Looking out for the 'Aussie Bloke': Gender, Class and Contextualizing a Hegemony of Working-Class Masculinities in Australia.

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis explores working-class masculinities in Australia, looking at such masculinities in relation to areas such as media representations, education, work, intimacy, and leisure and risk. In particular this thesis sets out to contextualize what is argued to be a hegemonic masculinity in a specific location, considering how the hegemony of certain representations of working-class masculinity is embedded in Australian culture in ways that legitimize certain gendered, classed, sexualized and ethnic positions while delegitimizing others. Working-class masculinity is considered as an inclusionary and exclusionary tool. This thesis uses masculinity theory, class theory, and some empirical research to look at working-class masculinity in Australia as *centralizing* and, consequently, hegemonic. In doing so this study explores this highly important and oft debated term in such a way as to suggest that the term hegemonic masculinity may in fact need to be contextualized in order to be clarified.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Kirsty Whitman

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

To my wonderful working-class family for supporting me, although you may not always get my work, you have always listened.

Extra special thanks to Auntie Sel – you've always been so supportive of me, and for that there are not enough thankyous.

And, finally, my rock, my mum Margie Whitman, who has supported me financially, spiritually and mentally throughout this whole process, especially the last few months when things were harder than I could have imagined. I love you endlessly.

<u>Dedication</u>

This thesis is dedicated to my dad Geoff who instilled in me a love of learning and a burning curiosity about the world, and who believed in me even when I didn't; and for my precious girl Archer. May I instil the same love of learning and burning curiosity in you.

Introduction

In 2006, halfway through my honours year, my partner was made redundant from his job at the Mitsubishi factory at Tonsley Park South Australia. At this time John Howard's Coalition Government's industrial relations reform, ironically entitled 'WorkChoices', was in full swing. My now ex-partner's ten years in the same manufacturing job amounted to very little in the labour market, and he struggled to find employment that was not poorly paid with even poorer conditions. I began to sense a disjunction between the experiences of not only my partner, but of most of my male friends and family, and the image of the 'Aussie bloke' that was often a part of Australian popular culture. As someone who locates herself as from the working-class, I became increasingly interested in the prevalence of images of the 'Aussie bloke'[1]. Who was he supposed to represent? What discursive renderings of class, gender and identity occurred through this construction? How was the 'Aussie bloke' becoming mainstream? Who was excluded from feeling aligned with this identity, and who was excluded *by* this identity? In exploring these questions it became clear that representations of working-class masculinities in Australia related to individuals and groups outside of the male working-class. I wanted to investigate this further.

I identify with the working-class. I live in a working-class suburb of South Australia, and I worked for 12 years in a working-class sporting club. Moreover, my friends and family are working-class, and I have seen firsthand the lack of cohesion

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[1] The 'Aussie Bloke' can be defined as a quintessential construction of white, heterosexual, Australian manhood, one that is often working-class aligned and one that is explored throughout this thesis.

between the legitimacy working-class white men are given through representations of working-class masculinity, and their actual lived experience—particularly economically. Furthermore, I saw the way that the legitimized representations of white working-class masculinity that are so culturally and socially ubiquitous have contributed to a sense of entitlement and aspirationalism,[2] which turns to a sense of injustice and anger when entitlement and aspirations are thwarted. I also began to recognize how this sense of injustice can result in xenophobia and exclusionary practices, and in hostility to the imagined 'other'. I wanted to explore the existence of a hegemony of working-class masculinity in Australia, how it differs from the actual experiences of working-class men, and how it becomes (and is consciously deployed as) an exclusionary tool. In particular I wanted to unpick the ways that working-class masculinity is *centralizing*—how it is highly visible and at the forefront of representations of mainstream masculinity in Australia—and how this reflects and affects the ways that certain classed, gendered, sexual and ethnic identities are legitimized or delegitimized in Australian culture.

This thesis employs gender and class analysis to investigate how representations of gender and class intersect in the construction of a centralizing image of working-class masculinity. In order to do this I have developed a term, 'centralizing working-class masculinity' to define how archetypes such as the 'battler'[3], the 'Aussie bloke', and 'working families' are utilized in political, social, and

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[2] The 'aspirational voter' has been a part of political rhetoric since the early 2000s, and have been defined as being located in the, 'upwardly mobile working-class' (Goot & Watson 2007: 220). While aspirationalism is discussed in Chapter Three, the 'aspirational working-class' as both a demographic group and a social and cultural construction will be the basis of future research, specifically in relation to mining masculinities.

cultural discourse in Australia to legitimize and privilege certain narratives, while delegitimizing others. Furthermore this political ideal (Beasley 2008) is discussed with reference to Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which, as Richard Howson states, 'is never simply *domination* but a far more complex operation of coercion and consensus' (2008b: 113). I also apply Raewyn Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity, which, 'can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy' (1995: 77). In effect, Connell argues that hegemonic masculinities are sets of social constructions around gender (and race, class and sexuality) which legitimize and privilege certain ways of being, and that encourage the acceptance of and adherence to systems of inequality, subordination and marginalization. I argue that centralizing working-class masculinity is a *configuration* of gender practice that helps to legitimize discursive constructions of gender as hierarchical and dichotomous. Furthermore, centralizing working-class masculinity's complex set of intersecting classed, gendered, sexual and racialized tropes enables other discourses around exclusion, belonging and being an 'Aussie' to be legitimized. As Elder argues, 'the trope of the working man centralized what were regarded as unique and positive characteristics of being Australian' (2007: 43).

Therefore, centralizing working-class masculinity does not only 'answer the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy', it answers the problem of the legitimacy of

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[3] 'The Battler' is another Australian archetype, based on a construction of (certain, specific iterations of) Australians being hardworking and 'battling' against difficult circumstances (Scalmer 1999: 9). Often the term is used to connote the white 'mainstream' who must battle against the 'special and the powerful from either side' (Scalmer 1999: 9).

whiteness and the legitimacy of heteronormativity,[4] and the legitimacy of these factors in national identity. It is often deployed to justify the privileging of masculinity, of whiteness, and of heteronormativity, yet it also masks the operations of practices that privilege and protect such systems of inequality. Furthermore, as I argue throughout this thesis, centralizing working-class masculinity legitimizes key tenets of neo-liberalism such as individualism, personal responsibility, and 'choice'. Dyrenfurth argues that none of these neo-liberal approaches are particularly helpful or beneficial to the working-class (2005: 190), an argument that this thesis explores. It is the legitimizing of gender dichotomies, whiteness, heteronormativity, and neo-liberalism that this thesis examines through the lens of centralizing working-class masculinity. This involves an exploration of how centralizing working-class masculinities are used as tools of inclusion and exclusion that are applied to particular narratives about class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. I also look at how certain narratives pertaining to class and gender—particularly where they intersect—are presented as legitimate in terms of Australian identity, and how this helps to maintain the status quo (and a cultural hegemony) in terms of class and gender through mainstreaming discourses.

There is a tense relationship between centralizing working-class masculinity and the ways in which the working-class are constructed in terms of gender. While exploring the lives of those who most fully embody this construction—working-class men—I also look at the wider implications of the ubiquity of centralizing working-class masculinity. I also consider what this means in terms of legitimacy, identity as

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[4] I use heteronormativity here rather than heterosexuality as it encompasses a sexuality that is both heterosexual and adheres to gendered norms. Furthermore, homosexuality is not always marginalized so long as it fits within a heteronormative and what Yep and Elia (2012) define as a *homonormative* framework. As they argue, 'we are living in an era of the new homonormative queer visibility' (2012: 894). However, in relation to centralizing working-class masculinities, heterosexuality is still by and large the norm.

an authentic 'Aussie', and the maintenance of inequities based on gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. This research demonstrates the extent to which a hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinity is exclusionary, restrictive, and ultimately inequitable. In order to do this, an investigation into the lives of people that engage with centralizing working-class masculinity—white working-class men—was undertaken.[5] This empirical research found that many of the practices and expectations linked with this identity can have negative outcomes for working-class men. The empirical research also exposed the ways that these practices and expectations are deeply rooted in mainstream discourses surrounding class and gender. Overall this thesis explores the ways that practicing centralizing working-class masculinity can create problematic outcomes, and what this means for those who engage with it, while also looking at how those who cannot are further marginalized. Ultimately, the thesis considers how gender and class can be reappropriated or reconfigured in ways that challenge, rather than uphold, social and cultural inequity.

Contextualizing Working-Class Masculinities as Centralizing.

The pivotal theoretical construction within this study is centralizing working-class masculinity. I use 'centralizing working-class masculinity' to exemplify what Flood argues is Raewyn Connell's lynchpin term (2002: 203), 'hegemonic masculinity'. Centralizing working-class masculinity is a discursive construction, yet

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[5] For some men (often those from the middle or upper classes who are appropriating aspects of working-class-ness) engaging with centralizing working-class masculinity is partial, they 'perform' certain traits associated with it, for others (actual working-class men) their gender and class is deeply rooted in centralizing working-class masculinity—it is their everyday lived experience.

one that is engaged with (often in terms of performativity) by actual men (and women). Throughout this thesis the term will be used as both a noun and a verb. It is used as a noun when being discussed as a discursive construction, one that people engage with. However, it also reads in some places as a verb, as it is also an action, a process and a state of being. It is important to clarify this 'slippage' in meaning, as this term refers to a complex set of practices, constructions and meanings as will be further explored below. Through conceptualizing a specific hegemonic (working-class) masculinity, the ways in which hegemonic masculinities are discursively constructed can be more fully explored. Furthermore, the identification of centralizing working-class masculinity as hegemonic, makes clear the ways in which it affects and reflects both individual and wider social conceptions of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity, enabling them to be more clearly understood. While the term 'hegemonic masculinity' will be discussed in detail in Chapter One, a brief clarification of what this research offers in the debates around this highly important term (Whitehead 2004: 89) is useful in this introduction.

First and foremost the use of the term centralizing in conjunction with working-class masculinity needs to be explained. This thesis argues that working-class masculinities in Australia occupy a position that is at the *centre of discourses* about not only gender and class, but race, sexuality and national identity. The everyman battler bloke (Beasley 2009a) can be represented in positive, negative or highly ambiguous ways—but his image informs the way Australians are invited to identify with socially sanctioned or 'normal' ways to do gender, class, race and sexuality. In particular the invisibility, the very averageness of this masculinity places it at the *centre* of narratives concerning what it means to be an Australian man.

Certain (white, male, heterosexual)[6] individuals who do not occupy the same (often classed) space as these archetypes can sometimes access attributes associated with these masculinities to shore up their identity as 'real' Australians, whereas some working-class men are unable to do so in certain contexts. Furthermore, working-class masculinity is highly visible in terms of representation (as is explored in Chapter Three), and yet is rendered *invisible* through its position as utterly normative (much in the way that whiteness or 'maleness' are rendered invisible).[7]

In Australia, working-class masculinity is central, yet it is also between spaces, in the middle. As this thesis explores, it is in the middle of visibility and invisibility, it rests somewhere between hegemony and complicity. Connell defines complicity as being a space in which men reap the benefits of hegemonic masculinity without actively engaging with it. It works by helping to maintain the patriarchal system through its complicity with it (Connell 1995: 79). Centralizing working-class masculinity slips between different meanings and spaces, and like many processes and practices, it is in constant flux. I define working-class masculinity as centralizing, as this masculinity is so closely associated with mainstreaming, authenticity, and averageness, and it is often at the centre of cultural and social understandings about what it means to be Australian, and to be a man, while it also rests in the middle of many theoretical understandings about masculinity. What also needs to be

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[6] While it is often white, heterosexual, middle and upper-class men who can appropriate working-class masculinity as an authenticating exercise, other people can and do access centralizing working-class masculinity, albeit in different ways. As explored in this thesis, women in male dominated industries (such as mining) can partially engage with working-class masculinity in an effort to 'fit in'. Likewise, aspects of working-class masculinity can be adopted (often in transgressive ways) by LGBT individuals, groups and even performers. In the case of women working in male dominated industries it is often still an authenticating tactic.

[7] This is explored more fully in my paper, Whitman, Kirsty (2013) 'The 'Aussie Battler and the Hegemony of Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity in Australia: Gender, Class, Mainstreaming and the Axis of Visibility in *Kenny.*' *Australian Feminist Studies* 28(75), 50-64.

addressed is how 'centralizing' ties in with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. As is explored in more detail in Chapter One, Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity resides alongside and interacts with complicit, marginalized, and subordinated masculinities (1995). This being so, where does centralizing working-class masculinity fit in? As I have argued, centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a position of hegemony. However, it is also often complicit as well. In fact, it often sits somewhere between complicity and hegemony depending on the space and place in which it is present, and the context it is in. For example, centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a position of hegemony in certain cultural spaces—for example in the front bar of most Australian hotels (as is explored in Chapter 7). However, working-class masculinity occupies a far less privileged space in an inner-city wine bar, where working-classness is less valued. In this space, while not occupying a position of hegemony, working-class masculinity is still complicit, as it is still benefitting from the 'patriarchal dividend (Connell 1995: 79).

As previously stated, centralizing working-class masculinity is not only a discursive construction with which some individuals can engage, it is also a political ideal. In certain manifestations centralizing working-class masculinity is deployed as a political tool. For example, representations of centralizing working-class masculinity are common in images associated with the mining industry. The working-class 'Aussie bloke' is used to establish the mining industry's Australian credentials; to illustrate the importance of mining as a site of employment for 'Aussie blokes', and as economically and culturally important to Australia (as will be explored in Chapters Five, Six and Seven). This thesis also explores how centralizing working-class masculinity is often discursively constructed as neo-liberal and conservative. Neo-

liberal discourses in particular are woven through the construction of working-class masculinity in such a way as to normalize and justify narratives of individualism, and 'choice', and to downplay the realities of systems of privilege and inequality. In its more conservative and neo-liberal guise, centralizing working-class masculinity can be engaged as a political ideal that allows for the denial of any social, cultural and economic inequality that cannot be blamed on an individual's failings, while helping to support and maintain such systemic inequity. All the while working-class masculinity is used to define the 'mainstream', a group that has been used politically as a powerful tool which is simultaneously mobilizing and exclusionary.

The positioning of centralizing working-class masculinity at the *centre* in Australia is why it will be defined as *centralizing*. Not only is it central to many mainstream discourses—central in terms of media representations, and central in political rhetoric—it is *centralizing* in terms of privilege. Furthermore, while centralizing working-class masculinity does not occupy a position of hegemony in all spaces and places, it does consistently confer hegemony upon the characteristics most associated with it: whiteness, maleness, and heterosexuality.[8] It keeps whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality central to what it means to be an Australian. In many ways this is its most important centralizing function—keeping a constructed and limited 'mainstream' at front and centre in the national psyche. Furthermore, the mainstream in Australia has been constructed in such a way as to have access to powerful narratives of both privilege and need (Dyrenfurth 2005: 187). The commonality of centralizing working-class masculinity makes it difficult to

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[8] It can also be associated with a particular type of working-class, manual labourer physicality (although this is not always the case).

challenge the current distribution of power, wealth, and privilege when the group who benefits most (male, white, heterosexual and middle-class) can lay claim to being underrepresented and threatened by special interests (Johnson 2005: 37). This centrality will be explored throughout this thesis in relation to media representation, schooling, work, intimacy and finally notions around 'risk'. The next section will explain how—by looking at the contents of this thesis and the reasons for structuring it in this way.

Gender and Legitimate Australian-ness

It is argued within this thesis, and indeed throughout feminist, queer and masculinity theory, that masculinity is often claimed to be the legitimate gender and sexed position. Legitimacy in Australia is gendered through centralizing working-class masculinity. Through the ways in which Australian national identity is marked as inherently masculine, the male body is posited as more legitimately Australian. Murrie discusses this in relation to archetypal Australian legends such as the 'bushman' and the 'ANZAC',

> The Australian legend has been a powerful fiction for constructing and legitimizing dominant meanings of 'masculine' and 'Australian' in Australian culture, and has functioned to reproduce those meanings through male Homosociality and the mythology of mateship (1998: 75).

As Murrie illustrates, Australian-ness is highly gendered, and one of the central tenets of this quintessential Australian-ness is 'mateship'. As discussed in relation to intimacy (in Chapter Six) and workplace communities and behaviours (in Chapter Five), 'mateship' is a particularly powerful way that gender is segregated and essentialized. Murrie explains that, 'that male homosocial order functions to control gendered power relations through the strategies of inclusion, exclusion, authorization and marginalization, which reproduce dominant masculine values' (1998: 75). This thesis argues that such masculine values go beyond being 'dominant'; they are at the root of what is conceived of as 'Aussie'. They are largely essential and, therefore, almost invisible as they become the default 'normal' values of mainstream Australia.

In this way a hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinity is reliant on its gendered status. There is a seemingly natural or essential 'realness' attached to a typically male-gender identified body. It is argued in Chapter One that masculinity is marked both by what it is (masculine) and what it is not (the female 'other'). Masculinity is always in flux, it is never a static set of practices (Connell 1995; Whitehead 2004). Masculinity is rather, as Murrie states, 'a complex set of strategies and negotiation, of inclusions and exclusions, which enable and legitimate gendered power relations' (1998: 68). In the case of centralizing working-class masculinities, they have shifted from the inclusive collectivism discussed by Murrie (1998) to the kind of neo-liberal individualism discussed throughout this thesis. While masculinity is always central to this construct, the way that class, and more specifically the working-class, are constructed has shifted along these lines as narratives of Australian working-class masculinities have been increasingly adopted by the neo-

liberal right. Often it is the way that class and gender intersect that creates such powerful and emotive discourses about what it means to be a 'real' Australian'.

Format and Structure

As just outlined, this thesis contains a new concept: centralizing working-class masculinity. Furthermore, the thesis examines the concept and workings of centralizing working-class masculinity in relation to the ways in which working-class men *do* their masculinity—and how a hegemony of this political ideal creates boundaries around inclusion and exclusion in terms of who can lay claim to legitimacy and authenticity. This legitimacy and authenticity then allows for the bolstering of neo-liberal and conservative discourses around choice, belonging, the 'mainstream' and individualism. This combination of themes leads to a complex array of theoretical approaches that must be considered. A definition of not only the term centralizing working-class masculinity, but also of the theoretical path to its conception, forms the basis of much of Chapter One. This chapter engages with the relevant academic theory, specifically in the areas of gender, masculinities and class. The focus is on masculinities theory, especially the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The chapter makes it clear how and why centralizing working-class masculinity has been defined as often hegemonic, but also explores how it sits within complicity. In this discussion the slippage between complicity and hegemony will be more fully explored. This chapter also considers class theory, particularly recent UK class theory looking at class as social, cultural and psychic as well as economic (Lawler 1999, 2002; Reay 2001, 2005; Skeggs 2004, 2005). This theoretical

approach to class as more complex than merely being an economic category is explored alongside analysis of masculinity theory in Chapter One. This allows for a clearer understanding of not only the ways in which terms are used in this study, but of the theoretical input and originality of this research.

Chapter Two looks at the methodological approach taken in this thesis; most specifically it focuses on the journey from looking at centralizing working-class masculinities as something people are, to looking at them as something people do, but also,—and this is the most important development,—as discourses. This chapter will include an analysis of discourse, looking in particular at critical discourse analysis, how it is applied and why the areas that were analysed were chosen. Moreover, Chapter Two explores the shift in methodological approach, and how methodological difficulties encountered during the writing and researching of this thesis actually led to positive conceptual changes being implemented. These changes in fact led to a refining of not only the methodological approaches, but to a clearer and more nuanced definition of working-class masculinities as centralizing in Australia, and how conceptualizing centralizing working-class masculinities can lead to greater understanding of the ways in which hegemonic masculinities work to regulate and legitimize specific identities.

The third chapter in this thesis offers an analysis of an important site of the legitimization of centralizing working-class masculinity; that of Australian media representations. Due to restraints in scope this chapter focuses on two main media forms; advertising and film. In the advertising section two television advertisements

from 2008-2010 will be analysed, with particular attention paid to the way that gender and class are combined to create meanings about who is a 'real' Aussie bloke, and why this is such a powerful tool in terms of selling not only products, but certain discursive constructions to the Australian people. This analysis will also focus on the apparent lack of, or denigration of non-white, non-hetero identities in such a way as to mark them 'other'. The film analysis will focus on two popular Australian films: *The Castle* (1997) and *Kenny* (2007). Moreover, the protagonists from each film; Darryl Kerrigan from *The Castle* and Kenny Smythe from *Kenny* will be analysed. This will be done with particular attention paid to the shifts in working-class masculine identity to a far more neo-liberal individualistic subject, and how the change from Darryl to Kenny can be read as reflecting a broader trajectory towards a conservative and neo-liberal agenda.

After the media chapter, the focus will shift to several sites of social and cultural engagements with centralizing working-class masculinity as it manifests itself in every-day life. This will be done with particular reference to neo-liberalism, conservatism and exclusionary narratives about legitimacy, Australian identity and belonging. The first area of every-day life being investigated in Chapter Four is the institutional and psychic experiences of schooling, education, choice and notions of 'crisis' as informed through centralizing working-class masculinity. This chapter examines how gender and class are influenced from early childhood through the hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinity, and how gender adherence is encouraged through social processes. It also considers how 'crisis' narratives actually bolster notions that gender is a natural biological binary, and how all these factors combine to create a space in which academic 'failure' can be blamed on

individual failure, supporting neo-liberal discourses around 'choice'. In particular I examine the ways that centralizing working-class masculinity as a legitimizing force encourages certain educational 'choices' which can have negative consequences for the individuals who make them, and that these choices can then be blamed on individual failure or lack rather than the deeply rooted classed nature of educational institutions.

This discussion of 'failure' will follow through to the next chapter, Chapter Five, which looks at work, in terms of paid employment, and how different social and economic expectations around centralizing working-class masculinity create a very limited scope in which working-class men in particular can find employment. This chapter will consider the role of physical labour and its construction as both working-class and inherently 'manly'. Work-based homosocial communities will be considered as sites of exclusionary demands for conformity, but also as places in which some aspects of neo-liberalism may also be challenged. The final part of this chapter will look in at the shift in industry, especially the decline of the manufacturing industry and resulting loss of jobs. The manufacturing industry, which has for so long been a site of employment for semi and un-skilled blue collar labourers, has been somewhat replaced through the rise of the mining industry. This is particularly important owing to the lifestyle changes a move from manufacturing to mining employment entails. Chapter Five looks at how the decline of manufacturing and rise of mining favours the type of individualism that is so intrinsic to neo-liberalism, and that is so often construed through images of centralizing working-class masculinity.

Chapter Six explores centralizing working-class masculinity in relation to intimacy. This follows somewhat from the previous chapter as it looks at the separation between 'home' and 'work', the 'private' and the 'public', particularly in terms of gender. This chapter considers the gap in the literature, as very little research has focussed on what men feel or experience, and instead focusses on what they *do.* Sexuality, intimacy, marriage and romance and parenting will all be explored. This chapter will also show that it is in the areas of intimacy and relationships that in fact many men from the working-class are actually challenging dominant discourses particularly around gender. However, the engagement with the mining industry that was explored in Chapter Five, and the pressure to engage with the individualism that is becoming an increasing part of centralizing working-class masculinity are creating barriers to a more inclusive, less singular way of doing intimacy. Intimacy and intimate spaces are argued to both pose a risk to conservative and mainstream discursive constructions of sex, families, parenting and gender while it is also *at* risk from increasing pressure and the individualism associated with neo-liberalism.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, explores this notion of risk, looking particularly at the policing of identity in terms of gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Moving away from Ulrich Beck's theory of a wider 'risk society' (1992) I instead look at the perceived risk in 'doing' gender wrong (in ways that are not widely accepted socially or culturally) in terms of a performative identity. In doing so centralizing working-class masculinity is considered both *as* risk, and *at* risk. In looking at centralizing working-class masculinity as a 'risky' performative mode this chapter will explore some of the ways the performance of centralizing working-class

masculinity can go too far—in ways that make it socially, culturally and economically 'risky'. The first part of Chapter Seven looks at two areas of risk that are associated with the performance of working-class masculinities: drinking culture and car culture. This analysis will examine how factors (such as engagement with drinking and car culture) associated with centralizing working-class masculinity can be 'done' to excess, and when done to excess an individuals' identity goes from threatened 'mainstream' to *threatening* the mainstream.

The second part of Chapter Seven looks at centralizing working-class masculinity when it is positioned as being *at* risk, often through mainstreaming discourses. The focus is on an analysis of the narratives of risk that can be linked to the Cronulla riot in 2005. This section looks at protectionism, especially in terms of whiteness, it explores the whiteness of centralizing working-class masculinity and it considers how access to this identity is limited by ethnicity. The exclusionary nature of centralizing working-class masculinity is particularly powerful when used in conservative political rhetoric[9] about a racialized 'other' that is often present in classed 'battler' discourses and the presumed political conservatism (Pini, McDonald & Mayes 2012) of the working class.

The conclusion assembles this thesis' findings, and shows how the legitimacy associated with this political ideal is only accessible to certain people, and that many working-class people with other intersecting points of marginalization are

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[9] In using the term conservative I am not specifically referring to the conservative Coalition Liberal/National Party, or indeed, conservative political parties in general. Instead I am looking at a wider conservatism that is also found in the Labor Party, some union groups, and often in the mainstream news media.

excluded from most mainstream discourses about class. Rather than looking at the ways in which engagement with centralizing working-class is both encouraged through its legitimization, and yet is also problematic for many individuals in specific areas, the conclusion considers the problematic nature of gendered (and classed) performativity as a whole. Specifically it is here that parallels are drawn between Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity as a method of legitimizing patriarchy and social, cultural and economic hierarchies (1995) and this conceptualization of a 'sub-hegemonic' (Beasley 2008) working-class masculinity. The conclusion links to the previous chapters and engages with the 'risk' involved to individuals who perform centralizing working-class masculinity, and to those whose identities are excluded by its powerful and continuing legitimacy.

This thesis offers something new to both class analysis in Australia and to masculinities theory—particularly the highly contested theory of hegemonic masculinity. It conceptualizes a masculinity that is defined as hegemonic in Australia. This study also explores the way centralizing working-class masculinity operates as a legitimiser of not only patriarchy (Connell 1995), but of other systems of privilege and inequality. This research offers an analysis of a highly visible mode of Australian masculinity—the working-class 'bloke'. Considering relevant theory, including research on masculinities and class, and media representations of centralizing working-class masculinity allows this political ideal to be identified and deconstructed. Then, by looking at several phenomenological areas in which centralizing working-class masculinity has particular resonance for those who perform it, an understanding of the ways in which this construct legitimizes relations of gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality can be more fully understood. This research

provides a site through which to engage with a conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity and allows for a richer and deeper understanding of how and why hierarchies of privilege and legitimacy are not only maintained, but strengthened.

Chapter 1

Theorizing 'the Aussie Bloke': Gender, Masculinities, Class and a Hegemony of Centralizing Working-Class Masculinities.

Chapter 1: Theorizing 'the Aussie Bloke': Gender, Masculinities, Class and a Hegemony of Centralizing Working-Class Masculinities.

Introduction

Being an 'Aussie bloke' is seemingly fairly simple. Moreover, as this thesis shows, the 'Aussie bloke' is somewhat ubiquitous in Australian culture. However, there are boundaries that limit access to this identity for many different groups and individuals. Even for those whose subjective position allows them to engage with the 'Aussie bloke' identity, there are still restrictions on what is accepted and what is not—there is a limited space in which 'Aussie bloke'-dom can be done 'right'. This chapter outlines my theoretical application of 'Aussie blokes', defines the term 'centralizing working-class masculinity' and conceptualizes working-class masculinity as hegemonic in Australia. In order to do this a more complex analysis of the relevant terms and theoretical frameworks is needed to more fully engage with the concept of centralizing working-class masculinities as hegemonic. Concepts such as masculinity, multiple masculinities, complicit and hegemonic masculinities, and the relevant literature surrounding them are analysed in this chapter, with a focus on how these terms fit in to my conception of centralizing working-class masculinities.

While the bulk of the theoretical background for this study comes from the field of masculinities, this thesis also concerns class and class theory. Consequently, this chapter will also include an analysis of class theory, considering research on the working-class, and why, in recent years class has received decreasing attention in the social sciences. The intersection of class and gender (and ethnicity and sexuality) that constructs centralizing working-class masculinity will be considered in terms of legitimization, marginalization, and the ways in which the intersection of legitimized and marginalized identities (in this instance gendered and classed identities) can create a very specific space in which power can be gained through access to narratives of both legitimacy and marginalization. In summation, this chapter provides a guide to the theoretical process undertaken in order to conceptualize centralizing working-class masculinities. This chapter considers the relevant research from gender and masculinities theory, and class theory, and discusses how these might support the notion of centralizing working-class masculinity as hegemonic. Reflection on the relevant masculinities and class theory will provide a basis for a deeper analysis of the ubiquity of centralizing working-class masculinities. It will also allow for engagement with the prevalence of images of centralizing working-class masculinity, and how it is positioned as both entitled and yet at 'risk'.

Gender and Masculinities

Before providing more detailed discussion of masculinities theory and how it supports the theory of centralizing working-class masculinity, a brief consideration of

the relevant 'newness' of masculinity theory is required together with a reflection upon the ways in which it differs in approach from much of the more recent work in gender, feminist and sexuality theory (Beasley 2009b). In the last two decades the study of masculinities has become a major component of studies about gender (Connell, Hearn & Kimmel 2005: 1). New terms, definitions and understandings about gender have been forged as multiple masculinities have been recognized and rendered visible. However these terms, definitions and understandings have varied. Consequently, masculinity theory is a much contested area with many debates occurring within academia surrounding the terms and theories involved. Contextualizing hegemonic masculinity is an important process in relation to these debates. Centralizing working-class masculinity provides a lens through which to explore constructions of hegemonic masculinities in Australia. Before undertaking a deeper analysis of such important terms as 'masculinities', 'multiple masculinities' and, most importantly, 'hegemonic masculinities', consideration will be given to the development of masculinity theory in general, its extension of (and from) feminist theory, and its gradual separation from the more poststructuralist accounts within gender and sexuality theory.

To start this analysis, it is necessary to recognize that the field of gender studies, having come from a feminist background, as Connell, Hearn and Kimmel point out in the introduction to the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, has tended to focus on women, and their experiences. As the authors note,

> Revealing the dynamics of gender, however, also makes masculinity visible and problematizes the position of men … Where men's outlooks and culturally defined characteristics were formerly the unexamined norm for science, citizenship, and religion, the specificity of different masculinities is now recognized, and their origins, structures and dynamics are investigated (Connell, Hearn and Kimmel 2005: 1).

Any study of race or ethnicity needs to take into account white privilege and the invisibility of whiteness as the perceived cultural standard or 'norm'. So too, studies looking at gender need to recognize the importance of both men and women's experiences, and the ways in which cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity shape how people live and experience their lives. Masculinity theory and the study of masculinities are therefore an important part of the study of the ways that gender is constructed. For this thesis masculinity theory is necessarily central to the definition of centralizing working-class masculinity and to the argument that it occupies a dual position of hegemony and complicity in Australian culture.

This discussion of feminist and gender theory provides a brief background to the analysis of masculinities, which illustrates some of the ways in which masculinity theory differs from gender and sexuality theory—particularly in relation to modernism, postmodernism and post-structural approaches. This is important, as this thesis takes a performative approach to gender, in keeping with Judith Butler's observation that, 'performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body' (1999, in

2006: xv). This is not only true in the gendered context of a body, but the classed, racialized and sexual context of a body as well.

Modernist and Postmodern accounts of Gender, Masculinity Theory, Sexuality and Discourse.

To clearly define centralizing working-class masculinity as both a political ideal and as something which people engage with performatively, it is helpful to explore modernist and postmodernist accounts of gender, sexuality and masculinity theory. In particular it is of use to consider why it is that masculinity is still often discussed through a modernist theoretical framework while both gender and sexuality studies have become increasingly located within a postmodern and poststructuralist paradigm? It is helpful to explore recent debates about this difference, and locate the approaches used within this study within a slightly more poststructuralist and fluid conception of masculinity and identity, particularly in regards to my definition of gender as 'performative' and constructed. Within the field of Gender/Sexuality there are three subfields: feminist, sexuality, and masculinity studies (Beasley 2009b: 173). Beasley argues that a postmodernist approach is often missing from the framing/terminology in Masculinities theorizing, saying, '[m]asculinity studies remains largely modernist in approach and has only recently entered the fraught debates associated with the challenges to this modernist frame of reference' (forthcoming 2013; 2009b: 176).

These debates in masculinity theory often centre around the notion of identity as fixed or fluid. Yet in postmodern inflected accounts identity is seen as discursively produced by 'a multitude of discourses' (Gutterman 2004: 57). As Beasley argues, within the field of masculinity studies, gender and sexuality are often positioned as stable identities, with gender determining sexuality (2009: 178). [10] As noted by Butler, '[t]he presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it' (1990: 9). The construction of gender as dichotomous is not supported throughout this study, indeed I would argue that the masculine should not automatically be aligned with the male body. In order to clarify where this thesis rests on the trajectory from modernism to postmodernism, I now explore this further, specifically in relation to centralizing working-class masculinity as a discursive construct.

The term 'centralizing working-class masculinity' is what Beasley would term a 'political ideal' (2008). This political ideal is not a fixed identity category (although sometimes it is represented as such, specifically in regards to being a fixed *Australian* identity), but rather a discourse that aims to define gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity in specific ways and within specific political and cultural contexts. This notion of discourse is important throughout this thesis, and needs a brief clarification. In this thesis discourse will be considered as, 'something that is produced, circulated, distributed and consumed within society' (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000: 448). Discourse will also be deemed as social and cultural practices (2000: 449).

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[10] One of the more critiqued aspects of a modernist approach to gender and sexuality is the, 'continuing adherence to gender categories and to notions of gender determining sexuality' (Beasley 2009: 176). These debates are explored in more detail in the exploration of intimacy in Chapter Five.

Discourse is something that can be used both to legitimize hegemony, but also to challenge hegemony (2000: 449).

There are several spaces in the field of masculinity theory that consider masculinities and discourse, whether through considering discourses *of* masculinity, or masculinity *as* discourse. Before moving on to consider masculinity theory and hegemonic masculinity, I first want to explore some of the more post-structural, postmodern and discursive approaches in masculinity theory. In this study, discourse is most often engaged with through critical discourse analysis—this will be explored in detail in the next chapter. In the interim, it must be noted that the term discourse is used to mean a set of texts and practices that are socially and culturally constructive. Within that meaning, centralizing working-class masculinity is part of a discourse of legitimization and marginalization around a construction of Australian 'identity'. That some individuals will 'do' or 'perform' this identity is inevitable—it is an exemplary model. However, centralizing working-class masculinity is not a descriptor of any group of actual people, although for some people access to this identity will be easier to attain. It is important to note that in parts this thesis looks at the ways in which a certain group of people, that is, white, (mostly) heterosexual, working-class men engage with this political ideal.

Masculinity/Masculinities: Debates and Clarifications.

In the introduction to this thesis there was a brief clarification of the ways in which the terms masculinity/masculinities and hegemonic masculinity/masculinities would be utilized throughout. In having done this it is important to recognize that neither term is unproblematic. As the lynchpin term of recent works on men and gender (Flood 2002: 203), any discussion and definition of masculinities must include an analysis of the term masculinity/masculinities itself. As Clatterbaugh points out, there is very little understanding of what exactly is being discussed when the term masculinity/masculinities is being used (1998: 27). Flood explains how this is extremely problematic for researchers in this field, and why academics need to clarify their usage of the term.

There are two main reasons why it is worth investigating and clarifying our use of this term. First, sound theoretical analysis requires clarity and precision. Second, to the extent that we wish to communicate to women and men our understandings of gender relations, we require terminologies and frameworks which are coherent, meaningful and clear (Clatterbaugh 25). When we slide from talking about images of men to talking about men, and when we generalize inappropriately about men's lives, we risk losing our audience and our credibility (2002: 204).

Flood's point illustrates that one of the most pressing problems with the use of the term masculinity/masculinities is the way that it slides from describing a set of qualities, behaviours and images that are associated with being male in Western

capitalist culture, to describing actual men, or groups of men (Flood 2002). 'Masculinity/masculinities' when used in this way merely reinforces notions of nature and essentialism, and ignores ways in which not only are masculinity/masculinities and their position as a dominant binary opposition to femininity/femininities problematic, but indeed may support the notion that this dichotomy is natural and immutable. Centralizing working-class masculinity is less about a set of characteristics (although throughout this thesis there will be a discussion of several common practices and characteristics that are associated with this ideal) and is more about legitimizing mainstream binary notions of gender, sexuality and ethnicity and creating consensus around what it means to be a man in Australia.

In order to separate the term 'masculinity/masculinities' from being used as a descriptor of behaviours and qualities associated with actual men as either groups or individuals, a coherent meaning must be produced from the quantity of research in the field. As illustrated by Flood's (2002) critique of the use of the term 'masculinity/masculinities', one of the most important reasons for this is to avoid making any generalizations about men and their behaviours that will only add to mainstream constructions of gender as binary. Certainly, if any practices or characteristics associated with masculinity are essentialized they are positioned as natural and therefore impervious to change as James W. Messerschmidt points out, 'any formulation of the concept as simply constituting as assemblage of 'masculine' character traits should be thoroughly transcended' (2012: 59). Furthermore, any generalizing about masculinity equating to men ignores the fact that women may also perform masculinities. As Butler argues, '*man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as

easily as a female one' (1990: 9), indeed she posits gender to be a 'free-floating artifice' (1990: 9). Indeed, the performance of masculinities is not reliant on the individual possessing male sex organs—women are able to enact traits associated with masculinity.[11] Beasley describes how the term is most often used by gender and masculinity theorists.

> Those writers who employ the term 'masculinity' do so in order to demonstrate, arguably even more definitively than references to 'men', that the subject is not a naturalized category of person. Rather the focus is upon a social construction, which may not even signal so-called 'male' bodies in that the masculine may be associated with female bodies (2005: 178).

