (traditional farming skills) are just as necessary but recently the field of expertise for our modern day farmer is widening. The 1986 successful farmer is also a taxation specialist and a foreign exchange forecaster. His or her role as a secretary-clerk-bookkeeper-accountant is growing, making a Bachelor of Commerce degree useful. The farmer is also a financial expert (specialising in arranging loans)".

I argue that this is one indicator of the way in which the hegemonic construction of rural masculinity has changed from one of self reliance and physical labour, to one of mental ability *combined* with physical labour. This is a theme which I will develop further in the following sections of this chapter.

### *Question 1*

The first question that I asked was aimed at discovering some of what had changed in farming since 1984. To this end I used magnets and a whiteboard to display a number

of, what I considered to be, possible goals for the farmers in the focus group. These goals were:

- becoming more skilled at farming
- farming in an environmentally friendly way
- working for/taking part in the rural community
- becoming debt free
- having the best possible family life
- receiving maximum personal income from the farm
- providing for your children's future
- leaving the land in a better condition than it was when you began farming it
- having enough time for personal recreation

I asked the farmers to rank the goals from one to nine, with nine being lowest and one highest. Table 4.2 shows the ranking as determined by the respondents of focus group one.

**Table 4.2** Results of Question One for Focus Group One

1	<b>Becoming more skilled at farming.</b> Most of the farmers saw this as the number one priority, since almost all the other goals were thought to stem from achieving this aim.
2	<b>Providing for your children's future/Having the best possible family life.</b> These two goals were seen as being similar. They were rated highly because the farmers thought that they were fundamental to defining 'successful farming'.
3	<b>See entry for "2" above.</b>
4	<b>Having enough time for personal recreation.</b> Most of the farmers agreed that this was a reasonably high priority, especially since they felt that they were getting busier every year.
5	<b>Receiving maximum personal income from the farm.</b> This was tentatively placed fifth since income was seen to be important by almost everyone. However, it was accepted that this goal could be re-prioritised according to the life-stage of the farmer, or the condition of the farm. The farmers pointed out (as I had hoped they would) that maximum <i>personal</i> income is not the same as maximum <i>farm</i> income. This was seen to have implications for the amount of surplus that was extracted from the farm for personal consumption, as opposed to the amount which was re-invested in capital improvements.
6	<b>Farming in an environmentally friendly way and Leaving the land in a better condition than it was when you began farming it.</b> These were seen as being basically the same. The farmers agreed that farming in an environmentally sustainable manner was something that they were becoming more and more conscious of.
7	<b>See entry for "6" above.</b>
8	<b>Becoming debt free.</b> The farmers recognised that while this was a worthy goal, it was often a low priority. "Debt free is not as important as manageable debt" (farmer in Focus Group One). "The actual debt itself is irrelevant, it's just being able to manage it" (farmer, <i>ibid.</i> ).
9	<b>Working for/taking part in the rural community.</b> This was seen as being the lowest priority because the farmers thought that it could only come after other goals had been fulfilled.

I then asked the farmers what (if any) goals would have been differently prioritised in the early 80s, prior to the period of rural restructuring.

The farmers' answer in this focus group was that the goals would have remained largely the same. Their main comment was that each of the goals would have been easier to achieve in the pre-restructuring environment. The discussion is reproduced below. I



have marked the responses by the discussion group consultant, and by myself as facilitator. All other responses are by individual farmers, unless otherwise indicated, and each response on a new line indicates that a different farmer has responded.

(Myself) "How do you think that pre rural restructuring, the early eighties, how do you think that these priorities might have changed?"

"I reckon I've got busier and busier every year".

(Consultant) "Back then getting debt free was a much lower priority. I can remember when inflation was higher than the interest rate. So there was no incentive to get debt free, and you were guaranteed prices and things. In those days it was hard to become a bankrupt farmer".

"If you were any good the more you could borrow the more money you made".

"There was a guaranteed income anyway. Things were geared to provide a minimum income to the poorest producer".

"You see some of the old farmers and they are actually very technically skilled. If they put a fence in you knew it was going to be there for 50 years".

"But there wasn't so much sharing of academic farming knowledge".

(Myself) "So it was farming skills rather than farming knowledge?"

"The skills were self taught. You learnt by your mistakes. Now you can't afford to do that".

*-Transcript from Focus Group One, held on the 11th of December 1997.*

This discussion, and notably the last comment, is especially interesting in the light of the responses by this focus group to my questionnaire, which I summarised in the previous section. Nine of the ten participants in this focus group considered that they learnt farming "by doing", and only four out of the ten stated that they combined this with some formal education such as at a University or Training Farm. But these comments show how they believe that farming has become more skilful and demanding.

In the last statement, the belief that today's farmer needs both traditional skills as well as new theoretical skills is explicitly verbalised. Thus, for these farmers, their understanding of the skills required to become a successful farmer has been translated into a belief that

farming has changed since 1984.

Another change since 1984 emerged when I referred to how time for personal recreation would have been prioritised in the pre-restructuring environment. One focus group member commented:

“Personal recreation time tends to get sacrificed when you’re getting a place going. But you make time”.

Another said:

“Well you should do anyway”.

Finally the consultant for the discussion group said:

“Certainly that would be a big difference (between the two periods) if you looked at personal recreation time this year as opposed to 1980. There would be a large difference”.

So there was a definite consensus that it was more difficult to be financially comfortable on the farm in the current economic climate. Hence, greater levels of skill, knowledge and effort were required on the part of the farmer. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the farmers were careful to classify these levels of skill, knowledge and effort as being different from those of the “old farmers”. The skill required to build a lasting fence was presumably still valued by the farmers in this focus group, but they were careful to point out that farming today required a type of “academic” knowledge that wasn’t needed as much in the period prior to restructuring.

Again, this illustrates how they perceive farming has changed in the recent past. As I pointed out previously in this chapter, I believe that this change has resulted in a corresponding change in the construction of rural masculinity in New Zealand.

### *Question 2*

The second question that I asked the first focus group was: “What contributes to being a successful farmer?”. I asked the farmers to weight three possible factors, firstly in the 1990’s and then in the pre-restructuring period. These factors were:

- Factors beyond the farmer's direct control (e.g. macro economic policy).
- Good fortune (e.g. weather conditions).
- The farmer's skill/knowledge.

The farmers' responses are reproduced below.

"You should have marriage!" (laughs)

"That's good fortune!" (laughs)

"Skill and knowledge".

"You can marry into a farm and you still won't be successful".

"How do you define a successful farmer?"

"Achieving your goals, maybe".

"It doesn't matter, they're still not due to things beyond your control. You make your own luck".

"So it (the farmer's skill and knowledge) would have to be 60 or 70 percent".

"I'd say it would be closer to 90% actually".

(Consultant) "Generally you're comparing yourself with others around you in terms of a top farmer versus an average or poor farmer. Therefore, you're likely to have the same weather and environment (as the other farmers in your area)".

"What are you getting at with 'other factors beyond the farmer's control'?"

(Myself) "Prices of products, government decisions".

"You don't have control over them so you don't worry about them".

"You could have other factors such as Maori lease blocks being taken over, that's beyond your control, you know the Government's got the puller on that one. But that still wouldn't have an effect on your own successful farming skills, because that's out of your control".

(Myself) "But, in terms of year to year, are you still achieving your goals and having a decent lifestyle, and being a successful farmer that way? How do you think that these factors beyond your control affect that?"

"Quite a lot".

"Usually negatively".

"They can have a big effect, but I don't know that you can ever have a control over it".

(Consultant) "It won't change too much the profitability. Say you ranked everyone in this room, it (external factors) won't change the ranking it will only change the absolute figure of how much we're making. Like just now with the wool price, it's gone down 50 cents or a dollar, that's going to change your profit but it won't change the ranking overall".

"Yeah, but fortune, like if you sell your wool a week earlier and you might make 20 cents more".

"But that's not going to happen every year. You're not going to strike a lucky sale every year".

"But percentage wise one year in ten you're going to strike it".

"Basically your decision making counters a lot of those. There's certainly an element of luck in it on those sort's of things which you have no control over though".

(Myself) "How do these things differ from the early eighties? If you had a border line farm would you have been so worried about those things back then?"

"In the early eighties a lot of these things were camouflaged because of the fact that you were subsidised, and that's out of your control".

"The problem was that it was encouraging people to take on marginal blocks (farms) during that time. Once the crunch came then that emphasis totally changed and those people just got left high and dry".

(Myself) "What was the subsidy meant to achieve?"

"Encourage wool production".

(Consultant) "It was aimed at production. The Government was prepared to subsidise farmers because of the overseas currency that agriculture earned. At that stage we were very dependent on that".

"The land subsidies, they were passed on down to the freezing chain to keep the workers going".

(Consultant) "I suppose that back then there wasn't the same fluctuations in farm produce prices, and there was generally more profit around. It wasn't the same financial squeeze. So now farmers are much more aware of managing risk. If they balls the job up it's reflected in their asset, whereas before the government would come along and bail them out".

(Myself) "That's something I picked up, that farmers are much more responsible for the risks of farming now than they were in the eighties".

"And climatic problems too".

"When you get down to it farming's a business, and business must take care of their own risks".

"There was disaster relief and all those things so whenever there was a drought there was subsidies. Actually that encouraged people to not be so proactive or plan as thoroughly. They knew if it got dry that there would be feed subsidies or something like that, whereas now they live and die by their own decisions".

