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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
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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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