While women are often 'othered' though the gendered binary that is often disseminated through centralizing working-class masculinity, some women may have access to practices associated with this ideal. In some spatial and social contexts engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity may be encouraged.[12] Some 'bloke'[13] identified practices can be performed by female bodies, often as a legitimizing tool. Indeed, in some circumstances centralizing working-class

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[11] Judith Halberstam looks at masculinity as performed by women in the GLBTQ community and takes an approach grounded in both masculinity and queer studies in *Female Masculinity* (2008).

[12] There are several spatial and social locations where women can gain legitimacy and agency through some engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity. Working in the mining industry is but one example and is explored by Mayes McDonald & Pini (2010) 'The Feminine Revolution in Mining: A Critique.' *Australian Geographer* 41(2). In this paper they discuss the fallacy of the claims of 'feminizing' the mining industry. As they state in relation to Bartram and Shobrook's study of women workers at the Plymouth's Devonport Dockyard, 'the dominance and prevalence of discourses of masculinity in this workplace have resulted in gendered socio-spatial boundary marking as the environment of the docks and the work undertaken at the docks have been seen to be more legitimately masculine' (2010: 234).

[13] 'Bloke' is a colloquialism used in various parts of the world to refer to a man, however, in Australia it refers to a specific construction of manhood tied to Australian national identity. In Australia, 'bloke' most often refers to a white, working-class aligned Australian man of the kind discussed throughout this thesis.

masculinity *may in certain locations* be not only permitted in a non-male body, but may actually be legitimizing. For example as McDonald, Mayes and Pini discovered, masculinity was encouraged and rewarded in both male and female employees in remote mining communities in Australia (2012). This means that it is important to tease out the meaning of centralizing working-class masculinity as separate from actual working-class *men*.[14] Furthermore, this 'masculinization' may not merely be performative, not only in the sense of individual practices and inter-relational exchanges, but also in terms of ways of subjectively engaging with and thinking about gender. All the same, the spaces and places in which women have access to these practices and relationalities as a form of legitimization are much more restricted than they are for individuals designated as male, that is, as occupying a male body.

Equating masculinity/masculinities with men is evidently problematic. As Lynne Segal argues, 'masculinity, as any type of inner essence, is a fiction or set of fictions—however real, perhaps disastrously real, men's attempt to live out these fictions may be' (1993: 630). Slippage between the terms 'masculinity' and 'men' tends to posit masculinity as natural to the male body, reiterating dichotomous notions of gender. Yet when masculinities are discussed it is very often in relation to men. By contrast this thesis is concerned with the discursive power of a privileged form of working-class masculinity as a cultural and social mobilizing ideal, and the ways in which individuals engage with this ideal, whether in terms of ideals or in practice. Masculinity/masculinities are employed in this thesis in relation to specific

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[14] I am aware that the very categories 'man' and 'woman' are problematic and somewhat essentialising as they are dichotomous and fail to recognize the myriad of gender identities along the queer and trans spectrum.

views or behaviours and in the context of the broader constitution of gender relations. This use is in keeping with Connell's approach, in which,

> 'Masculinity', to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture (1995: 71).

Many popular cultural/psychological definitions of the term reinforce the notion of a natural binary between 'masculinity', and 'femininity' that is determined by biology as much as by social, cultural and personal influences. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt state so clearly,

> Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular setting (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836).

Centralizing working-class masculinity/masculinities is indeed a configuration of practice, one that encourages the legitimization of not only gendered, but classed, racialized and sexual hierarchies. Their 'power', however, varies in different spatial, social, cultural and political locations. Through conceptualizing centralizing working-class masculinities I examine how they in turn shape social practices surrounding

not only gender but race, class and sexuality (Connell 1995:75). It is *how* this occurs and *why* centralizing working-class masculinities abound in Australian culture that is explored in this thesis. In particular it is the strength of this exemplar as a tool to legitimize gendered discourses, as well as power relations associated with class, ethnicity and sexuality that will be examined.

Recognizing Fluidity and Variations: Multiple Masculinities.

If social hierarchies and distributions of power are to be explored recognizing gendered binaries will not suffice. Masculinity does not exist as a singular gendered entity (as many pop-psychological and mythopoetic writers on the topic state). Rather masculinities are both multiple and hierarchical, even within social groupings. The concept of multiple masculinities, however, is not without its problems (Flood 2002: 206). One of the most prominent of these problems is that by recognizing a cacophony of masculinities, which exist in tension and competition with each other, responsibility for inequality and uneven distribution of power based along gender lines may be evaded. The recognition of multiple masculinities, 'certainly … does enable many, perhaps even most men to be configured—along with women—as victims too' (Beasley 2005: 229).

The appropriation of victim, or 'crisis' narratives is not the only problem with recognizing multiple masculinities. Another problem with recognizing multiple masculinities is voiced by Flood,

> An emphasis on diversities among men brings the danger of a retreat to an apolitical relativism, which may lose sight of men's power as a gender (Pease 31), and may remove 'attention from the interrelations of the unities of men, and the differences between men' (Hearn 211) (2002: 206).

If masculinities are so diverse then arguably not all men are either responsible for, or benefit from gendered inequality. Indeed, it could even be argued that men as a group do not occupy a position of privilege as there is so much variation between masculinities and the legitimacy held by different men who perform these masculinities. In this context, Schippers calls for masculinities which legitimize men's power to be distinguished from those that do not (2007 in Messerschmidt 2012: 71). This is problematic; a differential allocation of privilege and legitimacy certainly exists within a gendered group, but also exists between women and men. While certain men may have very little institutional or cultural power, they may very well still benefit from the power inequalities that work in their favour because they are men (Connell 1995). Furthermore, the individuals that have the capacity and ability to perform masculinities that are legitimized will exact more benefit from this legitimacy associated with those masculinities. This is certainly true of centralizing working-class masculinity and those who can access practices associated with it. It is necessary, therefore to theorize how multiple masculinities can be recognized and yet differential relations of power between different masculinities can be erased or reconfigured.

Certainly, centralizing working-class masculinity is not fixed. It changes and shifts to reflect changes and shifts in politics, culture and mainstream discourses. It is, as Demetriou argues about hegemonic masculinities, 'capable of reconfiguring itself' (2001: 355). This thesis explores some of these shifts, such as the move from celebrating working-class solidarity and community to a more neo-liberal individualistic configuration of working-class masculinity.[15] Furthermore there have been several historical configurations of centralizing working-class masculinity such as the 'bushman', the 'larrikin', the 'battler'[16] and the 'bloke' (Nile 2000) that continue to hold cultural relevance in contemporary Australia. The 'battler' and the 'bloke' in particular, as more recent manifestations of centralizing working-class masculinity, are explored throughout this thesis in various manifestations.

Recognizing that masculinities are multiple and variable in nature is not enough. If we try to define actual groups of men (such as working class men) by one, singular archetype of working-class masculinities we risk slipping into stereotyping and essentialising. There is no one set 'working-class' masculinity as there is no set 'middle-class' masculinity (Connell 1995:76). If the nature of particular masculinities—in this case working-class masculinities—are to be explored then it must be recognized that such masculinities will not always occupy the same space,

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[15] This will be explored in detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Five.

[16] The 'bushman', the 'larrikin', and the 'battler' are all Australian colloquialisms – often very closely linked with masculinity. The 'bushman' is a more historic figure representing colonial manhood, the 'larrikin' is a more recent configuration of the 'bloke', one linked with jocularity, excess (especially in relation to alcohol and women), and anti-authoritarianism, it is defined in the Macquarie dictionary as, 'an uncultivated, rowdy, but good-hearted person' http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/kirsty.whitman@adelaide.edu.au@919FFA87987150/-/p/thes/article_display.html?type=title&first=1&mid=2&last=2&current=1&result=1&DatabaseList=dictbigmac&query=larrikin&searchType=findrank) . The 'battler' is not always as gendered (women can be battlers, but not larrikins or bushmen), and is used to describe struggling, usually white and heterosexual, people who are largely aligned with the working-class—however in recent iterations, particularly in political rhetoric, 'battler' has been increasingly used to define the middle-class. The 'battler' in particular will be discussed in more detail throughout this thesis.

that not all individuals who attempt to perform working-class masculinities do so in the same way, and that embodied working-class masculinities will vary according to a wide range of social phenomena, and intersecting identities. While popular cultural representations of different masculinities may often resort to obvious stereotypes, and while political ideals may be limited in their scope, it is important not to rely on these limited representations. Connell discusses the hierarchical nature of masculinities, and the fact that certain masculinities and by extension the men who perform them are marginalized or subordinated. However, as is evident in the following statement, she also recognizes that even men who do not embody hegemonic forms of masculinity may still gain from their existence.

> The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell 1995: 79).

While masculinities are multiple and hierarchical, they also operate in relation to femininities, which are posited in a dichotomous and 'lesser' position. Masculinities are privileged and therefore those who perform them may be privileged as well. However, as it is usually men who are aligned with masculinity all men benefit from what Connell defines as the 'patriarchal dividend' (1995). As Connell points out, most men may be in fairly equal relationships, may treat women with respect, may share household responsibility, yet they will still see no need for feminism (Connell 1995: 80). It must also be recognized that the masculinities that

are the most marginalized are often those that are marked as 'closer' to femininity (for example gay masculinities, or the feminizing of some non-white masculinities). Conversely, those masculinities associated with culturally defined 'manliness' are often the most celebrated. It is often such masculinities that occupy a position of hegemony.

Contextualizing Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities, Hegemony, and Men.

Within masculinity studies, the theory of hegemonic masculinity is one of the most widely debated. This theoretical construct is important to this thesis in terms of my argument that centralizing working-class masculinity does occupy a socially and culturally hegemonic position *in some spaces*. While it may not occupy a position of hegemony in all spaces, even in those where it does not it is still complicit. As is explored below, complicity and hegemony are closely intertwined. Centralizing working-class masculinity operates between hegemony and complicity, in a constant state of what Gramsci defines as 'unstable equilibria' (1971: 182).[17] Like all such discursive constructions, working-class masculinities are never static, but shift in terms of practice, being, and process. Whether it is occupying a position of hegemony or complicity it is always centralizing, and that centralizing nature of working-class masculinity in Australia helps configure the hegemony of masculinity itself. Before exploring this slippage between hegemony and complicity I want to examine the importance of Connell's definition to this thesis.

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[17] Gramscian and Foucaultian constructions of discourse and hegemony as always being in such a state of instability, or what Foucault defines as, 'enunciative modalities' of discourse (1972) is beyond the scope of this thesis and will be explored in further research.

Raewyn Connell is credited with theorizing hegemonic masculinity, which she later defined in *Masculinities* in the following way:

> At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (1995:77).

Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity as the answer to the 'legitimacy of patriarchy' is a *key theoretical concept within this study*. The concept will be expanded from just addressing 'patriarchy' and the subordination of women by men to using it to consider other hierarchical orderings of subjective identities, such as class, ethnicity and sexuality. This thesis looks at hegemonic masculinity as multiple, hierarchical, and legitimizing/delegitimizing not only in relation to configurations of gender but also to configurations of ethnicity/race, class, and sexuality among other subject positions. It is how hegemonic identities *as discourse as well as practice* create spaces in which inclusion and exclusion are practiced in Australian culture that this thesis is most concerned. To explain this approach a deeper analysis of both hegemonic masculinities and the term hegemony itself needs to be undertaken. Hegemony is considered with a particular focus on how it applies to Connell's theory, and how her theory will be used in this study.

Connell's definition comes from the notion of hegemony as defined by Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci. Robert Bocock defines hegemony as,

> when the intellectual, moral and philosophical leadership provided by the class or alliance of class factions which is ruling successfully achieves its objective of providing the fundamental outlook for the whole society (1986: 63).

Characterizing the term 'hegemony' is crucial to understanding the term 'hegemonic masculinity'. Many of the debates about the meanings and usage of 'hegemonic masculinity' centre on the meanings and complexities of hegemony. Richard Howson, for instance, argues that the clarification of the term 'hegemonic masculinity' rests on engaging rigorously with Gramsci's version of hegemony (2008b: 211). Howson and Smith argue that hegemony is not reliant on power, but relations of power and powerlessness (2008a: 3), and the competing 'common sense' between what Gramsci terms, 'subaltern groups' (1975: Q25§4 in 2008: 2). They note that the term 'common sense' involves,

> conformism to the group's particular traditional practices and beliefs (Gramsci 1971: 324), which in turn leads to a fragmentation of civil society along the various and often competing lines of common sense ascribed to by subaltern groups (2008a: 4).

This tension between subaltern groups is one of the more powerful ways that consensus is achieved. The interests of subaltern groups, which may often be

aligned with each other and antithetical to those of legitimized groups can be pitted against one another. As Howson and Smith maintain, 'the State has incorporated certain corporatist interests and exercises its power to maintain these interests by keeping the subaltern groups fragmented and passive within civil society' (2008a: 5). Exploring how the 'common sense' of the 'Aussie bloke', who is able to be represented as both legitimate *and* subaltern, is often represented as an overriding national 'common sense' is a key aspect of this thesis.

Exploring how hegemony is achieved, through consensus, coercion or both, will affect how individual theorists define hegemonic masculinity and how the term is employed. Mike Donaldson argues that hegemony,

> is importantly about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process … it is importantly about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms on which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of this process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways which appear "natural", "ordinary", "normal" (1993: 645).

This characterization of hegemony as being about the dominance of a ruling group may be considered somewhat problematic. This thesis, for example, deals with a constructed identity that may be argued to occupy a dominant position in terms of

gender, but occupies a 'subaltern' classed position as discussed by Howson (2006: 45). The discussion here includes an exploration of Connell's use of the term through looking at hegemony less as coercive (dominance) and more as consensual (legitimacy). Also explored will be the extensive work that has surrounded Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity that will be used to locate this highly important term within this debate. This discussion then turns to the hegemony of neo-liberalism, and links this to centralizing working-class masculinity as legitimized, but also as *one of several* masculinities that occupies hegemonic space in Australia.

Debates around hegemonic masculinity/masculinities have recently often focused on whether the term can be applied to multiple masculinities, or whether it only applies to one universal, global masculine archetype. This debate is particularly pertinent for this study as if the argument is to be made that there is an often hegemonic *working-class* masculinity that is unique to Australia it must also be argued that different regions or groups of people (nations, cities, ethnic groups, religions, and cultures) may have different masculinities occupying hegemonic positions. If this is the case then how many hegemonic masculinities can there be, and are some hegemonic masculinities higher on the hierarchy than others?

Central to Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinities are the relations between masculinities, specifically hegemonic masculinities, complicit masculinities, marginalized masculinities and subordinated masculinities. As Connell explains,

hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal order works (1987: 183).

As Connell theorizes, different masculinities occupy different positions in a hierarchical order. She uses the examples of gay masculinities being subordinated (1995: 78), and working-class and black masculinities being marginalized (1995: 80). She also uses the term complicit to describe those masculinities that receive a dividend from the patriarchal order, despite not necessarily being hegemonic. They receive these dividends, 'without the tensions and risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy' (Connell 1995: 79). Centralizing working-class masculinities are an important site of examining these phenomena, as they are often complicit, yet they also often act as those 'frontline troops' of not only patriarchy, but also of whiteness and heteronormativity. This is a key exploration in this thesis—how working-class masculinity is itself hegemonic, but how it works to maintain the hegemony of whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality. Working-class masculinity may not occupy a position of hegemony in all spaces yet it is always central. Therefore, while I argue that working-class masculinity is hegemonic in some parts of this thesis—it will always be defined as centralizing. Indeed, even when working-class masculinity is not in a position of hegemony (such as in the political sphere), it it complicit in maintaining the hegemony of other legitimized groups (in this case white, heterosexual, upper-classed men). Furthermore, even when working-class masculinity is used as a point of opposition against other hegemonic masculinities (such as upper-class masculinity), it is complicit in maintaining the hegemony of whiteness, heterosexuality and maleness—as explored in Chapter Three. The next

section explores more fully some of the debates around hegemonic masculinities as a term and clarifies how centralizing working-class masculinity can be defined as occupying a position of hegemony in many spaces in Australian culture.

If hegemonic masculinity is used to ensure the legitimacy of not only patriarchy, but other sites of difference and the hierarchical ordering of subjective identities, then the term must be discussed in relation to both men's power over women and children, and some men's power over other men. Jeff Hearn suggests a move away from the term 'hegemonic masculinity' to a discussion of 'the hegemony of men' (Hearn 2004: 59). He argues that the problem with the term is that,

> The concept has generally been employed in too restricted a way; the focus on masculinity is too narrow. Instead it is time to go back from *masculinity* to men, to examine the hegemony of men and about men. The hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a *social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices* (Hearn 2004: 59).

Hearn suggests that there is a need to examine the different ways of being men, as opposed to specific masculinities. In particular he urges that there needs to be an, 'examination of that which sets the agenda for different ways of being men in relation to women, children and other men, rather than the identification of particular forms of

masculinity or hegemonic masculinity' (Hearn 2004: 60).[18]   In terms of Hearn's theory, this study tends towards contextualizing hegemonic masculinity as a discursive construction. In order to do this the lives of actual men will be considered—both through the empirical data and via a wider analysis of cultural and social discourse. As both Hearn and Connell argue, discursive constructions of masculinity, particularly hegemonic masculinity, are most beneficial to men (Hearn 2004: 51; Connell 2005: 245). That discursive centralizing working-class masculinity is beneficial to certain groups of men—white, heterosexual, able-bodied men—is one of the key points in this thesis.

Hearn's critique of the term hegemonic masculinity seeks to address the fact that the term itself may essentialize gender even as it ignores the actual practices of men. Demetrakis Demetriou goes further, to argue that, 'hegemonic masculinity is not a purely white or heterosexual configuration of practice but it is a hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy' (2001: 337). Demetriou further argues that it is the 'constant hybridization, its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjectures' (2001: 348). Demetriou's view of hegemonic masculinity being in constant flux ties in with the fact that centralizing working-class masculinity is often hegemonic, but is also fluid and changeable, often subtly shifting in relation to social, cultural, economic and political factors.[19]   For example, the collectivism

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[18] Hearn argues that in order to do this there are seven major aspects that need to be addressed (2004: 60-61)
[19] This is can be seen in the current neo-liberal iteration of centralizing working-class masculinity in which the collectivity of former iterations of working-class masculinity have largely been rejected, with these new iterations becoming more individualistic and isolated (see Chapter Three).

associated with working-class masculinities which had been repressed and reconfigured through the years of John Howard's Coalition Government (Dyrenfurth 2005; Milner 2009), enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in the aftermath of the WorkChoices legislation (Muir 2008).

Centralizing working-class masculinity utilizes different manifestations in popular culture in different ways. For example in some instances representations are overtly idealistic, particularly when nationalism is involved (Nile 2000), yet others are much more 'average', even offering a point of an expression of good-humoured mockery. Examples of these variations and their differing yet uniting purposes will be examined in Chapter Three in relation to media images of centralizing working-class masculinity. Demetriou's (2001) argument that hegemonic masculinity is continuously in flux (he uses the appropriation of some aspects of gay masculinity by hegemonic heterosexual masculinity—particularly in relation to capitalist culture) fits with this thesis. Furthermore, his argument that hegemonic masculinities (as there are more than one) adapt through appropriating aspects of marginalized and subordinated masculinities is certainly useful. Centralizing working-class masculinity works *because* it has taken aspects of a marginalized masculinity (working-class) and adapted them in such a way as to allow middle and upper-class men (and in some cases women) to engage with them.

In terms of the way that 'hegemonic masculinity/masculinities' is defined and utilized throughout this thesis Beasley's (2008; 2009b; 2013) significant contribution to the field is the most vital to this research. Beasley's critiques relate to the

'slippage' (2008: 88) of the term, and in particular relate to the definition of hegemony as legitimizing rather than being about dominance. She also recognizes the existence of multiple hegemonic masculinities, of which centralizing working-class masculinity is (at times) but one. In order to do this she suggests the following, 'more terms may be required, enabling recognition of what I would call "supra-hegemonic" and "sub-hegemonic" masculinities' (2008: 98). Beasley argues that this allows for hegemonic masculinities to be conceived as not only multiple, but as existing hierarchically. Her argument allows for the inclusion of working-class masculinities in Australia in the 'sub-hegemonic' category. Beasley's approach, which argues for the term to be narrowed to 'focus on its political function' (2009a: 62) while undertaking a, 'taxonomic expansion' to encompass a wider scope of hegemonic masculinities (2009: 62), fits this thesis' discussion of centralizing working-class masculinity as hegemonic, as a political ideal, and as discursive.

Hegemony, Gender, and Class.

If centralizing working-class masculinity represents a group whose class position is subaltern, then according to a Gramsican model of hegemony as theorized by Howson, it is in the best interests of the most legitimized to maintain friction between 'subaltern groups' (2006: 44). Indeed, Howson argues that legitimized group/groups need, 'to prevent the development within the various subaltern groups of a collective understanding … In other words, to undermine self-consciousness and organization … in the potential unification of their interests' (2006: 45). In this manner, centralizing working-class masculinities in some specific

forms are presented in such a way as to further neo-liberal and conservative agendas, as is explored in relation to centralizing working-class masculinity in the film *Kenny* (2006) in Chapter Three.

Yet, while neo-liberalism, 'dominates primarily through a combination of economic and extra-economic coercion' (Cahill 2008: 215), discursive centralizing working-class masculinity is often employed to gain consensus. Indeed, as Cahill argues, neo-liberalism has a harder time creating the consensus needed for social and cultural hegemony than it does being coercive (2008: 214). Therefore, centralizing working-class masculinity is extremely useful as a political tool, as it encourages social and cultural consensus through its position as highly legitimized. In particular, the individualistic neo-liberal version of centralizing working-class masculinity seen in mining industry masculinities (to be explored in Chapters Five, Six and Seven), encourages cultural consensus to systems of privilege and inequality. Furthermore, the centrality of such masculinities in Australia can render them somewhat invisible through their normative positioning (Kimmel 2004). Centralizing working-class masculinities are therefore both highly legitimizing, yet their legitimacy provides a normative invisibility.

As previously argued, this thesis takes up Beasley's assertion that hegemony rests in legitimacy. It is not the dominant position. In fact this thesis will explore how the anti-elitism that is such a part of centralizing working-class masculinity cannot operate as a dominant position. Legitimacy is granted though *authenticity*, and it is the subjective white, male, heterosexual and often working-

class position that is portrayed as truly authentic in terms of Australian national identity. As Beasley argues, 'the notion of an idealized working-class-inflected 'every-bloke' may work in certain contexts as a generalizable representation of proper, honoured manliness—that is, as a form of hegemonic masculinity' (Beasley 2009a: 61). This sense of *averageness* grants authenticity, and positions centralizing working-class masculinity as often hegemonic.[20]   Centralizing working-class masculinity is a thoroughly legitimized position that does not involve social, cultural or economic dominance, it is merely the normative position—the 'average'. However, while terms such as 'average Australian', and the 'mainstream' are often used to invoke a sense of social cohesion, the 'average'—centralizing working-class masculinity—is in fact an exclusionary construct.

The area of masculinities theory is one fraught with debate around the usage of terms. Indeed, even the existence of a separate field of masculinities is debated within the field of gender and sexualities theory.[21] While an exhaustive analysis of all the research in this field would require far more space than allocated for a doctoral thesis, the important and most relevant research has been discussed here, with a focus on the ways in which terms such as masculinities, hegemony, and hegemonic masculinities are employed throughout this study. This discussion of masculinities theories locates this thesis within the field. The approaches taken within this thesis add to the current conversation among masculinities scholars, and contribute something new to the field. Masculinities research has a healthy presence in

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[20] The hegemony of the 'average' in Australia has a long history, and can be seen in phenomena such as 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' and the championing of the 'Battler' (which is explored as part of this study) (Johnson 2005; Dyrenfurth 2007). A desire to move away from traditional, British constructions of class hierarchies was a factor in early constructions of Australian national identity (Elder 2007: 43).

[21] This was a major theme of the 2011 Centre for Research on Men and Masculinities (CROMM) centre launch conference.

Australia. Class research is far less prolific in this country. Therefore, class, and the way it engages with the economic, the social, the cultural and the psychic, is explored in the next section.

Intersections of Class and Gender

As illustrated in the previous section's discussions on current debates surrounding the terms masculinity/masculinities, and hegemonic masculinity/masculinities, gender is not the only way in which bodies are marked socially and culturally. Class, race and ethnicity, and sexuality are all identity matrixes that intersect with gender to create specific systems of hierarchy, legitimacy and subordination. One of the aims of this research is to unpick how class and gender intersect in ways that construct centralizing working-class masculinities in Australia. In order to do this this study explores recent research on class, linking this with the masculinities theory to establish how these terms relate to this work, and to show how important that matrix of class and gender (and race and sexuality) is in the construction of such a centralizing 'manhood'. As the terms used in masculinity theory are contested, so too are the terms used in research on class—indeed the very notion that class is still a relevant social category is disputed. This section of the thesis will explore class theory, including recent theory from the UK which examines class as a social, cultural and psychic phenomenon as well as an economic one, and this section will consider the lack of similar research in Australia (Pini, McDonald and Mayes 2012). In Australia class is both highly visible (for instance see Pini, Mayes and McDonald's 2012 work on the 'cashed-up bogan'), but its existence is often

denied. Centralizing working-class masculinity, while a classed construct, is used as a tool to deny any real class-based inequities. Elder discusses the prevalence of the 'working man' as a trope of Australian national identity, yet, as she argues,

> The way class operates in this story of Australian-ness in not simply about a division between rich and poor, and the possibility or impossibility of moving across these class divisions. In Australia, egalitarianism has been a key trope, that is a key symbol or theme, in class stories' (2007: 41).

The 'myth' of egalitarianism is explored in particular in the chapters on education, work and risk. Before launching into this analysis an overview of class theory as utilized in this study is needed.

Class: Moving Beyond Economic Categories.

Class, while being in part a measure of capital (economic, cultural and social) is far more than socio-economic status. Class is both a subjective and a reflexive position, a way in which people are constructed as they construct themselves. Class is also spatial, occupying different positions within different spaces and places. For example, being working-class can be legitimate and 'authentic' or delegitimized and marginalized depending on intersections with other identity categories and the space and place in which it occurs. In the social sciences, particularly in the UK, the study of social class was an important area of inquiry. As

Strangleman observes, 'historically, class was central to the social sciences and especially sociology in the UK. In fact social class was seen as the core, or central pillar of the discipline (2008:17). However, since the mid-eighties the study of social class has been in decline, with sociological focus tending more towards other identifiers such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Morgan 2005: 166). This is in large part due to the increasing focus on individuality, which Skeggs argues was influenced by the individualism inherent to the Thatcherism and Reaganism of the early eighties (2004: 47). The denial or rejection of class in the academy was a reflection of increasing political rhetoric stating that class was no longer applicable as a determiner of social, economic and cultural inequity (Skeggs 2004). Indeed, the recognition of class as having a real world impact had all but disappeared under the rubric of neo-liberalism and individualism.

As the focus moved away from social class in both cultural and political discourses in the nineties the subject lost popularity with academics from the social sciences, particularly in Australia (Pini, McDonald & Mayes 2012: 143). Neo-liberalism is at odds with the unifying nature of class studies, and discourses of equality and social justice were replaced with discourses about responsibility, choice, and upward-mobility. In Australia class never received the attention it did in the UK, partly owing to national narratives about egalitarianism and Australia as a classless society (Elder 2007). This is highly visible in the movement from social justice to individual responsibility and choice in the rhetoric of the Howard led Coalition Government (Dyrenfurth 2005). What the literature shows is that 'class' as a site of social, cultural and economic inequality has been consistently denied any space in neo-liberal discourses. This was achieved through denial of empathy (Johnson

2005), anti-elitism and the inversion of collective working-class terminology (Scalmer 1999), and mainstreaming (Dyrenfurth 2005).

Despite the removal of discussions around class from neo-liberal discourses, social class is still highly present, and is an important social category. Furthermore, the unifying aspects of belonging to the working-class are still present. Verity Burgmann discusses the continuing resonance of working-class mobility in Australia in this way,

> In the burgeoning of 'identity politics' from the 1980s onwards, it was assumed that the principle identities underpinning progressive action were gender, race and ethnicity, and sexuality. Class went missing. Yet, as we survey the historical record, including the very recent past, it is not difficult to find instances where Australians have resolutely identified themselves as working class or economically disadvantaged and mobilized effectively upon such a basis (2006: 89).

Just one example of this type of class-based collective action was seen in the protests against the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation. However, as this thesis will explore, centralizing working-class masculinity is becoming increasingly individualistic and neo-liberal in form. This erosion of collectivity as part of working-class masculine identity will be discussed, with particular reference to class as not only an economic category, but also as social and cultural.

The social and cultural aspects of class are recognized and recognizable in Australia, particular in terms of national identity. As Elder points out, 'many early national stories about Australian-ness locate the essence of being Australian in a concept of the working man—an idea emerging from a class-focused approach to society' (2007: 40). As she notes, this trope of the 'working man' (2007) has continued to resonate in terms of national identity in Australia. However what Elder calls the 'working man' (2007) which is understood here as centralizing working-class masculinity, does not operate in such a way as to highlight or make visible class based inequality and privilege. Rather, centralizing working-class masculinity operates in the construction of an ideal of national egalitarianism, in which everyone in Australia is 'equal' (Elder 2007). As will be explored throughout this thesis, centralizing working-class masculinity, rather than making any real class-based inequity visible, is used to mask the fact that any such inequity exists. Unfortunately even in academia class has been underrepresented in Australian research (Pini, Mayes & McDonald 2012).

Therefore, this thesis will utilize the newer, more intersectional, class analysis, in particular the work coming out of the United Kingdom which considers class and gender as moving far beyond mere socio-economic categories. Of relevance to this study are debates about the economic versus the social aspects of class, the classification of social bodies (Skeggs 2004: 36), and the variations within classed groups (Skeggs 2004: 36). The variations within classed groups are most relevant to this thesis, which is not looking to compartmentalize individuals into classed groups. The aim, rather, is to gain a deeper understanding of how

centralizing working-class masculinities operate as both discursive and performative identities.

Recognizing variations among class experiences allows for a clear distinction to be made between a socially constructed identity with an obvious social and cultural meaning, and the lived experiences of actual individuals. As Skeggs explains,

> Academics may define class, but how it is lived may be significantly different. This is why understanding the production of representations of class is so important—it points to the area of negotiation between classification, positioning, and experience and is the site of mediation, challenge and conflict (2004: 42).

The 'production of representations of class' is of concern because in Australia such productions can be problematic, and encourage class-based opposition.[22] The legitimacy afforded to white working-class masculinity allows space for anti-elitist discourses which often pit the 'cultural elites' against the 'battler'. The battler, who is often represented in political rhetoric, media images and cultural discourse as 'authentically Australian', is positioned as more worthy, more deserving. In this way working-class-ness is legitimized.

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[22] In the last few months before the submission of this thesis this class-based opposition became increasingly apparent in the mainstream news-media, in part as a reaction to the 2012 budget and payments made to lower-income families.

However, belonging to the working-class is no guarantee that this identity will be accessible. Women, non-whites, the disabled or unwell and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who are also working-class face subordination along the axis of two (or more) ways in which their bodies are marked. There are also other ways of performing working-class masculinities which will deny self-value to a man who otherwise could access this specific identity. As will be discussed in the media chapter, neo-liberal individualism has created a limited scope for actual engagement with those versions of being working-class that have traditional social and cultural legitimacy. Indeed, socially and culturally legitimizing working-class masculinities are reproduced under the umbrella term 'Aussie battler', which during the Howard Government years came to be associated with a disenfranchised working/lower middle class worker whose entitlements had been eaten away by the educated elites on the top and the welfare dependent 'lower-class' at the bottom (Dyrenfurth 2005: 188). Therefore to engage with centralizing working-class masculinity in a culturally sanctioned way an individual must not only be male, white and heterosexual, but must also be gainfully (and skilfully) employed, independent, and have aspirations more in line with the middle-class.[23] Furthermore, while an alignment with the working-class can be used as a legitimizing tool, trying to bring attention to actual class-based inequality is delegitimized as it goes against the trope of egalitarianism discussed by Elder (2007).

Recognizing the variety among classed groups is crucial if any understanding is to be gained of how gender and class combine to create socially

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[23] Such aspirations are largely materialistic, supporting adherence to neo-liberal individualism through which collectivity is often discarded for individualism and personal material gain. This is a common aspect of mining masculinities, which will be explored in a forthcoming paper.

powerful identities. The way in which masculinity and being working-class is linked in the Australian cultural psyche means that for many working-class Australians, particularly those who are the least culturally visible, power is denied. This disempowering is articulated by Skeggs in the following way:

> The working-classes who create their own culture […] and not in the conditions of their own choosing, have far less potential to generate exchange-value from their culture because of social circuits in which they operate. To convert their cultural resources into symbolic capital would require access to conversion mechanisms and this is where representations are central, because they attribute value to different people, practices, objects and classifications, thereby enhancing or limiting the potential for exchange (Skeggs 2004: 96).

As this illustrates, the representation of a highly limited and limiting centralizing working-class masculinity creates a dichotomy based on not only gender, but race and sexuality within the working class. Some bodies, therefore, have exchange value, while others do not. This positions a certain identity at which gender and class intersect as more legitimate, allowing for exchange value to be limited to those individuals who can be coded within centralizing working-class masculinity.

Despite the ways in which any social or cultural power afforded to a working-class identity is limited, it is crucial to note that for many Australians, belonging to the working-class does not bring with it a sense of shame, but rather a sense of pride. The desire to mark oneself as working-class is an area of analysis in this thesis.

Often the working-class define themselves not only with pride, but in direct opposition to the middle and upper classes (Skeggs 2004: 40).[24] A classic example of the 'ideal' of working-class masculinity can be found in the lyrics of Jimmy Barnes's 1986 hit *Working Class Man*.[25] Throughout the lyrics not only is the man's class lauded, but his sexuality 'he loves the little women someday he'll make his wife,' his past as a soldier, 'did his time in Vietnam, still mad at uncle Sam,' and masculine mentoring, 'Father's son left to carry on blue denim in his veins,' are all held in high regard (Barnes 1986). There are a variety of reasons for the continual cultural attachment to this song, but the hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinity is a major factor.

The historical break away from British culture which was often viewed as upper-class is one important factor behind Australia's cultural embrace of a working-class ethos. As Elder argues,

> Many of the stories of national identity in Australia are structured in terms of [a] relationship to Britain, which is often seen as both the place of the origin of the nation … and as the place against which Australia has to mark itself as different and better … Unlike Britain, where the aristocracy set the tone of the nation and its culture, in Australia it was argued that this came from the workers' (2007: 49-50).

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[24] However, it must also be pointed out that for many Australians there is a denial of any real social class categories both historically and increasingly since neo-liberal discourses about class have made it less visible (Dyrenfurth 2005).

[25] Despite its continual resonance as a song about the quintessential Aussie bloke, *Working Class Man* was actually written in the United States in reference to American white, working-class men (as can be seen in the reference to 'Uncle Sam').

Cultural admiration for the working-class has been somewhat hijacked by conservative discourses, particularly in relation to the battler archetype. What remains the same though is that working-class culture can be a source of pride for those within the working-class, and that many individuals may adopt some of the traits, behaviours or characteristics associated with working-class culture, even individuals not actually aligned with the working-class. As a result, it is necessary to note that much of the literature on class analysis fails to recognize the self-pride found in those who identify as working-class, 'so whilst huge amounts of energy are put into defining, knowing, classifying, recognizing and moralizing the working-class, they go about their business using their own definition and valuations' (Skeggs 2004: 40).[26]

Debates about class theory, defining social class and how to study class illustrate that as an identifier that is used to mark specific bodies class still requires attention. Belonging to a classed group is both economic and cultural. Class also intersects significantly with gender, race and ethnicity, and sexuality. As Skeggs shows, the ability to utilize class in ways that provide an individual or group with power is limited by the other ways in which their bodies are marked (2004: 3). Access to legitimization based on class is therefore accessible only to certain members of that classed group. Where this work offers the field something new is that it pays particular attention to how people choose and perform their own class (albeit in highly gendered ways). The working-class men who engage with centralizing working-class masculinity in Australia have a certain agency in their

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[26] It must be pointed out that Skeggs is discussing class research in the UK, where class is a far more commonly researched topic.

classed identity. However, as noted, there is a very limited scope for those who wish to engage with this more culturally accepted classed position. The 'battler' identity is a limited construct for those whose identities fall outside this scope. Whether by subjective experience (people who fall outside the white, male, heterosexual matrix), or by circumstance (the unemployed, single parents), class can then be used a way of marking the 'other'. There is a very fine line between inclusion and exclusion, one which will be explored in Chapter Seven. Furthermore, there is some very rich literature on class 'disgust' (Lawler 2004, 2005; Tyler 2008) which while not as apparent in Australia as the United Kingdom, is still present.[27] Divisions such as these maintain a class based dichotomy which disallows cross-class empathy and works to encourage division and mistrust along class lines (Johnson 2005).

The denigration of the 'lower-classes' as lacking in cultural capital is evident in Pini, McDonald and Mayes's research on the phenomenon of 'cashed-up bogans' (2012), in which they compare the 'disgust' associated with British 'Chav' identities to the 'Bogan' identity in Australia. Both are working-class archetypes that are often employed to provoke the worst assumptions about the working class. Their research on the 'cashed up bogan', or 'gilt-edged blue collar workers' (Salt 2009 in Pini, McDonald & Mayes 2012: 143), whose move into the highly paid mining industry has given them economic capital despite their 'lack' of *cultural* capital (owing to their working-class origins), found that despite this increase in financial capital, the working-class were still 'othered' from the middle-class.