"So once again it pointed out that once you start subsidising things you lose track".

"It gives the wrong signals".

(Myself) "But at the same time, do you think that because farming is so important for New Zealand..."

"Was or is?"

(Myself) "Is, so do you think that Government should have a role to play?"

"No, no, it gives the wrong signals, and within any industry you have got to have the people that are making the best decisions and turning out the best product being the most successful, otherwise it fudges the market signals".

"The problem with Governments is that every time something is going well they want to fix it".

*-Transcript from Focus Group One, held on the 11th of December 1997*

I included the entirety of this discussion because I believe it clearly illustrates the fundamental beliefs of this group of farmers. As a number of comments show, these farmers strongly believe in self-reliance and the efficacy of 'free-market' production, and it took a leading question from me for them to even acknowledge that they were not completely in control of their own destiny. The consequences of the removal of agricultural subsidies seem to be viewed as almost completely positive, despite an acknowledgement of the loss of employment and the way that they seemed to be becoming "busier and busier" (farmer's response to question 1). This ties in closely with

the hegemonic construction of farming as being an independent pursuit, best suited to tough and self-reliant men (see Liepins 1996). Farming is 'hard work' and, therefore, the farmer has to be tough and hardened to survive.

This construction of farming would seem to be incompatible with a theorisation that stressed the increasing vertical integration and globalisation of agricultural industry, and the way that this process took self control out of the hands of farmers. Yet it also strongly hints at a change in the construction of hegemonic rural masculinity as the farmers tie 'toughness' and 'self-reliance' to wider constructions of business and efficiency. This comes across especially strongly in the comments by the farmers such as:

"When you get down to it farming's a business and business must take care of their own risks".

Another farmer said:

"There was disaster relief and all those things so whenever there was a drought there was subsidies. Actually that encouraged people to not be so proactive or plan as thoroughly. They knew if it got dry that there would be feed subsidies or something like that, whereas now they live and die by their own decisions".

When I referred to the need for government support:

"No, no, it gives the wrong signals, and within any industry you have got to have the people that are making the best decisions and turning out the best product being the most successful, otherwise it fudges the market signals".

These comments illustrate how fully the farmers have adopted the idea that 'the market' and 'competition' are the best ways of organising farm production.

Another important point to note from this transcript comes from the initial comments that the farmers made after I asked Question 2 (what do you think contributes most to becoming a successful farmer?). In response one farmer said "you should have marriage!". This comment was followed by laughter and then another farmer said, "yeah, that's good fortune!" (in reference to one of my five possible factors), which was again followed by laughter.



Although these comments were made in jest I believe that they are revealing of a number of aspects of rural New Zealand culture. Firstly, they acknowledge that the rural man is also a *family* man. This is the same point as that made by Phillips (1996) in reference to the key characteristics of the “kiwi” male (see section 2.2). Thus the “true blue New Zealander” (the Pakeha farmer) is family orientated and, therefore, heterosexual.

Secondly, the importance of marriage to the farmers in this first focus group indicates how much the productive unit of the family farm relies on the labour of women. Thus, I argue that farmers recognise the contradiction between this reality and the social construction of their occupation which strongly masculinises farm labour (see Liepins 1996). I believe that the two initial comments, made in Focus Group One, on the importance of marriage to becoming a successful farmer are an example of this.

### *Question 3*

The third question that I asked in focus group one was aimed at delving further into the farmers self perceptions that I anticipated would arise in question 2. I asked the farmers: “What are the personal qualities needed to be a successful farmer?”. I then presented them with five qualities and asked them to rate them according to their personal experience. These qualities were:

- farming skill
- physical toughness/strength
- farming knowledge
- mental toughness
- good luck

Table 4.3 shows the ranking as determined by the respondents of focus group one.

**Table 4.3** Results of Question Three for Focus Group One

<b>1</b>	<b>Farming skill/Farming knowledge.</b> These were seen as being basically the same.
<b>2</b>	<b>See entry for “1” above.</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Mental toughness/Physical toughness and strength.</b> These were seen to be approximately equal. The main difference was that the pre-restructuring period placed greater demands on physical ability, as it encouraged a lot of farm development. As one farmer commented;</p> <p>“then it was all head down and arse up, but it’s a different philosophy now. For me mental toughness would be a high one because it’s your determination one”.</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>See entry for “3” above.</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Good luck.</b> This option was not even discussed or acknowledged by the farmers, although, admittedly, I only had a short time available for discussion. This discounting of the role of luck is perhaps not surprising given the responses to question two, which illustrated that farmers believe in skill and hard work as being the most important factors underpinning their success.</p>

The ranking of the five options in this question, and the farmers’ comments, again illustrate how they perceive that farming has changed since 1984. They argue that farming today requires equal amounts of mental and physical toughness, and the highest priority is farming knowledge and skill. Unsurprisingly the lowest priority is luck, since, as they argued in question two, the skill and application of the farmer ‘makes your own luck’.

I believe that this prioritising of the qualities necessary to become a successful farmer indicates one way in which there has been a significant shift in the hegemonic masculinity of rural New Zealand. This shift has been from an identity founded on hard physical effort and privileged status as the ‘backbone of the country’, to one based on neo-liberal economic rationality. This has followed the relegation of farming to ‘just another’ area of production in New Zealand since 1984, a position driven by neo-liberal economic conceptions of the state.

#### *Question 4*

In this question I asked the farmers to comment on farm focused advertising in general. I also distributed some examples of farm advertisements from the early 1980's to stimulate discussion. The question I asked was, "Do you think that the people in the advertisements are based on real farmers?". I have reproduced the responses below.

"Some of those adverts are demeaning, they treat the farmer as the thick joe".

"You see it all the time".

"He's a low skilled, low intelligence person and it rubs me up the wrong way".

"I don't know about others but unless I'm in the market to be buying something you don't take any notice of the adverts ("yeah, yeah" from other farmers). It's probably a generalisation but town people might be more consumer orientated, so they're looking for somewhere to spend their money".

"Farmers probably follow a budget too, so if it doesn't allow them to buy the brand new tractor this year they ain't going to be looking at tractor adverts".

"No they're not".

(Myself) "So what is it about the ad's that you think belittles farmers?"

"There's one on T.V. Something to do with cables going through the back of this couple's farm, it might be *Transpower*. The guy says; "looks like they're digging something". It's the way they look, the way they speak, everything makes them look like a hick".

"They must be doing something right though because we are remembering these adverts".

"Not really, people are going to buy things anyway. Yeah, you are remembering, but not for the right reasons".

"I don't think it does the image of farmers any good when you are dealing with people in the wider community such as banks".

"Most of the ad's we're talking about are pretty extreme, but most of them aren't like that though".

(Myself) "So if you're going to buy drench are you choosing drench on the basis of those ad's or not?"

(Nearly every Farmer) "Naaah".

"You get professional knowledge from the people in the industry like the vets".

"Basically you go on cost".

“And the drench family”.

“The drench that meets your requirements, you get the cheapest one that qualifies”.

“Probably ad’s do tell you what products are out there, and that’s about all they do”.

“They’d probably find that some of the products would sell better if they were more informative in their advertising. I’ve just been reading this ad which tells you how to control your Californian thistles. That’s more of an interesting read to me than getting this shit in the mail”.

(Myself) “So the text is important too?”

“It is *the* important bit”.

“That goes back to farming skill, I think if you bear in mind that it’s a sales pitch, but still take it in then...”

“I take notice of a factual advert but otherwise I don’t notice”.

*-Transcript from Focus Group One, held on the 11th of December 1997*

This discussion is interesting for it’s main focus on how farmers ‘read’ advertisements. The farmers central claim is that they are unaffected by image creation and the ‘craft’ of the advertisements. Instead they look for the “factual advert” which informs, educates and thereby increases their farming skill. Despite this claimed disinterest in ‘image’, they are still concerned that farmers are sometimes portrayed as being less intelligent and knowledgeable than urban dwellers. This concern, that farmers were sometimes portrayed in a negative light intellectually, was repeated across all three of my focus groups. This also ties into my discussion in Section 3.2. Not only do advertisers avoid using ‘image’ to sell products, but farmers actively reject appeals to ‘image’. For example, as the farmers in Focus Group One commented:

“Probably ad’s do tell you what products are out there, and that’s about all they do”.

“They’d probably find that some of the products would sell better if they were more informative in their advertising. I’ve just been reading this ad which tells you how to control your Californian thistles. That’s more of an interesting read to me than getting this shit in the mail”.

(Myself) "So the text is important too?"

"It is *the* important bit".

"That goes back to farming skill, I think if you bear in mind that it's a sales pitch, but still take it in then..."

"I take notice of a factual advert but otherwise I don't notice".

This discussion shows how farmers are interested in the "factual advert", which informs them. In this way they show how they regard other styles of advertisement as being inappropriate for selling products to farmers.

The opening comments regarding the inaccuracy of the portrayals of farmers in advertising (e.g. "Some of those adverts are demeaning, they treat the farmer as the thick joe"), tie into my wider argument about the change in farmers' self perceptions since 1984. The farmers' are now keen to portray themselves as competent *business-people*, the equal of any urban dweller. This comes out in a later comment:

"Farmers probably follow a budget too, so if it doesn't allow them to buy the brand new tractor this year they ain't going to be looking at tractor adverts".

Here, the farmer seems to be arguing for a personal identity as a 'hard-nosed' effective businessperson, who is at all times rational and resistant to emotive decisions. That this identity is an important part of farming in the post restructuring environment is put beyond doubt by a subsequent comment:

"I don't think it (the 'hick' image) does the image of farmers any good when you are dealing with people in the wider community such as banks".

Here, the farmer shows how he views connections to the wider community in commercial terms. Obviously, 'money talks' in the restructured New Zealand economy, and the participants in this focus group recognised this and strove to adjust their personal identity to suit this reality.

#### **4.2.2 Focus Group Two**

**Table 4.4** Focus Group Two  
(Takapau, 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1998)

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5
Years farming	45	16	28	37	26
Farm owner?	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Total area	415ha			485ha	520ha
How did you learn farming?	learnt by doing	learnt by doing	learnt by doing, field-days, seminars	learnt by doing, agricultural college, discussion groups, field-days, reading, consultants, other farmers.	Learnt by doing, field-days, Researchers, University Academics.
Read farming magazines?	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?	<i>Straight Furrow, N.Z.F.</i>		<i>N.Z.F.</i>	<i>N.Z.F., Straight Furrow, Baker Bulletin</i>	<i>Straight Furrow, N.Z.F., Deer Farmer, Meat Board News, Wool report, Stagline</i>
Opinion of magazines?	Always worth reading		Often worth reading	Varies. E.g. N.Z.F is always worth reading, Straight Furrow is sometimes.	Always worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	Often read them		Sometimes read them	Sometimes read them	Often read them
Partner work on the farm?	no	no	part-time	no	part-time
Partner work off the farm?	no	no	part-time	no	yes
Age	56 plus	36-45	36-45	46-55	36-45
Marital status	married	married	married	married	married



Table 4.4 (continued)

Respondent	6	7	8
Years farming	15	35	30
Farm owner?	yes	yes	yes
Total area	640ha	412ha	170ha
How did you learn farming?	Learnt by doing, University	learnt by doing, training farm	learnt by doing
Read farming magazines?	yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?	<i>N.Z.F., Meat Producer, Wool Report, Straight Furrow</i>	<i>N.Z.F.</i>	
Opinion of magazines?	Often worth reading	Always worth reading	Often worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	Often read them	Sometimes read them	Often read them
Partner work on the farm?	part-time	part-time	part-time
Partner work off the farm?	no	no	no
Age	36-45	46-55	46-55
Marital status	married	married	married

**Table 4.4** (continued)

Respondent	9	10	11
Years farming	11	husband is the farmer (38 yr.)	23
Farm owner?	yes	yes	no
Total area	440ha	400ha	850ha
How did you learn farming?	Learnt by doing, University		learnt by doing, University
Read farming magazines?	Yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?	<i>N.Z.F.</i>	<i>N.Z.F., Straight Furrow, freebies.</i>	<i>Straight Furrow, N.Z.F.</i>
Opinion of magazines?	Often worth reading	Always worth reading	Often Worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	Sometimes read them	Always read them.	Hardly ever read them
Partner work on the farm?	No	yes	yes
Partner work off the farm?	N/A	no	no
Age	36-45	56plus	36-45
Marital status	Never been married	married	married.

Table 4.4 shows the responses to the questionnaire from my second focus group. Many of the conclusions that can be drawn from this table are the same that I drew from table 4.1. One difference is that one of the participants is a woman, and is the husband of one of the other farmers. She notes in the questionnaire that her “husband is the farmer” (see respondent 10, Table 4.4), which is predictable given the way that I have theorised the hegemonic construction of the identity ‘farmer’ (see Section 2.2). All of the other farmers are male and, again, all are in their middle to later years. These two things tie in closely with the representations in the advertisements that I analysed.

### *Question 1*

In this focus group I was only able to ask two questions in the time that I had available. This first question was the same as in focus group one, which aimed to discover some of what had changed in farming since 1984. I used magnets and a whiteboard to display a

number of what I considered to be possible goals for the farmers in the focus group. I then asked the farmers to rank these goals. The results are displayed in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5** Results of Question One for Focus Group Two

1	<b>Becoming debt free:</b> This was seen by the farmers as being everybody's ultimate goal, although it was recognised that this would probably be re-prioritised at different times.
2	<b>Becoming more skilled at farming:</b> This was seen as essential to being a successful farmer.
3	<b>Receiving maximum personal income from the farm:</b> This goal was rated highly by these farmers, but it was recognised that income was often sacrificed at the beginning of a farmer's career. As one farmer stated:  "When you're young and starting out it's probably not a very high priority in your goals, but as you get older I'd say it becomes a higher priority".
4	<b>Farming in an environmentally friendly way/Leaving the land in a better condition than it was when you began farming it.</b> These two goals were again recognised as being essentially similar, and they were given a high priority by the farmers. This number four ranking reflected their belief that farming sustainably was fundamental to staying on the land.
5	See entry for "4" above.
6	<b>Providing for your children's future:</b> This goal was seen as a priority of average importance. However it was recognised that in the current economic environment farmers were less able to financially support their children than in the past. For example one farmer commented:  "these days most people look at it as.... they give their children a good education and after that to a certain extent they're on their own, with the odd bit of help".
7	<b>Having the best possible family life/ Having enough time for personal recreation.</b> These goals were seen as being basically similar.
8	See entry for "7" above.
9	<b>Working for and taking part in the rural community:</b> The farmers saw this as being a higher priority for older farmers than it was for younger farmers. One farmer summed it up as:  "Well it's always there isn't it. You work and live in the community and your focal point is often the local school, and that's just part and parcel of it. You do it mainly because you want to, but it's just there. You're expected to do it and if you don't well...."

I then asked the farmers what (if any) goals would have been prioritised differently in the early eighties, prior to the period of rural restructuring. One farmer replied:

“Yeah, I think the being debt free wasn’t so important because interest rates were low, and it wasn’t such a focus I would have thought, although perhaps I’m wrong. I would say that the rural community would have been a much higher priority because people weren’t as mobile as they are now, and rural communities certainly, well they still do, but they had to stick together to survive”.

Another farmer said:

“The input costs of farming were much lower too. And, I don’t know when S.M.P.’s went out but they didn’t help the farming community, well I mean it helped them in the short term I guess, but it didn’t really help them in the long term. In the 70’s and 80’s farmers always had relatively good cash flows and they spent a reasonable amount of money because it was there to spend. Also the input costs were that much lower, I can remember when posts were a dollar, now they’re \$7.50. Hundreds of tonnes of fertiliser went on rather than tens”.

## *Question 2*

For this focus group, due to time limitations, I went directly to asking the farmers about their opinions of farming advertisements. I passed around some examples of advertisements from farming magazines and then asked the farmers to say if they took any notice of them. One farmer immediately commented:

“Yeah I notice it a lot, I’ve had a guts-full of it and I think the words ‘farmer’ and ‘country’ should be patented and anybody who wants to use them from town should have to pay a royalty to those who live in the country”.

I asked him if he was talking about T.V. advertisements as well and he replied:

“Yeah, because those two guys who drink *Speights*<sup>25</sup> while wrapped up in oilskins down south, and then when people ask me what I do and I say “I’m a Farmer”, well they put me in the same oilskin, beer-drinking category as what

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<sup>25</sup> *Speights* is a brand of beer that was originally brewed by a local brewery in Dunedin. It has since been incorporated into the *New Zealand Breweries* family of brands, but it is still marketed via a ‘traditional’ image which is based on farming and the ‘Southern lifestyle’.

they see on T.V. They don't do it consciously, I appreciate that.

"I think that farmers in general have been looked down on by urban dwellers as maybe country bumpkins that don't really know what they're doing, and I think that's totally wrong. Most of us here are running a farm that's probably worth a million plus, and I mean we've all got to do it reasonably well or otherwise we just don't survive".

The farmers went on to relate reading an advertisement to their need for a particular product. They claimed that if they needed to buy something then the advertisements were useful, because they gave an insight into the variety of products that were available. Unless they needed to buy something, they were unlikely to read the advertisements.

I then asked if they agreed with the first farmer that portrayals of farmers were usually negative. The farmers replied:

(Myself) "So, do you guys agree with David when he says that portrayals of farmers are usually negative?"

"In advertising they often are".

(David) "I think negative is perhaps the wrong term, I'd use incorrect".

"Yeah, I mean that *Ivomec* ad where the farmers are playing the tune on the fences, it's the same sort of thing".

"It's taking the mickey out of them isn't it".

"And while we don't mind that sort of thing occasionally, certainly if you're talking T.V. ads it seems to happen more than it does the other way".

(David) "But on the other hand if you'd mentioned that ad I'd have recognised it straight away, if you hadn't have mentioned *Ivomec* I couldn't have told you what drench was mentioned, because I appreciate the cleverness of the ad, but what they're trying to sell doesn't stick on me at all".

"Yeah it doesn't mean anything in terms of going out and buying it, well from my point of view it doesn't".

(Myself) "So would you say that price was the most important thing then....so if you were in the market for *Ivomec* would you take any notice of the ad?"

"No I wouldn't take any notice of the ad, no".

"The product has got to work well for you for a start".

"It's got to be a factual ad for you to read it, not just a glossy".