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[27] While Australia lacks the 'Chav' identity which is the site of much of the class disgust in the UK, we do have our own ways of marking the classed 'other'. Andrew Bolt's venomous diatribe about the moral lack of the 'underclass' (*The Advertiser*, May 31) is but one example. The website, 'thingsboganslike.com', while humorous, reiterates a classed divide between the 'average' Aussie bogan lacking in cultural capital, and the upper-middle class hipster elite http://thingsboganslike.com/

> They [the cashed-up bogans] are constructed as underserving of wealth, and derided and stigmatized for what is seen as impersonating the middle class and being unsuccessful in the process in terms of a range of symbolic and cultural markers such as dress, deportment, and speech (Pini, McDonald & Mayes 2012: 146). [28]

The classed 'disgust' discussed by Pini, McDonald and Mayes flows both ways. For the working-class it manifests itself in anti-elitism. Both anti-elitism and working-class derision are consistently reinforced through media representations (which will be explored in Chapter Three) and discourses about the 'mainstream' versus the 'elites' (which will be explored in Chapters Four and Seven). Pini, McDonald and Mayes illustrate the ubiquitous yet almost invisible nature of class relations in Australia. Likewise Lawler (2005b) notes the way that class is presented as binary, the middle/upper classes dichotomized from the working/lower classes. Both studies illustrate the creation of class-based difference that creates social and cultural divisions along class lines.

One of the biggest points of difference is progressive values—which are seen as middle-class. Often, the working-class are aligned culturally with 'the worst kinds of conservative, regressive values' (Orr 2003 in Lawler 2005b). Conversely, anti-elitist sentiments includes the resentment many of the progressive values associated with the 'cultural elites', a group pitted against the mainstream battlers,

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[28] I want to point out that the derision towards the 'cashed-up-bogan' is contrasted against respect for 'aspirational tradies', a respect often interwoven with neo-liberal narratives.

or, to quote Scalmer, 'a bureaucratic knowledge-class attempting to reshape Australia and refusing to pay attention to 'ordinary Australians' (1999: 154). This creation of a class-based binary is a powerful conservative and neo-liberal political tool which is often manifested through centralizing working-class masculinity. The 'battlers' and the 'cultural elites' are represented as in opposition through such political rhetoric.

Theoretical Conclusions and the Use of Terminology.

In Australia while the corporate, middle-class heterosexual, male head of household occupies a position of relative cultural and social hegemony, a more robust, working-class, physical masculinity is hegemonic as well. Working-class masculinities—as represented in mainstream media and popular discourse—can be limited. Neo-liberal representations of centralizing working-class masculinity are usually white, and heterosexual, reinforcing normative standards of masculinity. The normalizing of this image renders it somewhat invisible, as Beasley argues, 'masculinity is almost invariably invisible in shaping social relations, its ever-present specificity and significance shrouded in its constitution as the universal, the axiomatic, the neutral' (2008: 86).

When considering the way in which working-class masculinity is represented in Australian popular culture it becomes apparent that it is not only class distinctions that are being forged. Often robust working-class masculinities are employed to

celebrate and reinforce particular codes pertaining to gender, sexuality and ethnicity. For the purpose of this study working-class masculinity (or masculinities) are defined as a socially constructed set of characteristics, behaviours and traits aligned with working-class men, but not inevitably employed or enacted by working-class men as individuals.

By clarifying definitions of the main terms in masculinity studies and theory the way in which these terms will be employed in this study can be cemented. These terms are crucial in this study as both discourses and practices of masculinities and the lives of actual men that are examined, with the aim of uncovering how images of centralizing working-class masculinities affect mainstream discourses surrounding gender, ethnicity, sexuality and national identity. By distinguishing legitimacy from dominance in terms of hegemony, and by adopting Beasley's use of the term hegemonic masculinity to describe a 'political mechanism', (2008: 99) and 'a discursive ideal mobilizing legitimization' (2008: 100), centralizing working-class masculinity can be deemed as often occupying a hegemonic space. However, as is demonstrated in Chapter Three, working-class masculinities have a tense relationship with hegemony. In some spaces, such as blue-collar workplaces (discussed in Chapter Five) or the average front bar (as discussed in chapter seven), or in some cultural contexts such as popular Australian comedy films (discussed in Chapter Three), working-class masculinity undoubtedly occupies a position of hegemony. However, in other spaces such as the school or university (discussed in chapter four), this hegemony is often challenged. Even when not occupying a position of hegemony, working-class masculinity is complicit with hegemony.

This potentially creates a problem with the definition of centralizing working-class masculinity as hegemonic. The most familiar definitions of the term hegemonic masculinity still remain Connell's, and as Beasley points out, Connell and Messerschmitt's 2005 definition of the term still defines hegemonic masculinity in singular terms (Beasley 2008: 97). Australian working-class masculinities occupy a position of hegemony in a limited sense, particularly on a global scale, and they also operate hierarchically with other hegemonic masculinities. Beasley's terms are highly applicable to the types of masculinities being discussed within this thesis. Yet, as she points out, the term hegemonic masculinity is problematic when used to describe masculinities that are only hegemonic in limited social and cultural spaces. What is defined as hegemonic in this thesis is not actual working-class *men*, although their ability to access centralizing working-class masculinity does give them some social and cultural leverage. What I define as hegemonic is centralizing working-class masculinity as a limited, neo-liberal and highly legitimizing *political ideal* and *discursive construct*. However, the process of 'doing' working-class masculinity grants an individual legitimacy, so the *process* (of living and performing) working-class masculinity is also often hegemonic. Another concern with the use of the term hegemonic is it is often used to discuss domination, particularly when used in reference to actual groups of men. Domination suggests total power, a reassertion that there is, 'a singular character of hegemonic masculinity … the pinnacle of a pyramid of masculinities' (Beasley 2008: 97). If this were the case, working-class masculinities would not be hegemonic. Working-class masculinity may not always occupy a hegemonic position as it slides between hegemony and complicity, but it is

always centralizing. Through this centrality it grants hegemony to the characteristics associated with it: masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the wider theory surrounding gender and masculinities in particular, and has illustrated the relevance of that theory for this study. It has proposed using the term *centralizing* working-class masculinity, establishing working-class masculinity as a legitimizing position. Furthermore, it has shown how centralizing working-class masculinity is influential through a national authenticity and cultural legitimacy in Australia. The study of social class, and the ways in which different classed experiences create different experiences, and different attitudes to experience is also a crucial part of understanding how working-class masculinities occupy the position of cultural and social power that they do. This reflection on the relevant theory also aims to reveal how there may be gaps in academic work on gender, masculinity and class in Australia and to show that this study offers something new that is worth consideration. The legitimization granted to centralizing working-class masculinity in Australia makes it resonate culturally, socially, and politically in Australia. In defining working-class masculinity as hegemonic I will define this hegemony as limited by using terms such as 'often' hegemonic. Yet when I am discussing specific circumstances, such as the blue-collar workplace or the front bar, I will define working-class masculinity as hegemonic. As I explore throughout this thesis, there are specific spaces such as the front bar of a suburban hotel, motor sport events (both larger scale such as the V8

supercars, or smaller scale such as Mallanats[29]), or even certain workplaces, where working-class masculinities are the most legitimized and celebrated way of 'being'. What I will do throughout this thesis is refer to *centralizing* working-class masculinity.

Centralizing working-class masculinity is a new concept, and one which was not reached without considerable shifts in approach and methodology. The next chapter will explore the methodological journey undertaken on the way to the theory of centralizing working-class masculinity, and the naming of it as often, though not always, occupying a hegemonic position. It will also explore some of the major methodological hurdles encountered—specifically the move away from empirical research—and the gradual shift to thinking about centralizing working-class masculinity not as something people are or do, but as a discourse which powerful neo-liberal and conservative undertones. The strands of masculinity and class theory that were discussed in this chapter will be woven throughout this thesis, supporting both the construct of centralizing working-class masculinity and the assertion that is indeed hegemonic.

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[29] Mallanats is a local car show held in the South Australian town of Mallala.

Chapter 2

'Why Don't You Talk to My Wife, She's Better at this Sort of Thing': The Journey to Overcoming Methodological Challenges and Finding the 'Right' Methodological Approach.

Chapter 2: 'Why Don't You Talk to My Wife, She's Better at this Sort of Thing': The Journey to Overcoming Methodological Challenges and Finding the 'Right' Methodological Approach.

Introduction

After years of listening to working-class men talk in the clubs where I worked and in the backyards of family and friends, I thought my thesis would be built on rich first-person stories of working-class men's lives. I expected there may be some hesitation in being involved in an academic study, but I trusted that my own working-class origins would reassure any potential interviewees. However, as this chapter shows in its account of my methodological journey, I was wrong. Talking about their experiences of being both a man, and working-class is seemingly not something most working-class men feel comfortable doing—particularly in an academic situation. This chapter not only engages with the methodological approach of this thesis, but it follows my expedition from looking at centralizing working-class masculinity as something working-class men *do*, to considering it as discursive, as both hegemonic and complicit, and as something that individual people engage with in a performative sense. In examining the challenges I faced in finding participants to provide empirical data this chapter details how this study became increasingly discursive in its approach while maintaining that indeed, many working-class men *do* centralizing working-class masculinity.

This thesis considers centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal, and looks at the ways in which this national archetype encourages the constructions of identities based on gender and class through the contextualization of hegemonic masculinity. In order to do this several methodological approaches were needed, and it is these methodological approaches that are explored in this chapter. The three main approaches are: media and cultural analysis, terminological analysis—particularly with regard to the construction of the term centralizing working-class masculinities and the definition of these masculinities as hegemonic, and empirical research. In the latter case, I consider how the small pool and passivity of the respondents led to a shifting of focus that actually benefitted the overall argument and structure of this study. This chapter also discusses reflexivity and how information and experiences are filtered through any researcher's reflexive position—in this case a reflexive positioning associated with my identification as working-class while working within the very middle-class environment of academia. Overall, this chapter explains and examines the methods used to analyze centralizing working-class masculinities as hegemonic (yet complicit), discursive, mainstream and as an important component of neo-liberal and conservative discourses. This multi-method approach was designed to enable a more comprehensive and deeper analysis of how centralizing working-class masculinities are used to legitimize certain subjectivities while delegitimizing others.

In the original methodological plan for this study, I intended to conduct a series of interviews with men who identified as working-class to provide a significant body of data concerning the lived experiences of Australian working-class men. Recruiting interview participants and then setting up the interviews themselves

proved to be highly problematic and led to several changes. The first change was in the way the interviews were conducted. This difficulty in finding willing participants necessitated a change in approach to the interviews and a closer consideration of the reasons why so many of the men approached were hesitant about being interviewed. Finally, the lack of participants willing to give interviews required a change in methodological approach, with less emphasis on the empirical data and more on social and discourse analysis. This change in approach allowed for a deeper and more nuanced analysis of centralizing working-class masculinity *as discourse* and shifted the theoretical approach of this thesis from one largely rooted in the broadly modernist emphasis of theorizing and terminologies concerned with the studies of masculinities (Beasley 2009b; Beasley 2011) to a more postmodern and post structural account of gender and class.

This chapter explores working-class masculinities from three angles: as something men do, as discursively constituted, and as a political ideal. This account of the methodology enables a more extensive account of the processes by which the knowledge and ideas put forth in this thesis were unearthed, and provides a guide as to how and why different areas were examined, different approaches considered and either used or rejected, and particular methods that were chosen in reaching the conclusions made in this study.

Identifying as a Working-Class Woman: The Reflexive and Subjective Position.

The reflexive standpoint of any researcher is an important aspect to consider. As Kathleen Riach makes clear, 'the challenge of conducting analysis or presenting findings in a way that sensitively captures the multiple levels of a research encounter remains one of the biggest challenges for the qualitative researcher' (2009: 356). The adoption of a reflexive stance enables a researcher to take into account their own social and cultural background and other defining factors such as class, gender and sexuality. In short, a researcher positions themselves within their research as a subject and takes into account their own position in the field (Gomm, 2004: 292). For this study I needed to take into account a variety of factors which might influence the way data is read, and the methodological and epistemological stance taken. These include gender, my working-class background and that I have a higher level of education than most of the interviewees. However the reflexive experience of being someone who identifies as being from a working-class background in a highly middle/upper-class environment also has an impact. Indeed, throughout the writing of this thesis I often found myself reflexively somewhere between the working-class participants' experiences and the middle-class experience of academia.[30] These factors had an effect on the texts I chose to analyze, the way in which I interpreted the data from the interviews, and even the methodological approach undertaken.

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[30] Dianne Reay (2001) offers some highly insightful and rich accounts of the difficulty of adapting a working-class identity to the middle/upper class environment of higher education and academia.

Any claims I make as a researcher must take into account my own slant on things. Or, as Altheide and Johnson claim, 'there is an increased awareness that, "*how* knowledge is acquired, organized, and interpreted is relevant to *what* the claims are"' (1994: 486 in Mauthner & Doucet 2003: 416). Reflexivity has been an important contribution of feminist research (Mauthner & Doucet 2003: 417) and as this study comes from a theoretical background of gender research it is crucial that the analysis and arguments within this thesis take into account my own position as a researcher and the ways that I make sense of the data. As Charmaz argues,

> Researchers and research participants make assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses, and pursue purposes that influence their respective views and actions in the presence of each other. Nevertheless, researchers, not participants, are obligated to be reflexive about what we bring to the scene, what we see, and how we see it.' (2006: 15).

The most important area in which the reflexive standpoint of the researcher had to be taken into account was in the theoretical journey undertaken to determine the use of the term hegemonic, and whether or not to define centralizing working-class masculinity as such. As a researcher who identifies with the subjective positions 'working class' and 'woman' I needed to recognize that my reflexive standpoint allowed me to see working-class masculinities as operating from a position of relative hegemony. Yet for others whose class, ethnicity, cultural background, gender and sexuality differ from mine, centralizing working-class masculinities may not be recognizable as occupying a hegemonic position. As Wanda Pillow explains,

Reflexivity thus is often understood as involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research (2003: 178).

In particular, people who identify as middle and upper-class may view working-class masculinities as boorish, rough and undesirable, an important factor when creating a body of writing whose chief audience is arguably outside the working-class. However, the argument that centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a position of hegemony (discussed in the previous chapter) is still appropriate even if the bodies often associated with this political ideal may not be seen to do so. Indeed people who identify with the middle and upper classes may appropriate specific aspects of these masculinities in order to legitimize their own construction of gender and class. Furthermore, my argument that neo-liberalism and conservatism are often bolstered through the hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinity must take into account that the chief beneficiaries of neo-liberalism are those at the upper end of the class spectrum (Cahill 2007), while conservatism helps maintain the cultural status quo.

In order to adopt a truly reflexive standpoint which moves beyond what Skeggs describes as, 'the experience of the research [as] one of the researcher's story, based on their identity, usually articulated as a singularity' (2004: 128) it was necessary to move outside the sphere of working-class experience, and consider wider social, cultural and political implications of the neo-liberal and conservative

aspects of centralizing working-class masculinity and its hegemony. Reflexivity that only takes into account the reflexive standpoint of the author/researcher fails to recognize that experience of the world is both multiple and fluid. Recognizing the ways in which my reflexive standpoint as identifying as both researcher and working-class women was relevant to this project allowed for a more nuanced exploration of centralizing working-class masculinity *as discourse*. Different social, cultural and economic spaces and places change the relative power linked with working-class masculinities, but centralizing working-class masculinities retain a hegemonic position. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the most important aspect of the defining of centralizing working-class masculinity as hegemonic arose from looking at hegemony as being about common sense knowledge and legitimacy (particularly the legitimizing of certain sites of oppression), as opposed to dominance.

Terminology: The Methodological Journey to 'Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity'.

In the early stages of this thesis one of the biggest challenges that needed to be dealt with was the clarification of the term working-class masculinity. In this preliminary stage, working-class masculinities referred to both a socially constructed image of class and gender (and ethnicity and sexuality) in Australian popular culture, and to actual working-class men. For the purpose of this thesis 'working-class masculinity' was to be used to discuss certain traits, behaviors and actions that are aligned with performing such masculinity.

It became increasingly clear that the term needed some work. 'Working-class masculinity/masculinities' was both too limiting and too wide in scope. To use working-class masculinities only in association with working-class men was somewhat essentialist—something this study tries to avoid. To label individuals or 'mark' bodies (Cooper 2006) by either class or gender became increasingly problematic as this thesis progressed. As a political ideal, working-class masculinities in Australia are consistently invoked through mainstreaming discourse about belonging, inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, working-class masculinities' power comes through its position as average, as central and centralizing. This led to the term being expanded to '*centralizing* working-class masculinity'. While centralizing working-class masculinity is a discursive political ideal, in Australian popular culture it is often stereotypical. This narrowly constructed gendered and classed figure operates as a limited version of idealized (or marginalized) masculinity that help inform individual constructions of gender and class. As Beasley states, working-class masculinities invoke, 'cross-class solidarity and complicity through [their] constitution as the quintessential national identity' (2009a: 63). These specific cultural working-class masculinities in their media forms will be discussed at length in the next chapter. It is often the case that gender (and class, sexuality and ethnicity) are often given highly stereotypical representation within popular culture. The ways in which this may be problematic for some while creating dividends and maintaining privilege for others is a focus of this thesis.

To reiterate: the term masculinity, as it will be employed in this study, can be defined as a pattern of gender practice (Flood 2002: 210), as a social construction separate from sexed bodies (Beasley 2005: 178), and as a historical site of social agency (Connell 1995: 81). Masculinities are separate from men, but the way in which masculinities are privileged in Australian society, and the ways in which masculinities are represented culturally combine to support a system of gendered inequality, as well as to support certain inequalities based on class, ethnicity and sexuality. This is made possible through the co-opting of centralizing working-class masculinity as a means to promote specific neo-liberal and conservative political ideals. They are a vehicle through which mainstreaming (centralizing) discourses are disseminated. This is explored throughout this study.

Qualitative Methodology and Feminist Research

The theoretical grounding for this study is in masculinities and class, yet overall this study employs a feminist theoretical framework. Therefore, when choosing a methodological approach to the empirical data collected through the interview process and the analysis of media and popular culture, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach was chosen. Qualitative research is often linked with feminist research. O'Shaughnessy and Krogman explain that, 'because qualitative methods addressed power and representation, they represented a favourable alternative to the quantitative practices that had long dominated the social sciences' (2012: 493). For this thesis qualitative work was undertaken in relation to both the

media analysis and the gathering of empirical data, which, as will be discussed later, ended up being a much smaller portion of the overall data base than anticipated. Indeed, the empirical data ultimately became less of a focus and more of a method to support other research (particularly the critical discourse analysis). Initially, the aim was to gather open, freely-given information from participants about their lives and the ways in which they engaged (explicitly or not) with centralizing working-class masculinities. In order to achieve this openness life-history style interviews were used, which provided the data that would allow for an analysis of the way in which Australian men who identified with being working-class enacted their masculinity.

As Gomm argues, 'most people who call themselves qualitative researchers are primarily interested in investigating how people experience the world and/or how they make sense of it' (2004: 7). Certainly in this study the aim was to dissect whether, and if so, how, representations of centralizing working-class masculinities in Australian culture are perceived and appropriated by Australian men. In asking the participants about the ways they view themselves and others in relation to their position as both male and Australian, I aimed for a deeper understanding of the link between cultural and political representations of gender and the ways actual people absorb these messages. The interviews wanted access, 'to experience [which] is gained through talk' (Kitzinger 2004: 128). In particular, the open-endedness of the interviews was intended to allow for this experience to be included with other data, and to give unique perspective in some areas such as intimacy and relationships where the small data sampled offered some very rich analysis.

Given this study's theoretical base in the study of men and masculinities which is a part of wider gender theory (Connell, Hearn & Kimmel, 2005), the adoption of a qualitative methodology is not surprising. As Kitzinger notes 'within feminist social science research, qualitative data, in particular in-depth interviews, have held a prominent place in the history of feminist inquiry' (2004: 126). There are several reasons that qualitative research and feminist research have long been so intrinsically linked. One of the most important is the positivist nature of quantitative data analysis (Charmaz 2006: 5) whereby quantity of data is given the highest regard and the position of the researcher as impartial and salient goes unanalyzed and unquestioned. As Charmaz points out, 'beliefs in scientific knowledge, a unitary method, objectivity, and truth legitimized reducing qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables,' (2006: 5). The positivist notion of distance and impartiality is imprinted on the data retrieved and the analyzed results—leading to an arguably false notion of truth whereby differences of opinion, culture, gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity are subjugated to a homogeneity that comes from a position of privilege (Henwood & Pidgeon 1995: 8). Adopting a qualitative research methodology allows for the recognition of my own subjective position, and offers a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between researcher and researched, one which does not maintain what Margaret Eichler calls a 'top-down' relationship between researcher and participant (1997: 13). Furthermore, as Charmaz argues, 'qualitative researchers can find another way of seeing, of gaining a deeper view. Conducting innovative, incisive, and thorough research breaks down barriers and moves boundaries,' (2008: 15).

Critical Discourse and Textual Analysis.

One of the major components of this study is the analysis of various aspects of the media and popular culture. While this is done in part to illustrate the socially and culturally powerful nature of working-class masculinity in Australia, a reading of several different media forms will illuminate just how working-class masculinity is constructed and how this image may shift with social, political and economic changes. Using a critical discourse analysis approach in part will allow popular discourses to be read and analyzed. As Blommaert and Bulcaen argue, critical discourse analysis works to uncover, 'ways in which the social structure impinges on discourse patterns, relations and models (in the form of power relations, ideological effects, and so forth)' (2000: 449). Critical discourse analysis is a major component of this study as it deals with various social, cultural and political 'texts', and it is often through various texts—such as the film *Kenny*, that discursive representations of centralizing working-class masculinities are made visible. Kathy Charmaz argues that,

> Texts do not stand as objective facts … people construct texts for specific purposes and they do so within social, economic, historical, cultural and situational contexts. Texts draw on particular discourses and provide accounts that record, explore, explain, justify or foretell actions (2006: 35).

The media analysis conducted alongside the empirical research aims to chart some of these social, economic, historical, cultural and situational shifts and

the ways in which working-class masculinity is reflective of and reflected by these changes. Since the beginning of this project substantial changes have occurred in all these contexts both nationally and globally. Nationally, Australia has seen a change of government and a Labor Prime Minister for the first time in eleven years, then the first woman Prime Minister in Australian history. There was also the massive unpopularity of the Howard Government's WorkChoices Act, an apology to the Stolen Generations, the signing of The Kyoto Protocol and a shift in attitudes towards the environment. The media analysis unpicks the ways in which some representations of working-class masculinities in Australian popular culture have changed in response to these wider social and cultural shifts. The media analysis also considers ways in which nostalgic adaptations of Australian working-class masculinities are used to counter social and cultural change, and to shore up the privilege of certain groups who may feel their dominance being threatened by such change.

Critical discourse analysis makes it possible to take into account the ways social changes may be reflected *and* affected by changes in discourse. As Blommaert and Bulcaen remind us,

> The way in which discourse is being represented, respoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power (2000: 449).

One example of changing discourse representing both a struggle over normativity and attempts to maintain hierarchical power relations based on gender, class, race,

ethnicity and sexuality can be seen in the shifts in the construction of working-class masculinities in Australia. This will be explored in depth in the media analysis chapter with regard to the representation of working-class masculinities in the films *The Castle* and *Kenny.* These two films have been selected in part for their popular success (including box office figures) and the ways they may be seen to exemplify particular narratives of Australian working-class masculinity. Through engaging with these textual representations of centralizing working-class masculinities critically, these discursive representations can be better understood. Critical discourse analysis allows for a deeper understanding of how socially constructed centralizing working-class masculinity has changed to reflect a cultural shift to individualism as one of the most distinguishing features of neo-liberal Australia.

Critical discourse analysis will be applied in particular to deconstructing 'common sense' knowledge that is such an integral part of mainstream discourses. It is this commonsense knowledge that influences mainstream constructions of class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality as normative. Furthermore, commonsense knowledge is so entrenched in mainstream discourse that any challenge to this knowledge can be easily deflected as being somehow un-Australian. This is a powerful tool in the maintenance of social and cultural inequities. The neo-liberalism and conservatism that inform much of Australian 'commonsense' knowledge will also be examined through the lens of critical discourse analysis, with particular consideration to the ways that they have become commonsense knowledge, and as a result have become somewhat sacrosanct as being 'authentically' Australian. This

is, in part, achieved through centralizing working-class masculinities' prominence in mainstream discourse.

Critically analyzing discursive ways of representing centralizing working-class masculinities is therefore an important part of this study. While Blommaert and Bulcaen argue that critical discourse analysis,

> interprets discourse under the guise of critical analysis. Critical discourse analysis does not analyze how a text can be read in many ways or under what social circumstances it is produced and consumed … analysts project their own political biases and prejudices onto their data and analyze them accordingly (2000: 455),

This issue is recognized in my critical analysis of discursive texts such as *The Castle* and *Kenny.* Each film has various possible 'readings', as social commentary, as political commentary, as genuine reflections of 'real' Aussies, as just 'bloody funny' films. As both Milner (2009) and Stratton (2009) argue, discursive textual readings of these films are needed in order to recognize their multiple meanings, and the ways that some of these meanings are hidden under other, more benign meanings. In the case of the critical analysis of advertising in Chapter Three, many of the more socially or politically loaded meanings in the analyzed advertisements are actually masked somewhat through humour. Indeed, as will be explored in relation to the analyzed ads, humour is a powerful tool in dispelling criticism. However, it is important to recognize that this while such use of humour is possibly more transparent to people within the academy (particularly those who have a background in feminist theory and critical discourse analysis) it may not be recognizable for

everyone. Therefore, 'our' reflexive position must be taken into account. In order to allow for any inherit bias or specific way of reading these texts the researcher's own reflexive standpoint, and the possible reflexive standpoint of the readers of this study must be considered and discussed in more detail. The adoption of a reflexive stance allows for potential bias, and attempts to deconstruct the ways that meanings are applied to the texts in question.

It is relations of power reflected in a discourse of gendered dichotomy as well as distinctions based on social class and socio-economic position that will be disentangled from common discourses at work in Australian popular culture through critical discourse analysis. It is also a substantial part of the analysis of both the media and the interview data to discover how working-class masculinity discourses are both a product and a producer of Australia's gendered and classed culture. Chouliaraki and Fairclough state in this context that,

> It is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as discourses as well as processes that are taking place outside of discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantively shaped by these discourses (1999: 4).

Critical discourse analysis is used beyond the media chapter into the chapters looking at schooling and education (Chapter Four), work (Chapter Five), and intimacy (Chapter Six). In these three chapters critical discourse analysis is applied to a range of discursive social phenomena. For example, recent political and

media focus on the resource 'boom' is examined through critical discourse analysis particularly in regards to narratives of masculinity, success and 'choice'. While the resource 'boom' is often represented in media and political discourses to be a boon for blue-collar workers, their families, remote communities and the Australian people in general, several recent studies have shown that this may not be entirely true (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010; Torkington, Larkins & Gupta 2011; Richardson & Denniss 2011). Critically examining such discourses allows for the ways that certain narratives are expressed while others are hidden to be explored. This is the same for the critical analysis of mainstream narratives around education, 'choice', and blame, which often ignore the way that class has a major effect on not only an individual's educational choices, but on the way that those choices are made. By critically examining specific discourses of masculinity and choice at a variety of spaces and places the ways in which centralizing working-class masculinity is constructed (particularly as neo-liberal) can be better understood and critiqued.

Recruitment of Participants.

One of the biggest problems arising throughout the research process for this thesis was the difficulty in finding people who were willing to be interviewed for this study. The reasons for the reluctance to be interviewed, the ways this was dealt with, and the eventual shift in approach to one which was partly affected by participant disinterest will be discussed later in this chapter. Here I want to briefly discuss recruitment methods employed in this thesis, covering how participants were sought,

the materials used to give information about the project I was undertaking, areas in which the reflexive standpoint of the interviewees needed to be considered, and the move away from conducting face-to-face to telephone interviews.

The first approaches to recruit participants were made through employment agencies, TAFE (Training and Further Education) colleges[31] and a local noticeboard. Emails were initially sent to both a local employment agency and the Regency college of TAFE, with no response. Follow-up phone-calls were also met with no response. After several attempts to contact TAFE lecturers through the office at Regency TAFE (chosen as it is has a high number of trade courses), it became clear that recruitment through TAFE would be difficult to achieve. As a result recruitment was moved to a local working-class sporting club where I had been previously employed. In trying to recruit people who knew me not as an academic researcher, but as a former casual employee, it became clear how difficult it would be to get the required number of interview participants to warrant an extended study as part of this thesis. Power imbalances that can be constructed through the interviewer/interviewee relationship, imbalances that becomes particularly difficult to navigate when class and gender are involved (Pini 2005: 203), were less of a concern when interviewing former (and therefore known) customers. For them, my subjective classed and gendered position (as a working-class woman) was already established, and hence I hoped that there would be less concern about any perceived 'threat' created by an unequal class relationship. However, even men who had known me as a service provider and acquaintance for years were still extremely

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[31] TAFE (Training and Further Education) is an Australia-wide tertiary institution with a focus on vocational, trade and technical qualification.

cagey about being interviewed for an academic endeavor.[32] The few men who were willing to be interviewed were all either my previous customers or acquaintances of my friends and family.

To recruit the few willing participants that were willing to be interviewed two methods were used. First, an information sheet [33] were placed at the Highercombe Golf Club where I had previously been employed. When this garnered no responses, I actually went to the club itself and spoke directly to the customers there, going from table to table and getting them to sign consent forms[34] on the spot if they were willing to be interviewed. Of those that signed consent forms only about a quarter were actually willing to go through with the interview process, and all of these were done by phone. The last few interviews were done with friends of friends and family. By the end of the recruitment and interview process I had seven respondents. This was whittled down from the sixteen that originally agreed to do interviews. Of those respondents three were retirees, two were in their late 30s/early 40s, and two were under 25. While this gave me some generational scope, it also gave me far less data than originally planned for. Out of those seven respondents, several were very taciturn in the interview.

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[32] An extended examination of the tense relationship between working-class masculinities and academia will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four. Also, While I had hoped that former customers would be more inclined to talk to someone they knew as working-class, possibly allaying any concerns about talking to an 'academic', it is also possible that some felt uncomfortable *because* they knew me.

[33] See appendix a

[34] See appendix b

There are several possible reasons for the large percentage of possible participants who dropped out and the overall lack of interest in being involved in this study. Many of the individuals who were approached about participating in this study were hesitant to do so for a variety of reasons. Responses such as, 'I really wouldn't have anything to say,' 'I don't like doing surveys,' and 'I don't want to discuss my private life,' were common. One man actually asked if his wife could do the interview as she was, 'better at that sort of thing'. Eventually, because of the effort expended and the time spent trying to get interviewees, and the fact that it had yielded such poor results the methodological approach of focusing on the interview data was revised. However, by this time it had also become increasingly clear that this thesis was not just looking at centralizing working-class masculinities as something *done* by working-class men, but rather that it was looking at centralizing working-class masculinities as a wider social and cultural discourse.

Therefore, instead of having a large part of this thesis attend to the actual lived experiences of a sample of working-class men, the interview responses have been utilized as supporting data, except in a few specific areas where the data was quite rich, for example the data on relationships and intimacy (explored in Chapter Six). This change provided the study with a new approach—one that is often lacking in masculinity research in particular (Beasley 2009b)—that is, looking at masculinity as something that is not necessarily seamlessly in accord with men's bodies. It allowed for the research done on the lives of working-class men in Australia to become more expansive and facilitated the move to looking at how centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal is exclusionary and divisive, even for

those individuals whose subjective experience allows them access to this identity. Before looking at the eventual methodology employed and considering how this approach fits in with a more fluid, post structural account of gender (and other identity categories), there will be a brief discussion of the methodological issues associated with interviewing around class and gender, and with interviewing people who may be apprehensive about academia.

The Reflexive Standpoint of the Participants: Gender, Class and Mistrusting the Academic 'Elites'.

It is not only my own background as a researcher that needs to be taken into account. The backgrounds of participants must also to be considered. This is important, as often, 'there is an assumption built into many data analysis methods that the researcher, the method and the data are separate entities rather than reflexively interdependent and interconnected' (Mauthner & Doucet 2003: 414). The way I, as the researcher and interviewer, may read the data that is produced from an interview may be different from the way it was meant to be understood as put across by the interviewee. Riach points out that, 'by considering ways in which a participant's account may be analyzed as a reflexive product, we can understand the interview as producing multiple realities without falling into a spiral of self-reflexivity' (2009: 357). The voices of my working-class participants, none of whom had any tertiary education, reflect a different reality than my own, educated experience;

particularly in terms of the space in which their narratives occur (within an academic thesis). As Kitzinger cautions,

> by implicitly endorsing some voices as offering accurate, truthful, or valid ways of understanding, while 'explaining away' other voices as merely rationalizations or justifications born of 'false knowledge' we are imposing a heavy (and often unacknowledged) interpretive frame on to our data (2004:127).

So, while it is important to recognize the relative position of power owned by most of the participants due to their status as male, heterosexual, and white, it is crucial that meanings are analyzed as they have seen them—not purely as my interpretation would have them seem. Instead, I tried to use their responses as they were meant by the respondents—and in many cases the richest data came from their talking about the everyday reality of their own lives and their feelings about that. In asking questions that did not overly challenge their experiences as working-class men I tried to encourage them to tell their stories. There were several techniques I used to encourage openness and trust in the interviews, and to reflect the multiple meanings found in some of the data. These will now be explored in more detail.

Gender as an Issue.

The interviewing of men by women can be problematic in regards to relations of power (Pini 2005). The power structure of the interviewer/interviewee relationship is usually hierarchical with the interviewer being in the dominant position.

However, the surrendering of power to a woman can be a real threat to the maintenance of masculinity. As has been discussed the participants in this study were chosen on the basis of their own self-definition as working-class men. Therefore, these are individuals who would be engaged to a greater or lesser extent with centralizing working-class masculinities.

The interviewer – interviewee exchange can be seen as a power relation with the interviewee adopting the subordinate position. Sabine Grenz argues that the interview process,

> [is] an irritation to socially dominant perceptions of masculinity. Being looked at, investigated, makes one feel uncomfortable … in the constellation of a man being interviewed by a women, the sense of the male looker and the female looked at is subverted, as is the related notion of active versus passive (2005: 2097).

Obviously, this inversion of power needed to be addressed in order to increase the chances of obtaining honest responses that were not tainted by a perceived feeling of being judged or subjugated. The problems faced by female interviewers of men therefore needed to be addressed, especially in a case such as this where the participants are being questioned about their engagement with a legitimized classed and gendered position. In order to overcome this, a 'sympathetic listener' approach was used, with an emphasis on a shared classed subjectivity and a downplaying of the difference in education. This approach was especially important when interviewing the older men. Of the seven interviewees who were willing to participate, three were over sixty and retired. In the interviews with them, in particular, my previous role as a bartender at a sporting club they regularly frequented allowed for

a more traditional gendered relationship to take place in which, as Pini puts it, 'the availability to men of masculinity discourses present[ed] them with greater opportunities to exert power when interacting with a female researcher' (2005: 203). While this reliance on traditional, dichotomous and hierarchical gender roles is highly problematic, it allowed for the men interviewed to be less threatened by my education, and it allowed me to retain my role as an empathetic listener with whom they had a friendly and respected relationship. As Pini argues,

> some female researchers have argued that being located in traditional discourses of femininity by male participants can be advantageous for their research in that one may be viewed as unthreatening and different (2005: 203).

This was definitely the case in the interviews conducted for this thesis. While there are many problematic aspects to relying on traditional hierarchical gender roles it was something I had to do in my role as a bartender in the conservative environment of the golf club, and it helped to build trust and empathy with the interviewees in my role as a researcher. The angle of listener and the positioning of the interviewees as being able to tell their stories and have their voices heard allowed those of the participants who may have been uncomfortable with the blurring of gender hierarchies to feel entrenched back in a position of authority. In light of the difficulty I had in finding any participants at all, it was a necessary role to adopt, and was one in which I had a precedent.

Culture and Class

The reading of gender and the inversion of stereotypical gender roles with the masculine being dominant was a problem that needed to be overcome, and was partly done as noted above, through the positioning of the interviewer as a sympathetic listener. Another consideration that needed to be made was of the culture and class differences that could arise during the interview process. This was particularly pertinent in this situation as many of the questions focused on class and the way that social class affected the life-choices and paths taken by the participants. During the questions about educational choices the effects of social class on educational choices became clear early as most of the interviewees regretted ending their education when they did. This stood in contrast to the relatively high level of education which I (the interviewer) have attained. However, the dimorphism in educational levels that presented a cultural and social class-based inequality in the interviewer/interviewee relationship was able to be offset by my working-class background and the fact that I was known to many of the participants through my previous employment as a bar attendant at a working-class sporting club.

My own class position was included in the information sheet[35]—as was my 12 years' experience working at a local golf club among other bars in mostly working-class areas of Adelaide. This approach was deliberately chosen in conjunction with my supervisors in order to generate a sense of class-based

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[35] See appendix a

solidarity and to mitigate any implication of elitism that could be associated with my educational level. This class-based solidarity was enhanced by my position as someone who had previously had a customer – service-provider relationship with some of my respondents. Reiteration of my identification and life experiences as a working-class woman placed me in an uneasy relationship with the middle-class institution of the university (Lawler 1999; Lucey, Melody & Walkerdine 2003) and thus empathy and shared experiences were highlighted rather than difference. This allowed me to ask questions specifically around class and the experience of being working-class that otherwise may have been received differently. In particular, I found that my respondents were quite open about their classed subjectivities which allowed for some richly textured data about class.

<u>Telephone Interviews</u>

As illustrated above, one of the biggest problems faced in encouraging people to be a part of this project was a simple lack of interest. For many the idea of taking time out of their busy lives to talk to an academic, especially about their personal circumstances, with no recompense, was an unattractive prospect. Getting people to go somewhere neutral and be interviewed for an hour or two proved to be extremely difficult. After several months of contacting organizations and individuals with limited response it became clear that another method of data collection might be needed. As a result it was decided that phone interviews would be conducted.

The conducting of telephone interviews brought with it another set of issues. The use of the telephone limits the researcher's ability to 'read' the respondent. Genovese notes that,

> Unlike face-to-face interviews in which interviewers can read facial expression and body language and respond accordingly, interviewers who conduct telephone interviews are constrained by what they can hear and say (2004: 216).

The preliminary interviews had illustrated how the respondents sometimes paused before answering questions, especially those related to gender, sexuality or ethnicity—possibly in order to offer an answer they judged might be more acceptable to the interviewer. Responses to such questions were often carefully delivered in what seemed like attempts to mask prejudice or to phrase responses that might be acceptable to the interviewer. By using telephone interviews any ability to read care in the faces of the respondents was eliminated—I became totally reliant on hearing carefully delivered answers.