"Invariably there are so many similar types of products that it's a negotiating thing, I mean you can do a deal on a similar type of product".

Before I left one of the farmers reiterated what he saw as the place of farmers within New Zealand:

"I've got to be careful what I say here because I know there's an Aucklanders here (laughs), but really when you think about it there's a lot of people in this country who shuffle paper from one desk to another, and they get an income and a wage from it, but they actually don't achieve any real wealth for the country. OK, we're probably not at the moment ourselves, but I think people have to realise that other than exports and manufacturing we are the only other exporter of any substance. And if we and the dairy farmers and the like all decided that we were going to shut up shop tomorrow, New Zealand would be in a bad way".

(Consultant) "Well when you consider that primary industry still makes up most of our Gross Domestic Product".

"Especially when you have a hiccup in Korea and all of a sudden the tourists have gone from whatever to a trickle, it makes you think how vulnerable you really are".

(Myself) "So do you think that you should still have some government assistance then?"

"No, no".

(Myself) "You don't?"

"I just want a fair deal".

(Consultant) "A bit more political weight".

"I mean what do you think of the farmers in Marlborough getting \$83 000 for 200 odd farmers or whatever?"

(Myself) "Yeah, well I do think it's shocking when you think of it, as you say, that the productive sector of New Zealand is getting smaller and it's only farmers, really, that are holding it together".

"Well we've got so many thousand hectares in trees which is a 30 year Programme and they mightn't be worth anything then, we don't know yet (laughs)".

"Just drive through a few of the small towns and you'll see more and more empty



shops”.

- *Transcript from Focus Group Two, held on the 17th of February 1998.*

The opening comments in this passage by the farmer ‘David’ are remarkable for the way in which he summarises many of the changes that I argue have occurred within the hegemonic construction of rural masculinity since 1984. He is angry that the media uses stereotypical images in order to portray people that work at his occupation, farming, and argues that these images are inaccurate. Instead, he believes that farmers deserve to be represented as they are in ‘reality’, as ‘million-dollar’ businessmen, who are expert at their job because they have to be.

Underlying this assertion is still the strong current of self sufficiency and independence that has been a part of rural New Zealand masculinity since early settlement (see my discussion in Section 2.2). However, I argue that the basis for this independence has changed from the solely physical to include the mental. The privileged economic and social position of farming prior to 1984 had supported a culture of the rural that had sidelined the conventional rhetoric of commerce. However, the post-1984 effects on rural masculinity were marked, as farmers adopted a new discourse of business and mental ability that stressed their skill and claimed equality with other capitalist businessmen.

In the last part of the transcript above, the farmers are careful to reinforce their claim to being an important part of the New Zealand economy. As a researcher, I believe that the claim itself is beyond dispute, however the comment is revealing in the way it shows how farmers recognise that their status within New Zealand has changed. While recognising that this has had negative effects, they are always careful to frame their disapproval within the post-1984 ‘free market’ rhetoric, rather than push for measures similar to pre-1984 government support. Their claim for “a bit more political weight” (Consultant, Focus Group Two) is based on their position as primary producers in a country that still relies heavily on such production. For example, a farmer in Focus Group Two opposed any claims by an ‘Auckland paper shuffler’ for the ear of political decision makers:

“I’ve got to be careful what I say here because I know there’s an Auckland

here (laughs), but really when you think about it there's a lot of people in this country who shuffle paper from one desk to another, and they get an income and a wage from it, but they actually don't achieve any real wealth for the country. OK, we're probably not at the moment ourselves, but I think people have to realise that other than exports and manufacturing we are the only other exporter of any substance. And if we and the dairy farmers and the like, all decided that we were going to shut up shop tomorrow, New Zealand would be in a bad way".

Thus, the political landscape is understood as being different for farmers since 1984, but these changes are seen as fundamentally positive. However, as the comment above shows, the farmers believe that there is still some room for improvement, whilst preserving the benefits of 'free-market' production. This was a sentiment which was also expressed in my first focus group.

#### **4.2.3 Focus Group Three**

**Table 4.6** Focus Group Three(Near Pongaroa, 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1998)

Respondent	1	2	3	4
Years farming	7	3	13	14
Farm owner?	yes	no	yes	yes
Total area	236ha	550ha	364ha	540ha
How did you learn farming?	Learnt by doing. Also reading and asking questions.	Learnt by doing, University	Training farm, University	Learnt by doing, University
Read farming magazines?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you buy/subscribe to any?	<i>N.Z.F.</i>	<i>N.Z.F., Farm Equipment News, Rural News.</i>	<i>Wilson and Associates Ag' Letter</i>	<i>N.Z.F.</i>
Opinion of magazines?	Often worth reading	Always worth reading	Often worth reading	Sometimes worth reading
How often do you read the adverts?	Sometimes read them.	Often read them	Often read them	Often read them
Partner work on the farm?	part-time	part-time	part-time	part-time
Partner work off the farm?	part-time	no	no	no
Age	36-45	25-35	25-35	25-35
Marital status	married	de-facto relationship	married	de-facto relationship

**Table 4.6** (continued)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Years farming</b>	10	8	22	5	16
<b>Farm owner?</b>	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
<b>Total area</b>	530ha	330ha	292ha	370ha	319ha
<b>How did you learn farming?</b>	Growing up on a farm, correspondence courses, learnt by doing	Learnt by doing, University	Learnt by doing, University, short courses	Learnt by doing	University
<b>Read farming magazines?</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
<b>Do you buy/subscribe to any?</b>	Receive them second-hand	N.Z.F.	N.Z.F., Straight Furrow, New Zealand Dairy Exporter		no
<b>Opinion of magazines?</b>	Always worth reading	Sometimes worth reading	Always worth reading	Often worth reading	no
<b>How often do you read the adverts?</b>	Sometimes read them	Often read them	Sometimes read them		
<b>Partner work on the farm?</b>	she does "books"	part-time	no	no	
<b>Partner work off the farm?</b>	no	no	no	full-time	
<b>Age</b>	25-35	25-35	36-45	25-35	25-35
<b>Marital status</b>	married	married	married	de-facto relationship	married

Table 4.6 shows the responses to the questionnaire from the third focus group. As with focus groups one and two, all the members of the discussion group are male. This is despite six out of nine respondents saying that their partners worked on the farm. One difference in this focus group was that the participants were mostly younger than those in Focus Groups One and Two. The responses by these younger farmers to the questions that I posed were more limited than the older farmers in the other focus groups. I believe this was because they did not have the same first-hand experience of the pre-restructuring period as the older farmers.

Aside from this consideration, the conclusions that I drew from Focus Groups One and

Two are also applicable to Focus Group Three. These included the way that nearly all the farmers were married, and the way that they were likely to own large farms. They also were very likely to read farming magazines.

Significantly, one difference is the way that these younger farmers were more likely to have 'learnt farming' at University. The figures are revealing. In Focus Group Three there were seven farmers aged 25-35 and two aged 36-45. Of these, six had been to University. In Focus Group Two there were four aged 36-45 and the rest were aged 45+, from which two had been to University. Finally, in Focus Group One there was one farmer aged 25-35, four farmers aged 36-45 and the remaining five were aged 45+, and again two of these farmers had been to University.

This connection between age and a University education would seem to tie in closely to my arguments about the way that rural masculinity has changed since 1984. My argument has been that a business rationality has become part of the farmers identity, so that it has created a need for them to possess mental/theoretical abilities which are equal to businessmen in the city. This has in turn created a need for University education, as the traditional 'hard man' rationality now co-exists with the 'businessman' image.

### *Question 1*

As in Focus Group Two, I was only able to ask two questions in this focus group due to time constraints. This first question was the same as in Focus Group One and Two, as I attempted to discover some of what had changed in farming since 1984. I used magnets and a whiteboard to display a number of what I considered to be possible goals for the farmers in the focus group. Table 4.7 shows how the farmers ranked the nine goals.

**Table 4.7** Results of Question One for Focus Group Three

<b>1</b>	<b>Receiving maximum possible income from the farm.</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Farming in an environmentally friendly way/ Leaving the land in a better condition than it was when you began farming it.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>See entry for number “2” above.</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Becoming more skilled at farming.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Having enough time for personal recreation/ Having the best possible family life.</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>See entry for number “5” above.</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Providing for your children’s future.</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Becoming debt free:</b> The farmers in this focus group thought that this goal was too long term to be considered relevant.
<b>9</b>	<b>Working for/taking part in the rural community.</b>

I then asked the farmers what (if any) goals would have been differently prioritised in the early eighties, prior to the period of rural restructuring.

“Back then it would have been ‘borrow as much as possible’”.

“I *was* debt free then (laughs)”.

(Myself) “So it was less of a priority then?”. “What about some of these other things like ‘becoming more skilled’?”

“Possibly becoming more skilled at farming was perhaps not quite as much of an issue then, but it was probably becoming so at that stage”.

“The same with debt free, you know, the incentives were there to borrow”.

(Myself) “So does that mean that some of these other things were higher?”.

“The community might have been a bit higher”.

(Farmers) “Yeah, yeah”.

(Farmers) “We used to have a school (laughs)”.

“I think the recreation one, that must have been up in those times”.

“It was probably still the same priority, they just did it more! (laughs)”.

(Myself) “Any other comments?”.



"Providing for your children's future might have been easier sort of thing, you know. Well I mean now you've got to think about the cost".

"There's more of a push toward the environment and sustainability now whereas then it probably didn't mean much".

(Consultant) "Well back then everyone was putting bulldozers along the top of ridges and stuff".

## *Question 2*

For this focus group, due to time limitations, I went directly to asking the farmers about their opinions of farming advertisements. I passed around some examples of advertisements from farming magazines and then asked the farmers to say if they took any notice of them.

(Myself) "I guess what I'm asking is, do you look at that farmer and think 'oh yeah that's applicable to me'".

"You probably wouldn't read all that stuff on the side, but you'd look at the picture and see the name and think 'oh yep'".

"You might sort of take a browse at it and if you like what you're reading you'll might sort of take a bit more of it in and read a bit more".

(Myself) "But is that only if you're in the market for drench anyway or...".

"Yeah, you'd probably go and talk to somebody that you buy it from".

"But if an ad really stands out, and it's zany or colourful or something different and you can't figure it out straight away, sometimes that might draw your attention to it. But obviously with this you can see at a glance whether it's pertinent to what you're thinking about at the time, and if it's not I think you'd be inclined just to keep going".

(Myself) "How about the way that farmers are portrayed in general, in all ads, T.V., radio that sort of thing, do you think that's accurate?"

"Probably not accurate but it might be appropriate you know, you don't mind being sort of categorised, you know".

"Probably when you see a farmer in shorts and gumboots city people know it's not worth looking at that ad (laughs), whether farmers look at it is another thing".

"I think they tend to put you down a little bit as sort of 'hick life' in some of them".

"But we all buy into that, I mean Fred Dagg and Wal Footrot, that's laughing at ourselves isn't it?"

(Myself) "So is that a stereotype?"

"I think we've gone past that stereotype, like if you took our group we should be the new image of farming and we're probably not! I like to think we're above that".

These last comments are especially revealing for their candid recognition that the image of farmers has changed, at least in their own self-image. The 'traditional' images of farmers, like the cartoon character 'Wal Footrot', and the John Clarke caricature 'Fred Dagg', are recognised as being just that, caricatures and cartoons. They are no longer, or perhaps never were, an accurate representation of farmers, yet as the farmers in Focus Groups One and Two demonstrated, farmers now seem to be anxious to 'debunk the myth' of these representations.

However, this sentiment co-exists with a recognition of the social power that the 'hard-man' image gave farmers as a group within society. As one farmers said in reference to his representation in Television advertisements:

"Probably not accurate but it might be appropriate you know, you don't mind being sort of categorised, you know".

I believe this comment alludes to the relationship that exists within rural masculinity between the 'hard man' ('farming as lifestyle', see Section 3.4), and the 'businessman' ('farming as business', see Section 3.4). I argue that farmers recognise that each identity is useful to them in the post-1984 rural environment, hence both co-exist as an amalgamation of 'business rationality' and a 'hard man' logic that see 'townies' as being inferior.

### 4.3 Conclusion

Theorising this amalgamation between pre and post-1984 farming identities in a way which explains their hegemonic power requires an understanding of the discourse of rural masculinity. I have stated previously in this thesis that I believe that New Zealand rural masculinity is closely aligned with the theorisation presented by Liepins (1996). This theorisation creates a joint discourse from within the discourse of the hegemonic white masculine subject (see Rose 1993), and the hegemonic discourse of agriculture (ibid.).

In addition, I have drawn on the work of Walter (1995) who argues that the tensions between maximising production and farming in harmony with nature, within modern farming, have given rise to “at least two common and often competing pictures of agriculture: farming as way of life and farming as business” (Walter 1995: 57). The way-of-life story is said to rely on images of *family, community, hard work, bucolic simplicity, and closeness to the land*, while the business-oriented farming narrative emphasises the American farmer’s *productivity, technological sophistication, management savvy, and independence*.

In both this chapter and Chapter Three, I have argued that the ‘farming as business’ paradigm has been valourised at the expense of the ‘farming as lifestyle’ paradigm in post-1984 New Zealand. Thus, I believe that Liepin’s (1996) conception of New Zealand hegemonic masculinity includes elements of both of these paradigms. In particular the farmers conceptualise themselves as rural *businessmen*, yet they also maintain a separation between themselves and their urban equivalents.

Evidence for this emerged from the focus groups, which I discuss in this chapter, as expressed by the realisation that the ‘old’ farming skills, such as fencing and stockmanship, were no longer as important as they were prior to the restructuring of rural New Zealand. Today’s farmers are careful to point out that they can still perform such tasks, as well if not better than their predecessors, but they argue that the ‘restructured’ farmer must do so much more besides. As Christie (1991) makes clear, ‘today’s’ farmer must be as skilled in financial management and the application of agricultural science as they are in stockmanship and fencing.

Further evidence can be seen in my analysis of the education levels of my focus group

participants. In simple terms, the younger the farmer, the more likely they were to have a university education. This connection between age and a university education reinforces my arguments about the way in which rural masculinity has changed since 1984. My argument has been that a business rationality has become part of the farmers identity, so that it has created a need for them to possess mental/theoretical abilities which are equal to businessmen in the city. This has, in turn, caused a discursive change, so that the university graduate and the 'businessman' image now co-exist within the traditional 'hard man' rationality. Thus, farmers self conceptualisation and gender identity has come to increasingly accommodate an idea of farmers as 'businessmen', in addition to their traditional conceptions of themselves as physically active 'producers'.

It is important to note that this 'business' conceptualisation is still underpinned by a strong current of self sufficiency and independence that has been a part of rural New Zealand masculinity since early settlement (see my discussion in Section 2.2). However, I argue that the basis for this independence has changed from the solely physical to include the mental. The privileged economic and social position of farming prior to 1984 had supported a culture of the rural that had sidelined the conventional rhetoric of commerce. However, the post-1984 effects on rural masculinity are marked, as farmers have adopted a new discourse of business and mental ability that stresses their skill and claims equality with other capitalist businessmen.

In structural terms I argue that the systems of state intervention prior to 1984 meant that the state bore most of the risks of agricultural production systems (Moyle and Douglas 1986), a situation which came to be seen as benefiting *national* rather than just sectoral interests. Thus, I argue that farmers no longer had to identify as strongly with a hegemonic discourse of self-identity; the state had legitimised their interests. In contrast, the post-1984 environment illustrates a dramatic change. Farmers were relegated to being an interest group alongside all other interest groups, and this has resulted in farmers re-invigorating a self-identity which attempts to compensate for this change. By stressing their 'business' acumen and their role as important New Zealand producers who operate in a highly efficient and technical manner, I argue that they are attempting to compensate for the loss of influence at the national level.

In the restructured economic environment the 'business' paradigm allows farmers to rationalise their position, and strengthens their resolve to remain on the land despite difficulties. From talking to farmers during the course of this thesis, I was told that prior to restructuring there were two kinds of farmers. The first kind was aligned with the 'farming as business' paradigm and all that this entailed regarding the way that they ran their farms, while the second kind were said to take the approach of 'well I'm not too worried about the bottom line, as long as there's meat in the freezer, everything's o.k'. In the post-1984 environment this second type of farmer is said to have disappeared, because now *all* farmers are worried about the bottom line.

I use this as an example of the way that rural restructuring has entailed a re-valorisation of the 'farming as business' paradigm within the hegemonic discourses of rural masculinity. This is because the 'business' paradigm relies on images of *productivity*, *technological sophistication*, *management savvy*, and *independence*. Therefore, it is this hegemonic form that has necessarily been re-valorised in response to restructuring. I believe that the outcome of this re-valorisation of the 'farming as business' paradigm (Walter 1995) is a reduction of discursive space within New Zealand rurality for alternative discourses of agriculture such as the "farming as lifestyle paradigm" (ibid).

## **Conclusion**

As I have stated previously, this thesis is a social constructionist analysis of the construction of rural masculinity in New Zealand. As such, I have sought to link the major changes in the relationship between New Zealand farmers and the state since 1984, to a perceptible shift in the way that farmers conceptualise themselves.

Therefore, the aim of Chapter One was to outline the changes in the New Zealand economy, with special reference to agriculture, in order to provide an empirical basis for the following chapters which link this process to changes in the construction of rural masculinity. With this aim in mind I began by investigating the changes in New Zealand since 1984, and by documenting the shift from a Keynesian economic approach to one of neo-classical liberalism. This provided a background to the following sections, which looked in greater depth at the differences in agricultural policy between the indicative planning era and the post-1984 period.

The change of economic direction in New Zealand since 1984 has impacted especially harshly on farmers, because the withdrawal of government support came at a time of accelerated structural change in the global market for agricultural goods. Unlike many other O.E.C.D. countries, farmers have had to bear much of the cost of this structural change themselves, to the extent of enduring historically low real returns. Despite this, agriculture is still New Zealand's primary export earner. Even in 1989, in the period just after the removal of subsidies, agricultural products constituted some 60% of our total merchandise export receipts (Sandrey and Reynolds 1990).

These changes after 1984 were a dramatic break with previous government policy. However, agricultural policy had not remained static prior to this. At various times in New Zealand's recent history, agricultural production has occupied a variety of positions in the minds of policy makers and politicians. After World War II the government actively pursued a policy of promoting manufacturing in order to broaden the nation's economic base. This changed in the 1960's as politicians once again looked to the "livestock, forestry and horticulture industries to generate the quickest and greatest



export returns" (Britton et al 1992: 91). Hence, when the 1980's began farmers were, according to Roche, Johnston and Le Heron (1992), "at the top of the political pyramid".