However, as Sturges and Hanrahan go on to point out, there are several situations in which telephone interviews are not only appropriate but may offer the better option (2004). In their study on visits to correctional facilities in the US, they found that for a variety of reasons telephone interviews were the only viable option. In several cases the problems they faced were the same as the ones faced in this study—a reluctance on the part of potential participants to be interviewed face-to-face. They suggest that,

> Telephone interviewing may provide an opportunity to obtain data from potential participants who are reluctant to participate in face-to-face interviews or from groups who are otherwise difficult to access in person (Sturges & Hanrahan 2004: 109).

In order to make sure that the interviewees felt comfortable it was important for me as the interviewer to demonstrate empathy and interest. Indeed, Rapley asserts that 'when an interviewer is neutral they create a hierarchical, asymmetrical (and patriarchal) relationship in which the interviewee is treated as a research "object"' (2004: 19). In order to make sure the respondents felt relaxed and open I made an effort to avoid threatening any traditional sense of masculine authority which might have arisen in relation to my positioning as both an academic and an interviewer. As a result, I chose to use voice to convey understanding or interest despite the possibility that this could arguably lead the interview's direction. Rapley posits that,

> As interviewees offer their own thoughts, ideas or experiences they begin to treat the interviewer as another human being. This cooperative, engaged relationship—centered on, mutual self-disclosure—can encourage 'deep disclosure' (2004: 19).

So, I made sure to disclose my own classed position in such a way as to build a relationship with my interviewees based on mutual classed experiences. For example when asking one participant about his schooling experiences in a public school[36] I empathized with the lack of educational choices and the problems often encountered in working-class public schools. In this case, my identification as working-class, an identification that could be at odds with the class environment of

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[36] 'Public schools' are government funded 'state' schools, as opposed to private schools.

the university (Lawler 1999), was beneficial. Without such disclosure it is possible that there may have been even less participants, and it is almost certain that the frankness with which most interviewees talked about their classed experiences would have been missing.

Question Choice.

Careful question choice, in terms of both wording and content, is necessary to gain productive and useful answers. As Charmaz explains, 'researchers need to be constantly reflexive about the nature of their questions and whether they work for the specific participants' (2006: 32). In the case of the interviews done for this study, the questions needed to be probing but not confronting—giving the participants ample opportunity for introspective answers without putting them on guard. This obviously presented a problem—how to assure that the interviews would be in-depth without being too probing or personal. In order to do this I chose to focus on life-history questions which would allow for deeper analysis if the interviewee seemed open to it. Yet I also chose questions that were not going to put an already hesitant group of interviewees on guard.

The first consideration made when choosing interview questions was how the participants would represent themselves and how if their masculinity were somehow challenged, it could lead to a breakdown in the interview. Blommaert and

Bulcaen note in this context that, 'individuals move through such institutionalized discursive regimes, constructing selves, social categories, and social realities' (2000: 449). It was this type of self-construction that I was eager to unpick, while maintaining a good rapport with my interviewees, which Charmaz argues is important to good data collection (2006: 19). Therefore question choice became very important, in order not to alienate interviewees or make them uncomfortable. Charmaz explains that she, 'choose[es] questions carefully and ask[s] them slowly to foster the participants reflections' (2006: 29).

In keeping with this approach, I chose questions that were not overly probing and that allowed my interviewees to lead the interviews—for instance one of my participants spoke at length as his time as a merchant seaman. His background in this work was a large part of what had shaped his masculinity and his ideas about work, family and class. As a result although the interview veered away from the direction of some of the questions it also enabled a reading of the importance of this part of life to this particular interviewee.

Reading the Unsaid.

When discussing the visibility (or rather invisibility) of masculinity, Michael Kimmel states that 'the very processes that confer privilege to one group and not another group are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred'

(2004: 7). In asking the interview participants questions about their background, their culture and their definitions of self it is, therefore, important to read not only the answers, but to also account for what goes unsaid. As early as the preliminary interviews, it became apparent that participants were aware of their classed position, but race, sexuality and gender were descriptors that went largely unused. While this could be a reflection on the fact that I was more open in my discussion about class than about areas where I may not have such a shared experience such as race or gender, it is also arguably indicative of the normative position of the respondents gender (male), sexuality (hetero) and race (white).

To probe the interviewees deeper about their gender, their ethnicity or their sexuality could have resulted in engendering defensiveness on their part, which would only make the attainment of frank answers more difficult. Instead, for this study a reading of the ignored or overlooked self-descriptors enabled a deeper understanding of how working-class men saw themselves. I undertook this reading, following on from Kimmel, on the basis that qualities that were identified with a lack of power, or a lower social position, would be spoken, whereas those qualities that were precursors to social power would go largely ignored.

It was not only in the interviews that reading the unsaid was important. In the media analysis, in particular, taken for granted normative assumptions about ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality needed to also be explored. The advertising section contained two ads in which certain bodies were highly visible, and yet

rendered unremarkable by their subjective position as the 'norm'. As Kimmel points out in regards to the invisible ubiquity of the male body,

> Invisibility reproduces inequality. And the invisibility of gender to those privileged by it reproduces the inequalities that are circumscribed by gender. The centrality of gender and the process by which it has been come to be seen as central are political processes that involve both power and resistance to power (1993: 30).

White, heterosexual, male bodies were positioned as the legitimized position in both the advertising and the films discussed in the media chapter, and it was the exclusion, the lack of 'other' bodies, that made up a substantial portion of the analysis of the advertising. Furthermore, there is also a need to recognize that much of the literature on men and masculinities presumes whiteness as the universal 'norm' in a way that is problematic (Pease 2004: 120). It, therefore, became important to read the unsaid in all facets of research undertaken in order to make clear the ways in which legitimacy, 'normalcy' and notions of the mainstream are simultaneously constructed and hidden.

Changes in Scope and Methodology: The Eventual Structure of this Study.

This methodological journey, in which the study has shifted from being about the lives of working-class men to being about working-class masculinities as political ideals, involved changes in both theoretical and methodological approaches. It was partly through a reading of the unsaid in terms of the analysis of relevant media,

masculinities theory and mainstream discourses that a pattern became clear. Centralizing working-class masculinities were not only hegemonic (in the sense that they legitimize certain subjective identities) but they are also intrinsically woven in to the fabric of commonsense knowledge about what it means to be an 'Australian'.

It became clear that this thesis was not only talking about the lives of working-class men, but it was also critically concerned with the ways in which certain identities are utilized as political ideals to mobilize understanding about what it means to be both a *man*, and an *Australian*. Furthermore, actual embodied social and economic power has little to do with the legitimizing power of certain identities, as Beasley explores (2009a: 62). Centralizing working-class masculinity is an example of this. Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapter, hegemonic masculinities do not necessarily correspond to the lives of actual men, even the men they purport to represent (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). That being the case, centralizing working-class masculinity as a hegemonic political ideal is not necessarily correlated with the lived subjectivity of working-class men.

White, heterosexual working-class men have *access* to this identity in a way that legitimates their power that 'othered' subjective identities do not. Therefore there is arguably substantial social pressure for them to perform their gender and their class within the scope of centralizing working-class masculinity. So, while the empirical side of this research became far less important, an understanding of the ways in which working-class men's lives, and in particular their choices, are affected

by this 'mobilizing ideal' became an increasingly significant part of this research. Furthermore, this contextualizing of hegemonic masculinities and the way they are used as political and cultural 'tools' is an area of contemporary masculinities research in which few studies have been undertaken. In particular, it became clear that in deconstructing and contextualizing centralizing working-class masculinities I was exploring a 'tool' that was often used in neo-liberal discourses.

Choice is particularly important as it is a central tenet of neo-liberalism which is hegemonic in Australia (Cahill 2007; 2008). Baker argues that,

> The individualization that is associated with late modernity coincides with the prevailing politics of neo-liberal conservatism … Neo-liberalism advocates a form of negative freedom which is predicated on an absence of restraint (Laski, 1960) and reduced state intervention which allows for an increase in individualized, self-interest market activity informed by rational choice (2008: 54).

It is the idea of choice as 'rational' in neo-liberalism that is problematic. Centralizing working-class masculinity, like many socially constructed identities, offers limited ways for individuals to 'do' gender and class. Choices must therefore be made within this framework. It is these limits placed on choices that this thesis seeks to understand. As discussed in the introduction, this thesis has shifted from an examination of working-class men's lived experiences to the ways in which their choices *as working-class men* became shaped by hegemonic discourse and the ubiquity of centralizing working-class masculinity. This research has expanded its scope to look beyond the experiences of those who are able to engage with

centralizing working-class masculinity to also examine how such narrow definitions of what it means to be both a man and an Australian affect the choices available to those who are 'othered' by this identity. Methodologically this meant a shift away from empirical research, which as this chapter has shown has certain limits when the objects of that research are working-class men, and to a more holistic consideration of mainstream neo-liberal discourses and expectations about what 'Aussie' men both *are supposed to be*, and what they should *do*.

In light of these changes, along with the theoretical and media analysis, there is an examination of several key areas in men's lives. These areas are: youth and schooling; employment and industry; intimacy; and risk. While these chapters will still contain some empirical data these limited findings cannot drive the argument in the way the research was originally intended, instead, where relevant empirical data has been collected it will demonstrate the ways particular phenomena manifest in men's everyday lives or will support findings from other research. Each of these chapters examines a combination of relevant research, mainstream discourses, and current social, cultural, political and economic events to explore in detail the ways in which centralizing working-class masculinities are used within certain political and social discourses to limit inclusion to certain types of Australian identity (certainly the more legitimized identities), and to set limits around the choices that certain individuals can make. By shifting the focus from the lives of actual men, to the forces that shape their experiences, their actions and their identities, this thesis does something that is rare in masculinity studies, namely looking at masculinities as

political ideals *and* as discourse. This allows this thesis to fill a gap in current masculinities research both in Australia, and internationally.

Conclusion

Choosing a methodological approach is a step that requires an in-depth understanding of the theoretical background of a research project, as well as taking into account difficulties that may be encountered throughout the research process. In the case of this study, the theoretical background of gender, masculinity studies and feminist theory in part directed the methodological approach. However, it was the difficulties encountered in the research process—particularly in the recruitment of interview participants and in eliciting elaborated responses from those who did agree to participate—that made the methodology employed central to the success of this study. Furthermore, it was this flexibility that allowed for major methodological changes to be made which made this work more holistic, more focused, and more original.

In examining the methodological journey from talking about masculinity as it relates to men, to talking about centralizing working-class masculinity as discourse, as a political ideal, and as slipping between hegemony and complicity, this chapter has explored the processes through which the final approaches to this study were reached. Several areas in this are key: an understanding of reflexivity; looking at hegemony as legitimacy not domination; flexibility in interview techniques leading to

a shift away from empirical research; a reading of the unsaid; and finally, and most important, a move to looking at centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal. It was this methodological journey away from a more standard study of masculinities in men's bodies, to masculinities as political, discursive and as discourse that allowed this thesis to explore new areas in terms of gender, class, and national identity in Australia. The ways that centralizing working-class masculinities are constructed vary. Yet one of the most powerful and pervasive is through the media. Representations of working-class masculinities in the Australian media will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

'Real Aussie Blokes': Gender, Class, Visibility and Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity in the Media

Chapter Three: 'Real Aussie Blokes': Gender, Class, Visibility and Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity in the Media

Introduction

Media images are critical tools in the dissemination of discursive constructions of gender. While individuals frequently engage critically with media texts and negotiate their own meanings nonetheless prevailing representations of gender, race, class and sexuality act to legitimate and promote preferred and hegemonic constructions. Race, ethnicity, sexuality and class are allocated meanings and values through media representations, and while these meanings change in different media spaces and through different media forms, 'commonsense' meanings often prevail. As Karen Pyke explains, 'the main mechanisms that link macrostructural relations of power and micropractices are the cultural ideologies woven into the fabric of "commonsense" knowledge' (1996: 582). The ways that gender, class and other intersecting identifiers are often presented through many mainstream media images influence the construction of such 'commonsense knowledge' (see also Howson 2006; Smith & Howson 2008). Therefore, in looking at constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity, and, in particular, in arguing that it occupies a hegemonic space, an analysis of the media representations is instructive. Media representations of centralizing working-class masculinity are varied depending on the form of media involved, the prospective audience, and the medium through which the media is operating. However, as this chapter will

illustrate, the resultant 'commonsense' knowledge about gender, class, and Australian-ness is often exclusionary, and, as Jon Stratton argues, individualistic and rooted in neo-liberalism (2009).

Centralizing working-class masculinities are often visible in terms of Australian popular culture. They can be either average and mainstream or somewhat idealized, but they are largely present. Furthermore media representations of centralizing working-class masculinity are often utilized to reaffirm 'correct' gendered identity. As Kivel and Johnson explain,

> Cultural texts such as television, film, books, magazines, music and video games not only exist for the purposes of providing pleasure in the context of leisure, but also have the capacity for imparting information and understanding in relation to our gender identities through the transmission of cultural values and social norms (2009: 111).

It is this transmission of social norms that this chapter investigates by looking at two specific areas of the mainstream media; advertising and film. Advertising and film are two areas in which media representations of working-class masculinities are both plentiful, but also areas which have historical context in relation to national identity as gendered and classed (Crawford 2007; Collins 2009). Before undergoing a deeper analysis of centralizing working-class masculinities in relation to specific examples drawn from Australian advertising and film, consideration will be given to other forms of media and the various constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity and its 'types' (the battler, the ocker, the larrikin, the bloke).

There is a wealth of examples of images of centralizing working-class masculinities at work in the mainstream media in Australia. Sporting masculinities are often inflected with working-class-ness, particularly in the various football codes. There is a presumption of a shared working-class identity between the players, the fans and the viewers.[37] On television there are the robust working-class 'Aussie bloke' archetypes within Australian soap operas such as the long-running character Alf in *Home and Away*. There is the usual inclusion of at least one or two working-class blokes in reality shows such as *Big Brother* (axed in 2008 and rebooted in 2012), *The Biggest Loser*, and *Excess Baggage,* which actually has Beaconsfield mine cave-in survivor Brant Webb as a contestant.[38] While these 'reality' shows may not always feature the working-class man in a position of strength or power, he is usually visible. Australian radio stations still play music on high rotation from such working-class aligned pub rockers as Cold Chisel, AC/DC, and Jimmy Barnes. Furthermore, the Aussie 'battler' archetype is pervasive in both the news media and the political rhetoric of both major parties. As Katherine Bode explains, the,

> 'Aussie battler' is used by politicians from across the domestic spectrum to
> demonstrate the difficulties faced by 'ordinary' Australians … The prevalence and
> variety of references to the Aussie battler in political discourse aptly demonstrates

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[37] The imagined shared working-class community between sports players, fans and viewers denies the very high incomes of those in professional sports including those in sporting management and media.

[38] In 2006 there was a mine cave-in in the Tasmanian town of Beaconsfield. Two men were trapped underground for two weeks (Brant Webb and Todd Russell), and a third man, Larry Knight, was killed. The story received widespread national and international media attention and the two miners became local heroes. In 2012 Channel Nine aired a miniseries about the event called *Beaconsfield*. Furthermore, it starred *Kenny* lead actor Shane Jacobsen, who had already established himself as a portrayer of 'Aussie blokes' after playing Kenny Smythe, and the lead role (with that other icon, Paul Hogan) in *Charlie and Boots*.

the way in which conceptions of white masculinity continue to organize and define Australian national identity (2009: 339).

As the lines between politics and the media become increasingly blurred, political archetypes such as the 'battler' (which is but one manifestation of centralizing working-class masculinity) are powerful tools through which mainstream consensus is maintained.

'Infotainment' shows such as *Today Tonight* and *A Current Affair,* in particular, celebrate the neo-liberal construction of the 'Aussie battler', often in ways that position the battler in binary opposition to other, marginalized identities. For example, the hardworking battler is often positioned as the 'victim' of the 'bludger' (Price 2011: 81) on one hand, and unscrupulous business people (who are often aligned with the entrepreneur cosmopolitan upper-middle class) on the other.[39] Both of these archetypes are working-class, however, the battler is hardworking, deserving and 'doing it tough' (Price 2011: 83), while the bludger is taking advantage of not only the government but also the battlers themselves, driving a 'wedge between the deserving poor and the despicably poor, the battler and the bludger' (Price 2011: 80). The Aussie battler trying to get ahead is celebrated. The Aussie bloke on welfare, workers' compensation or disability benefits is much maligned. Images related to workers and unions are ambivalent at best. At times such images are positive. For example the recent proliferation of 'blokes' at work in the mining industry are often extremely positive and tap into national pride (this will be explored

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[39] The battler is also often represented as a victim of government bureaucracy, fitting in to a neo-liberal discursive construction of government as excessive and intrusive.

in depth in Chapter Seven). Images of blokes who have been affected by the decline in manufacturing are also often positive, while still allowing such blokes to have access to narratives of victimhood (Lewis & Simpson 2010: 4). However, images of union activity often rely on the 'union thug' trope (Muir 2008: 160). Images of working-class masculinity abound within the Australian mainstream media, and this is far from an exhaustive list, but it shows, that whether they celebrate or marginalize, they are plentiful.

Robert Hanke argues that, 'we have come to understand masculinity as both a product and process of representation' (1998: 183). Media images are not a direct reflection of people's actual lives, in which gender and class are both performative and fluid, but are rather a part of a wider social discourse in which exclusionary practices can be explained and justified, and hierarchies of gender and class values are offered up as models. Neo-liberal and conservative discourses are readily apparent throughout mainstream media images, in which often political and social representations of the populace are as individuals and consumers (Cahill 2008). A desire to belong to the included group involves invoking a normative identity, one that is often perpetrated through the media.

The ability of media images to affect how people view themselves, those around them and the world in general are an important way that certain discourses are given legitimacy. As Carter and Steiner point out, 'the messages of media texts never simply mirror or reflect "reality", but instead construct hegemonic definitions of

what should be accepted as "reality"' (2004: 21). The reality in terms of gender is that both masculinities and femininities are represented in highly limited and limiting ways. Where this becomes problematic is in the way that not only is gender shown as binary, but that class can be too. While media representations can completely ignore the existence of class, when class is represented it is often in oppositional ways. The dualities of masculinity and femininity coincide with working and middle-class binaries. In suggesting that being working class is in direct opposition to being middle class, Australian mainstream media images perpetrate the notion that individuals must perform their class correctly in order to perform their gender correctly. As Kivel and Johnson suggest, 'while there are a variety of ways to perform masculinity, men often feel obligated, consciously or unconsciously, to perform masculinity in specific ways that are dependent upon the current cultural climate' (2009: 110).

In order to provide a strong foundational analysis of the presence and operations of centralizing working-class masculinity in Australian popular media images, two specific areas will be explored. Several examples of different ways that masculinity and class (as well as whiteness and sexuality) are represented will be considered. The first part of this chapter analyzes two examples from advertising, exploring how they represent not only gender and class, but also race, ethnicity and sexuality. The second part of this chapter looks at two highly popular Australian films in which competing representations of working-class masculinities are central; *Kenny* (2006) and *The Castle* (1997). That discussion will focus on how certain normative constructions about gender and class are maintained through

identification with 'battler' protagonists, and how social and cultural shifts between the mid to late 90s when *The Castle* was made, to the mid-2000s when *Kenny* was made, can be uncovered through the shifts in representation of class and gender in these two films. In particular, this chapter aims to deconstruct popular representations of centralizing working-class masculinities and show how these gendered and classed images are utilized in ways that legitimate certain social and cultural hierarchies, and how centralizing working-class masculinities in a variety of forms are legitimized through Australian media images.

Advertising: Marketing the 'Average Aussie Bloke' and Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity.

Advertising offers a good source of examples for analysis owing to its ubiquity in Western capitalist culture and its presence within and around most other forms of media (Bignell 2002: 29). For example advertising dominates television and radio, and it makes up a huge portion of magazine content whether through glossy full-page spreads or editorial commentary. Advertising is even peppered throughout films in subtle (and not so subtle) product placements (Bignell 2002). Even the urban environment contains constant advertising images: on the sides of busses, on billboards and in shop displays. Advertising, whether overt or covert, is everywhere. It also encourages mythic semiotic connections between certain images and texts and specific meanings, meanings which support consumer culture (Bignell 2002: 37). Advertisements, therefore, use idealized constructions of particular market segments

in order to provoke anxieties that will be (arguably) assuaged by the purchase and use/consumption of products, therefore advertising relies heavily on highly legitimized tropes around gender, class, race and sexuality.

Advertising is an area in which there are various representations of masculinity and class. The nature of advertising is to appeal to specific niche markets, whether those groups are real or constructed. Coming mostly from the corporate sector, much of the discourse in advertising is from a neo-liberal perspective (Schroeder & Zwick 2004: 22), ergo advertising is unlikely to challenge the legitimacy of certain identities based on gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality.[40] As Schroeder and Zwick point out,

> Repeated, or reiterated, versions of gender and race underlie and continually revitalize what is considered natural, typical and, often, appropriate for specific groups. Stereotyped and, perhaps, damaging, representations of iterations derived from essentialist, often sexist and racist, understandings remain a crucial concern for research into advertising (2004: 28).

Advertising relies on idealized images that are designed to appeal to specific groups, and it works on building and maintaining aspirations surrounding the construction of identity.

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[40] For an example of reiteration of gender and sexuality based binaries and normative structuralist accounts of sexuality and gender as predetermined, it is interesting to consider the response to the 2011-2012 Libra tampon ad featuring a 'competition' between a 'real' (read 'biologically determined' in terms of sex at birth) woman, and a transgender 'false' woman. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmKTnKFzKlU

This includes constructions of class and gender, ethnicity—usually whiteness but sometimes an 'exotic' other (O'Shaughnessy 1999)—and sexuality. As a media form, advertising's pervasive nature makes it an ideal site to explore how classed images of masculinity are used to represent either idealized or, in turn, marginalized manhood through representations of centralizing working-class masculinities. The analysis of the highly gendered nature of advertising has historically most often looked at the way women are portrayed—and how these portrayals are problematic. As Sarah E. Dempsey explains,

> Although researchers have paid careful attention to the nuances of female representation and campaigns targeting women, we lack a similar understanding of images of men and masculinity, especially as they are intertwined with and against femininities. Masculinity, like whiteness, secures its dominance by appearing unexceptional (2009: 38).

However, research into masculinities in the media, advertising and popular culture is a growing field (Edwards 2006; Benwell 2003, 2005, 2007). The following examples are presented to deconstruct not only the way gender is used as a motivational tool by advertisers, but also how centralizing working-class masculinities are utilized to link certain products with the average Australian in what usually amounts to highly masculinist and nationalistic ways.

The two advertisements analyzed in this section illustrate the ways in which centralizing working-class masculinities are often represented in advertising so as to render them both completely normative (and therefore unmarked) and idealized.

Both advertisements are for beer, which is a product that is socially and culturally linked with Australian masculinities. From a semiotic approach, both ads use images and signs to, as Schroeder and Zwick write, 'manipulate social signifiers rather than how individuals appropriate their symbolic value' (2004: 22). A semiotic approach will demonstrate that texts cannot be reduced to their literal meanings (Chandler 2002: 145), but rather that these texts, 'are always produced in social contexts; they are influenced by and reproduce the cultural values and myths of those contexts' (Thwaites, Davis & Mules 2002: 85). Both of the advertisements analyzed here are texts in which myths surrounding gender, class and national identity are naturalized through the utilization of centralizing working-class masculinities.

A Hard Earned Thirst: Beer Advertising, Victoria Bitter, Whiteness, and Neo-Liberal Representations of Working-Class Solidarity.

Beer has long been associated with the working-class in Australia (Kirkby 2003). Although in recent years 'boutique' beers and their promotion has seen advertising for beer become diversified, and even women are being marketed to, beer is still very much synonymous with the working-class 'Aussie' bloke. Therefore, when selecting advertisements through which to analyze and contextualize centralizing working-class masculinities ads selling beer seemed an obvious choice. Beer and liquor advertising have been analyzed before in relation to masculinity (Messner & Montez de Orca 2010). Furthermore, in Australia beer advertising has been a site of robust displays of masculinity. As Kirkby states, 'the nostalgic

association between Australian nationalism, masculinity, and drinking beer is a religious trinity that has proved hard to break' (2003: 254). Advertisements for the Victoria Bitter beer brand have long utilized the links between gender, class, national identity and beer consumption. Indeed the Victoria Bitter (or 'VB' as it is colloquially known) ads have become part of the national lexicon, especially relating to images of 'Aussie blokedom'. The most famous of these ads contains such gendered and classed imagery and scripting as,

you can get it pushing a plough (image of farm worker involved in hard manual labour), or takin' a vow (man about to get married looking terrified), matter of fact I've got it now…a hard earned thirst needs a big cold beer, and the best cold beer is Vic.[41]

Advertising for VB is strongly associated with the Aussie bloke, 'for generations, Victoria Bitter has been synonymous with the no-frills, blue-collar Aussie bloke with a hard-earned thirst' (Rumble 2007).[42] Centralizing working-class masculinity at its most average, and its most white and heteronormative, has long been the image presented in advertising for Victoria Bitter. VB is marketed as the beer for what Elder (2007) defines as the Australian 'working man', consequently VB is advertised in opposition to more middle-class orientated boutique brands.[43]

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[41]This is one example of advertisements for VB: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KolkCNvDnWc&feature=related ,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA1h9h7-_Z4 .

[42] Victoria Bitter decreased its alcohol content in 2009 in order to reduce excise tax. However, the move was highly unpopular with their market segment (working-class men), so in mid-2012 they increased the alcohol levels back to their pre-2009 levels. See http://www.news.com.au/business/aussie-beer-favourite-victoria-bitter-back-to-full-strength/story-e6frfm1i-1226464247134

[43] The most recent advertisement for VB (at the time this thesis was completed) includes a shot of a man's hairy forearm ironing a white man's shirt with a small blue floral pattern—a possible attempt to appeal to a younger, more fashion conscious market—one they would have ridiculed only a few years ago. However, the VB 'hands' advertisement reestablishes who the VB bloke is—working class. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X16jIojMK5o

In marketing beer to the working class a rejection of elitism and middle/upper-class product values often means reiterating the very 'averageness' of the Aussie bloke. In relation to the same phenomenon in the US Messner and Montez de Orca note, 'if losers are used in some … ads to clarify the bounds of masculine normality, this is not to say that hypermasculine men are set up as the norm' (2010: 471). In Australia, centralizing working-class masculinities in beer ads are not coded as being the 'winners' of the middle-class (which are often portrayed as feminized), but as the everyday 'average' bloke. In particular, beer ads that market to the working-class do not rely on the hard-bodied hypermasculine ideal, but frequently contain beer-bellied, often middle-aged, not particularly attractive, very average blokes. Yet these 'average blokes' are afforded a unique authenticity. They may not be the ideal, but they are 'real' Aussies. As Kirkby argues, advertisers, '[seem] unable to represent beer drinking in anything other than nationalistic terms, a nationalism that [is] simultaneously sex-specific and gormless' (2003: 253). While beer advertising has shifted from the employment of the 'ocker'[44] in advertisements of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the utilization of centralizing working-class masculinities to engender consensus about what it means to be both Australian and a man is still highly prevalent in mainstream beer advertising.

In 2009 a new adverting campaign for VB, 'The Regulars', was launched. It was designed to replace the iconic 'A hard earned thirst needs a big cold beer' campaign that ran from the late 1970s to the 2000s, and became a landmark

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[44] The 'ocker' is an Australian archetype which is in part based on the larrikin. He is boorish, vulgar, sexist and often racist yet he is also an exemplar of 'blokehood' (Crawford 2007).

advertisement in Australian popular culture. The chairman of the advertising company who produced 'The Regulars', David Nobay, said that,

> What was clear to us from the start is that VB is the great leveller – that's what makes it such a quintessential Aussie brand. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do or wear, when you pick up VB you become a part of something authentic. Our creative challenge was to amplify that in a way that is equally authentic, Australian and real. The result is the "The Regulars" and as a team it's work we're really proud of (Creative Chairman of Droga5, quoted on Adland 2009)

The resultant advertising campaign relies on tropes of centralizing working-class masculinities and a sense of Australian authenticity. It is this 'authenticity' that will be explored in relation to the ad, particularly in relation to the way it represents race, gender and class while encouraging a neo-liberal perspective.

'The Regulars' began appearing on television in July 2009. The first version of the ad was shown on July 8 2009 during the first ad break on the SBS telecast of the Ashes (mumbrella.com 2009).[45] This first airing was of an extended two minute version of the ad. Subsequent airings cut the ad down to the standard 30 second timeframe. The ad features a 'march' in the form of a protest march or key annual event such as a Labour Day parade. The ad focusses on groups of 'marchers' in this parade, all with placards featuring slogans such as 'Men who should've read the

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[45] 'The Regulars' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIdDLWNtfHA

instructions', 'Guardians of the mullet',[46] 'Men punching above their weight', and 'Guys who chucked a sickie to be here'. Apart from the girlfriends of 'Men punching above their weight', the vast majority of the marchers are male. Furthermore, the group is almost uniformly white. For an advertisement that is argued to be 'a celebration of Australian archetypes and national identity, bringing out the variety found in white male working-class Australian drinking culture' (http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2009/vb-regulars-march-under-banners/ 2009), it shows a limited representation of Australian men.

While 'The Regulars' utilizes humour and parody, it also clearly delineates who is part of 'average' Australian drinking culture and who is not. 'The Regulars' supposedly shows a range of people—the 'average' Australians including less idealized types such as fat men, balding men, men who are could be identified as the 'losers' previously discussed by Messner—but it actually gives a rather limited representation of the Australian population. While there is a variety of body types, ages and dress styles on display, nearly all of these variations are in white male bodies. Race, sexuality and gender become invisible as the white male becomes by proxy the representative of all that is 'authentic' about being Australian. There are two consistent commonalities: whiteness and drinking beer. White men, who often, 'represent the normative dominant subject position on the two main axes of power' (Pease 2004: 119), become both invisible through their normativity (Kimmel 2004) and yet the only group who is visible. 'The Regulars' is a powerful cultural marker of

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[46] The 'mullet' is a men's hairstyle that was very popular in the eighties, but has recently come back into fashion. It involves a short front and sides with long hair at the back. It is most closely linked with the "bogan" subculture—a working-class identity that is also linked with excess alcohol consumption, drug use, heavy metal or hard rock music, car culture (particularly V8 muscle cars) and the uniform of mullet or shaved head, tight jeans, black sneakers and the flannelette shirt.

inclusion and exclusion in this way, and reproduces legitimizing discourses surrounding centralizing working-class masculinities and those 'others' by which it is delineated.

'The Regulars' supports a discourse in which white male bodies are both normative and authentic, restricting the potential identification to a narrow range of privileged masculinities. Furthermore, 'The Regulars' also mocks the kind of collective protest commonly employed by the working-class in a way that is dismissive of collective action while being supportive of neo-liberal individualism. There is a suggestion of Australian men being post-protest—that an ad can mock the image of collective action seemingly suggests that the need for such measures is over. Where this is most interesting is that it was only two years previous to the launch of this campaign that mass demonstrations organized by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (the ACTU) and other unions. These protests helped rally support for the 'Your Rights at Work' campaign against the Howard Governments' WorkChoices legislation, which stripped both unions and employees of many previous rights, and had many negative effects on working-class and blue-collar workers. 'The Regulars' parodies protests such as these with different 'groups' of men marching behind banners.

The mass demonstrations held against 'WorkChoices' also had different union groups—crucially many female orientated union groups[47]—marching together under the banners of their unions. The setting of 'The Regulars' reflects the images of the protests that occurred between 2005 and 2007 in such a way as to diminish the power of such collective action. Collective solidarity and a sense of community (Verity & Jolley 2008) within the workplace is a trait that has been associated with the working-class (Donaldson 1991: 16). The discourse of 'fighting with dignity' (Donaldson 1991: 16) against injustice in the workplace—which was how WorkChoices was perceived—gives a certain amount of power to working-class people. Furthermore, this was the specific preferred message of the Your Rights at Work campaign as constructed by the ACTU (Muir 2008).

While it could be argued that the whole idea behind 'The Regulars' is to celebrate such collective action, it is presented in such a way as to both trivialize and diminish the importance of such marches. It signifies the notion of collective working-class action as being archaic and outdated, as no longer a facet of an idealized working-class masculinity that has become increasingly linked to discourses of individualism. It is drenched in neo-liberalism, representative of the citizen as a consumer (Cahill 2008) and an individual rather than someone involved in a social contract in which there is concern for the welfare of other people (Stratton 2009: 185). The shift from the collective action and protest of earlier forms of working-class masculinity to the individualism associated with newer images of centralizing working-class masculinities—an individualism that is linked to neo-liberalism—will be

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[47] The Australian Nurses Federation was heavily involved in the protests, and many female dominated workplaces were deeply affected by the WorkChoices legislation (Muir 2008).

discussed in detail in relation to the films *Kenny* and *The Castle.* The political ideal of centralizing working-class masculinity and its hegemony can be argued to be rooted in neo-liberal individualism in this ad, it mocks workplace collectivity and makes it appear to be no longer needed or wanted by the working man. Through its co-opting of the image of the mass protest, this ad demonstrates a corporate agenda that has little in common with, and is even dismissive of, collective action and worker's rights.

'It's Just Aussie, Taking the Piss Out of Something': West End Draft, Anti-Elitism and the Classed 'Other'.

The second advertisement being considered here is the West End[48] beer advertisement which satirizes the Victorian 'Lose Yourself' tourism ad.[49] The advertisement uses the rivalry between South Australia and Victoria as a focal point, following a long tradition of advertising for West End that attempts to sell not only a superiority of South Australia in terms of landscape,[50] but also in terms of authenticity. West End advertising relies on classed tropes and anti-elitist sentiment as explained by Scalmer (1999). This advertisement, along with several other advertisements for West End beer, shows the 'South Aussies' as the 'genuine' blokes and the Victorians as pretentious and elitist. In particular this advertisement

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[48] West End originated in South Australia and is associated with the state. However, the brand and the brewery are now owned by Lion, which is part of the Kirin Brewery Company of Japan.

[49] The 'Lose Yourself' campaign featured a young white woman pushing a large ball of wool around Melbourne—essentially 'losing' herself. It featured many of the city's architecture and cultural sites, particularly in the theatre district, and aimed to highlight Melbourne as a cultural centre http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RwNM_XfXll .

[50] 'Victorians Come to South Australia' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feqS9VhAQco&feature=related

utilizes a conjunction of class and gender to mark authentic Australian masculinity as working-class, while marking the 'cultural elites' as feminized, outside acceptable sexuality, and therefore not 'real' in terms of being authentically Australian (Scalmer 1999). In the ad two men sit at a bar drinking West End Draft. One asks the other if he knows about 'beer karma', which is explained to mean that for each West End Draft drunk, a Victorian 'cops it'. The scene then switches to the parody of the 'Lose Yourself' ad, showing a woman with a large ball of wool which runs over Victorian diner while a young man (who is clearly representing an inner-city feminized gay man) screams. The ad finishes with the two men at the bar laughing, and one states 'well they did steal the Grand Prix'.[51]

The ad on the surface plays on the rivalries and tensions between South Australians and Victorians, positioning South Australians as the working-class 'average' and the Victorians as the 'cultural elite', pretentious and feminized. Even the settings are vastly different, the two 'real' men are located in a typical suburban or rural front bar and the Victorian scene shows the alfresco part of an inner-city café. Binaries between city and country (or suburbia as the case may be), masculine and feminine, working and upper-middle class are suggested through these settings. The front bar is still a space that remains highly masculinized, a space in which the 'natural' social world is one in which participation is limited to white, heterosexual men (Campbell 2000: 563). The café has a far different social meaning. The café is a place in which coffee is the main beverage of choice, as opposed to beer (Campbell 2000), and if alcohol is drunk it is more likely to be wine. The labeling of the elites

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[51] The Australian Grand Prix has been part of the international Formula One World Championship since 1985. It was held in Adelaide, South Australia until 1995 when it was moved to Melbourne, Victoria, and was the cause of some inter-state animosity.

through their beverage choice has long occurred—'cappuccino' and 'chardonnay' being two very popular affixes in conservative rhetoric (Scalmer 1999).[52] Cafés are also linked with Europe, high culture and the inner-city. As a location the café and the front bar offer vastly different spaces and vastly different embodied experiences. This is all highlighted in the 'Beer Karma' advertisement.

This dichotomizing between both people (the authentic working-class versus the cultural elites) and places (the front bar versus the café) is an exclusionary tactic. This exclusion flows both ways, from the working to upper-middle classes and back again. In online forums discussing both this and the original 'Lose Yourself' campaign this class and location based tension is constantly reiterated. This excerpt taken from the forums at *Campaign Brief.com* (http://www.campaignbrief.com/2010/04/west-end-draught-tries-beer-ka.html) illustrates this class-based opposition, often expressed along state lines:

> If you were a big mullet-ed Port supporter just off a tuna boat and feeling thirsty, chances are you're gonna love seeing an effeminate Melbourne diner end up wearing his soy chai latte. ('Devil's Advocate' April 28, 2010 8:26 AM)

> I just laughed, it's hilarious (sic). Not one of those pretentious, epic or 'It's another magical/ weird wacko world' alcohol ads. It's just Aussie, taking the piss out of something. ('Katie': April 28, 2010 10:04 AM)

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[52] In Australia terms such as 'Chardonnay Socialists', Cappuccino Set', and 'Latté Lovers' are used to refer to educated inner-city 'cultural elites' in a negative way (Scalmer 1999).

As 'Katie' illustrates, the idea that to 'take the piss' is authentically Australian allows those on the SA/working-class side of this imagined opposition to lay claim to being somehow more genuinely Australian. It provides a space in which the larger and more impressive resources of the Victorian/upper-middle-classes can be dismissed, yet it also provides a space in which the working-class can be devalued,

> I grew up in Melbourne but now live in South Australia due to work. People, you have to understand that West End draught is a bogan drink, so they have to play up the idea that anyone who drinks anything else is a pretentious wanker. The Melbourne tourism ad was whimsical and clever - it made people want to go to Melbourne. This ad makes me want to (continue to) avoid Adelaide pubs and their trailer trash alcoholic patrons. By the way, the ad has hints of homophobia in it (the guy with the weird blonde hairdo) and so it will encourage people to say 'Yep, that's what you get in the provincial backwater that is Adelaide' ('Former Melbournian': June 29, 2010 4:40 PM).