Being at the top of the pyramid meant that, beginning in the 1960's, economic assistance began to be targeted toward farmers. By the 1980's there was a comprehensive package of government intervention policies in place which were seen as vital incentives to agricultural export production (Cloke 1989). However, later in this decade the connection between the government (National Party) and farmers was, in effect, severed. This occurred in substance when the Labour Party was elected in 1984. With its predominantly urban support base, and the subsequent domination of cabinet by ministers with a state sector rather than an agricultural background, there was no longer the in-built support for farming within the Government.

The effects of this change can be seen in the post-1984 restructuring of agricultural production, when New Zealand went against world trends by significantly reducing government support overall. This reduction in government support stemmed from a concern that the state was exposing itself to an undesirable level of risk in the agricultural sector, but was also underpinned by a broader ideological concern that government intervention reduced agricultural efficiency. The Finance and Agricultural ministers issued a joint statement in 1986 which explicitly argued for the transferral of risk from the state to farmers (see section 1.2.1). I went on to argue in Chapter Three that this transferral of risk from the Government to farmers has had far reaching effects on the identity of farmers, which has affected their relationship with the hegemonic discourses of agriculture.

McKenna, Roche and Le Heron (1998, see Section 1.2.2) argue that this change in status for farmers at the national level has resulted in two continuing areas of contention. These are, firstly, what farmers see as the public's mis-perceptions about the business of farming and, secondly, the privatisation of the inherent risks of agricultural production. Both of these changes have affected farmers' job security and motivation. I argued in Chapter Three that this has resulted in the empowerment of a hegemonic discourse of farming which Walter (1995) terms, "farming as business". This has been a consequence of a shift in identity from farming in the 'national interest' to one of individualism and

farming for 'personal gain' and, as such, has been a by-product of the deliberate change in policy by the New Zealand Government since 1984. I have argued in this thesis that this empowerment of the "farming as business" paradigm has come at the expense of a competing discourse which Walter (ibid) terms the, "farming as lifestyle" paradigm .

In Chapter Two I began by reviewing the major themes of masculinity research in the early to mid 20th century: Psychoanalysis and Gender Role Theory. I then explained the theoretical perspective that I have chosen for this thesis, which is Social Constructionism. This theory originated in the 1980's under the umbrella of the Poststructuralist/Postmodernist movement (Burr 1995). The four main tenets of this theory are: firstly, that we must reject the supposition that we can unproblematically know the nature of the world through observation; secondly, that we accept our ways of understanding the world are historically and culturally specific; thirdly, that we understand our knowledge of the world is sustained by social processes; finally, that we acknowledge these socially constructed understandings in turn create a specific kind of social action.

These tenets fundamentally inform this thesis and are especially important in explaining my link between economic restructuring and change in masculine identities. If masculinity is seen as the product of human actions and choices, it is then able to be studied with a view to discovering its formative processes within society. As a result, my study of rural masculinity investigates the links between the farmers' masculine personal identity and their social, cultural and economic situation.

I also link the farmers' masculine personal identity to their social, cultural and economic environment through the work of Connell (1995). Connell describes *production relations* in terms of the capitalist imperative of the gendered accumulation of capital. Within a capitalist economy that embodies a patriarchal structure there is a gendered division of labour. Necessarily, this results in a gendered accumulation process, which in turn leads to men having greater economic power than women. He argues that changes in this accumulation order, due to resistance by Women or through the vagaries of capitalist accumulation, lead to challenges for masculine identities. These challenges then create the potential for change in the social construction of these identities.

Within these socially constructed identities, it is possible to learn how specific constructions have been empowered as particular categories. In the case of masculinity, a particular construction of male identity that is *hegemonically* powerful has the effect of empowering those men who conform to this construction. Many studies of masculinity indeed show such a structure of power relations. I used the work of Walker (1988), Berg (1994), Williams (1994), Phillips (1996), and Jensen (1996) as specific examples.

I went on to discuss the form of New Zealand hegemonic masculinity identified by Berg (1994) in more depth, and in Chapter Three and Four I compared this construction with the findings from my semiotic analysis and focus groups. Berg discusses the tradition of New Zealand masculinity which underpins this privileging of empirical over theoretical research. Drawing especially on the work of Phillips (1980, 1987) and James & Saville-Smith (1989), Berg links the social relations of 19th century colonial life to the identity of a “true blue New Zealander”. New Zealand in the 19th century was dominated by exclusively male communities in the rural and frontier regions. This led to the development of a particular kind of masculinity that valued the independence gained through the possession of multiple skills, which were necessary in these frontier communities.

Berg (*ibid.*) went on to argue that such a ‘frontier’ discourse continues to underpin present-day constructions of the New Zealand Pakeha male as being fiercely independent, practical, and capable of dealing with anything that comes along. Thus, the “true blue New Zealander” is a “kiwi battler”. This term refers to a male Pakeha farmer who is practical, independent, and resourceful, and who tames the frontier and contributes to capitalist production through ingenuity and hard work. In this way, the historical context of New Zealand has created and maintained a *hegemonic* form of New Zealand masculinity.

In Chapters Three and Four I discussed how I believe that this hegemonic form of masculinity, which underpins the construction of masculinity in New Zealand, has been altered by the economic restructuring of the agricultural sector in New Zealand since 1984. Specifically, I investigated the alteration of this hegemonic discourse with reference to the gendered identity of male farmers. I began this task in Chapter Three by

analysing a number of advertisements from farming magazines. I chose to focus on a semiotic analysis of the main signifiers, the overall paradigm, and the intertextual references within the advertisements that I analysed, in an attempt to find some evidence of significant change in the hegemonic discourses of agriculture since 1980. Understanding this change would then allow me to link rural restructuring and changes in rural masculinity.

My findings in Chapter Three indicate that the general content of the farm advertisements that I analysed has undergone a subtle change during the 1980-1995 period. While the use of (largely) the same signifiers has allowed me to identify a semiotic *paradigm* for the advertisements, which describes the way in which the typical signifiers are combined and related, in overall terms I argue that the advertisements have reflected the way that farming risk has become privatised in the post-1984 period (McKenna, Roche and Le Heron 1998).

I argue that one example of this is the increase in the number of Banking and Insurance advertisements in 1990 and 1995 in comparison to 1980 and 1985 (see Table 3.5). The restructuring of the rural finance industry had opened the market for commercial farm financiers, but the advertisements used by these commercial providers reflected the way that farmers had changed their identity to accommodate these structural changes. For example Figures 3.11 and 3.12 illustrate this change in an obvious manner through their headlines.

As my content analysis indicated initially, in the advertisements that I analysed the portrayal of the 'typical farmer' was consistent throughout my research period (1980-1995) in terms of sex (male), approximate age (30-50) and 'race' (New Zealand European/Pakeha) (see, for example, Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7). He was more often than not wearing a checked shirt, jeans or work trousers, and a hat, and as such he conformed to the stereotypical and 'common sense' media portrayal of a farmer. As I argued in Section 3.2, this is consistent with the 'traditional' conception of New Zealand masculinity that is argued to be hegemonically powerful (see, for example, Berg 1994, Phillips 1987, 1996).

These findings also corresponded closely to the findings of Liepins (1996). Liepins

found that, in a number of advertisements featured in farming magazines in both New Zealand and Australia, the characters featured in the publications overwhelmingly matched a hegemonic definition of rural masculinity. The corollary of these typical male representations was that women were marginalised and constructed in ways that are socially subservient. Because this labour is constructed in opposition to masculine work, Liepins (ibid.) argues that women are usually absent from farming advertisements. My findings, in both my focus groups and in my semiotic analysis, reinforce this conclusion.

To facilitate further analysis I continued Chapter Three by discussing the hegemonic discourses of agriculture in New Zealand in more depth, and drew, in particular, on the work of Liepins (1996) and Walter (1995). By doing this I aimed to form a theoretical basis for my conclusions about the changes in these discourses.

Liepins (1996), with particular reference to Australia/New Zealand, suggests that rural discourse draws on hegemonic discourses of both masculinity and agricultural production. Thus, the hegemonic form of masculinity within which men are *white*, *bourgeois*, and *heterosexual* is combined with the hegemonic form of agricultural production which is said to be based on *science*, *productivity*, *market economics* and *physical labour*. Walter (1995) also identifies competing definitions of agriculture within North American farm imagery. He defines these competing discourses as the “farming as business” paradigm and the “farming as way of life” paradigm. In Chapter Three I argued that the “farming as business” discourse, with its emphasis on *productivity*, *technological sophistication*, *management savvy* and *independence* has been ‘re-invigorated’ and ‘re-centralised’ within New Zealand agriculture in response to the changes since 1984. This has led to a shift in self-identity from ‘hard working’, ‘true-blue’ New Zealanders, to one of farmers as ‘million dollar’, highly-skilled business men.