Class-based inter-state antagonism is then highlighted by the following statement— one that is often echoed on a national scale in relation to non-white migrants:

> fuck u Victorian bastard (sic) go back to were u come from if u dont like adelaide so fuck off back home. ('Anonymous': September 29, 2010 1:10 AM)

Divisions are constructed in this advertisement which both reflect and support those in the public lexicon. These divisions are damaging to both those associated with the 'cultural elites' (Scalmer 1999) and those associated with the working-class average Australian.

These class-based divisions are enmeshed in gender and sexuality. The ad clearly sets up homosexuality as deviant and 'other' to a genuine Australian masculinity. As 'Former Melbournian' makes so clear, this suggestion of homophobia allows for accusations of homophobia, narrow-mindedness and a lack in education and intellect to be levelled at the working-class, something that Pini, McDonald and Mayes have noted (2012). This ad is indeed gendered, classed and homophobic, and it makes no attempt to present 'real Australian blokes' as anything else. This advertisement takes the political rhetoric of pitting the 'battlers' against the 'elites' and regurgitates it using humour. These class based divisions are present in other media forms, but advertising, which acts to, 'produce meaning outside the realm of the advertised product' (Schroeder & Zwick 2004: 24), really stresses these classed divisions. Advertising creates meanings to allow an individual or group to identify with the product at hand (Schroeder & Zwick 2004), indeed this is the power of brand marketing. In all three of the ads analyzed here, binaries and exclusions based around gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality are vigorously reinforced.

As both a reflection of, and cause of, a desire to attain cultural and social dominance, advertising offers a very specific insight into the types of gendered behavior and performance that are most celebrated or normalized. Kirkby notes, 'advertising is, of course, directed at a particular market for its product' (2003: 253). By utilizing a specific classed and gendered identity, aspirations can be manufactured that appeal to a sense of national identity and therefore arguably operate across class lines, and yet appeal to notions of Australian 'male-ness' in

ways that in fact are classed. Centralizing working-class masculinity is not always (or even often) represented as powerful or dominant in advertising, but it is usually legitimized through its authenticity.

As advertising's chief objective is to sell it is most likely to contain images of hegemonic masculinity (or conversely idealized femininity) in order to appeal to an individual's desire to perform gender as most valued by society (Schroeder & Zwick 2004). However, that which is most valued in terms of gender is not static, but shifts with changing social and cultural phenomena. As Connell puts it masculinity and femininity are 'dynamic processes of configuring practices through time' (2000: 28). For example beer advertising has shifted in tone from the beginning of this century up until now—with different masculine archetypes being shown to be the average Aussie beer-drinking bloke. Dianne Kirkby (2003) identifies this in her article on beer drinking and national culture in Australia, where she explains the link beer has to masculinity in Australia, and the resistance this image has had to social change,

> Despite enormous social and economic reorientation of post 1960s Australian society (that has, in fact, led to a declining beer consumption), the nostalgic association between Australian nationalism, masculinity, and drinking beer is a religious trinity that has proved hard to break (2003: 254).

Advertising that attempts to appeal to Australian men often utilizes centralizing working-class masculinity—the 'real' Aussie bloke whose toughness, strength, loyalty, heterosexuality and whiteness are his defining features (Murrie 2009). As Schroeder and Zwick argue, 'advertising imagery helps to provide consumer

solutions to gender tensions and struggles over representing idealized masculine consumers, in particular the crisis of masculinity' (2004: 23). Gender binaries are reaffirmed as natural and immutable while specific gendered ideals are commonplace in advertising—providing semiotic points of comparison and aspiration in terms of gender, class and identity. Australian national identity is reaffirmed as white, male and working-class inflected through advertisements such as these. Centralizing working-class masculinity is used to grant authenticity to a limited section of the Australian community.

Centralizing Working-Class Masculinities in Australian Film: Gender, Class, Ethnicity and Neo-Liberalism in *The Castle* and *Kenny*.

Film offers a unique space in which to both support and challenge normative constructions of identity in terms of ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. In terms of looking at masculinities there are a wide variety of films to choose from. According to Edwards, 'cinematic images of men and indeed masculinity are perhaps some of the most conspicuous and, moreover, most *conscious* forms of looking at men that we engage in' (2006: 116). In Australia film has long been a space in which the, 'most reverberating national myths' (Sarwal & Sarwal 2009: xxvii) are disseminated.

It is the national myths surrounding centralizing working-class masculinity that I want to explore in this analysis of two films, particularly in reference to

Australian identity within a changing political agenda and increasing neo-liberal sentiment. As Beasley explains, a 'number of Australian films more or less explicitly connect Australian national identity, being located as an Australian, with a central masculine citizen/subject' (2010: 63). These themes will be explored through an analysis of two Australian comedies that focus on the working class; *The Castle* (director Rob Sitch 1997) and *Kenny* (director Clayton Jacobsen 2006). Each of these films was successful at the Australian box office (*The Castle* took AU$10,326,428, and *Kenny* took AU$7,778,177). Firstly, the history of cinema in Australia will be briefly explored, particularly the representation of the 'battler' in Australian comedy. This is compared with dramatic representations of the working-class, specifically how drama and comedy are marketed along class lines, and how class has crept into discussions of the Australian film industry. This section will then explore gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality in *The Castle* and in *Kenny*, comparing the films' chief protagonists as exemplars of centralizing working-class masculinities associated with particular political discourses relating to contemporary social policies, masculinities and neo-liberalism.

When looking for cinematic representations of centralizing working-class masculinity in Australian film there are a wide variety of examples, and many of these are found in Australian comedies. Felicity Collins explains that, 'the decent Aussie bloke has a privileged place in the history of Australian comedy' (2007: 154). This 'decent Aussie bloke' appeared in early silent films *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919) and *On Our Selection* (1920). Since that time he has appeared in a variety of guises in films from *Dad Rudd M.P.* (1940) to *Crocodile Dundee* (1986). The nature

of the Aussie bloke in Australian film comedy has shifted somewhat, moving from 'family man' to 'loveable larrikin' to the excesses of the 'ocker' in films such as *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972). However, despite the specific form in which the bloke appears, 'in Australian cinema, popular comedies continue to draw on and reinforce the most conservative aspects of a national type' (Collins 2009: 154).

It is this conservatism that will be explored in relation to two filmic representations of what Collins describes as the Aussie bloke, 'whose ultimate role in social imagery is to reaffirm and preserve the decency, goodness and superiority of the Australian way of life' (2009: 154). Both *Kenny* and *The Castle* do this, albeit in different ways. The difference reflects an increasing shift to neo-liberal individualism, yet both films (and many of the others mentioned) support the consistent mainstream discourse about the 'culture wars' in which the 'battler' is pitted against an imaginary elite (Scalmer 1999; Collins 2007). Australian comedies, particularly populist ones such as *Kenny* (Collins 2007), often uphold such discourses through representations of gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality that are highly normative in nature. Ergo it can be argued that Australian comedy film is rife with neo-liberal and neo-conservative discourses about what it means to be an Australian and who can lay claim to that title. In this media form mainstream neo-liberal discourses become nationalized and, therefore, difficult to challenge (Collins 2009: 165).

Before looking at *The Castle* and *Kenny,* the representations of the working-class male in Australian drama will be explored. Dramatic Australian film often offers

a different perspective on working-class experience than that offered in comedies. Indeed, when considering films such as *Romper Stomper* (1992), *The Boys* (1998)*, Little Fish* (2005)*, Suburban Mayhem* (2006), *Last Train to Freo* (2006), *West* (2007), *Blessed* (2009)*, Beautiful Kate* (2009), *Animal Kingdom* (2010) and *Snowtown* (2011) rather than representing the best of working-class 'Aussie-ness', working-class lives are shown as bleak, crime-filled and dark. In many of the films mentioned, the protagonists seem to represent an image of working/lower class Australia deigned to induce fear, horror or pity in middle and upper-class audiences. Certainly the lives of the working-class are illustrated as being brutal, hopeless, and disempowered, resulting in individuals who are dangerous, predatory, and lacking in conscience or morals. In recent Australian cinematic dramas, working-class masculinities[53] are often shown to be in 'crisis' (Bowman 2003; Bode 2009). This contrast between dramatic and comedic representations of working-class masculinities could be argued to be a reflection of ongoing debates about the 'darkness' of the Australian film industry and the inaccessibility of Australian drama— which is argued by the commentariat from the right to be a result of the culture wars, the 'black-armbanding' of history, and dominance of the 'elites' in the Australian film industry (Collins 2007). I would further argue that the working-class masculinities represented in much of the Australian drama discussed here are not the centralizing constructions discussed throughout this thesis, but are often more nuanced representations that critique neo-liberalism and conservatism rather than bolster them as many images of centralizing working-class masculinities tend to do.

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[53] There are also many negative filmic representations of working-class women (see *The Boys* 1998; *Blessed* 2009; and *Snowtown* 2011), however they are less likely to be linked to violence (except as victims) and more likely to be about diverging from acceptable femininities—particularly in terms of being a 'good' mother. Two variations on this theme are the character of Katrina Skinner in *Suburban Mayhem* (2006) who is the ultimate transgressive working-class mother, and Janine 'Smurf' Cody in *Animal Kingdom* (2010). Each of these characters is not only transgressive in terms of class and gender, each is also a catalyst for violence. In the case of both Katrina and Smurf, transgressive 'bad' mothering is linked to their capacity to incite violence in the men around them, on whom they wield significant influence.

In Australian comedy there is a history of an 'Australian tradition of films celebrating the working-class man' (Stratton 2009: 195). In the two examples that are analyzed here; *The Castle* and *Kenny*, I consider how working-class masculinities are portrayed, how humour is used ambivalently, and how shifts in mainstream discourses about class, gender and community are reflected in the differences between the ways in which these films represent Australian working-class masculinities. I also examine how the positioning of Darryl Kerrigan and Kenny Smyth as working-class battler 'victims' support already prominent dichotomies based around the mainstream 'battler'[54] archetypes and a perceived educated elite, creating tension towards not only academia, but the much maligned notion of 'political correctness' at the expense of those already subordinated within Australian society. Finally, I explore changes in media images of centralizing working-class masculinities in the ten years between *The Castle* and *Kenny*, and look at how in each film the main protagonist reflects these changes, and how many of the traits previously associated with being working-class, such as strong communal bonds, collective action and a sense of social obligation, have been replaced by notions of individuality and 'choice' associated with neo-liberalism.

The Castle: The Battler Bloke against 'The Big End of Town'.

The Castle, released in 1997, is one of Australian cinema's biggest box office and critical successes (Mortimer 1998: 123). The film tells the story of the

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[54] Discursive constructions of cultural oppositions between the average mainstream battler and the cultural 'elites' was one of the favourites of former Prime Minister John Howard. See Dyrenfurth 2005.

Kerrigan family and their battle to save their family home against the will of both the government and big business. A 'tongue in cheek comedy of suburban manners' (Collins & Davis 2004: 117), *The Castle* presents an ultimate David and Goliath battle. The Kerrigan family patriarch, Darryl Kerrigan, represents the battler, the 'decent Aussie bloke' (Collins 2009). There are many reasons why *The Castle* is an important film to analyze in terms of national identity, class and gender. First *The Castle* is highly ambivalent about the class of its protagonists (Mortimer 1998: 123), shifting from mocking to empathizing with them (and often doing both in tandem). *The Castle* is also interesting in its co-option of the sense of displacement from the land that was being addressed by Indigenous Australians at the time, and how the discourses of Aboriginal Australia were able to be successfully adopted by a white family. Lastly, *The Castle* and its chief protagonist reflect cultural notions of the 'battler' as a specific classed masculinity that was present in the late 1990s, but had been seriously challenged by the time *Kenny* was screening a decade later. *The Castle* can be seen as a part in a steady progression of representations of centralizing working-class masculinity from a more collective representation to a more neo-liberal one. The films' consideration will lead into the analysis of neo-liberalism and individualism in *Kenny.*

At the start of *The Castle* the audience is introduced to the Kerrigan family. In these establishing scenes the audience is encouraged to find humour in the parochial nature of the Kerrigans—in everything from their lack of culinary sophistication to their outdated homemade decor. Brian McFarlane, cinema writer, asks, 'are they [the filmmakers] being clever and funny at the expense of the simple

people at the center of their film, and at the expense of some rather easy targets?' (2007: 145) Class lines are established early on in *The Castle*, a number of reviewers note different responses to the humour depending on the class background of the audience watching (see Mortimer 1998; McFarlane 2007). The Kerrigan family themselves arguably represent an exaggerated, but somewhat realistic example of working-class relationships to culture, particularly cultural capital. For example in the classic scene when the audience is introduced to the 'Pool Room' (a room containing the family's treasures, a bar and pool table) the camera sweeps over assorted knick-knacks such a novelty beer-mugs, a homemade macramé lampshade, and various other signifiers of the Kerrigan's lack of 'taste'. This same lack of cultural capital is seen through the obvious lack of appeal in their 'holiday home' situated on a flat expanse of lake, where the nighttime quiet is punctuated by the sound of bugs frying in the bug-zapper. It is during this scene when Darryl utters the classic line, 'how's the serenity' (*The Castle* 1997).

The rejection of a middle/upper-class measure of what is deemed 'good' or 'quality' is a common way for the working classes to differentiate themselves and to produce pride in their difference. The Kerrigan family's love of 'low culture' is described by Justine Lloyd,

> The characters passionately participate in the everyday and low culture pursuits of greyhound racing, fishing, maintaining and driving fast cars and boats, shopping for secondhand goods (usually without buying them), watching re-runs of highlights of television variety shows … and home decorating (2002: 128)

This filmic representation of the Kerrigan family's lives could be argued to be somewhat mocking of their working-class 'battler' persona. Yet, as the film progresses our sympathies as an audience subtly shift from derision to admiration. There is an 'evident fondness' (Collins & Davis 2004: 120) for these characters. There is a continual ambivalence between what the Kerrigans think about themselves and what the viewer might think of working-class life' (Collins & Davis 2004: 117). As far as the aesthetics of the film go, *The Castle* may provide the audience with someone to laugh *at,* particularly in relation to their grotesque tastes, yet they are also extolling core values given high merit in mainstream national culture.

There is an ambivalent relationship between mocking and empathy that is created though viewing *The Castle.* As Lloyd explains,

> While the film takes a fairly broadly comic approach by describing the family's quirks and everyday habits, it employs a tragic dramatic structure to motivate the story and address some ethical and moral themes (2002: 128).

The audience's empathy is earned through the Kerrigan's battle against a monolithic and unquantifiable power which can seize homes at will. The very traits that marked the Kerrigan family as simple and somewhat subordinate are then used to highlight their 'ordinariness' and their position as everyday 'average' Aussies. As Elder explains, 'the film creates an affectionate portrait of the Kerrigan family's life that many Australians identified with' (2007: 302). Notions often associated with Australian national identity are intrinsically linked with the Kerrigan family and their

(and their neighbors) battle to keep their beloved home, notions such as a 'fair go' and the sanctity of the suburban family home (Elder 2007: 302).

This battle to retain their home is, in part, a battle to have their inarguable ownership of the land recognized. The suggestion of unfair acquisition of land in the film borrows somewhat from Indigenous experiences of forced dispossession, and indeed there are many references throughout the film—subtle and not-so-subtle—of a commonality of experience. The year of the film's release (1997) there was a 'fierce campaign by farmers, miners, conservative journalists, and the States to extinguish native title' (Collins & Davis 2004: 118). The ways in which the film co-opts the Aboriginal experience, particularly in the Mabo case (Lloyd 2002: 129), offers a powerful point of comparison.

The Castle, problematically, somewhat whitewashes the experience of Indigenous Australians, offering a 'happy ending' in which everyone involved prospers and ignoring the very real struggles still faced by Aboriginal people today (Collins & Davis 2004: 119). The ongoing entrenched racism so common to mainstream discourses about 'real' Australians allows for Aboriginal people to be denied access to narratives of belonging, land and country either through their being positioned as 'other' or their experiences being totally ignored. The traditional gender roles apparent in *The Castle* (Collins & Davis 2004: 119) reassert white masculinity as the normative and Aboriginal masculinity as the marginalized. If Darryl Kerrigan is

a filmic representation of a version of centralizing working-class masculinity, *The Castle* re-establishes this masculinity as white. As Beasley points out,

> The Australian 'every-bloke' is evidently not every bloke at all after all, but definitively white. Yet he stands in the Australian setting for the neutral, universal, axiomatic Man, whereas Indigenous men are particularized as exotic/mysterious/marginal/other/oppressed (2010: 73).

Co-opting narratives of Aboriginal struggles over land rights gives white Australian audiences a chance to empathize with Indigenous experience without ever having to really face their colonial heritage. Furthermore, it could also allow for white Australians to totally foreground their own relationship to the land and thus see it as equal to, or even greater than, Indigenous relationships to the land. Conversely, in *The Castle* ties to land based on more than economic factors are established, so while the film is problematic in its whiteness, it does contain some more progressive discourses about land, home and belonging. In this the film does differ from many conservative and mainstream neo-liberal discourses about who can lay claim to 'home' (Due & Riggs 2008).

In looking at neo-liberalism and conservatism in *The Castle* there is an important way in which the film contests those values, especially in terms of centralizing working-class masculinity. While there are arguably conservative discourses about family and the nature of the 'little people'/ 'Aussie battler' running through the film, Darryl's fight for his rights and those of his neighbors (who consist of an Anglo elderly man and several ethnic minorities) is also reflective of the kind of

collective action by unions, and often associated with working-class solidarity (Milner 2009). The eventual triumph of the Kerrigan family over the faceless corporation that would strip them of their home only further solidifies the strength implied in Darryl's collective action. This offers an interesting point of comparison with Kenny Smythe, the titular 'hero' in the film *Kenny*. While Darryl Kerrigan is a man with ties to his family, ties to his community and ties to the land Kenny Smythe is highly individualistic, with his strongest tie being to his work. This contrast between these two characters can, as is shown in the next section, be read as reflecting an ongoing cultural shift to neo-liberalism, especially neo-liberal industrial relations policies.

Kenny: The Ultimate Neo-Liberal Exemplar of Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity?

Kenny (2007) is a commercially sucessful 'mockumentary' following the everyday life of a port-a-loo attendant. Unlike *The Castle* with its ambivalent treatment of its characters, *Kenny* establishes empathy with its titular character from the opening credits. Kenny, the 'knight in shining overalls' is the quintessential good Aussie bloke, described as the, 'archetypal down-to-earth tradesman, always there with a helping hand outstretched and some hard-won advice' (Mitchell 2006: 26). Huijser articulates this point, saying, 'in many ways Kenny is the personification of the white Australian working-class man, otherwise known as the Aussie Battler' (2009). Unfortunately for Kenny, his job (as a port-a-loo plumber) is marked as highly undesirable, particularly by those who treat him with disdain (most notably his middle-class clients and his seemingly middle-class wife). In particular, his

opposition to those who are better educated is shown, most notably in his dealings with a university student employee who becomes the example of middle-class laziness and lack of work ethic, or his brother who is ashamed of his menial, and rather grubby, job. What is interesting about both the film and its protagonist is the way it reflects neo-liberal individualism, particularly in contrast with *The Castle*. Kenny Smythe could be arguably viewed as the ultimate neo-liberal working-class subject; white, heterosexual, aspirational working-class, and totally individualistic (Milner 2009: 157).[55]

The film follows Kenny Smythe's day to day experiences through his job as a port-a-loo attendant (which allows for much toilet-based humour). Kenny's main points of interaction are through his job, which is consistently reiterated as the thing that Kenny puts first. Furthermore, this total dedication to a job which is grubby, difficult and not overly well paid is never questioned. Kenny is also dedicated to his aging father and his pre-teen son. However, his relationships with them seemingly come second to his job, As Milner says, 'Kenny uses his occupation, not his dysfunctional family, to define himself' (2009: 158). When Kenny has to work the Melbourne Cup[56] while he has custody of his son his refusal to miss the event is presented as a positive and the 'right' thing to do, while his ex-wife's unwillingness to take the son and concede to her ex-husband's job is constructed as unreasonable. Indeed, when Kenny explains why his wife left, her reasons, that he prioritized work over family, are never represented as entirely fair (Milner 2009: 159). The film lacks

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[55] As a character, the only trait Kenny Smythe lacks that is typically associated with the constructed neo-liberal subject is self-awareness as a consumer and a citizen. As Cahill recognizes, the neo-liberal state is made up of individuals who are self-determined, particularly as consumers (2007: 226).

[56] The Melbourne Cup, the 'race that stops a nation' is one of the richest turf races in the world, and is a hugely watched and attended event in Australia.

the focus and celebration of family and community that is such a central tenet in *The Castle.* Instead, as Lisa Milner explains, 'Kenny is basically a loner' (2009: 158). Furthermore, while *The Castle* ends in triumph and prosperity, *Kenny* ends in one act of retributive violence against the middle-class 'elites'. His actions are individualistic and singular, indeed, as Milner notes, Kenny is one of the little people in Australian society, as he said himself, 'life is about small victories, the rest is just a distraction' (2009: 156). The overriding narrative of a grand battle against those with more power that is central to *The Castle* is missing from *Kenny*. In *Kenny* power structures are never challenged.

This lack of questioning or resistance may in part relate to Kenny Smythe's position as one of 'Howard's battlers' (Dyrenfurth 2005; Milner 2009), with a parade of stereotypes (the bitchy ex-wife, the slack yet privileged university student, the snobbish and un-Australian 'elites' who ignore Kenny while he works) aligned against him. Beside the neo-liberal discourses running throughout *Kenny's* narrative, there are also conservative discourses around belonging and Australian identity. As Felicity Collins explains,

> If audiences and critics have embraced *Kenny* as the return of the 'decent' Aussie bloke, this is because *Kenny*, as an event in Australian popular culture, legitimizes the delegation of 'Aussie values' to the safe-keeping of an idealized and 'ordinary' Australian—an imaginary but powerful figure of national rhetoric, much beloved in both the Menzies and Howard eras of national politics (2007: 90).

Like Darryl Kerrigan, Kenny Smythe represents the Aussie bloke archetype (Collins 2007), which is clearly a manifestation of centralizing working-class masculinity. Moreover his ethnicity, sexuality and gender are the normative in mainstream discourses. He has unqualified access to narratives of belonging and ownership—he is unquestionably Australian. This gives weight to his position as a 'victim' of the elites, who do not have the same access to belonging, and sets up a binary between the elites and the mainstream that is powerfully enforced throughout the film.

This dichotomy between the 'elite' educated middle and upper classes and the working-class battler as personified by Kenny can be argued to be a reflection of some of the current debates about the Australian film industry itself. *Kenny* is famously a film that was made without government funding (as was *The Castle*), marking the film itself as an underdog much like its titular character (Milner 2009: 154). As a comedy film whose protagonist is an exemplar of the Aussie-bloke/battler archetype, the film has been cited as an example of Australian cinema made for the average Aussie, a quixotic individual commitment to a vision unaffected by the politics of the elite, as posited by many columnists. Conservative media commentator Michael Duffy compares *Kenny* with another Australian film released at the time, *Jindabyne*, arguing the latter is the product of the 'Art Bubble' elite that govern which types of films are granted funding through the AFFC:

> It's a product of the Art Bubble, that social space inhabited by people for whom art seems to be important not for its connectedness to life but as a badge of social distinction, a way of showing they are different from ordinary people. Government

funding plays an important part in the Bubble, allowing its inhabitants to exist in a state of semi-detachment from the rest of the country (Duffy: 2006: 35).

Duffy argues that while *Jindabyne* portrays white men as 'violent or alcoholics', *Kenny*, 'respects ordinary people and understands them' (2006: 35). He argues that the private funding of the film, by people with 'real jobs' (as opposed to those in the arts or academia, whose jobs are delegitimized as elitist and un-Australian—this will be explored in more detail in Chapters Four and Five) allows it to represent the 'real' Australian.

Andrew Bolt, another conservative columnist, also argues that Kenny Smythe represents the 'invisible' average Aussie, that battler archetype who is pitted against the educated elites, 'what those on our cultural heights too often choose not to see in the valleys beneath them are not just the Kennys, but the great virtues of so many of these invisible Australians' (Bolt 2006: 50). The links between the 'reality' of *Kenny's* experience and the 'art bubble' politics in films such as *Jindabyne*[57] are of critical importance in two ways. First, the suggestion that *Kenny* is representative of 'authentic' Australians as opposed to the educated elites derided in many Australian newspaper columns continues discourses that not only offer up classed binaries, but that also portray certain educational pathways, specifically those in the humanities and arts, as un-masculine, undesirable and out of touch with 'real' Australia. Not only

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[57] Debate over the state of Australia's film industry, particularly the 'darkness' of films such as *Beautiful Kate* (2009) and *Blessed* (2009) in comparison with bigger box office successes such as *Charlie and Boots* (another Jacobson film) has been on the rise, with dichotomies drawn between the argued 'elite' nature of some films against the battler archetype presented in others. This debate often positions the educated 'art' crowd elite perceived to be both the makers and viewers of Australian drama as diametrically opposed to the 'average' Australian while maintaining discourses that posit this 'average' Australian as white, male and heterosexual.

do these discourses rely on the stereotype of the educated elite, they reinforce notions that academic success is at odds with being an Aussie bloke, particularly a working-class Aussie bloke. Both through characterization within the film, and the separate mainstream discussions of the film as a textual representation of 'real' Australia, *Kenny* reaffirms class-based binaries and a mistrust of academia already at work in the creation of working-class masculine identities.

The second important point to arise out of the mainstream commentary on the authenticity of Kenny as an Australian character is how arguments over visibility and representation reinforce the normalcy, the taken-for-granted natural position, of the white, heterosexual male as the 'real' Australian. The film opens with the quote, 'None are less visible than those we choose not to see', a quote which automatically links Kenny Smythe with an invisible, disempowered underclass. In fact, as has been noted within not only gender theory but whiteness theory, invisibility can be a marker of privilege. To be invisible is to be the 'norm'. As Kimmel notes, 'privilege, as well as gender, remains invisible. And it is hard to generate a politics of inclusion from invisibility' (2004: 8). Kenny's invisibility can be read as a signifier of his hierarchical power as a white, heterosexual male. His classed position is the only way in which Kenny is made 'visible' in terms of the hierarchical scaling of bodies. However, popular discourses about the Aussie 'battler' actually mark Kenny's classed position, which while blue-collar and working-class is not economically disadvantaged, as operating within the middle of the mainstream. The statement at the beginning of the film can therefore be read as an affirmation of Kenny's social and cultural power. He is invisible because he is the 'norm'; his body is not marked by his gender, his

sexuality, his race or ethnicity. It can, therefore, be argued that in fact his invisibility is a symptom of his privilege, not his subordination. As Cooper states,

> Because the scaling of bodies creates a normative status within each identity category and ranks others against the norm, it renders invisible everyday norms that subordinate people with certain identity statuses (2006: 872).

Kenny's invisibility is actually as much a symptom of his privilege as a white, heterosexual male, as it is a symptom of his classed position.

However, in the case of Kenny, his invisibility is called out, it is illuminated, in a way that gives him access to power—the power of recognition. By being marked as a victim of a society that has delegitimized him and given his power to other, less deserving groups, this powerful statement allows Kenny and those who identify with him to access the language of victimhood. Kenny's invisibility operates on two levels; it marks his power while also legitimizing the request for more power from those like him. The subtext behind the question of Kenny's visibility is that as a white, heterosexual, 'battler bloke' in Australia, his (already disproportionate) access to power must be protected. Furthermore, any challenge to the disproportionate privilege granted to white, heterosexual men can be read as un-Australian. It is a deeply conservative narrative message.

The positioning of Kenny as the one made invisible allows for the creation of a discourse in which the experience of those marked as 'other', women, non-whites,

non-heterosexuals, is delegitimized, for it is the white, heterosexual working-class male that is marginalized. The politics of *Kenny* can be argued to sit alongside those of Fathers' Rights groups, and discourses about the 'crisis of masculinity'. The perceived need for recognition of an already powerful masculine archetype displaces any focus on members of Australian society already on the economic and social fringes, and questions the legitimacy of any attempts to create social and economic equity. Kenny as a character operates at the intersection of class and gender in a powerful way. His identity as a man (one of privilege) intersects with his identity as working-class (subordinated) to create an identity that has access to both the power associated with privilege and the language of victimhood.

As textual representations of Australian working-class masculinities, *Kenny* and *The Castle* are superficially similar. A deeper analysis reveals that shifts in the conceptualization of dominant working-class masculinities from the late 1990s to the next decade are reflected in these two films, particularly in the comparisons between Darryl Kerrigan and Kenny Smythe. As cinematic manifestations of an idealized Aussie bloke, there is a significant shift in the qualities exemplified by Darryl Kerrigan to those present in Kenny. Lisa Milner (2009) discusses this in relation to cultural changes that occurred during the Howard years in Australian politics in her paper, 'Kenny: the evolution of the battler figure in Howard's Australia'. The key differences she notes between the characters of Darryl Kerrigan and Kenny can be recognized in the way that notions of individuality, choice, and political agency changed

throughout the eleven years of the conservative Howard-led coalition government.[58] More specifically, some of the traits long associated with working-class masculinities that may have been positive and empowering were eroded during this period in favor of a singularity and sense of lone achievement (Milner: 2009, 161).

Howard championed the position of his mainstream, aspirational battler, crossing class divisions and creating a middle at odds with the cultural elites on top and the welfare reliant needy at the bottom (Dyrenfurth 2005: 188). As Dyrenfurth explains, 'battlers, by way of their shared fears, values and sense of "betrayal", are coded as cross-class: the working-class is made obsolete not only due to its material wants but also by its aspiration to middle-class membership' (2005: 188). The notion of individual responsibility of one's position both economically and culturally is highlighted in Kenny's singular battle against a world in which he is suggested to be rendered invisible. Each of Kenny's triumphs is an individual one, whether against the machinations of his ex-wife, or the 'yuppie' into whose car he pours effluent from his van. This contrasts with Darryl Kerrigan's big win against the government— achieved with the support of his neighbors, his family and his two legal representatives. As Milner explains,

> Kenny is one of the little people in Australian society who looks after the day-to-day issues, and he said himself that 'life is about small victories, the rest is just a distraction'. He puts his head down and does not argue the big picture, unlike Darryl

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[58] The increasing hegemony of neo-liberalism actually began under the Keating Labour government, but accelerated under the Howard Government (Johnson 2007).

Kerrigan, who stood up for his rights, and encouraged his neighbors to fight alongside him in the highest court in the land (2009: 156).

The Castle offers a traditional narrative of conflict and resolution in which the little guy wins. *Kenny*, on the other hand, has no real resolution apart from one act of retribution against the elites.

Kenny's problems with work/family balance are never resolved, in fact they are never really addressed as problems. That Kenny's life revolves around his work to the total detriment of his personal relationships is never really tackled as an issue (Milner 2009: 159). This is one of the biggest differences between the protagonists in these two films, one which illustrates an increasing social and cultural shift towards neo-liberal individualism. While on the surface both men seemingly care about their families, there is a vast difference in their relationships with their loved ones. Darryl Kerrigan's first priority is his family; Kenny Smythe's is his work (Milner 2009: 158). Milner goes on to describe how Kenny's disconnect and lack of relationships is reflective of neo-conservative cultural shifts,

His life reflects how family relationships have become more distanced – it seems his connections are mostly in the mobile phone class with his wife, son and father. He lives in this new horizon of expectations; he represents what the new market-driven economic climate has turned his Australian viewers into – the person who is forced to drop his family and social lives to go back to work for the pay packet (2009: 158).

While Darryl Kerrigan fights for his family first and foremost, Kenny never even questions either the wisdom of putting his work before his family or the fairness of the massive demands made of his time and resources. This difference marks a powerful neo-conservative script in which workers are completely beholden to their employers, and the rights of the individual to make a profit far outweigh the rights of the family. It also highlights class anomalies that are masked through 'culture war' discourses. That part of the success of the Your Rights at Work campaign against WorkChoices was its targeting of 'working families' (Muir 2008: 65) shows that to Australians family is still a central concern (this will be explored in detail below in Chapter Five, which looks at work, and Chapter Six, which looks at intimacy).

Despite the somewhat ambiguous relationship the audience is encouraged to have with Darryl Kerrigan and his aesthetically challenged family, the Kerrigans' offer an example of a more organized, collective, communally-engaged working-class than the Howard-battler individualism of *Kenny*. As Milner states, 'with each re-telling of the battler's story on Australian screens, we can see a change in this figure, as it fits the socio-cultural landscape of the day' (2009: 161). The cultural and social shifts that occurred throughout the Howard era, that were detrimental to the working-class and led up to the implementation of WorkChoices, are reflected so poignantly in the contrasts between the working-class masculinities represented in two of Australia's most successful and celebrated comedies. The contrasts between *The Castle* and *Kenny* point to an increasing shift to both conservatism and neo-liberalism. This is important, as it highlights the increasing neo-liberal construction of

centralizing working-class masculinities. In *Kenny* in particular, centralizing working-class masculinity is represented as highly legitimized, yet also victimized (Lewis & Simpson 2010: 4) by 'other' groups whose claim to equality is less legitimized as they are positioned as less legitimately Australian.

Conclusion

The media is a powerful tool in the dissemination of mainstream discourses. As this chapter has illustrated, such discourses are becoming increasingly conservative, neo-liberal and individualistic in nature. While there can be more progressive images of working-class masculinities (for example in certain media associated with unions and in health and community services) [59] the majority of media representations fall under the more neo-liberal, increasingly individualistic, and exclusionary construction. Certainly, centralizing working-class masculinities are a powerful political tool, and their prevalence in the media can be a method through which conservative and neo-liberal discourses are reinforced. Some of its more common guises—the 'batter', the 'decent bloke', the 'larrikin', and the average Aussie among others—are heavily laden with specific cultural meanings. This is achieved through the positioning of this archetype as authentically Australian, which effectively marginalizes any 'other' that can be positioned as binary to this ideal. Ergo gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity become areas in which dichotomous

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[59] One example that is attempting to challenge some of the more problematic aspects of centralizing working-class masculinities is the 'Real Heroes Walk Away' campaign which aims at targeting alcohol fueled violence. This will be looked at more closely in Chapter Seven.

interests are constructed—those that are in the best interests of mainstream 'real' Australians and those that are not.

The media's constant reinforcing of mainstream cultural, social and political 'common sense' is highly problematic for working-class men whose images of themselves may be shaped in part by what they see, hear and read every day—especially if their behaviors and decisions are influenced by a constructed gender and class binary. In the next four chapters several of the major components of working-class men's lives, including schooling, work and intimacy will be examined with a view to providing insight into how the mainstream discourses that are disseminated through the commonality of centralizing working-class masculinities affect not only those people whose embodied experience marks as dichotomous to this identity, but also to the very people this identity is argued to represent. If working-class men's identities are affected by these mainstream discourses—which are often dispersed through the media—and these affects are problematic, then how difficult does this make it for those who are marginalized from this construction of gender and class to have their voices heard? Are there spaces in which working-class masculinities and working-class people are challenging mainstream discursive constructions gender, class, race and sexuality? These questions and issues are explored in more detail in the next few chapters, starting with an area where narratives of individualism and choice are powerfully at work: education and schooling.

Chapter Four

Learning Class and Gender: Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity, Childhood, Schooling and Making the 'Right' Educational Choices.

Chapter Four: Learning Class and Gender: Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity, Childhood, Schooling and Making the 'Right' Educational Choices.

Introduction

Gender and class are learned and imprinted on the body both through external social and cultural constructions of the normative, but also through internal self-construction. As previously discussed centralizing working-class masculinity is a normative social construction of gender and class that is highly legitimized in Australia. Gender and class are not 'natural' subjective positions, but are socially constructed through various means. This construction starts early. Children become aware of normative classed and gendered constructions while they are quite young, and they are encouraged to negotiate this normativity. For example, while Bartholomaeus has critiqued the use of hegemonic masculinity as a way of theorizing the gender of young children,[60] she also noted in her research that often boys were keen to be seen as identifying with common tropes associated with masculinity (2012: 235). Maintaining and performing gender and class, particularly in regards to centralizing working-class masculinity leads to a narrowing of the parameters of acceptable behavior, and limits classed and gendered 'choices'—particularly in regards to education.

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[60] Bartholomaeus notes that boys can access some aspects of hegemonic masculinity (physical toughness) but not others (normative sexuality) and that boys are more marked by their status as children, than they are by their status as male in terms of access to the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 2002 in Bartholomaeus 2012).

This chapter looks at how the intersection of class and gender creates a specific set of values. These values impact on how children in Australia engage with and perform gender and class, particularly in relation to schooling. The way that education and educational institutions are not only gendered, but are classed, affects the way children and their parents approach education. Crucially, if this is the case for those children who have access to privilege whether that is owing to their gender, ethnic background, economic status, cultural background or even their ability, then how does the embodiment of centralizing notions of working-class masculinity affect the paths for those children who come from less privileged backgrounds? This chapter also looks at the wide variety of factors that discourage children and their parents from pursuing certain pathways in schooling and academia. First, early childhood and the construction of gendered and classed identities is explored. Next, gender, embodied masculinities and schooling with a focus on the 'crisis' of boys in education is examined, taking into account the class conflict between the middle-classed nature of educational institutions and working-class identities. Finally, this chapter looks at the ways in which class and gender intersect to create specific barriers to educational success for those who lack privilege, and how the existence of such barriers can be denied through neo-liberal narratives of 'choice'. This chapter considers whether the construction of a gendered, classed identity that conforms to the centralizing working-class masculinities that occupy a simultaneously hegemonic and complicit position not only has real effects on individual's educational choices and pathways, but may have more to do with the afore mentioned 'crisis' of boys in school than is often recognized.

Early Life and the Shaping of Masculinities: Making 'Little Aussie Blokes'.

Alongside academic and professional debates around childhood and education, there exists an often intense, populist debate carried out through media, politics and community forums. In much of this populist commentary on childhood, boys and, in particular, education, gender is essentialized (Keddie 2005: 23). This essentialist notion of gender is often relied upon to account for variations in academic choices or performance and to support bids for resources (particularly in relation to the 'crisis of boys in schools'[61] which is explored further on). The notion that there are two distinct gender identities, masculine and feminine, and the idea that these gendered identities will conform to the sexed bodies (male and female) is often taken for granted. As Connell explains, 'it was generally assumed that there are two sex roles, a male and a female one, with boys and girls getting separately inducted into the norms and expectations of the appropriate one' (2002: 12). This assumption that binary gendered characteristics are natural and innate not only pigeonholes children before they have a chance to develop into whoever they will become, it also ignores the myriad other factors that may affect how a child will embody gender.

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[61] Populist debates about the 'crisis' of boys in schools largely ignore the fact that while boys are less likely to perform well at school when they are young, and make up a slightly smaller percentage of university enrollment, men are more likely to achieve career-wise and the gender wage gap has doubled for graduates in the last year. See Priess 2013 http://www.smh.com.au/national/tertiary-education/gender-pay-gap-doubles-in-a-year-20130103-2c78q.html and Tovey and McNeilage (2012) http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/their-numbers-are-up-girls-scoop-the-pool-in-hsc-maths-20121218-2bl8t.html

Class, ethnicity, cultural background, family background, and parental employment are only some of the factors that may influence how a child embodies their own gender, and how they perceive the gendered behaviors of others. The fluidity of gender, not only between genders, femininities and masculinities, but within any set performance of gender is ignored when gender is essentialized. As Keddie argues,

> Seeing boys' enactments of masculinity as a product of dynamic, fluid, contextual and historically contingent social processes, allows these enactments to be positioned as amenable to change rather than as fixed, pre-determined, or inevitable (2005: 24).

One of the biggest problems with most of the current 'crisis' debates about 'Aussie' boys, youth and schooling is that any recognition of the fluidity of social processes is disregarded in favor of gender essentialism and the shoring up of privilege associated with certain subjective identity positions. Centralizing working-class masculinity, the 'every-bloke' (Beasley 2009a) identity, seems to be presumed to be the natural and immutable starting position for all 'Australian' (white, heterosexual, possibly working-class but not 'poor') boys. Indeed, as is explored further on, certain traits linked with neo-liberal inflected centralizing working-class masculinity are celebrated and encouraged among the middle and upper-class. Not only 'bloke-ism' but some of the more concerning aspects of 'larrikinism' are certainly encouraged in some upper-class spaces inhabited by teenagers and young men such as university colleges (Donaldson 2003). Before exploring centralizing working-class masculinity and schooling there will be a brief background discussion on gender, class and early childhood.

The ways in which children engage with gender (and class) are influenced by a wide variety of factors including what they see at home, an exposure to the media, the behavior of their peers and what they experience at school. To quote Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner,

> The social processes by which boys become men are complex and important. How does early childhood socialization differ for boys and girls? What specific traits are emphasized for boys that mark their socialization as different? What types of institutional arrangements reinforce those traits? How do the various institutions in which boys find themselves—school, family, and circles of friends—influence their development? What of the special institutions that promote 'boys' life' or an adolescent male subculture? (2009: 37).

This thesis explores some of these questions in relation to centralizing working-class masculinities. For example how do young children develop relationships to gender? The earliest exposure to notions of correct gendered behavior (such as centralizing working-class masculinity) often comes from the home. As Kimmel explains, 'during infancy, expectations about how each gender ought to be treated lead to different behaviors by parents and other adults' (2004: 130). Parents own beliefs and experiences and engagement about gender (among other intersecting identifiers) will shape the way the way that they influence their children's production of gendered identities. Kane explains that, 'parents begin gendering their children from their very first awareness of those children, whether in pregnancy or while awaiting adoption' (2006: 150). In Australia centralizing working-class masculinities occupy a position of hegemony, part of this gendering is going to have threaded through it notions of

Australian identity, class and whiteness. Gender, as has been shown, does not exist in a vacuum.

There are a variety of ways in which gender is influenced by parents, starting from pre-conception. The first thing most people want to know about a new baby is its sex (Kimmel 2004: 129). Provision of clothes, toys, books and media can vary to accommodate normative socio-biological notions of correct gender behaviors.[62] Furthermore, parents are not merely agents of socializing their children's gender, they are themselves actors, illustrating how gender is done (Kane 2006: 151). Kane argues that heterosexual fathers in particular tend to be more influential (and more concerned) about their child's doing of gender, and this concern is increased in relation to boys doing of masculinity (2006: 151). In Australia performative engagements with the 'right' masculinities are so closely linked with being authentically Australian, indeed, 'when … asked about a typical Australian, many people still imagine a man' (Elder 2007:65). This illustrates the valuing of the masculine over the feminine. For a girl to enact certain traits associated with masculinity may be acceptable in certain situations, as Kane found out when looking at parents reactions to daughters displaying what were considered 'masculine' traits, or liking things associated with 'boys'. Indeed, as Kane notes, 'mothers and fathers … often celebrated what they perceived as gender nonconformity on the part of their young daughters' (2006: 156). For many boys, belonging to the gendered

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[62] See, among others, Lytton and Romney (1991) and Pomerleau (1990). Also consider the gendering of LEGO toys in recent years, as discussed by Anita Sarkeesian in the Feminist Frequency videos discussing the 2012 'girls' LEGO range, *LEGO Friends*: Part 1 http://www.feministfrequency.com/2012/01/lego-gender-part-1-lego-friends/ and Part 2 http://www.feministfrequency.com/2012/02/lego-gender-part-2-the-boys-club/ .

mainstream is encoded as crucial in order to belong socially, and adopting traits associated with the feminine coded as deeply undesirable.

Belonging through correct navigation of gendered behavior can be encouraged in the home, but even if it is not it will quickly become learned in other social interactions. As Fenstermaker and West argue, 'in the accomplishment of difference [including gender], accountability is the driving motivator; the specifics of the normative order provide the consent, with the social interaction the medium' (2002: 213). The intrinsic ties between Australian identity, authenticity, gender and class create significant pressure to encourage engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity. The whiteness and heterosexuality that is granted normative (and therefore somewhat invisible) status as part of this identity is simultaneously hidden and yet made hyper-visible through its ubiquity.

While the home may be one of, if not the earliest site where gender practices (as well as cultural, and class practices) are learned, studies have shown a child's relationship with their peers is also highly relevant to the way a child will begin to construct notions of gender and gendered behavior. The peer group a child joins from early school years onwards will often have a great influence over that child's perceptions of how to 'do' gendered identities. Mac an Ghaill discusses the importance of peer networks in the formation of gendered identities, saying,

Peer networks comprise a measure through which boys can explore, negotiate and practice a range of social and sexual 'identities'. Within this infrastructure, many boys learn the codes of masculinity and develop the 'social and discursive practices that serve to validate and amplify masculine reputations' (Mac an Ghaill 1994: 53).

For young boys, homosocial inclusion may rely on an ability to engage with more culturally celebrated masculinities. Stoudt argues that homosocial disciplining of gender is a, 'masculine performance that artificially imposes rigid boundaries on a largely ambiguous and socially constructed identity' (2006: 279). For those outside of the 'norm' social exclusion is highly likely, and avoiding such exclusion is encouragement not only to engage with hegemonic masculinities, but to engage in the policing of gender (Stoudt 2006: 282). Even in young children, homosocial policing of gender creates a space in which adherence to 'correct' gendered behaviors is highly encouraged.

What this illustrates is how the seeds of gendered thinking take root very early on, and are influenced by a number of social and cultural mediums including but not limited to media images, parental influence, and peer group policing of gender. This thesis adds to the discussion of the various mediums through which gendered expectations are passed on to children by considering the ways in which gender intersects with class to create specific locations at which centralizing working-class masculinities are encouraged. Gender is not the only subjective position shaped in early childhood. Furthermore, gender intersects with class, ethnicity and sexuality to create various hierarchical ways of being. Masculinity on its own is not a singular marker for social and cultural power. Masculinities are scaled

particularly in relation to other, intersecting identifiers (Cooper 2006: 857). White masculinities occupy a far more normative, less visible position than non-white masculinities; heterosexual masculinities are far more socially and culturally powerful than homosexual masculinities, and class is important in how it is used to differentiate between masculinities in different ways in different social and cultural settings. Centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal reiterates this. The normative is made somewhat invisible, as was explored in relation to the character of Kenny Smythe in the film *Kenny*. The intersection of class and masculinity operates in these different settings in ways that help maintain not only gendered status quos, but also classed status quos. The schoolyard is one place in which class and gender intersect in specific ways to order bodies hierarchically. This scaling of bodies is, arguably, encouraged through current social and cultural discourses about the 'crisis' of boys in school, in which gendered dichotomies are naturalized and essentialized, and are also often classed (as in the case of populist accounts of boys being more likely to finish high school in private elite schools than in state schools).

Much like in the film *Kenny*, the subjective position of being white, heterosexual, male and working-class is simultaneously made culturally visible, and yet is rendered utterly normative while being granted status as 'at risk' (which will be explored in detail in Chapter Seven). This granting of a complex and contradictory power of both exemplar and victim is also enmeshed in anti-elitist discourses—particular about who are deserving, genuine Australians (Johnson 2005: 56). Certain

types of children are marked as more deserving, or legitimate,[63] and this is in part tied in to their own performance of and engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity. Being male and being white are the most obvious pre-requisites to engage with working-class masculinity. Highly prestigious educational institutions may not offer the same level of reverence for certain traits associated with being working-class, or the average 'Aussie bloke' archetype. However, certain traits such as sporting prowess, while associated with the physicality of the working-class and available for appropriation across class lines are still highly legitimized, even in these elite settings. The emotional toughness and disregard for certain types of authority that is aligned with centralizing working-class masculinity is also performed in the setting of the elite school (Martino 1999; Donaldson 2003). This is reflected in recent occurrences at several elite university colleges in Australia.[64]

Traits such as physical toughness, particularly in relation to sporting prowess, emotional control, and a lack of regard for authority, are all traits that are often associated with social success in the school environment (Martino 1999; Morris 2008). Mainstream narratives about the 'crisis' of masculinity are a manifestation of the normativity of centralizing working-class masculinities and their consistent positioning as victims of both the 'elites' on one side and the 'minorities' on the other (Dyrenfurth 2005). Furthermore, by discussing 'boys' as a singular monolithic identity

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[63] For example children of working-class mothers (particularly single mothers on welfare) are somehow seen as less legitimized. Lawler found that middle-class children were represented in the British press as 'real children' while working-class children were, 'excluded from the apparently open and capricious category "child"' (2002: 108).

[64] See *Hoyden About Town* 'Toxic Culture in University Colleges.' http://hoydenabouttown.com/20121104.12549/toxic-culture-in-university-colleges/

in crisis, normative central working-class masculinity as a powerful neo-liberal political ideal is reinforced and gender is essentialized.

Narratives of Crisis: Boys in School

Mainstream narratives of 'masculinity in crisis' have received an inordinate amount of media, government and social attention since the mid-nineties.[65] This is particularly true of the 'crisis' of boys in schools. As Edwards explains,

> Media and academic concern alike are heightened, to near hysterical levels in the case of the media, as the failure of boys seems to be centered on their own increasing rebelliousness and inability to study, or more simply on problems with their 'masculinity' (2006: 10).

Concern over 'mainstream' interests being threatened by 'minority' interests has seen a surge in the focus on boys and schooling, and in particular on the 'problems' being faced by boys in the education system. Concern over boys in schools is particularly focused on working-class boys (Woodin & Burke 2007: 121). This focus on the decline in success rates for male students has generated a combination of concern, attention and outrage. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli explain,

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[65] See Pallotta-Chiarolli (2005) .

Debates about boys and their constitution as disadvantaged subjects continue to rage in Australia, North America, and the United Kingdom, with the media playing a major role in promulgating a feminist backlash politics (2004: 143).

Australian social, cultural and political discourses have been overtly concerned with the 'crisis' of 'Aussie boys' and their apparent disadvantage—a disadvantage that can be somewhat blamed on more inclusive schooling practices, particularly practices that are seen to advantage girls. It makes for powerful conservative neo-liberal political rhetoric.[66] Furthermore, these 'crisis' discourses reiterate gender as biologically determined and essentialized.

As a result, much of the focus on 'problems' in the education system have revolved around the issue of teaching boys, and the need to develop strategies that will allow for the 'natural' behaviors of boys (as dichotomously posited from girls) to be catered to in the classroom.[67] The problematic notion of an innate, natural difference between the educational needs of boys and girls is an idea that largely ignores other factors such a family background, ethnicity, class and socio-economic background and sexuality. This simplifies the myriad problems facing both boys and

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[66] As Cortis and Newmarch stated in 2002, 'the extent of community concern is reflected in the number of submissions to the current federal inquiry into the education of boys, media attention and the emergence of a plethora of popular literature on the theme' (151).

[67] In one of the many pop-psychology texts to spring up in the late nineties: *A Fine Young Man: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men,* author Michael Gurian posits that, 'most educators are not trained specifically to handle the somewhat high-testosterone, male-brain, impulsive, and aggressive boys' (1999: 185). In the similarly themed *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood* author William Pollack supports this theme of boys in crisis, 'confused by society's mixed messages about what's expected of them as boys, and later as men, many fell a sadness and disconnection they cannot even name … many of our sons are currently in desperate crisis' (1999: xxi). Australia's most successful family and parenting writer (Pearce 2001: 50), Steve Biddulph also focuses his work on the 'crisis of masculinity' that is argued to posit boys at the lower end of the social hierarchy.

girls from a variety of backgrounds; while reinforcing heteronormative, patriarchal gender roles. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli argue that,

> in fact, schoolboys have emerged as mono-cultural, hetero-sexualized white subjects within a policy and educational social context set by the dictates of the Right agenda, fuelled by the media and men's rights groups (2004: 143).

Centralizing working-class masculinity, when deployed as conservative and neo-liberal, enables the agenda to be set in regards to what is best for boys in school, as if a singular monolithic 'cure' were achievable. However, it may be that the very masculinities boys are encouraged to engage with, through the reiteration of discursive gender binaries and anti-elite and anti-intellectual rhetoric, negatively impact school participation.

Certainly, while boys in schools have been painted as being victims of a perceived 'crisis' in masculinity, often the links between the poor performance of boys in school and the performance of hegemonic masculinities (particularly in the context of the centralizing working-class masculinities being discussed in this thesis) have been largely ignored, apart, that is, from lip service paid to the lack of strategies to deal with 'masculine' behaviors in boys. With much of the mainstream attention on the 'crisis' of boys in school employing a purely essentialist reading of gender, many of the strategies being put forth to combat this problem also assume a natural biological binary between the educational needs of boys and girls. Amanda Keddie notes that essentialist readings of gender often dominate in the strategies employed to combat the 'crisis' of boys in schools,

Strategies along the lines of increasing the number of male role models in boys lives, using more 'masculine' teaching styles and content and the implementation of single-sex classes, for instance, are often deployed within simplistic (and invariably biologically deterministic) understandings of gender as difference and opposition (2005: 23)

Not only do such strategies for combating the 'problem of boys' educational outcomes reinforce gender as dichotomous, but, arguably, they also encourage adherence to normative accounts of masculinity and what it means to be a man.

As Keddie illustrates, too often biological sex-role assumptions have been the most important factor in trying to determine not only where any problems boys face in schooling and education may stem from, but in the development of strategies to deal with the perceived 'crisis' of boys in schools. Strategies based on essentialist notions of gender can be counterproductive in that they fail to account for contextual factors in boys' lack of success in schools (particularly in subjects deemed 'feminine') and that such strategies are based on, 'recuperating or reinstating an idealized form of conventional and universal white, middle-class and heterosexual masculinity' (Keddie, 2205: 23). However, as is explored below, engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity (which is white and heterosexual) is antithetical to the middle-class institutional requirements of a 'good student'. Indeed, the 'good student' position can be marked as feminized.

Being defined as feminine or 'gay' is an exclusionary tactic among school-boys. Wayne Martino argues in relation to high school boys, that,

> they define their masculinity within a set of cultural and social practices which involve a rejection and denigration of what they consider to be feminine attributes or behaviors that often serve as markers of homosexuality in the policing of ascendant forms of masculinity (1999: 244).

As Kimmel and Messner point out, homophobic teasing and insults about being gay, 'often characterizes masculinity in adolescence and early adulthood' (2009: 70). One of the most effective insults one boy can sling at another is to question his heterosexuality—and therefore his masculinity. Academic achievement, particularly the type that is commonly feminized, is therefore something worth avoiding if a child doesn't want to face exclusion. This may be more applicable to working-class schooling environments, where engaging with centralizing working-class masculinity is legitimizing (Morris 2008).

When strategies aimed at dealing with the 'crisis' of boys in schools are based on an essentialist notion of gender, the notion of embodied gender itself being a major problem is overlooked. As Morris explains,

> It is tempting to presume that a gender gap in education reveals how some boys can be disadvantaged compared to girls. But some analyses of educational gender differences fail to understand masculinity as an overall system of power (Morris, 2008: 730).

Furthermore, schools themselves are masculinist structures, often rewarding success in such a way as to favor what is perceived as masculine over what is perceived as feminine. Socially, the 'good student' is feminized. In the classroom behavior often associated with the 'good student', for example, being attentive, respectful, and cooperative, is also marked as feminized. As Keddie points out,

> schools are structured around notions of academic success which are conventional, limited, masculinist and classist as, in this way, constitute a particular masculine position as superior over other masculine and feminine positions (2005: 25).

When this is coupled with class, certain problematic behaviors that may limit educational choices are not only normalized, they are legitimized. This creates an extremely complex and risky situation for the working-class—they are encouraged to make 'bad' educational choices which can then be blamed on individual deficiencies. This clash between working-class identity and the middle-classed nature of the educational institution will be considered further on in this chapter, but first there will be an exploration of the tense relationship between gender and class in terms of schooling and education.

Centralizing Working-Class Masculinities and School: Classed and Gendered Opposition.

The obligation to engage with centralizing working-class masculinities becomes more pronounced for individuals from the working class, as they do not have access to other classed identities, or, as one researcher put it, 'the performativity of categories may not be an option' (Ahmed 2000 in Skeggs 2004: 156). Engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity often involves the rejection of academia in favor of more robust activities at school (for instance sports). The celebrating of the physical over the mental is one tenet of centralizing working-class masculinity (Martino 1999; Morris 2008) and will be much further explored in the next chapter. Being authentically working-class also means opposition against or a protective disinterest in educational achievement (I don't care if I fail …) which is associated with being middle-class. In fact, it is not actual academic success but *trying* to succeed academically which is questioned. Success at school is allowed— but only on the condition that it is a result of natural intelligence and talent rather than hard work. Edward Morris discovered this in his research on educational outcomes, gender and class in rural America,

> Academically orientated behavior itself could not be seen as masculine. For example, boys perceived as 'nerdy'—often those who put more effort into school and were involved in school activities such as band—were more likely to be called 'gay' or 'pussies' (2008: 737).

As Morris discovered, boys who achieved academically but were seen as doing so based on talent or smarts alone were less likely to have their masculinity called into question. Such boys, 'were understood by themselves and others as smart enough to "get by", but not expected to attend diligently to academic work' (2008: 737). Academic success is also more acceptable if combined with achievement in sport.

What can be surmised is that both class and gender, and indeed the intersection of the two, affects how boys performed academically. As Morris goes on to note, 'class privilege and gender privilege can be considered two separate, but interconnected systems of hegemony, further complicated by different (local, regional, and global) levels of practice' (2008: 746). In Australia centralizing working-class masculinities occupy a highly legitimized position. This being the case, there are social and cultural incentives to engage with this ideal. For boys whose access to social, cultural and economic currency is lessened owing to their classed position, the pressure to engage as fully as possible with centralizing working-class masculinity must be significant. Studies show that even boys from middle and upper-class backgrounds will reject academic achievement in order to shore up their masculinity. For example, this rejection of academia as both middle-class (elite) and feminized can be seen in Wayne Martino's series of interviews with boys attending a largely middle-class high school in Perth, Western Australia.

Martino describes the boys as coming from a, 'predominantly white middle-class background' (1999: 242). He found that, much like the rural, working-class

boys in Morris's 2008 study in the United States, these boys did not want to be seen as trying hard to achieve academically. Unlike Morris's study, Martino finds that these boys were not determined to follow a path into unskilled labour and academic failure encouraged by a social feminization of non-physical work. As Martino points out,

> It could be assumed that these are the working-class academic losers in the British context. However, although loud and disruptive in class, these white middle-class boys are not usually academic failures. Many are successful students but this must be achieved apparently without any effort and without any visible signs of excessive mental labour or studiousness (1999: 247).

The only area in which it was seen as 'cool' to try hard was in sports—mainly Australian Rules football (1999: 243). This suggests that engagement with centralizing working-class masculinities is partially contingent on regarding the physical over the mental. Some of my interview respondents illustrated this when discussing how they did while at school. One respondent discussed his 'natural' inclination towards sport and trade-based subjects when asked about how he did at school,

> Um, average, average, like um, some bits I did better, but stuff like maths it was just not me. I was good at sport and trades work and that probably shaped my life more as far as the grades I did well in (M, Manufacturing worker, engaged, 35).

He was not the only participant who felt a natural disinclination towards academia, as another respondent explains when asked about why he left school,

Uh, one, I was going to fail so I didn't want to deal with the concept, and also I had probably reached the stage where I realized I wasn't going to be that academic, so it was take the easy option out and perhaps look at a trade and that sort of thing so I looked in those areas and came across a pre-vocational course with TAFE and uh, and went and did that in carpentry and that's how I started my working life I guess (T, Union worker, 41, married).

What is interesting about both the above comments is that they show the participants felt a 'natural' inclination away from academic areas (the mental), and towards more physical areas (trades and sports).

Indeed, the literature has highlighted organized sports, particularly football, as being a way to display physical prowess within the schoolyard. There has been a range of studies looking at the correlation between sporting achievement and the enactment of hegemonic masculinity in the schoolyard—both in Australia and in other countries (Martino 1999; Laberge & Albert 1999; Lee, MacDonald & Wright 2009). In an Australian context the ability to succeed at a chosen sport, particularly something marked as overtly masculine like Australian Rules, Rugby, or surfing, is a crucial part of being masculine. As Lee, MacDonald and Wright explain,

Historically, in Western culture, sport has been framed for young men as character building and as promoting courage, chivalry, moral strength, and military patriotism … young men who display sporting prowess in male-dominated sports such as

football are often accorded a high status of masculinity and thus popularity among

peers both male and female (2009: 61).

Sport occupies a critical position in the Australian national psyche. Elder writes that

the, 'link between Australian-ness and sport is sometimes represented as so intimate

that the Australian national sporting team is understood to stand for the nation'

(2007: 289). This is in part because of sport's linkages with centralizing working-

class masculinity. While an interest in art, literature or classical music can be defined

as belonging to the much maligned cultural elites (Scalmer 1999), interest in sport is

tightly bound with national identity and sport has considerable cultural capital (Lee,

MacDonald & Wright 2009: 63). Dichotomizing between the physical and the mental

is readily examined through the lens of sport, and the position of importance it

retains in Australian culture, particularly in Australian working-class culture (Elder

2007: 295).

In Australia centralizing working-class masculinity is often marked as the

most oppositional to femininity (Elder 2007: 66). Aussie blokes, larrikins, are tough,

unemotional, physical, rational, and wary of anything that could be deemed

feminine—which included activities, traits and behaviors seen as being elite (Murrie

1998; Scalmer 1999). Therefore it can be argued that the performance of

centralizing working-class hegemonic masculinity is often at odds with academic

success. Morris argues that,

Hegemonic masculinity focuses on the construction and tension among various

practices of masculinity. This framework captures how students create gender

identities and how such identities influence their school effort and achievement. It also accounts for ironic outcomes of the overall patriarchal gender system, which might exact costs for some men at the same time as these men seek out to maintain masculine dominance (2008: 731).

The issue then becomes how are class and gender based discrepancies to be dealt with? As previously discussed, many of the current efforts to deal with the 'crisis' of boys in school adopt a biological difference perspective on gender—delineating between the educational needs of boys and girls, and failing to recognize other factors that may influence educational achievement.

In this essentialist reading of gender that colours mainstream discourse about what boys 'need' in terms of their educations, cultural and social factors that pose genuine problems for both boys and girls in school are largely ignored. Anti-elitism establishes certain subjects, ways of learning, and even the institution of the school as antithetical to the performance of centralizing working-class masculinity. In the interviews there was a sense of 'clash', of the culture of the school being at odds with young working-class men's performance of gender and class. Two of the interviewees discussed 'rebelling' against the system, G and T, the second of whom described himself as being a 'bit of a rebel'. This is of interest because both of these participants expressed regret at not going on to further education—yet both saw their 'choices' as far as academic achievement in the school setting as inevitable in terms of where they were in life. The sense of regret in 'failing' to finish school and get into university will be explored further on. This tension between desire to achieve and outcomes that are arguably shaped by gendered and classed habitus illustrate the

oppositional nature of centralizing working-class masculinities to the middle-class institution of the school. If this is the case then challenging the hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinities may be of more use than schemes that reinforce the gender binary and the notion that boys are 'naturally' more physically inclined, particularly working-class boys (Connelly 2004: 199). This only reinforces the notion that formal schooling and academic achievement are oppositional to working-class masculinities in relation to both class and gender. A focus on 'crisis' only reinforces this binary.

The intersection of class and masculinity in centralizing working-class masculinities therefore paints certain aspects of educational achievement, intellectualism and academia as directly in opposition to the white, male, heterosexual mainstream.[68] The narratives of privilege afforded this identity through its gender, ethnicity and sexuality can be seen in the overwhelming concern about the crisis of boys in schools. Mainstream cultural discourse rarely calls into question the entitlement that some specific identities are seen to have to an education system that fits them and their embodied identities—even if it means that educational systems have to be changed to the detriment of other, genuinely marginalized, groups. It is the narratives of marginalization achieved through the working-class 'battler' aspect of this masculinity that reinforces the notion that it is this group who are most at risk, most in 'need'. The intersection of gender (privilege/entitlement) and class (marginalization/need) coupled with the notion of centrality grants this identity a

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[68] Constructions of race and gender, and expectations around academic achievement are often culturally linked. For example young Asian men are seen as likely to succeed academically, whereas Arabic and African young men are often expected to drop out. In particular narratives about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and education are often very bleak, portraying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as a monolithic group at odds with formal education while failing to ignore the inherent whiteness and cultural homogeneity of most educational institutions.

legitimization denied to other, less mainstream identities. Focus can be kept on how systems of education need to fit this centralizing identity, not how it is the embodiment of this identity that causes friction with various aspects of educational systems.

Class Conflict, the Tension Between Working-Class Identity and the Educational Institution.

The masculinist nature of the school as an institution arguably bolsters boys' sense of gendered entitlement. As Morris points out,

> The structure of masculine privilege is actually at the root of academic gender differences. However, this privilege must be understood as a system that interacts with racial privilege and class privilege in dynamic and complex ways (2008: 730).

While gender privilege may in fact favor boys—particularly in light of narratives of 'crisis' in masculinity, some boys (and girls) face marginalization in other areas within the confines of the middle-class institution of the school. Therefore, it is important to recognize that schools are not only gendered institutions, they are also classed. For boys (and girls) from working-class backgrounds, educational issues are not only reliant on embodied gendered behaviors, but on embodied *classed* behaviors. As an institution, the school adopts middle-class individualist ethics in relation to educational achievement (Keddie, Mills & Mills 2008: 199). This creates a tense relationship between students from working-class backgrounds and educational

achievement, resulting in students who may lack opportunity for educational success being further maligned by their classed identity.

When this is considered in light of suggested class dichotomies it can be easily understood how boys in particular—whose gendered subjectivity allows for a more full engagement with centralizing working-class masculinities—may feel that the nature of schooling is in opposition to their identities. As Paul Connolly found, working-class boys are like a 'fish out of water' (2004: 199) in the academic context. In particular, he found that the formality and rigidity of academia went against working-class boys' habitus (2004: 199). Once again the mind/body binary was reinforced, with working-class boys favoring the physical over mental endeavors (2004: 201). Connolly's study shows, tensions between middle and upper-class identities and working-class identities often center around the feminization of the 'other', with those embodying working-class masculinities positioning themselves as embodying a more authentic 'manhood' than what is positioned as a feminized, weaker, less physically capable middle-class masculinity (2004: 192).

There is an element of traditional anti-authoritarianism here too. While middle and upper-class boys are more likely to grow up into positions of authority, many working-class boys (and girls) will not. Working-class resentment of authority and privilege can enable working-class men (and women) to maintain their position against the 'boss' (Wills 2004). Anti-elitism and anti-intellectualism exacerbates this

class based conflict. In particular, centralizing working-class masculinity as discourse encourages the marking of intellectual pursuits as 'pretentious'. As Skeggs explains,

> One challenge to negative evaluation is to devalue the authority of those who are in a position to judge through a critique of pretentions, but this is double-edged. It also works to keep the working-class in their place, as they too, become subject to their own critique (2004: 117).

In the context of schooling where not only the institutions themselves, but the very notion of academic success is linked with being middle-class and white-collar (and therefore pretentious and feminized), the conflict between centralizing working-class masculinities and educational achievement is exacerbated.[69]

The tension between the middle-class institution of the school and the working-class experience of some students does not merely flow from student to education. Educational success is far more difficult for those who do not have the middle-class resources that enable success (Lucey, Melody & Walkerdine 2003: 290). Keddie discusses this phenomenon in the following way:

> With schools assuming middle-class culture, attitudes and values, we can see how … students might lack the cultural capital necessary for academic success—with regard to the 'explicit and implicit values, knowledge, attitudes to and relationship

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[69] The relationship between femininity, class and education is also fraught. Lawler explains how women of the working class are more pathologized than men (1999: 11), the 'other' other. Her study on women's class mobility found that there was pain and self-doubt for women who had managed to move from the working to the middle class (1999). This was also found by Reay in relation to education (2001) and Lucey, Melody and Walkerdine (2003).

with academic culture required for success in school' (Henry et al. 1988, 233)' (2008: 199).

As previously discussed, the tension between working and middle-class values in regards to education and academia creates an uneven 'playing field' in terms of what 'choices' are legitimized for both parents and students. Furthermore, there is a very real economic difference between the educational 'choices' available to working and middle/upper-class parents and students. Middle and upper-class parents are more likely to have the financial means to provide better educational outcomes for their children.[70] Arguably the school system in Australia operates within a neo-liberal paradigm. Connell writes that, 'neo-liberal governments have … given priority to the expansion of a private school system, intended to compete with public school in local markets' (Connell 2003: 237). 'Choice' around schooling and education, including the choice to send children to public or private schools, is paramount in the Australian school system. Connell further notes that, '[educational] reform has always been constrained by the need of privileged social groups to make the education system serve their specific interests' (2003: 236).

By creating a system which works to the advantage of the already privileged, educational inequity is cemented. The neo-liberal system in which 'choice' is valued over equity—a system which also denies that any real class-based inequity exists—

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[70] One area in which there is much debate is the public/private school divide, with the media weighing in on the educational benefits of sending children to a private school (much more likely for middle and upper-class families) rather than a public school. As noted by Rachael Jacobs in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (12/12/11), private schools have better test scores, but public schools have the majority of students with disabilities, indigenous students, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and students with behavioral problems. Furthermore public schools run on 70% of the operating budget of private schools. http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/public-v-private-school-its-not-as-cutanddried-as-you-may-think-20111212-1or0s.html

places the blame on individual students when the system fails them. The difficulties experienced by some students are explained away. For instance, B who attended a public school in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, and came from a very poor family, described how the public school system failed to provide him with an education in the area he wanted to find employment in: IT. The following excerpt from our interview illustrates how he was failed by the school system:

K: If you could do it again would you make any different decisions regarding your education?

B: I wouldn't go to [Northern Suburbs Public] High School, because they stuffed me up big time.

K: Did you want to expand on that?

B: My classes weren't the classes that I chose. I chose IT courses stuff like that and they couldn't put me in there because of lack of funding and stuff like that they basically didn't have the resources so I was stuck into courses which I had no interest in and they wouldn't help me at all which pretty much didn't help me find a job at all. For example my psychology class I didn't have a teacher. I was just left in the library the whole lesson, I had no work to do, and I couldn't pass at all but I still got P's (pass grades) because the teacher said 'we'll just give you an average grade of a B' even though I did no work at all, I didn't get one assignment for the whole year, and that was in year twelve.

K: Far out, so do you think that going to a public school as you did didn't give you the educational opportunities that you wanted?

B: Nah, [Public School] definitely didn't help me in that aspect (Unemployed, 18, living with partner and her family).

B's experience illustrates Connelly's assertion that at times working-class schools act in a care capacity as opposed to an educational one (2004: 177), and that providing a range of educational pathways is of less concern when expectations of students are lower (2004: 174). B was denied the chance to enrol in a subject which would have been useful to him, forced to enrol in a subject which had no teacher, and then was granted a 'B' grade without learning any actual new skills. As will be explored in the next chapter, this had a negative effect on B's employment opportunities for some time.

Lack of opportunity and an underfunded public system are not the only barriers working-class students face. Indeed, for working-class students the sense of occupying an 'outsider' position in the academic institution can result in a rejection of academia as pretentious, or it can result in the erasure of the working-class self (Reay 2001: 334; see also Lawler 1999). In the United Kingdom where many of these studies took place, 'class divisions have historically been, and currently remain, more polarized' (Reay 2001: 334). In Australia, where centralizing working-class masculinity is simultaneously culturally ubiquitous, yet acts as a political tool in making class inequity less visible (Dyrenfurth 2005), the conflict between the working-class self and the middle-classed educational institution arguably creates greater difficulties for those wanting to leave their working-class selves behind. Therefore, a desire or willingness to achieve academically that may actually require

the rejection of an individual's working-class identity can be easily negatively marked. Diane Reay discusses the 'erasure' of the working-class identity in the pursuit of academic success as a means to a 'better life' in the United Kingdom,

> In England, in the minority of cases when the equation of working class plus education equals academic success, education is not about the valorization of working classness but its erasure; education as escape (2001: 334).

This is also true of Australia, where working-class 'battler' identities are a highly legitimized Australian identity, and anti-elitism aimed at academia is so prevalent (Scalmer 1999), that to give up, or erase one's working-class identity can be seen as a rejection of core values. As Reay points out, 'aspirational working classness is pretentious—a hankering after 'the other' rather than an acceptance of the self' (2001: 337). While neo-liberal constructions of working-class identity are aspirational in terms of the accumulation of wealth and material goods, accumulation of certain types of knowledge or cultural capital are less favorably received.[71] Lucey, Melody and Walkerdine found this in their study on working-class women's relationship to education, where they reported that working-class young women at, or planning to go to, university often encountered negative perceptions of students from wider family (2003: 291). In Australia, it seems that while aspiring to *material* improvement is valorized under the rubric of individualism, aspiring to *cultural* improvement is painted as elitist and undesirable.[72]

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[71] This is often displayed in the framing of mining masculinities as more authentically Australian than university educated elites—often in conservative opinion pieces that celebrate that mining workers often earn more than people with university degrees. See, for example, 'Cashed-Up Bogans will have the Last Laugh on Labour' (David Penberthy *The Punch* 5th May 2012) http://www.thepunch.com.au/articles/Cashed-up-bogans-have-the-lethal-last-laugh-on-Labor/

The problem with discussing class as an institutional barrier to educational outcomes for many working-class boys and girls is that despite the prevalence of centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal, as Connell observes, under the rubric of individualism, actual distinctions between social classes are no longer recognized (2003: 237). As Reay notes, dominant [neo-liberal, individualistic] discourses aid in making class invisible (2001: 335). However, as Connell points out, 'class inequality and class exclusion are continuing realities, and remain formative influences on education' (2003: 247). In the interviews conducted for this thesis, only one participant recognized the genuine social and economic inequity of the education system, particularly in access to education and 'culture' linked with good educational outcomes:

> We had a culture of the haves and the have nots and, look, we're always gonna have it, particularly in terms of a university education. Some of the people that turn around from the previous government made incredibly bad decisions on things like HECS debts and that sort of thing for university education. If you have the smarts and have the drive money shouldn't hinder you from being a better person than you are (T, Union worker, 41, married).

While T was the only participant to recognize that there are in fact educational inequities, especially around access to higher education, he was not the only participant to recognize the importance of university education. Furthermore, he argues that getting a university education is in fact a way of 'bettering' yourself. This

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[72] However, there is still tension between working-class accumulation of wealth and middle-class cultural capital, in which working-class consumption is seen as crass and distasteful. See Pini, McDonald & Mayes (2012) 'Class Contestations and Australia's Resource Boom: The Emergence of the 'Cashed-up Bogan'' *Sociology* 142-156.

is very important; while the interviewees all engaged with centralizing working-class masculinities, and spoke of their 'natural' opposition to formal education, they also recognized the cultural capital attached to being university educated.[73]

Non-recognition of the genuine discrepancies between educational outcomes for the working-class on one hand and the middle and upper classes on the other, only masks many of the problems faced by working-class children in schools, especially children whose gender and class put them at odds with the middle-class nature of educational institutions. Where this becomes highly problematic is in the narratives of individual choice that are so common to neo-liberal discussions about achievement and education, as is noted by Connell (2003). 'Choice' and individual responsibility are often used to explain why people from working (and poverty) class backgrounds are less likely to achieve at school and go on to achieve in the workplace. As Reay explains in relation to the United Kingdom,

> The growing gap between the rich and the poor has become an accepted part of the 'way things are' for many in England, often understood through discourses of individualization which attribute material success or failure to either individual effort, individual talent or a mixture of the two (2001: 335).

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[73] However, certain types of university education are often valued more than others among the working-class. Often it is subject choices and educational pathways that are seen to lead directly to a career and wealth that are favored. This will be explored in an upcoming paper based on data from a University of Adelaide School of Education 2013 study I was working on when this thesis was submitted looking at the experiences of students in the University's Preparatory Program, which found that the vast number of students saw university as a step to more secure employment and a higher wage. Degrees that led to the development of professional qualifications (such as engineering, law and nursing) were more popular, and seen as being more worthwhile, than degrees such as the arts and humanities which were seen as a potential 'waste of time'.