This business orientated narrative can be seen as being similar to Liepins’ conception of the hegemonic discourse of agriculture in Australia/New Zealand, as both feature productivity, and stress the role of technology/science and good management (“business orientated”, “market economics”, “management savvy”) in defining ‘successful’ agriculture. Yet, in contrast, Liepins definition also incorporates “physical labour”, an element which seems closest to “hard work” in Walter’s “farming as way of life”



definition, and which includes connotations of “bucolic simplicity” and “closeness to the land” (Walter 1995). My findings in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis reinforce the way that New Zealand farmers differentiate themselves from urban workers by referring to their role as physically active ‘producers’, as opposed to sedentary ‘paper shufflers’ (see Focus Group Two). Thus, I argue that the Australian/New Zealand hegemonic definition of agriculture can not be understood as analogous to either Walter’s “farming as way of life” or to his “farming as business” narratives. Instead the Australasian discursive frame must be understood as a combination of both of these discourses/narratives. However, I also argue that these twin discourses can be understood as a ‘binary opposition’, in which the ‘business’ discourse is privileged over the ‘lifestyle’ discourse. One of my conclusions in this thesis is that this unequal relationship has become more marked in New Zealand since 1984.

Finally, in Chapter Four I discussed the findings of my three focus groups. These findings complemented the findings of my semiotic analysis of texts. In particular, the farmers stressed the way that the current economic environment was different to the period prior to 1984. They made it clear that, in the current environment, ‘successful’ farmers needed to be adept at both traditional, manual farming skills and wider analytical decision making. Thus, they saw themselves as both ‘million dollar businessmen’ and highly skilled agricultural producers.

I understood this discursive change in terms of the ‘re-invigoration’ by farmers of Walter’s (1995) ‘farming as business’ paradigm. I argued that the cause of this change was the removal of government support for the farming sector from 1984. In this restructured economic environment the ‘business’ paradigm allows farmers to rationalise their position, and strengthens their resolve to remain on the land despite difficulties. From talking to farmers during the course of this thesis, I was told that prior to restructuring there were two kinds of farmers. The first kind was aligned with the ‘farming as business’ paradigm, and all that this entailed regarding the way that they ran their farms, while the second kind were said to take the approach of ‘well I’m not too worried about the bottom line, as long as there’s meat in the freezer, everything’s o.k’. In the post-1984 environment this second type of farmer is said to have disappeared,



because now *all* farmers are worried about the bottom line. I use this as an example of the way that rural restructuring has entailed a re-valorisation of the 'farming as business' paradigm.

In saying this, it is important to note that this 'business' conceptualisation is still underpinned by a strong current of self-sufficiency and independence that has been a part of rural New Zealand masculinity since early settlement (see my discussion in Section 2.2). I argue that the difference now is that the basis for this independence has changed from the solely physical to include the mental. The privileged economic and social position of farming prior to 1984 had supported a culture of the rural that had sidelined the conventional rhetoric of commerce. However, the post-1984 effects on rural masculinity were marked, as farmers adopted a discourse of business and mental ability that stressed their skill, and claimed equality with other capitalist businessmen.

I argue that farmers have identified with this 'business' paradigm because it incorporates images of *productivity, technological sophistication, management savvy, and independence*. Therefore, it is this hegemonic form that has necessarily been re-valorised in response to restructuring. I believe that the result of this re-valorisation of the 'farming as business' paradigm (Walter 1995) is a reduction of discursive space within New Zealand rurality for alternative discourses of agriculture such as the "farming as lifestyle paradigm" (ibid). I conclude that this change constitutes a significant alteration in the construction of rural New Zealand masculinity.

## Appendix A: Semiotics

### 6.1 Communication Theory

The study of communication is based on the assumption that all forms involve the use of *signs* or *codes*. Signs are artefacts or acts that refer to something other than themselves; that is, they are signifying constructs (Fiske 1982). Codes are the systems into which signs are organised and which determine how signs may be related to each other (ibid.). Inherent in the concept of communication is the idea that these signs and codes are transmitted and made available to others, and that the result of transmitting or receiving signs/codes/communication is the practise of social relationships.

It is assumed that communication is central to the life of our culture: without it culture could not exist. Consequently, the study of communication also involves studying the *culture* that it is integrated with. This is the linkage whereby the study of the media as a form of communication allows for conclusions to be drawn about the culture itself. Advertising as the “window on consumption” (Sack 1992) is, therefore, also a window on culture, through the interpretation of signs and codes.

Understanding communication has been approached through two distinct schools of thought. Firstly, what Fiske terms the “process” school (Fiske 1982) sees communication as the *transmission of messages*. Hence, it is concerned with how senders and receivers encode and decode, and with how transmitters use the channels and media of communication. Communication in the process school is seen as a process by which one person affects the behaviour or state of mind of another, and if the effect is smaller than intended, then according to this school the researcher must look at the different stages to see where the failure occurred. In theory terms, the process school is closely tied to a positivist framework in which the meaning, aims and outcomes of communication can be understood through observation.

The second school of thought interprets communication as the *production and exchange of meanings*. Hence, this school is concerned with how messages or texts interact with people in order to produce meaning, and also with the role of those texts in culture.

Thus, differences between intended and actual effects of communication are seen as the result of differences in *signification*, or cultural difference, rather than communication failure. This school is identified as *semiotics*, which is in turn defined as the science of signs and meaning (Fiske 1982).

Communication is defined by both approaches as “social interaction through messages” (Fiske 1982: 2), however, while the process school is concerned with *acts* of communication, semiotics is concerned with *works* of communication. Consequently, semiotics defines social interaction as the processes which constitute the individual as a member of a particular culture or society. In theoretical terms, semiotics is part of structuralist/ poststructuralist theory and, therefore, involves a rejection of the possibility of the ‘facts (acts of communication) speaking for themselves’. Instead, semiotic theory recognises the role of culture in mediating the meaning of these ‘facts’. In this thesis I have chosen to work from a social constructionist, poststructuralist theoretical perspective. Therefore, I have chosen to analyse my chosen advertisements using a semiotic approach.

## 6.2 Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics is concerned with the analysis of the signs of communication, and the coding of these signs. In order for a sign or collection of signs to become a message, there must be a structured set of relationships that enable the interpretation of the sign. Hence, there are three main areas of study (adapted from Fiske 1982: 40).

- 1) *The sign itself*: this involves the study of the different varieties of sign, the different ways they have of conveying meaning, and the way they relate to the people that use them. Signs are human constructs, and can only be understood in terms of the uses people put them to.
- 2) *The codes or systems into which signs are organised*: this consists of analysing the way that different codes have developed which are specific to a certain culture or channel of communication. For example, the choice of shot, lighting and music used in creating a particular mood in a feature film, and which are common to many similar films.

3) *The culture within which these codes and signs operate*: in turn, this is dependent on the use of these signs and codes for its own existence and form.

Therefore, the methodology of semiotics involves the studying of these three areas within a selected text. I shall discuss each of these three areas in turn, beginning with a discussion of the theories related to the use of the sign.

Saussure theorised the sign as consisting of two elements. A signifier (the sign itself) and the signified, which is the mental concept to which the sign refers. Chandler (1994) extends these two elements in the case of the written sign, by renaming 'the signified' as the 'signified concept'. In between the sign and the signified concept is the 'signifier', the written components of language that create the sign. Thus, according to Chandler the three main analytical concepts of semiotic analysis are:

**Sign:** For example the written word 'tree'.

**Signifier:** Which then becomes the letters 't-r-e-e'.

**Signified concept:** Which is the category of object called 'tree'.

Saussure stressed that there is not necessarily a connection between the sign and the signifier (signified concept). The relationship is purely conventional and arbitrary, and depends on the language and the different distinctions between one signifier (signified concept) and another. For example 'tree' and 'bush'.

Based on the ideas of Pierce (with examples by Chandler 1994), signs can be further broken down into three categories.

**'Iconic':** a sign which resembles the signified (e.g. a portrait, a photograph, an x-ray, a map).

**'Symbolic':** a sign which does not resemble the signified concept but which is arbitrary or purely conventional (e.g. the word "stop" or a red traffic light).

**'Indexical':** a sign which is inherently connected in some way (existentially or causally) to the signified (e.g. smoke signifies fire, a thermometer, pain, a weathercock).

Film and television use all three categories: icon (sound and image); symbol (speech and

writing); and index (as the effect of what is being filmed). Most signs in film or television are iconic. Print advertising, the subject of this thesis, also makes use of iconic signs through photographs and illustrations. However the accompanying text in a print advertisement can also play an important part through the use of *symbolic* signs.

In terms of audience understanding, the difference between the symbolic signs of text and the iconic signs of photographs, film and television is that iconic signs appear to offer 'reflections of reality'. The gap between the signifier and the signified is narrowed so that the signs appear to *record*, rather than to transform or signify reality. However, this appearance of the sign as a 'record' of reality is misleading, as all signs convey some meaning which is itself mediated by culture. This cultural relativity is unavoidable. As Roland Barthes argues (for example, see Barthes 1973), media which utilise iconic signs serve an ideological function, by making a *created* reality appear to be an unmediated reflection of the 'real' world.