The interview data backs these claims. Three of the interviewees, T, M and G, all expressed regret at not having gone on to university. These are their responses to being asked if they would do anything differently in terms of their education. One participant wished he had 'tried harder',

> Um, yeah I'd probably try a lot harder, you'll probably find a lot of people say that, uh, you know, it probably says to me a little bit about the age that we ask kids to be at school it would probably be a good idea that there'd be some time off in between. Um, yeah, if I had my time over I'd probably study harder, do all the right things, you know, and perhaps reach my full potential which I don't think I did in terms of an academic education (T, union worker, 41, married).

While another simply stated,

> Yes. I'd finish High School and go straight to uni I reckon (G, contract labourer, 25, single).

Yet another was more concerned with the labour market, and his lack of options after the closure of the Mitsubishi Motors factory at Tonsley Park in South Australia (where he had worked for seven years),

> I probably would, I probably would try and go to university because that tends to be able to set you in a career with better money, because you do have higher qualifications. Either that, or to actually go and get an apprenticeship which again means you have better qualifications which means you have better paperwork which means you can get a better wage, which is probably the biggest thing I regret now because I'm getting older, and even though I have a lot of skills I'm a bit of this,

a bit of that, but not a master of anything. So that would probably be what holds me
back (M, manufacturing worker, 35, engaged).

All three of these participants regretted their educational decisions. Yet, in the case
of all three 'blame' for those decisions was aimed at the self. Wider social, cultural
and economic factors were not recognized, and while T did go on to note the
discrepancies in access to education along class lines, he did not notice the social
and cultural disconnect between being an Aussie 'bloke' and trying to do well at
school. In each case, individual 'choice' was seen as being the reason for not going
on to higher education.

In Australia these discourses of individualization are not only common, they
are actually reproduced through neo-liberal appropriation of centralizing working-
class masculinity as a political ideal. The participants' stories show this; they all felt a
'natural' disconnect from formal education in high school, yet regret their 'decisions'
in not going on to university, which they all feel would have led to better outcomes in
terms of employment. They have absorbed both the hegemony of centralizing
working-class masculinities, and neo-liberal discourses of 'choice' and
'individualism'. The notion of personal responsibility for an individual's life outcomes
coupled with the overwhelming pressure to maintain gendered and classed links to
the 'mainstream' present working-class boys with a double bind. To reject their
classed background is feminizing, and could be viewed as pretentious or elitist (Reay
2001: 337), but if they fail to achieve through education it is their own individual

choices that have let them down. They are encouraged to remain in their classed position, and blamed when it fails them.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the fact that children learn how to 'do' gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) from a young age. Gender is both influenced and reflexively produced in highly complex ways. In particular this chapter has examined the ways that the performance of gender and class interacts with the educational world to create tensions around class and masculinity. Boys who perform aspects of idealized working-class masculinity may reject academia in order to maintain their embodied gender. Edward Morris discusses this in reference to mostly white, working-class rural boys in the United States,

> For working class boys 'being a man' meant resisting school, engaging in risky, physically challenging behaviors such as fighting or drug use, and embracing manual or illegal labour. Such constructions of masculinity promoted opposition to school and other institutions. This only calcified the boys' working class position, hindering their chances for upward mobility and greater social and economic power (2008: 733).

For those from lower socio-economic backgrounds poor educational outcomes are particularly risky, as these individuals will most likely end up in unskilled and semi-skilled employment.

While embodying centralizing working-class masculinities can provide boys with a space in which to belong, the way this identity operates in conflict with educational achievement can work to the detriment of working-class boys (and girls) who lack the access to resources that boys (and girls) from more privileged backgrounds may have. For working-class boys (and girls) to achieve in terms of their education can often mean a rejection of their classed backgrounds, especially in the university setting which is even more linked with middle-class values (Reay 2001: 338). Centralizing working-class masculinities are often used to support narratives of neo-liberal individualization. By taking focus from the genuinely marginalized (including many working-class children in the education system) and putting the focus on the 'mainstream' which is posited as working-class but is more often than not the middle and upper classes, actual solutions to educational inequality are rarely found. It is possible that if working-class children are to achieve in schools several things may need to change. Firstly, the institution of the school may need to be 'de-classed' with different, more inclusive ways of measuring success. Secondly, the ways that subjects are gendered needs to be challenged. Lastly, the type of mainstream centralized working-class masculinity that occupies such a legitimate and legitimizing position as far as Australian identity is concerned needs to be challenged.

As the next chapter will explore in more detail, the face of the semi-skilled and unskilled labour market has changed dramatically in recent years in the light of de-industrialization. Traditional semi-skilled and unskilled employment opportunities for working-class men in localized areas such as manufacturing are becoming

obsolete, leading to a lack of localized jobs for those without either tertiary or trade qualifications. There are two options as for blue-collar workers; the service sector (which is local but poorly paid and often requires skills in emotional or aesthetic labour (Nixon 2009), or the mining industry (which is well paid but often remote). There are problems with both. Many of the employment opportunities within the service sector are viewed as feminized, and therefore remain unattractive employment options for those traditionally employed in the manufacturing and heavy industries. Martino explains that the descaling of industry, 'has led to the proliferation of service sector employment in lieu of a de-industrialized labour market that will continue to have significant impact on both boys and girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds' (2003: 12). Quoting Apple (2001), Martino goes on to illustrate how this will affect the future employment for those from the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum,

> The paid labour market will increasingly be dominated by low-paying, repetitive work in retail, trade, and service sectors' (43) and this has the potential to exacerbate 'the existing race, gender, and class divisions of labour' (44). This points to the intensification of disadvantage for those from working-class and Indigenous backgrounds, both boys and girls (2003: 12).

The mining industry, while well paid, has a myriad of problems that effect worker's wellbeing. Separation from families (Torkington, Larkins & Gupta 2011), isolation, long work hours (Peetz & Murray 2011) and a highly masculinized culture (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010) are all potentially problematic for workers in the mining industry. This will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

'Working Hard to Make a Living': Work, Choice, and the Changing Face of Blue-Collar Work in Australia.

Chapter Five: 'Working Hard to Make a Living': Work, Choice, and the Changing Face of Blue-Collar Work in Australia.

Introduction

'Work', as it is discussed in this chapter, is an important component of how individuals and groups are socially constructed, and of how people construct themselves. 'Work' is also classed and gendered. The type of work done, the amount of pay received (if any), the industry, the experience and the level/skills attained are all ways in which people are 'classed' through work. Classed and gendered subjectivity arguably influences working life. Conversely, class and gender identities are shaped by the type of work a person is involved in, whether it is paid employment or unpaid domestic work, whether it is blue, pink or white-collar, whether it is work that is viewed as nurturing or helping, or work that is seen to be about achievement and success. The previous chapter explored how centralizing working-class masculinities are discursively constructed in relation to childhood and education in Australia. This chapter carries the analysis further along the life trajectory to consider work. Employment is a crucial part of how individual people enact and exist within society, not only on an economic level, but also on a social, cultural and political level. 'Work' as a classed and gendered construct needs to be examined beyond simple distinctions between 'women's work' and 'men's work', and blue and white-collar work. Work is obviously an economic activity, however, this chapter explores how our relationships with work are far more nuanced than a purely

economic explanation can provide, starting with a closer look at how the very notion of 'work' is shaped by classed and gendered discourses.

This chapter commences with an examination of how work is framed in both gendered and classed ways, and how this may explain how 'choices' about work can be influenced by such gendered and classed frameworks. The framing of work and working lives is intimately linked with discourses about class, gender, and legitimacy discussed in the previous chapters. Several aspects of working life are explored including the ways in which notions of 'work' are both gendered and classed, and the way that 'work' as a gendered construct is tied in with neo-liberal 'choice' discourses and the pressure to 'do' gender and class 'right' as working selves. The exploration of the gendered and classed constructions of 'work' includes an analysis of the cultural significance awarded to physical labour and the risks involved. This latter theme attends to the links between idealized masculinity (particularly centralizing working-class masculinity) and being a 'labourer'. This chapter then engages with the social and cultural importance of work-based communities, both as sites for shoring up constructions of gender and class, and yet as potential sites for progressive change. Finally these factors are analyzed in conjunction with the changing face of unskilled and semi-skilled labour in Australia, with the main focus on the decline of the manufacturing industry as a main site of semi and unskilled work, and the corresponding 'boom' in the mining industry.

'Work': a Gendered and Classed Construct.

'Work' is a gendered and classed construct and workplaces themselves are often highly structured in terms of mainstream classed and gendered discourses. This is particularly so when looking at the gendered nature of the way that 'work' is culturally defined. The public sphere of paid employment is correlated to the notion of work while the private sphere of domestic labour and childrearing is often ignored. Collinson and Hearn articulate the division in this way,

> 'Work' is a socially contextualized phenomenon. The meaning and naming of work is heavily linked to broad societal organization. It does not only mean organizational, paid, employed work in formal organizations in the public sphere … Indeed the home is still not often seen as a workplace at all (2005: 290).

Even though this chapter looks specifically at paid employment, the importance of the gendering of work cannot be overlooked. The public/private dichotomy that legitimizes paid employment while failing to recognize the huge contribution made through unpaid domestic labour is just one way in which gendered divisions are maintained.[74]

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[74] The public/private gendered dichotomy will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, particularly in relation to the working-class family.

There is a large body of research looking at the ways work (paid employment) and masculinity intersect. Within the field of masculinity studies there has been a sizable quantity of research looking at masculinities in the workplace.[75] There has also been a focus on men's involvement in the home and on the domestic front, often looking at the inequity of the division of unpaid labour.[76] While cultural definitions of work still often refer only to paid employment as 'real' work, within Gender and Sexuality studies (including the sub-field of masculinity studies) work is recognized as being both public and private, paid and unpaid. As Pocock argues, '"home" and "work" cannot be separated into a neat binary' (2003: 15). Such a binary would belie the complex structures of our working lives, of the way in which we 'do' work. It is this highly gendered yet continually reiterated dichotomizing of the concept of work that needs further exploration, particularly in relation to paid and unpaid work.

Notions of paid and unpaid work are only one way in which the very construction of 'work' is gendered. Within paid employment traits associated with masculinity (indeed hegemonic masculinity) are often those most valued within the workplace. Sharon Bird illustrates how the valuing of 'masculine' traits is linked with the valuing of paid 'public' work over unpaid 'private' domestic work, adding to the breadwinner mythos,

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[75] See among others: Collinson (1992); Hearn & Collinson (1996); Collinson & Hearn (1996); Nixon (2009) and Desmond (2007).

[76] See Coltrane (1996).

In work organizations, characteristics associated with men and masculinity include competitiveness, lack of empathy and emotional detachment. Oppositional thinking that stems from common conceptualizations of paid work as a man's domain and the home as a woman's domain suggests that men are defined primarily by their effort and ability to support a family financially (585: 2003).

The 'work' done in the private sphere including, but not limited to, domestic duties, emotion work and childrearing is of utmost importance, and any in-depth analysis of work and employment needs to take unpaid labour into account.

This is so important because without unpaid labour many would be unable to participate in the paid labour force, and it could be argued that the strength of the labour market is highly contingent on the work that gets done in millions of homes every day without pay or recognition. As Pocock explains,

Indeed neo-classical economists … barely recognize the issue, with a myopic focus on market relations where the paid workplace and its entire product actually swims unconsciously atop, and totally dependent on, an unrecognized world of the unpaid—where workers, and their managers and employers are reproduced and sustained (2003: 16).

In this chapter it is the importance of paid employment in the lives of the working-class and the way that work is constructed in relation to centralizing working-class masculinities that will be explored. The importance of unpaid work, particularly in the

home, cannot be discounted and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

That the correlation of 'work' as a concept with paid employment alone is problematically gendered must be recognized. It must also be recognized that although this thesis mainly considers the lives of working-class men, discussions of class are often gender blind. As Uhlmann establishes in reference to the classed and gendered identities in a de-industrializing Australian town,

> In symbolic class struggles the masculinity of different classes signifies those classes as a synecdoche and stands for the class as a whole. When thinking of the 'working class', 'working Australians', 'workers', 'blue/white-collar workers' it was primarily an image of the male of the class that both male and female informants had in mind (Uhlmann, 2001: 450).

Uhlmann's findings illustrate a very important point about class 'fractions' (2001: 450); that often, those differences are marked in terms of gender. To be of the 'wrong' (that is, not socially sanctioned) class in certain circumstances is to be feminized. Therefore, for some men (and women) who engage with centralizing working-class masculinity, there is an onus to reject that which is constructed as middle-or-upper-classed. This correlation of doing class 'wrong' with doing gender 'wrong' arguably has a substantial impact on individual working lives.

This is related to the fact that in Australia the type of employment undertaken by any single person is a major factor in the way they will be perceived, and the way they will perceive themselves. Classed and gendered distinctions are made between white and blue-collar workers, bosses and employees, skilled and unskilled workers. Often this class-based tension is reinforced along gendered lines. Class-based masculinities are constructed in part by what they are not—an 'other' feminized by their classed position. As Dunk and Bartol state,

> Given the constraints on life chances and the nature of the work in which they are involved, it is not surprising that working-class men tend to celebrate physical toughness and embrace traits of machismo. Men of the new middle-class, on the other hand, frequently display more competitive attitudes and concentrate on upward mobility and success (2005: 32).

Australian (and most Westernized cultures) use a very middle-class construction of success, as illustrated by Dunk and Bartol in reference to the masculinities of middle-class men. Upward mobility, financial success and outward displays of wealth and consumption are ways in which middle-class men can display their masculinity in terms of both their gender and their class.

For working-class men, legitimation often cannot be sought in this way as they lack the capacity to engage with what is a very (middle and upper) classed, and gendered, notion of success. Therefore they need to find other ways to engage their masculinity. By marking the middle-class 'other' as feminized, especially in relation to work, working-class men (and arguably some working-class women), can use their

gender to deflect from the limitations placed on them by their class. Paul Willis explored the valuing of the physical over the mental and the correlation of working-class-ness with authentic masculinity in his research on young working-class men, or as he described them, the 'lads', 'masculinity was mobilized in the class context because of the work it could accomplish for the "lads" in relation to the urgent issues facing them as they saw them,' (2004: 180). For Willis' 'lads', the need to reassert an authentic masculinity over the middle and upper-classed, individuals who had more economic and social power than the 'lads', was a way to shore up their masculinity. This is also true for men who engage with centralizing working-class masculinity. As recent reports in the news media show, tension along class lines is alive and well in Australia.[77] That centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a position of hegemony allows for the maintenance of divisions wrought along classed lines.

The way that dichotomies are constructed between classed groups, often in gendered ways, allows for these oppositions to be carried into the realm of employment. Different jobs are awarded different values, according to gender and class. For those engaging with working-class masculinities, there is an 'othering' not only of the middle classes, but of the white-collar jobs associated with this classed position. As MacKenzie, Stuart, Forde, Greenwood, Gardiner and Perrett state, 'the propensity of individuals to think in class terms suggests a structural awareness, plus a feeling of shared and distinct group identity—a perception of "us" as distinct from "them"' (2006: 835). Of particular interest here is the tension between white and

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[77] Several articles in the last year have highlighted class-based tension either through recognizing the nature of such divisions, or adding to class-based rhetoric (O'Neil, 2011; Freeman-Greene, 2012; Bolt, 2012; Hills, 2012). Furthermore, as this thesis was undergoing final edits 'class war' rhetoric is becoming increasingly used in media discussions of 457 (non-resident) visas.

blue-collar work, and the ways that the working-class construct non-manual employment, especially white-collar office work, as feminized (Willis 2004: 180). The construction of opposing types of work as gendered allows working-class men, who are feeling the pinch of deindustrialization, to shore up their class position through their use of gender as they invest this classed position with an 'authentic' Australian masculinity. An analysis of the importance of work as a way masculinities are embodied and enacted sheds some light on ways that classed and gendered binaries are created and maintained. This is particularly true when considering the difference that is constructed between physical and mental labour, a difference where class and gender shape one another (Willis 2004, 181).

The Working Self: Choice, Gender, Class and 'Doing it Right'.

Engaging with the labour market is an important part of centralizing working-class masculinity. As explored in the previous chapter in relation to education, capitalist social discourses and neo-liberal discourses about choice and effort allow an individual whose employment is poorly paid, sporadic or tenuous to feel that the blame rests with them. Donaldson explains that, 'since all young men are given an 'equal go' at school, those who succeed in obtaining life's better things must do so because they deserve to, work harder, try harder, are brighter or more diligent' (1991: 9). Work is, therefore, an important part of 'doing' masculinity within the 'right' discursive framework. Nearly all of my respondents stated that their work played (or had played when they were working), a big part in how they saw

themselves. Their reasons for this varied enormously, from simple behavioral reasoning to feelings of pride and accomplishment in their work;

> I think my work plays a big part [in how I see myself] because I get told I swear too much and that but, that's part of the workplace culture of factory life … (M, manufacturing worker, engaged, 35).

> [When asked how large a part his work played in how he saw himself as a man] Um, probably a pretty large part because I've really surprised myself, I guess being a person that can be … liked but liked for a reason, and in my work I'm contributing back to society I guess contributing something back to people so uh, that's really how I see myself as someone that has contributed over the years and this way of empowering other people to say that, 'hey, I could do this type of thing as well', and help other people out within their job (M, union worker, 41, married).

Pride in work often seemed linked to a pride in being a man. The links between centralizing working-class masculinity and being gainfully employed are clear. Nearly all cultural manifestations of this political ideal make it clear that to be a 'proper' authentic Aussie bloke means being gainfully employed.[78]

Therefore, when engaging to some extent with centralizing working-class masculinity in Australia, work (defined here as paid employment) is a crucial aspect of getting masculinity 'right'. Part of this is achieved through the action of labour, and

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[78] There is a widespread cultural 'disgust' in Australia for individuals who are seen to be 'bludging', which can include but is not limited to single parents on benefits (particularly single mothers with children to more than one father), the unemployed, and some people on disability benefits. Disdain for 'bludgers' is an important discursive product of neo-liberalism and conservatism (although there is a long history of such disdain in Australia). This will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven.

may also be enhanced by the community and social interactions developed within the workplace—particularly in terms of fitting in with other working-class 'blokes'. The two previous quotes show how both workplace community and pride in work is tied up with perceptions of an individual's gender and class. Another factor of not only working-class masculinity but all dominant masculinities is being the 'provider', and supporting oneself and one's family. The role of the male head of household, however, is arguably granted a particular significance when linked with the working-class.

> [when asked about traits are important to being an Australian 'man'] Well it's providing for your family … Getting out there and getting work and doing work (T, manufacturing worker, 35, engaged).

The notion of the 'Aussie battler' archetype is often linked with the image of the working-class family with a male head of household. As Mike Donaldson points out, 'If he is not to fail, a working-class man must attain a steady job, education for the children, a home for the family and freedom from the threat of poverty' (1991: 21). While this notion of 'providing', not only for the self, but for a presumed set of dependents, clearly defines paid employment as a crucial part of being a 'real' Australian man in the cultural lexicon, in reality few working-class households can survive on one income. Indeed, as is explored in the next chapter, the reality for most working-class households is that either two incomes or some government support is needed to survive economically.[79] Apart from work within the mining

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[79] Government benefits such as Family Tax Benefits part A and B, The Baby Bonus (which was scrapped in the 2013 budget), and the Childcare rebate are often referred to as 'middle-class welfare' in the media and political rhetoric. In fact, it

industry, most blue-collar (or 'pink-collar') work is too poorly paid to provide a decent standard of living. Yet this truth is often denied in neo-liberal and conservative discursive representations of working-class life. Furthermore, engaging with employment is not all that is significant to the performance of centralizing working-class masculinity. The type of work undertaken is also of importance.

Real Blokes Are Tough Blokes: Physical Labour, Being an 'Aussie' and Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity.

In August 2009 a new advertisement for King Gee work wear was launched. The 'Span' ad featured sweeping black and white images of the Sydney Harbor Bridge coupled with a voiceover announcing that 'you never talk about the memo you sent, or the tooth you drilled', but that you'll feel pride looking at a bridge you helped build.[80] This is just one example in a long history of using the image of the manual labourer to invoke a sense of 'real' Australian manhood. Centralizing working-class masculinity has long been associated with physical labour. Australian history, from its past rooted in the manual labour of our convict heritage, to the tales of the bushman, to the need to 'tame' the land through hard work and diligence, has long been tied to hard physical labour (Moore 1998: 48). Manual labour and the performance of qualities associated with centralizing working-class masculinity are

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is these types of benefits that are most likely to give extra financial support to low-income families. However, when such benefits are discussed either in the media or in politics, working-class-ness is never mentioned. It is interesting to note that such benefits are linked to middle-class families rather than the working-class families who are more likely to need them.

[80] It is also interesting to note that the campaign slogan for the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union is 'We Built this City'.

not only linked to historical ways of framing class and gender but are also interwoven as fundamental constituents of Australian identity (Elder 2007:46).

Australian discursive constructions of 'work' often reiterate a mind/body dichotomy. Indeed, mind/body binaries are often maintained along classed and gendered lines, with more value being given to the rational, mental masculine than the irrational, physical feminine. As Lawler points out, in terms of class, being deeply rooted in the physical body, being abject, allows for the middle-class to construct themselves as, '*not* being the repellant and disgusting 'other'' (2005: 431). This construction of polarizing difference between the middle-class, which is associated with the mind that is rational and 'pure', and the embodied physicality of the working-classes, operates in a clearly hierarchical way, with the mind being favored over the body. This mind/body split is not only disrupted, but is inverted in terms of centralizing working-class masculinity with a valuing of the physical, and a devaluing of the mental (a devaluing often achieved through anti-elitism). This inversion, however, only extends to white, male bodies. Working-class women, non-white working-class people, and people with disabilities are still often marked as abject.

In Australia, therefore, the previously discussed need to break away from colonial middle-class identities has resulted in somewhat of an inversion of the mind/body split, in both the gendered and classed value assigned to the physical and the mental (even if it does only extend to white, male, able bodies). Iverson argues that, 'the traditions and culture or the Australian working class were celebrated and

embraced rather than repressed and denied' (1997: 39). Rather than the class 'disgust' explored by Lawler (2002) and Skeggs (2005), Australian working-class masculinities actually gain status by virtue of their physicality.[81] Being embodied is in this case a cause for pride rather than disgust, a pride that inverts the 'othering' of the working-class by virtue of their physicality. The physicality and toughness associated with manual labour is marked as more authentically masculine than the mental labour of the middle-class white-collar other, which is often viewed through a lens of mistrust and opposition whether the middle-class other is a boss, or merely someone who can be marked as the 'bourgeois' (Lynch 1997: 77). There is more involved in this inversion than a defense against being marginalized along class and employment lines. In Australia, there is a highly legitimizing link with the physical that is an important part of the way Australian identity is shaped (Elder 2007:42).[82]

The rejection of non-physical forms of work, including both skilled white-collar 'mental' labour and unskilled feminized service work is important to this shaping of identity. As Nixon states,

It is the construction of skilled manual work and low-skilled 'grafting' as particularly masculine forms of labour that has enabled working-class men to inhabit positive

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[81] It must be pointed out here that Lawler is discussing embodiment that is both working-class and *feminine*, When she states that, 'Bodies—their appearance, their bearing and their adornment—are central in representations of white, working-class people' (2005: 432), the bodies she is discussing are female. The bodies discussed here are (largely) male and, therefore, are granted a higher cultural standing than those discussed not only by Lawler, but also by Skeggs (2004, 2005).

[82] There are also working-class masculinities in Britain and the United States that involve the inversion of the superiority of the mental over the physical (see Desmond 2006, Dunk and Bartol 2007, and MacKenzie et.al. 2006). It is arguable that this is a feature of settler societies in particular, and seems stronger both in Australia and the United States, where there are several groups and areas in which the celebration of the physical over the mental occurs.

and respectable discursive positions in relation to women and middle-class men (2009: 309).

As often occurs, gendered and classed legitimacy is therefore able to be defined not by what it is, but by what it is not.

Gender related, classed-based mental/manual labour binaries are established early in school. In an institution (schools) that consistently reinforces middle-classed notions of success and achievement, the rejection of mental labour as feminized is a way for boys to legitimize their classed position (Willis 1977; Martino 1999). As the boys' class puts them at odds with the middle-class nature of the school, this valorizing of the physical over the mental in terms of work is understandable. This may be even more so when the employment of their parents (particularly their fathers)[83] is taken into account. As Donaldson points out,

> Even while still at school, some young working-class men attempt to redefine work by associating manual labour with the social superiority of masculinity—strength, activity, hardness, danger, difficulty, courage; and mental labour with the social inferiority of femininity—weakness, passivity, softness, timidity, domesticity (1991: 10).

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[83] This is not to suggest that boys will naturally be more influenced by their fathers, or any gendered notion of childhood or parenting. Rather, it supports discussions from the family chapter about how gender and class are partially shaped in the home, and how working-class boys are influenced by the classed and gendered attitudes of their parents (see Willis 1972, Kane 2006, Connolly & Neill 2001, Connolly 2004).

Links between masculinity and physicality are positioned in direct opposition to more cerebral or emotional work which is linked with femininity. The valuing of the masculine over the feminine gives the gendering of employment weight both socially and culturally. As Willis argued,

> Manual labour is associated with the social superiority of masculinity and mental labour with the social inferiority of femininity. In particular manual labour is imbued with a masculine tone and nature that rends it positively expressive of more than its intrinsic focus in work (1977: 148).

The hard physical exertion of most blue-collar work is extolled as a virtue, with traditional masculine mores shored up by participation in a workforce that is often disempowered both socially and economically. This is illustrated in this quote from Darren Nixon:

> Working-class men fall short of the standards set by middle-class 'cerebral' masculinities that privilege intellect, academic success and non-manual labour (McDowell 2003). Yet, hard and heavy manual labour … has enabled working-class men to construct themselves as quintessentially more masculine than potentially more powerful men of the middle classes. Manual labour has thus been a key source of identity, pride, self-esteem and power for working-class men (2009: 309).

In Australia the links between physicality and hegemonic masculinity are consistently reinforced through the media, as shown in the King Gee advertisement discussed earlier. The sense of pride achieved through doing a 'real man's job' enables men

whose masculinity may be threatened by a lack of economic power to shore up power socially and culturally. As Donaldson points out,

> Work made meaningless by capitalist social relations is given significance by patriarchy. The necessity to do boring, repetitive, dirty, unhealthy, poorly paid, demeaning, self-destructive, mind-numbing, soul-destroying work is turned into a virtue (1991: 10).

Physical labour as opposed to mental labour is not the only aspect of this work that is valorized in Australian culture. The ability to put up with these poor conditions, the 'toughness' involved, the risks taken and ignored are all part of this gendered and classed construction of masculinity.[84] There is also pride to be found in the power and satisfaction linked to embodying a more 'raw' form of masculinity. In this instance, centralizing working-class masculinity is marked not only in relation to what it is *not* (feminized, middle-class, elite), but also what it *is*. Physical and mental toughness of the kind needed to work in many semi and unskilled labouring positions is a highly valued part of being an 'authentic' Australian. This can be seen in the long hours and tough physical (and mental and psychological) demands of the mining industry (Peetz & Murray 2011), as well as the emotional fortitude to deal with lengthy separations from home and loved ones[85]. Not being a 'whinger' but being able to put up with difficult conditions and still 'get on with the job' are pivotal traits associated with this centralized, legitimizing ideal.

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[84] Surviving this kind of work also requires a mental, psychological and emotional toughness, or resilience, not just a physical one. This mental toughness is culturally recognized often in a way that the emotional and psychological work done by workers in 'feminized' professions (such as aged care, childcare and nursing) is not.

[85] In reality, many men cannot stay long in mining work for these very reasons.

Through the cultural connections that are constructed between manual labour and masculinity, blue-collar workers are associated in the Australian cultural psyche with an idealized image of 'authentic' Australian masculinity. When this is considered in the light of the cultural antagonism that can exist between the working and middle/upper classes, the importance of maintaining not only 'correct' socially sanctioned masculinity, but of maintaining socially sanctioned working-class masculinity, becomes apparent. As Uhlmann points out, 'the labouring male and his body, which is the manifestation of his labour power, have emerged as the essence and symbol of working-class-ness to both the dominated and the dominant classes' (2001: 450). Indeed, tensions between class-based masculinities enables the notion that for an Aussie working-class 'bloke', manual labour is the more acceptable, 'authentic' and legitimized profession.

The link that is formed between manual labour and an idealized Australian masculinity has several negative outcomes—particularly for working-class men. The notion of physical labour combined with mental toughness is risky. It discourages certain types of complaining or speaking out about certain conditions that may put the health and well-being of these workers at risk (Iacuone 2005). This is particularly concerning when the increase in neo-liberal and conservative discourse is taken into account, along with decreasing union presence in many workplaces. For example, in the mining industry, 'involuntary long hours … reflect the expression of preferences by employers, not employees,' (Peetz & Murray 2011: 26). The pressure to be tough and 'get on with it' and the playing down of the collectivism long associated with

working-class masculinities combine to mark complaining about risky conditions as oppositional to centralizing working-class masculinity.[86]

Another one of the main problems that can be associated with the linkage of manual labour with centralizing hegemonic working-class masculinity is that for many unskilled and semi-skilled labourers the job market is becoming increasingly competitive if individuals are unwilling to seek employment in the mining industry. The decline of the manufacturing industry has resulted in a decrease in positions available for men (and women) whose employment history is linked to manufacturing. As Nixon says, 'de-industrialization and the decline of employment in manufacturing has led to the collapse of demand for the male manual workers who dominate employment in the declining heavy industries' (2009: 301). While the manufacturing industry has been in decline, the service industries and mining have been in steady growth. Nayak points out that, 'recently the dearth of manufacturing jobs in Western nations has in part been supplemented by an expanding service sector economy' (2006: 814). While the mining industry provides well-paid work, it is often remote. The local option is therefore movement into the service industry, but this also poses challenges.

This shift from an unskilled and semi-skilled labour market in the manufacturing and heavy industries to the service industries under increasing

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[86] However it must be noted that union campaign have often tried to redefine masculinities and 'risk' in particular taking the risk of sticking up for a mate as opposed to simply risking one's own safety and welfare along with the safety and welfare of others. This was particularly pointed in the 'Rights on Site' campaign, where such disregard for safety was portrayed as anti-collective and un-Australian. See Kathie Muir (2013).

deindustrialization is often problematic for men whose identity is entangled with embodied centralizing working-class masculinities which are linked to hard physical labour. McDowell (2003), Bourgios (1995), and Newman (1999) have all found that service industry employment is at odds with working-class masculinity. Nixon articulates the problem as such,

> The idealized embodied masculinity of working-class men is fundamentally at odds with the deference and docility required in the low-level service jobs that now dominate employment opportunities for those with few skills' (2009: 302).

The cultural and social link that is presumed to exist between manual/physical labour and ideal masculinity discourages those who are enacting masculinity from seeking work in industries where their physical strength and prowess are valued less than their ability to empathize with a customer's needs.

For those that decide instead to find work in the mining industry, there may be other challenges. Mining workplaces are defined by toughness, physicality, and a 'blokey' environment (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010: 400). The resources boom in Australia has seen a highly significant growth in employment in this sector. Yet work in the mining industry differs from work in manufacturing in several key areas; and while it offers more in terms of remuneration (Pini, Mayes & McDonald 2012), it also lacks many of the benefits of manufacturing work, particularly in large, highly unionized workplaces. In particular non-resident work is recently being shown to have several detrimental effects on employees, including, 'sleep disturbance, …interference from work on the ability to perform social and domestic activities, …

and an increased likelihood of experiencing greater strain on the family' (Torkington, Larkins & Gupta 2011: 135). Furthermore, engagement with the mining industry is framed as more than desirable, it is framed as somehow quintessentially Australian, and 'culturally significant' (McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 24). Indeed, pressure for blue-collar workers displaced by deindustrialization to take up work in the mining industry is strong. 'Bludger' narratives once again are used to guilt those who are un- or-under employed for their reliance on government benefits when they could be earning big money in mining (the fact that the work in unsuitable for many is often ignored). Narratives such as these, combined with the possibility of earning well above usual wages for blue-collar workers, make work in the mining industry a persuasive option.

However, the mining industry is not a place of employment for everyone; it is a significantly masculinized workplace. Despite recent moves to make the mining industry more 'female friendly' and to highlight the increasing employment opportunities for women (Mayes & Pini 2010), the mining industry remains discursively produced as masculine. Remote work, particularly for non-resident workers involves a highly specified interaction with a largely male workforce in which masculinity is heavily policed (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010). The importance of work-based communities as both sites of positive interaction and negative reinforcement of dichotomies surrounding gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality will be explored in the next section. This will then lead into a deeper analysis of the move from manufacturing to mining as big employers of blue-collar workers which will

consider some of the implications for workers who have made the move to the mining industry.

The Social Side of Work: Workplace Community, Homosocial Bonding and 'Fitting In'.

The physicality of labouring work is only one facet of how work is constructed in terms of centralizing working-class masculinities. Apart from the obvious role that employment plays in the economic position of a household, work is also often a site of social and community interaction which provides a space for the policing and reinforcing of the hegemony of centralizing working-class masculinities.[87] Communities, defined by Barbara Pocock, as 'a straightforward geographic association, to a shared interest, culture, heritage, or governance' (2003:19), have been important sites for creating social and cultural inclusion. In the face of declining involvement in communal bonds, often brought about by increasing work hours, growing suburban sprawl, a growing reliance on television and the internet for social interaction and entertainment, and lower civic engagement, (Pocock 2003: 49), work-based communities arguably become more important, and the friendships made in the workplace are replacing the former importance of civic communities as a site for social interaction.

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[87] While the focus of this chapter is blue-collar/working-class work, certain traits and behaviors associated with centralizing working-class masculinity are celebrated in some white-collar and middle/upper-class work environments. Traits and behaviors such as toughness, a dedication to the workplace, and even working-class 'blokesim' are often lauded in white-collar workplaces.

Historically workplace communities have been an important part of labouring life. Dunk and Bartol explain that,

> The cooperation between workers required by the labour processes involved, and the solidarity built through the struggles between local workers and their employers, meant that the male friendship group became an important source of identity and support for many working-class men. In the early phase of industrialization, these groups were also based on ethnic and linguistic commonalities (2005: 38).

In the face of growing neo-liberal influence on industrial relations, the opportunity to form workplace communities is under threat. For example, in the mining industry, mining communities are being increasingly replaced by fly-in-fly-out arrangements and individual contracts,[88] where workers are isolated from the local community and each other. Individual contracts, particularly short-term contracts make it difficult to forge workplace bonds and weaken the capacity for collective action (Peetz & Preston 2009). The Howard Liberal Government saw a marked decrease in union membership (Cooper & Ellem 2008: 537), and a sustained effort to erode collectivism. In fact, as Cooper and Ellem clearly state, 'The Prime Minister [Howard] made it clear that his government intended to bury the collectivist legacy once and for all' (2008: 534). In mining in particular, the long work hours and non-resident status of many of the workers make the forging of any real workplace community, such as the one at Mitsubishi motors as discussed by Verity and Jolley (2008), much more difficult. It is also important to recognize that the strong sense of workplace community found at Mitsubishi was aided by a strong union presence. Indeed,

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[88] Mining company BHP was instrumental in getting laws passed that allowed for the non-recognition of unions, laws which moved the mining industry for one of the most highly unionized to a largely non-unionized workforce where individual contracts are the norm (Cooper & Ellem 2008: 541).

workplace community activities were often union related (Verity & Jolley 2008). The increasingly individualistic nature of mainstream representations of centralizing working-class masculinity (such as Kenny Smythe) are often deeply rooted in neo-liberalism, and work to erode collectivity.

The importance of work-based communities is partially rooted in the traditional collectivism associated with the working class (a collectivism that is threatened under neo-liberal industrial relations policies) and strong union membership. In traditional industrial workplaces peer-group bonding occurs along class lines in ways that may defy the marginalization associated with belonging to the working class. In fact, as Dunk and Bartol explain, work-based friendships, which often extend outside of the workplace, provide a place in which working-class identity can be shored up against social values that are more aligned with the middle class (2005: 38). As they explain, working-class homosocial relationships,

> [are] and continue to be based upon principles quite different from those of the wider capitalist society. The dynamics of interaction between members of the informal group illustrate an alternative set of cultural norms and practices (2005: 38).

By rejecting social mores, such as competition and 'maximization of self-interest' (Dunk & Bartol 2005: 38), that are associated with middle-class masculinities, the group acts to counterbalance the perceived hegemony of middle-class values.[89]

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[89] However, self-interest and individualization are key factors involved in the production of centralizing working-class masculinities as neo-liberal political ideals. This is particularly evident in individual workplace agreements, the increase of

These work-based peer groups create spaces in which not only are the gendered aspects of working-class masculinities positioned as hegemonic, but the class aspects of these identities are granted hegemonic status also. This hegemony is limited to specific embodied working-class masculinities—ones that tie in closely to those that occupy hegemonic positions within Australian culture and are often marked in reference to an embodied 'other'. This can then create problematic exclusionary practices based not only on gender and class, but also ethnicity and sexuality.

Us and Them: Marking the 'Other'.

The importance of the sense of belonging to a homogenous group based on gender and class (and often sexuality and ethnicity) is an important aspect of embodied centralizing working-class masculinity. This arguably leads to collective discriminatory practices. As Dunk and Bartol explain,

> A specifically male solidarity is, thus, played out in the informal group. It reflects the masculine culture of typically all-male work places in its emphasis on equality and solidarity within the group and in its often sexist and homophobic elements that function to maintain group boundaries … It is progressive insofar as it expresses working-class solidarity but is reactionary insofar as it is also the venue for the celebration of heterosexual masculinity in opposition to homosexual men and women (2005: 39).

non-resident workers in the mining industry and the aspirationalism that underpins the rationalization to undertake such work, and even in the personification of the individualistic 'worker'—like Kenny Smythe in *Kenny*.