### 6.3 Paradigms and Syntagms

Signs are organised into codes in two ways: by (semiotic) paradigms, and by syntagms. Paradigms are classifications of signs, or sets of associated signs, which are all members of some defining category, but within this category each sign is significantly different. A paradigmatic analysis of a text studies patterns which occur through the linking of non-sequential signs. Drawing on structuralist theory, a paradigmatic analysis often involves the study of binary oppositions set up through two or more signs. For example, oppositions such as nature/culture, animal/human or order/chaos exist within a wider set of values which privilege one term over the other. By linking other signs to such a widely understood (but culturally defined) binary, such as nature/culture, strong meanings can be conveyed. Umberto Eco (1965) makes clear how such oppositions are part of a wider ideological discourse within a culture. So, for example, the privileging of culture over nature in modern Western society has links to masculine dominance, theories of racial superiority and economic theory. Hence, paradigmatic analysis is an important part of linking semiotics and culture, because it allows us to identify any

possible links to wider, social-discursive practises which may be present within the signs of the chosen text.

In contrast, syntagmatic analysis involves studying the text as a narrative sequence. Narrative theory is a major interdisciplinary field in its own right (Chandler 1994), and is not necessarily framed within a semiotic perspective. However, in general terms, it is usually concerned with the narrative in any mode, literary or non literary, verbal or visual. In essence, it tends to focus on minimal narrative units and the 'grammar of the plot'. For example, in film and television a syntagmatic analysis would involve an analysis of how each shot, scene or sequence related to the others before and after it. For a novel, the story could be interpreted in terms of the basic narrative scheme and major plot movements.

For the advertisements that I analysed, I interpreted a syntagmatic analysis as being an investigation of the relationship between the photograph, text and headline. Therefore, the narrative structure can be followed through from the headline or photograph, through the subheadings and on through the text. The relative importance of these components can help in understanding the importance and meaning of the signs contained within the advertisement.

#### **6.4 Intertextuality**

Semiotics, as argued above, involves the study of texts. However, each text exists within a vast society of texts in various genres and media. Many of the ideas represented within a text can in turn be linked or referenced to the ideas in other texts. This becomes a useful semiotic technique because, in the same way as paradigmatic analysis, it allows for another level of understanding of the signifiers and the signified in the original text. The semiotic understanding of the original text adds to the analysis of the text which references that original signifier. Hence the term 'intertextuality' (see Kristeva, 1980), which refers to the way in which each text exists in relation to others.

The idea of intertextuality introduced by Julia Kristeva is associated primarily with *poststructuralist* theorists (Chandler 1994). Therefore, the aim of intertextual analysis is



the identification of various discourses which are referenced through the use of signs. In addition, all parts of the sign are open to intertextual analysis since post-structuralism (for example the work of Foucault 1977, 1980) maintains that there is no external 'real' outside cultural systems. The history of particular discourses (and, therefore, of signs) and the *deconstruction* of truth claims are two other ways in which poststructuralist ideas of intertextuality can be used to analyse signs.

The references between different texts can be made in many ways, however most obvious are the formal frames: a television programme, for instance, may be part of a series and part of a *genre* such as a *soap* or *sitcom*. Less obvious are the cultural references which are matched to the perceived value set of the dominant viewing group. For example, in the farming advertisements that I analysed it would be expected that the dominant values in the advertisements would be those of the farmers who make up the target audience. In turn, since this person is most likely to be a white, middle class male, the values expressed are most likely to be representative of this dominant group.

## **Appendix B: A Note on Focus Groups**

Originally, 'focus groups' evolved out of the need to conduct evaluations of a specific stimulus such as a radio show, movie or advertisement. In particular, these beginnings stemmed from the desire of the United States Army to evaluate their training and propaganda films during World War II (Goss 1996). In these original 'focus groups', the group discussion was managed by a trained moderator, and the researcher made notes on the content of the discussion but did not participate.

Since these beginnings, focus groups have continued to be an important technique for marketing research, however, in the 1980's their use also spread to the Social Sciences (Morgan 1997). In Social Science research, focus groups have been used for initial 'scoping' of a research field, for following up surveys and helping with the interpretation of quantitative data, and for presenting that data for validation (Goss 1996). These uses have been theorised by Morgan (1997), who identifies three basic uses for focus groups within current Social Science research. First, they are used as a *self contained* method in studies in which they serve as the principal source of data. Second, they are used as a *supplementary* source of data in studies that rely on some other primary method, such as a survey. Third, they are used in *multimethod* studies that combine two or more means of gathering data, in which there is no primary method that determines the use of the others.

My use of focus groups could therefore be defined, to some extent at least, as being a *supplementary* source of information that complements the semiotic analysis of the previous chapter.

### **7.1 Introducing myself and gaining informed consent**

The first stage of all three of my focus groups was to inform the participants of the purposes and aims of my thesis, and then to gain their written permission to record their opinions during the focus group (see Section 7.2). To achieve this, I handed out an

information sheet (see Section 7.3) which detailed the aims of the focus group. After the participants had read this, and after I had highlighted the main points for them in my verbal introduction, I handed out a consent form to each of them which required a name and signature (see below). In the event, no-one declined to participate in my focus groups.

## 7.2 Consent Form

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### Representing Rural Masculinity 1980-1995

#### CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that I can decline to answer any particular questions during an interview. I may also request the tape recorder be turned off. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding it is confidential to the research and any publications arising from it.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

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Antony Maguire

Postgraduate Student in Human Geography

Massey University - Turitea Campus

Private Bag 11-222

Palmerston North

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### **7.3 Information Sheet**

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Representing Rural Masculinity 1980-1995

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR DISCUSSION GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

**WHO AM I?**

My name is Antony Maguire and I am a Masters student in the Department of Geography at

Massey University (telephone 356 9099 ext. 5950)

## WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

Underpinning my Masters thesis is the theory that the restructuring of the rural sector in New Zealand since 1984 has had a corresponding effect on the way that farmers are portrayed in the print media. To research this question I have conducted an analysis of a number of advertisements in *New Zealand Farmer*, *Straight Furrow* and *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*. The second part of my research involves the moderating of my conclusions through talking to the target audience for the advertisements. This is the stage at which you have become involved.

## HOW CAN YOU ASSIST?

This second part of my research will involve talking to a number of farmers such as yourselves to determine what you see as the most important aspects of rural change during this period. Also the way in which you, as the target audience for the advertisements that I have chosen, interpret the characters portrayed in them. This will provide me with a way of moderating my conclusions about changes in the construction of farm magazine advertisements since 1984.

To ensure an accurate record of your responses the discussion will be tape-recorded and transcribed. Also, to protect your confidentiality you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT IF YOU TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you take part in our study, you have:

- \* the right to refuse to answer any question, to ask that the tape-recorder be turned off, to stop the interview, and

to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty;

- \* the right to ask any further questions that occur to you during your involvement in the project and to contact me at the address above if any problems or queries should arise;

- \* the right to agree to participate in the discussion on the understanding that any information you provide will be confidential to the research and any publications arising from it;

- \* the right to agree to participate in focus group interviews on the understanding that your identity will remain anonymous;

- \* the right to request a summary of the findings of the research project when it is concluded;

- \* the right to agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in this information sheet.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION GATHERED DURING INTERVIEWS?

The focus group interviews will be taped and the tapes will be transcribed by myself. The information from all interviews will be combined and used to prepare my Masters thesis. You have the right to be provided with a summary of the findings of the thesis. The information may also be used to prepare a number of articles for publication in academic books or journals.



The tapes and transcripts will be stored in a secure location in the Department of Geography and will not be accessible to any other person.

You will not be identified in any reports or articles that arise from this research.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you for considering taking part in my research. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at any stage, either by telephone or at the address below.

Yours sincerely,



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Antony Maguire

Masters Student in Geography

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Palmerston North

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Telephone: 06 350 5950

Fax: 06 350 5644

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## 7.4 Focus Group Questionnaire

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This questionnaire is designed and administered by Antony Maguire

Contact Address:

Antony Maguire

c/o Geography Department

Massey University, Private Bag 11 222

Palmerston North

ph 06 350 5950

e-mail: A.M.Maguire@massey.ac.nz

1/ How many years have you been farming?.....

2/ Do you own your own farm? (Circle one)

Yes (go to question 3)

No (go on to question 4)

3/ What is the total area that you farm?

.....

4/ How did you gain your knowledge of managing a farm? (Circle one or more)

Learnt by  
doing

Training farm  
(or similar)

Agricultural  
college

University

Other (Please  
explain below)

.....  
.....  
.....

5/ Do you read any of the nationally distributed farming magazines or journals, e.g. New Zealand Farmer? (circle one)

Yes (go on to question 6)

No (go to question 9)

6/ Do you buy/ subscribe to any farming magazines/journals? If so, which ones?

.....

.....

.....

7/ What is your opinion of the national farming magazines? (N.Z. Farmer, Straight Furrow etc). Circle a number on the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not worth reading	Sometimes worth reading	Neutral/ don't know	Often worth reading	Always worth reading

8/ As a general impression, how often would you read the advertisements in these farming magazines? (Circle a number on the scale below)

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly ever read them	Sometimes read them	Neutral/ don't know	Often read them	Always read them

9/ Does your partner work on the farm? (circle one or more)

(i) yes	(ii) no	(iii) full-time	(iv) part-time	(v) Not applicable
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10/ Does your partner undertake paid work off the farm? (circle one or more)

(i) yes                      (ii) No                      (iii) full-time                      (iv) part-time                      (v) Not applicable

11/ What is your age? (Circle one)

under 25                      25-35                      36-45                      46-55                      56plus

12/ What is your marital status? (Circle one)

Never been married                      Married                      No longer married                      De facto relationship

Thank-you for answering this questionnaire.

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