It is not only homosexual men and women who are marked as abject in such groups; men (and women) of colour are also often excluded from these fraternal groupings. The collective nature of these groups, seemingly based on a shared class background also serves to position working-class-ness as white, heterosexual and male. In workplaces where the majority of workers conform to these set identifiers structures of hegemony based on class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are arguably easier to maintain.

Certainly, male-dominated workplaces are more likely to involve conforming to practices allied with traditional hegemonic masculinities. Sharon Bird explains that, 'conventional masculinity stereotypes, where masculinity is defined as 'opposite' and superior to women and femininity, are likely to be stronger in men-dominated work groups then in mixed-sex groups' (586: 2003). The pressure to conform to discursive constructions of 'manhood' in male-dominated workplaces is, therefore, significant. For those whose subjective embodiment negates the possibility of 'fitting in' with centralizing working-class masculinities this creates a boundary to belonging and reinforces 'othering' behaviors.[90] 'Othering' is not only performed as a way of marking oneself in opposition to the other based on class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, it is also performed in ways that shore up the privilege of the members of the group through the harassment and ridicule of those perceived 'others'. This can take the form of racism, sexism, homophobia or anti-elitism.

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[90]Whether this is due to the nature of the work, or more likely the hostility shown to women who try to do 'men's work', women still make up a disproportionately small number of the individuals working in the traditional blue-collar industries such as mining. For instance in a mining town in Western Australia census data showed that not only were women underrepresented as workers, they were more likely to leave the town, and made up a disproportionately small percentage of town residents—even when non-resident workers were not counted (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010: 398).

Fitting into the Hierarchy: 'Doing' Centralizing Working-Class Masculinities at Work.

It is not only the reiteration of the superiority of the main group identity (white, heterosexual, male, working class) that needs to be displayed in order to fit into the workplace community. Often displays of hyper-masculinity may be needed to be accepted as 'one of the boys', and failure to perform the correct gendered behavior may result in the individual being ostracized. As Bird explains,

> In order for a man to pass as gender 'appropriate' he must live up to at least some of the widely held expectations for men in that context. Men (and women) who do not display the 'appropriate' characteristics and beliefs risk being evaluated negatively by others and, perhaps, by themselves (584: 2003).

Iacuone's (2005)[91] study of hegemonic masculinity in the construction industry illustrates this fact (particularly in relation to safe work practices and healthy behaviors), and shows how often the behaviors and practices associated with hegemonic masculinity can have negative results for both the men performing the 'correct', socially sanctioned, masculinities, and for those around them.

The reiteration of othering and exclusionary behaviors posits some work-based communities as unhealthy places, not only for working-class men who are engaged in these activities, but also for the wider community. This may be the case

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[91] See also Paap (2006).

for remote communities where there are large numbers of fly-in-fly-out workers. As Carrington, McIntosh and Scott explain in relation to a Western Australian town with a large number of such workers, 'the rate of offences against the person has risen almost three-fold since the beginning of the resources boom' (2010: 395). Carrington, McIntosh and Scott argue that it is the 'othering' faced *by* fly-in-fly-out workers from townspeople that may be the cause of violence.[92] Certainly, hierarchies of masculinities can be constructed through inclusion and exclusion, creating spaces in which competition is likely. This can be seen in the mining communities Carrington, McIntosh and Scott researched, where competition between locals and fly-in-fly-out workers and a largely male workplace has seen male-on-male violence in particular increase exponentially (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010; Carrington & Pereira 2011). This is an area in which more research is needed in order to explore the nuance (particularly in relation to class and gender) of these antagonistic relations (McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 26).

It would seem then, that competition and masculine hierarchies encourage risk behaviors. Often in working-class/blue-collar occupations, performing high-risk activities is a collective experience that heightens the bonds between workers (Desmond 2006: 389). This was the findings of Iacuone's research on how attitudes to Occupational Health and Safety were affected by the continual reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity by construction workers (2003). His research also shows that participation in these behaviors is a necessary part of joining the peer group,

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[92] Research on the dynamics within mining community remains limited, and is often 'dualistic, such as a tendency to caricature mining worker and communities in overly positive terms as strong and resilient or alternatively in overly negative terms as narrow and parochial (Strangleman et al. 1999 in McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 26).

In the building industry there exists a particular variety of hegemonic masculinity. This force structures relationships between construction workers hierarchically and influences their perceptions of OH&S so that they are not overly concerned about their wellbeing (2003: 265).

The performance of risky behaviors is more likely in some occupational areas than others. For example, recent mine disasters, including the Beaconsfield cave-in which was discussed above, have alerted workers in the mining industry to the need for safety. Therefore, workers' attitudes to risky behavior as a marker of masculinity likely differ across various workplaces. Furthermore, recent union efforts to mobilize around risk have used homosocial bonding and workplace community to challenge this 'risk-taking' enactment of masculinity and instead encourage a respect for safety and well-being in the workplace (Muir 2010).[93] It is possible to argue that the homosocial bonds built through a shared work experience may allow for a level of care and consideration for one another that transcends more traditional modes of behavior.

The Positive Side of Workplace Communities: Collectivity and Inclusion.

Work-based communities are a critical place in which class and gender based commonalities can be established among peers. While homosocial groupings in the workplace can be highly exclusionary—often in ways that are not only to the

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[93] In South Australia in 2010 construction worker Ark Tribe was charged under the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) rules for speaking out against unsafe workplace conditions, and faced a possible six months in prison. Tribe was acquitted in late 2010 and the highly contentious ABCC was disbanded in March 2012. See http://www.rightsonsite.org.au/ and http://www.arkstribe.org.au/ .

detriment of those groups excluded, but also to the men who are defining themselves in this group by what they are not—workplace community can also be an important site of collectivism and solidarity. Workplace communities may provide spaces in which to challenge notions of individualism, to create collectivity, and to alleviate isolation (particularly in industries with long hours such as the mining industry). The importance of the workplace as a site for the creation of peer-group communities is explained by MacKenzie, Stuart, Forde, Greenwood, Gardiner and Perrett, who argue that,

> work as a collective experience, not just in terms of the presence or absence of union organization but in terms of the shared experience of the labour process, may act as a basis for group identity (2006: 836).

This 'collective experience' allows groups of men to identify not only along gender lines, but also by virtue of their class. This creation of a sense of community is of benefit to its members in two ways. Firstly, there is the fulfillment of the natural human need to feel part of a group, and the 'consistency' that comes from friendship networks (Whitehead 2002: 161). Secondly, there is the collectivism that comes with belonging to such a group. Collectivism is a powerful tool. It provides a space in which to push against the neo-liberal individualism that has become an increasing aspect of centralizing working-class masculinities in Australia.

Therefore, social relations in the workplace and a good work-based community can be a positive thing for blue-collar workers despite the problematic and exclusionary tactics that are often associated with the creation of these

communities. Arguably, for many blue-collar workers, decreasing workplace power and workplace conditions can be somewhat offset by the sense of inclusion and solidarity that comes with belonging to a community based on a collective classed and gendered experience. As Sharon Bird writes, 'workplace relations often provide a sense of belonging, affirmation, authenticity, bonding and support, and in some cases, much needed distraction from otherwise tedious demeaning job responsibilities' (2003: 581). The relationships formed within the workplace can provide the worker with a support system and lead to a sense of solidarity. However, in order for this to have a positive effect on the lives of working-class men and women, and other marginalized groups these communities need to be based on inclusionary collectivism not exclusion.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) 'Your Rights at Work' campaign (2005-2007) against the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation is a prime example where work-based communities spread out to become a powerful force for positive change. The 'Your Rights at Work' campaign illustrates how inclusion can create a more powerful and more fluid sense of workplace community—one that may have the potential to exist outside and away from the workplace. One of my respondents who was heavily involved in the campaign spoke of feeling aligned to their coworkers and the importance of class-based collectivity,

> well, being in a working-class environment rather than perhaps being an individual or being a person that is more in an individualistic type role um, I come more from a role of being with your mates and playing football and understanding about the collective group as opposed to being an individual (T, union worker, 41, married).

This collectivity, and a sense of shared experience with other groups, not only working, but other activist or marginalized groups has been a long standing part of working-class collective action, even though some workplaces still practice sexual and racial discrimination. For example, some members of the union movement has been identified with the Aboriginal land rights movement, environmental groups and women's rights groups in ways that are beneficial to all parties involved.[94]

Most importantly, by performing an inclusive collectivity rather than an exclusive collectivity, the concerns of working-class employees can reach beyond the workplace community. Moreover, a rejection of 'othering' and the hierarchical scaling of bodies benefits men and women who may be marginalized, especially in a neo-liberal labour market, on the basis of their class. While the difference between inclusive and exclusive collectivity will be explored in Chapter Seven in detail, for this purpose it must be stated that workplace communities offer working-class men a powerful site of identification and a place in which to collectively seek fairer treatment. However, as previously explored, when workplace communities are exclusionary they can be risky for both those involved and the wider community. Furthermore, workplace communities that are limited in their scope are at risk of becoming a site of loss in the face of redundancy. Loss of community is something that has been discovered in research on workers who have been made redundant.

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[94] There are several examples of this, for instance the Waterside Worker's Union provided key support for the Gurindigi walk-off , and the ACTU was also heavily involved with the demand for equal pay for aboriginal workers (Gurr 1983). There have also been instances of unions becoming involved in environmental activism which was 'ecological, altruistic and cross-class' (Burgmann & Burgmann 2000: 45), and women's issues such as the rights of outworkers to be recognized as employees.

With the importance of work-based communities having been established, what then becomes of those individuals who lose this important site of bonding when they lose their jobs in the face of increasing deindustrialization? In their paper on the closure of the Mitsubishi plant at Tonsley in South Australia , Verity and Jolley look not at the economic repercussions of the retrenchment of Mitsubishi's some 2000 workers, but of the social and community effects felt by those who lost jobs many of them had held for more than 10 years (2008: 334). They argue that,

> In countries such as Australia, work-based 'communities' take many forms influenced by factors like industry type, the nature and conditions of work (i.e. hours of and at work, organizational values, form and structures), workforce profile and opportunities for work friendships and associations to develop. Class, occupational role, gender and family responsibilities shape experiences (Verity & Jolley 2008: 332).

This research into the social aspects of working at Mitsubishi found that owing to a variety of factors the workers at the vehicle manufacturing plant had a very strong sense of community identity with each other, and many of the workers socialized heavily with other Mitsubishi employees. Reasons for this included,

> the length and stability of employment, shared cultural connections, kinship connections merging with other attachments within the workplace, the ordered and interdependent nature of the production environment, the nature of shift work in demarcating and binding social groupings, and the reach of social connections from the workplace to family and social life outside the paid workplace (2008: 337).

Verity and Jolley's findings correlate with other empirical research on the importance of workplace community to the working-class, and how the loss of this space and place for homosocial interaction and bonding can have deep reaching affects. McKenzie, Stuart, Forde, Greenwood, Gardiner and Perrett find that redundancy causes a range of challenges to working-class men, including 'adjustment to the absence of identity-shaping social interaction in the workplace' (2006: 837). For working-class, men the loss of this community presents very significant challenges.

The kinds of opportunities for the creation of workplace communities, particularly ones that extend beyond the actual workplace into the private and family live of employees are not offered in the new boom industry of mining. Long work hours such as 12 hour shifts (Carrington & Pereira 2011, Peetz & Murray 2011), camp life and the distance between home and work discourages the kind of community bonding that McKenzie et al. found in the manufacturing workplace. The nature of the mining industry makes it a highly individualized workplace (McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 24). In the new economy, blue-collar workers may not have the same opportunities to connect with their workmates in positive ways that are both collective and inclusive.

Workplaces provide a site where similar people can connect—particularly regarding work issues. For working-class men these communities also provide a site where they can affirm their gender and their class among others who are also

establishing similar gendered and classed identities. However, for these communities to become sites where classed and gendered (and other) hierarchies can be challenged or disrupted, they need to be inclusive rather than highly structured and limiting. Particularly in light of increasing workplace instability and a competitive and neo-liberal labour market, including the move to the mining industry, inclusive collectivity and progressive thinking may be the best way to challenge threats to working-class job security, safety, and conditions. As the pool of blue-collar workers, particularly those without a skilled trade, find themselves having to choose between uncertain employment in more populated areas or the high-pay long hours of non-resident work in the mines, the chance to create inclusive, collective, communities is becoming much rarer. The mining industry may in fact be producing the kind of individualized working-class subject seen in the film *Kenny*, one whose job is his life and who rarely challenges the neo-liberal status quo. This will be explored in the next section.

The Changing Face of Blue Collar Work in Australia: The Decline of Manufacturing and the 'Boom' in Resources.

As has been previously discussed, the manual, semi-skilled or unskilled labour that has provided working-class men with a large proportion of their employment is becoming a much more competitive job market. Deindustrialization coupled with a rise in service sector work (Nixon 2009: 300) has created a far more tenuous relationship with the labour market for men (and women) from the working-

class, particularly those who are semiskilled or unskilled and are unwilling or unable to relocate to regional and remote areas to find employment in the mining sector. This in turn relegates them to the secondary labour market, about which Allon Uhlmann assays,

> The secondary labour market offers casual employment and dead-end jobs, is characterized by great worker mobility, low skill level, low investment by employers in employee training, poor working conditions, job insecurity, and, ultimately, low wages. The labour market participation patterns of those who sell their labour power on this market can be typified by great horizontal job mobility, normally between employers and without promotion, accompanied by high levels of unemployment (2001: 451).

For many working-class Australian men, the decline of the manufacturing has seen them move from relatively stable, highly unionized workplaces engaged in large-scale manufacturing in areas such as the automotive industry, into employment with smaller companies often for lower wages, less job security and worse conditions. Beer et al. argue that, 'economic restructuring is an inescapable and important feature of the Australian economy' (2006: 1). Economic restructuring means that some industries, such as manufacturing, are in decline (Beer et al. 2006: 1), while others, such as mining, are seeing growth.[95]

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[95] While decline in the manufacturing industry is partly owing to changes in trade practiced and free-market economic reform (Beer et al 2006), the mining industry may have negatively impacted the manufacturing industry, with workers in industries that are 'trade exposed' experiencing 'reductions in employment and less job security' (Richardson and Denniss 2011: 11). Richardson and Denniss find that the resource boom has a negative effect on manufacturing (2011: 41) and may not be as beneficial on a national scale as has been claimed (56).

Indeed, work in the mining industry is fast becoming a site of desirable employment for blue-collar workers. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data illustrates the changing face of blue-collar work in Australia in the ABS publication *50 Years of Labour Force Statistics: Now and Then.* Statistics show that the biggest shift in Australian workplace trends has been from blue-collar to white-collar work (2011), and shifts from the manufacturing to service industries. Within blue-collar work the main shift has been from manufacturing to mining, and this has occurred relatively recently and happened very quickly. For example exports from Australia in 2004-2005 were 53.2% from the manufacturing industry and 32.4% from the mining industry. In four years to 2008-2009 this has changed to 40.1% from manufacturing and 51.4% from mining (ABS yearbook 2009). Mining has boomed while the manufacturing industry has seen consistent decline, and many big, unionized workplaces that provided blue-collar jobs such as Mitsubishi in Tonsley Park South Australia have moved offshore, creating a gap in employment which the mining industry is seemingly going to fill.[96]

If blue-collar jobs are moving from manufacturing to mining what does this mean for blue-collar workers? While there is some research on the impacts of large influxes of non-resident workers on rural communities (Carrington & Pereira 2011) there is as yet limited research on employee experiences of mining industry work—in particular the experience of fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workers (Torkington, Lawkins & Gupta 2011: 135). What research there is shows several negative effects of large

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[96] However, mining industry figures on the number of people employed by mining companies has been largely inflated. While the 'Australian Mining: This is Our Story' campaign claims mining employs 750 000 people, in fact mining employment was found to be 217 100 employees according to ABS data. This accounts for just 1.9% of the workforce (Richardson & Denniss 2011: 20).

non-resident workforces on rural communities while the non-resident workers themselves are also negatively affected. As Torkington, Lawkins and Gupta found,

> FIFO miners reported higher levels of sleep disturbance, more interference from work on the ability to perform social and domestic activities (e.g. participating in sport, attending the doctor, looking after children) and an increased likelihood of experiencing greater strain on the family (2011: 135).

These negative outcomes mean that the mining industry has a very rapid employee turnover (Senate Committee Hearing on FIFO Work, 2013). While 26% of mining workers left in 2011 (Richardson & Denniss 2011: 54), others, who move into mining looking for short-term gains find themselves unable to leave as they cannot find other options for well-paid work.

Furthermore, as previously explored, one of the benefits of working in highly unionized, large manufacturing workplaces, was the sense of community and engagement that extended beyond the workplace (Verity & Jolley 2008). Instead of finding community, non-resident workers actually lose their ties to the community, effectively isolating the individual. Satisfaction seemingly comes from the high wages and work satisfaction involved with mining work (Torkington, Lawkins & Gupta 2011: 140). Furthermore, FIFO arrangements 'weaken the bonds of collectivism' (Ellem 2006 in McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 24). The individual contracts most FIFO workers are on are symptomatic of the individualization of the mining industry (Peetz 2006; Mayes & Pini 2011; Peetz & Murray 2011). This fits very well into the production of neo-liberal subjects as informed by the political ideal of centralizing

working-class masculinities—contemporary mines are places in which solidarity is eroded, collectivism discouraged, and individualism triumphs.[97]

The change in Australian industry and the move from manufacturing to mining creates several challenges for working-class men and women. In terms of encouraging engagement with the most neo-liberal version of centralizing working-class masculinity, the lifestyle afforded by the mining industry is a powerful influencer. Mining work is individualistic in nature and often results in lack of community engagement, and a separation from loved ones and a resulting lack of intimacy that isolates its mostly male workforce (Peetz & Murray 2011). In the face of this isolation many mining workers—particularly non-resident workers—lose many of the benefits that come from being working-class such as collectivism and strong workplace community. Meanwhile, many of the negative aspects of labouring work such as increased physical pressure, risk taking and exclusion of 'others' are still present. Carrington and Pereira (2011; 2011a) found that mining had a largely negative effect on the regional towns in which there were a large number of fly-in-fly-out workers.

Therefore, far-reaching consequences may be the result for those individuals who want to enjoy some of the financial benefits to be found in the resources boom. These consequences are beneficial for maintaining neo-liberal hegemony and the idea that workers are, 'individual labour units who develop their marketable attributes

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[97] There are some traditional mining towns with a largely live-in population, high union membership and a collective consciousness, however these types of mining towns are declining and hold a far lower percentage of the industry than the bigger, more neo-liberal mining operations.

and compete with one another' (Cahill 2008: 212). As Peetz and Murray remind us, under a string of conservative state and federal governments,

> Companies were able to use individual contracts to undermine collective organization; seniority, which protected union activists against targeting for dismissal, was abolished as a criterion for determining order of redundancy; and perhaps most importantly, mining companies were permitted to make unrestricted use of contract labour, often non-unionized and able to be used to maintain production during disputes (2011: 16).

These consequences provide massive challenges to the kinds of collectivity and community that was formerly valued as a part of working-class identity. It is community and collectivity that provide the biggest opportunities to challenge social and economic inequities, and to provide a space in which working-class masculinities can be more inclusive and holistic. Instead, the discourse of centralizing working-class masculinity that is encouraged through engagement with the mining industry could be argued to promote exclusion and individualism in ways that are in line with neo-liberal versions of Australian identity—particularly in regards to work. As Peetz and Murray (2011), and McDonald, Mayes and Pini (2012) found, the individualism so intrinsic to mining industry employment dismantles the collectivism that has often given working-class workers some power in the workplace.

Conclusion.

Work, whether paid or unpaid, is at the heart of discourses about both gender and class. Where someone works, what they do, what time they work, how often, at what level—these are all classed and gendered aspects of different types of work. This chapter has explored how work is an area in which people are constructed, and construct themselves. For those who engage with centralizing working-class masculinities gender and class are partially constructed through their relationship to the labour market. Manual labour which displays autonomy, physical strength and resilience is still culturally celebrated in Australia as somehow authentically masculine. Skilled blue-collar trades too are granted a high status—they are both aspirational and physical. This combines with the links between masculinity and breadwinner status, and the classed and gendered homosocial bonding that often occurs in male-dominated blue-collar work places, to create very strong conceptual links between the work a man undertakes, and his classed masculinity.

As has been illustrated, cultural nostalgia linked to the valorized image of the centralizing working-class worker is problematic for a number of reasons. The heavy industries and manufacturing jobs in which traditional blue-collar work could be found are fast disappearing with rapid deindustrialization. Those traditional jobs in which working-class men had their class and gender so legitimized are being replaced by service industry jobs which require an entirely different set of classed and gendered

tools, or mining industry jobs, where the collectivity of working-class identity is seriously threatened. Inevitably many working-class men (and women) who have previously found their employment in the heavy industries are reluctant to disengage with their classed and gendered identities to work in an industry that is largely casualised, poorly paid, and, most importantly, culturally feminized. Yet they may also be unwilling to make the sacrifices to home and community needed to engage with non-resident mining work. Even those jobs remaining in traditional industrial spaces have lost many of the benefits associated with these workplaces. Increasing privatization, decreasing unionization and sweeping changes to industrial relations laws have impacted upon workers particularly from unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. Blue-collar work is often scarcer, poorer paid, more casualized and has less benefits then was the case in previous decades. The competition for these jobs also increases the pressure to 'man up' and put up with bad conditions. It is mainly in the mining industry that well-paid jobs are plentiful, but this type of work comes with its own set of consequences, many of which negate the financial benefits.

When this decrease in both the availability and the rewards associated with local manual labour is combined with the continual cultural resonance applied to hard physical labour it becomes clear that the losers will be those men who embody this type of masculinity. For them, while culture dictates that their construction of classed and gendered identities is authentic and valuable, the employment market has made them, like the industries they previously worked in, largely redundant. It is only in engaging with the mining industry that successful, fulfilling, blue-collar work can often be found, yet this comes with its own set of problems—many of which

involve increased individualism and isolation and decreased intimacy. Research on the experiences of men in the mining industry has often focused on what they *do* as opposed to what they *experience* or how they *feel*. The next chapter will focus on intimacy, centralizing working-class masculinities and working-class experiences of family, sexuality and intimacy.

Chapter Six

Private Lives, Living and Loving: Friendship, Sexualities, Relationships, Families, Parenting and Intimacy.

Chapter Six: Private Lives, Living and Loving: Friendship, Sexualities, Relationships, Families, Parenting and Intimacy.

Introduction

Class and gender intersect in a range of locations, some of these spaces are marked as public and some are marked as private. This gendering of the public and private spheres is a means through which constructions of gender as a binary are reinforced, although as Elder argues, 'it would be simplistic to suggest that there is a watertight division between the masculine public and the feminine private' (2007: 77). The creation of gendered binaries of space and place is most clear when looking at the way intimacies, sexuality, family and parenting are often structured as specific gendered and spaced constructs. Intimate lives, while often framed as a private space exist in both the private and public sphere. Furthermore, these public and private spheres impact on each other; work impacts on intimacy as intimacy impacts working life (Pocock 2003: 105). In the social construction of centralizing working-class masculinities, certain scripts about 'mateship', sexuality, intimacy, families and parenting predominate. The Aussie 'bloke' often is represented as having a limited emotional role (Ward 1958 in Nile 1998; Murrie, 1998); what he *does* is more often the focus in Australian culture than what he *experiences or feels*. Yet, as the previous argument by Elder shows, constructions of gender around the public and private spheres are more complex than often allowed for—particularly in relation to centralizing working-class masculinities.

Intimacy, sexuality, the family and parenting are not only marked as gendered, but are also constructed in highly classed ways. Much of the research in this area, while accounting for gender, either places middle-class experiences front and center, or ignores class all together (Johnson & Lawler 2005; Gillies 2005; Shows & Gerstel 2009; Legerski & Cornwall 2010; Jackson 2011). Conversely, research on class has often failed to recognize the importance of intimacy, sexuality, friendship and the family in the construction of classed identities (Johnson & Lawler 2005: 1.2). It seems that even within class research, the gendered dichotomy between the public 'outer' life and the 'private' inner life still exists. However, as Diane Reay argues, 'we need more understanding of how social class is actually lived, of how it informs our inner worlds to complement research on how it shapes our life chances in the outer world' (2005: 913).

With only a small section of academia concerned with looking at the intersection of gender and class with relationships, family, sexuality and intimacy; this is an area in serious need of further study. This chapter looks at how class and gender intersect in the 'private' intimate sphere in the construction and embodiment of centralizing working-class masculinities. In order to do this several different areas of intimacy and relationships are explored as both social constructions and important parts of the way men do class and gender. Homosocial bonding and friendships are discussed, carrying on from the analysis of work-based communities in the last chapter to consider further how men's friendships can be a site for the maintenance, or disruption, of gendered, classed, racialized and sexed identities. Sexualities and

intimacies are then examined, considering the lack of research in this area and why both masculinity and class are often left out of research on sex and relationships. Finally consideration is given to parenting and the family with reference to recent research in the area, asking if this might be a space in which it is the working-class who are disrupting gendered norms. In the final section the contrast between the (often) neo-liberal social and cultural constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity and the actual lives of working-class people is considered as a fissure in which challenge and change may indeed be happening.

Mates: Friendships and the Policing of Class and Gender

In the media chapter there was an analysis of beer advertising on Australian television—an area where centralizing working-class masculinities are overwhelmingly represented as the 'norm'. One of the most consistent factors in this representation is that this 'bloke' is always with his mates. This is to be expected, drinking is considered a social behavior. The image of the 'bloke' sitting on his own enjoying a beer would be less reminiscent of the fun and 'mateship' that beer companies want associated with their products, and drinking alone is often associated with 'problem drinking'. 'Mateship' is an important aspect of an Australian identity, as Butera argues, 'the term has an emotional quality that, although it has long been honoured in other cultures, is celebrated and sentimentalized as quintessentially Australian' (2008: 269). Furthermore, 'mateship' is rooted in classed, racialized and gendered discourses, and it is often a key part of representations of

centralizing working-class masculinities. As Dyrenfurth points out, 'the discourse of mateship appealed to men's identities over and above (a limited consciousness of) class and intersected with contemporary, intersecting anxieties of race and gender' (2007: 212). 'Mateship' is important in terms of being an Australian and important in terms of being a 'bloke'.

Being there for your 'mates', having good 'mates', putting your 'mates' first are all traits heavily associated with being an Aussie 'bloke', as Butera notes, '"mate" is a word that has expansive colloquial currency in Australia' (2008: 269). The concept of 'mateship' is riddled with gendered, classed, racialized and sexualized meanings. John Howard's desire to include the term in the preamble of the Australian constitution was often seen as a method for differentiating the 'real' Australians from those who were not 'our' mates.[98] Howard used the term in such a way as to both support individualistic neo-liberal discourses while creating the illusion of a singular Australian experience devoid of class, race, gender or sexuality. He defined the 'average' Australian as thus,

> he or she doesn't think this country has much to be ashamed of …that individuals should be given a fair go … but having been helped they should then get on with their lives and not expect the rest of the community to keep on assisting them … And finally and very importantly the average Australian believes in a classless society… (Howard 2005 in Dyrenfurth 2007: 223).

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[98] In 1996 then Prime Minister John Howard tried to have a stanza about 'mateship' inserted into the preamble of the constitution. After criticism from many who saw the move as exclusionary, especially in relation to gender, he stated, 'I know some of the … more red fems will have a go at me over it. But … I wouldn't feel easy with myself if I hadn't put it in because I really believe that ideal is a very important part of the Australian psyche' (Howard 1999 in Dyrenfurth 2007: 221).

Clearly neo-liberal discursive constructions of 'mateship' ignore class, gender, race and sexuality, while using 'mateship' to link centralizing working-class masculinities to neo-liberalism. 'Mateship', therefore, is a highly mobilizing political tool in defining Australian identity, 'mateship has iconic status as a cultural symbol of Australian identity' (Butera 2008: 265). Cultural constructions of mateship are highly masculinized and often exclusionary (Dyrenfurth 2005; Butera 2008).

As discussed above, cultural constructions of 'mateship' are often limited and limiting. Yet, friendship is actually a complex issue for working-class men (and women). Homosocial bonding can be a site for the maintenance of the correct gendered and classed behaviors, yet it can also be a site for finding new ways of doing class and doing masculinity. Butera found that this was often true of homosocial masculine friendships, and she pointed out that, 'there is a distinct shift from traditional modes of mateship to something of a middle-ground' (2008: 270). It is this complex nature of homosocial bonds that is explored here, looking at these complex elements of 'mateship' and seeing if it cannot provide a site for challenging problematic notions of gender—as often enmeshed in discursive centralizing working-class masculinities—rather than simply reinforcing them.

Before looking at the ways in which male to male friendship groups can provide both affirming and challenging spaces for working-class men consideration is given to the ways that notions about friendship can be gendered in terms of emotion, types of friendship, and friendship practices. Michael Messner illustrates the ways

that homosocial bonding between men is differentiated along gendered lines from homosocial bonding between women. He argues that homosocial relationships are often defined in terms of gender, that within popular cultural discourses it is assumed that, 'women have deep, intimate, meaningful and lasting friendships, while men have a number of shallow, superficial, and unsatisfying 'acquaintances' (Messner 2001: 253). Messner further argues that men's less 'meaningful' relationships are often argued to be caused by men's 'natural' fear of intimacy (2001: 254). Reasons given for men having different friendships from women include their lack of communication skills (Messner 2001: 254), their friendships being placed in more public spaces (Walker 1994: 307), and that unlike women they often bond over shared activities rather than shared experiences (Messner 2001: 254). However, intimacy within homosocial groups can occur (Anderson 2007: 615). Moreover, not all friendship groupings are totally homosocial—most friendship groups are of mixed gender. Bird noted that heterosocial bonding is often a site where gendered friendship behaviors can be broken down and the monitoring of 'correct' gendered behavior becomes less of a focus (1996: 127). As homosocial bonding is an important part of the way individuals enact their class and gender, for the purpose of this analysis the focus will be on homosocial groups, and considering how working-class men's relationships with other men can challenge or affirm classed and gendered discourses.

Research on male to male friendships has often focused on the negatives associated with homosocial bonding, mostly in ways that are exclusionary. For instance, the male friendship group has been studied as a site of many social ills:

misogyny and possible violence against women (Flood 2008); racism (Redmond, 2007); anti-intellectualism and anti-environmentalism (Desmond 2006); and homophobia (Kimmel 1994). Homosocial groups as a site of exclusionary behavior is well documented. This exclusionary aspect of homosocial friendships is highly problematic in general as it allows for the reinforcement of 'othering' discourses among privileged groups while maintaining differentiations based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class. For men from the working-class, this maintenance of group boundaries may allow for the continual resonance of discourses that perpetuate the privilege associated with their gendered position and the marginalization that can be associated with their classed position. In Australia, where centralizing working-class masculinities occupy a hegemonic position not necessarily occupied by working-class *men,* this is of concern as it both legitimizes and yet makes less visible inequities based on not only class, but gender, race and sexuality as well.

Homosocial groups operate as exclusionary in two ways: they exclude women, and they exclude men associated with 'othered' masculinities. Sharon Bird discusses the exclusion of what she calls nonhegemonic masculinities,

> Homosocial interaction, among heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with nonhegemonic masculinity identities (1996: 121).

In a homosocial working-class group this maintenance of a group identity may require individuals to engage with centralizing working-class masculinity in highly limiting ways. As Dunk and Bartol point out, it is in these homosocial groups that the hegemony of working-class, white, heterosexual masculinity can be maintained through exclusionary tactics, 'these groups also tightly maintain boundaries, especially against women and gay men … this is still a world where women and gay men are excluded through the use of foul and sexist language and ethnic and gendered humor' (2005: 39).

Fear of being ostracized from the group for not conforming is a powerful motivator to adopt accepted masculine behaviors, including, but not limited to, sexism, racism and homophobia (Iacuone 2005). Arguably, this creates a space in which challenging notions of hegemonic masculinity is highly unlikely, as Bird points out,

> Internalization of hegemonic meanings provides a base of shared meanings for social interaction but also quells the expression of nonhegemonic meanings. The presumption that hegemonic masculinity meanings are the only mutually accepted and legitimate masculinity meanings helps to reify hegemonic norms while suppressing meanings that might otherwise create a foundation for the subversion of the existing hegemony (1996: 122).

Bird's research shows that emotional detachment, the objectification of women and competition are crucial aspects of the homosocial group's monitoring of the correct masculinity (1996: 122). However, her research focused on middle and upper-

classed men with high levels of education (Bird 1996: 123). Other research has shown that middle and upper-classed masculinities are more likely to align with traditional modes of emotional engagement within relationships including friendship groups, partners and children (Bird 1996; Shows & Gerstel 2009). Therefore, for working-class men, while the homosocial group may be a site for the policing of their gendered and classed behaviors, these behaviors may in fact differ from those found in ruling-class homosocial groups.

One of the biggest differentiations found in research on middle/upper-class friendships groups and working-class friendship groups is that of competition between friends. Bird, drawing on Gilligan, notes that, 'competition in the male homosocial group supports an identity that depends not on likeness and cooperation but on separation and distinction' (Gilligan 1982 in Bird 1996: 122). In contrast to Bird's findings, Dunk and Bartol (2004) discovered a discouragement of competition in their research on working-class men in the Canadian hinterlands. They found that within their homosocial groupings not only was competition not encouraged as part of displaying hegemonic masculinity, it was actively discouraged,

> In the wider society, exchange is based on the capitalist principles of competition and the maximization of one's own self-interest. Within the informal men's group, however, exchange is based on the principle of generalized reciprocity (2005: 38).

Dunk and Bartol particularly noticed this in relation to sports, whereby the men in their study often eschewed competition for a more inclusive, collective attitude towards sport (2005: 38).

Indeed, one area where the public nature of men's friendships is displayed often involves sports, whether they are participants or spectators. The area of sports also provided a site where differing classed attitudes to competition can be contrasted. While Bird found that sports were a site of competiveness, 'in male homosocial groups a man risks loss of status and self-esteem unless he competes' (1996: 128), for working-class men, sports were yet another site of collectivity. Sport is indeed an important part of working-class camaraderie, whether it be through participation or spectatorship. In working-class contexts, middle-class competitiveness gives way to working-class collectivism, as Dunk and Bartol explain, 'the point of the game is to participate in a group activity, to have a laugh, to share a few drinks, and to cement friendships. It is truly a social ritual; rather than an opportunity to exhibit one's individual prowess' (2005: 39). Sports, therefore, become a site for group reiteration of acceptable masculinity, in which not only is sexuality, gender and ethnicity marked hierarchically, but it is also a site where class can be marked in this way, with classed traits associated with the middle and upper-classes rejected.

This rejection of traits associated with the middle and upper-classes arguably creates a situation whereby working-class men are in fact subverting certain values associated with hegemonic masculinities—namely competition. 'Mateship' as defined by the interview participants differs from neo-liberal uses of the term. Howard's version of mateship as 'othering' and exclusive is not the way 'mateship' is viewed by many working-class men. In fact, despite neo-liberal

hijacking of the 'battler' as a representative of middle Australia, the competitiveness and individualism associated with this usage of the term (and shown at such strength in the film *Kenny*) (Scalmer 1999; Milner 2008), collectivism is valued far higher in working-class homosocial groups than individualism and competitiveness. As T explains,

> We can be strong, and funnily enough when John Howard used to talk about mateship and all that sort of thing, but generally he talked about it on ANZAC day and then forgot about it when he was criticizing unions … and that's what unions are about is a collective sort of mateship. When you're standing by your mate and making sure he's okay and he's safe on the worksite and that he's looked after inn terms of conditions and pay (T, union worker, 41, married).

While this respondent is discussing workplace relations and the fight against WorkChoices he makes a valuable observation—that working-class masculinities are still associated with 'mateship', not as an exclusionary force, but as a collective one. One of the more powerful arguments against WorkChoices was that it was seen as being unfair and betraying the tenets of mateship (Muir 2008). Despite individualism increasingly creeping into discourses surrounding the 'battler', 'mateship', and 'working-families' (Collins 2008), working-class homosocial groups may be a space in which neo-liberal discourses can be challenged. Unfortunately, these challenges are often limited in their scope. Classed notions of competition versus collectivism may be challenged in these spaces, but often gendered inequalities are not. Homophobia, racism and sexism are still parts of the working-class friendship group, and, as Dunk and Bartol (2005) argue, encouraged by a collective identity, they are likely to remain unchallenged. Centralizing working-class masculinities are a factor in

this. Their highly legitimized position gives them cultural and social weight, encouraging engagement with them.

For the friendship group to become a site where working-class masculinities can exist that are less divisive in terms of gender, race and sexuality, practices of exclusion and inclusion need to be challenged. The inclusion of women in the friendship group is one way of this occurring, as Bird notes, 'homosocial masculinity was characterized by emotional detachment, whereas heterosocial masculinity downplayed these factors' (1996: 127). Workplace collectivity is yet another way for the friendship group to offer a site for change and challenge to cultural and ideological representations of hegemonic working-class masculinity. Shows and Gerstel (2009) found that working-class collectivity allowed for the men they studied to have certain flexibility within the workplace despite the fact this was not provided for by management. This is particularly noteworthy as the flexibility and support they found among Emergency Medical Technicians in the US enabled these working-class men to take a more active role in day-to-day domestic duties, essentially they were helping each other out in being there for their children and wives (2009: 180). Butera found that younger men were more likely to engage in, 'vulnerability and show deeper feelings, hopes and fears with their friends' (2008: 279). So, despite homosocial groupings being a place where inequalities and the marking of 'others' based on gender, race, sexuality and class still occurs, it could be argued that these groups may also provide a space in which new, more inclusive, ways of doing masculinity can be forged. One of the areas which needs challenging is the way that sexuality is performed—both as a method of demeaning women and as a way to

shore up heterosexuality. Working-class men's sexualities and sexualities in the context of centralizing working-class masculinities are explored in the next section.

Sexualities: Intersections of Class and Gender

Research on men and masculinities and their relationships, sexualities and intimacies contains some significant gaps. Often, analysis on men's sexuality and relationships is in relation to the subordination of women, and the use of sexuality as a tool to access power (Whitehead 2002: 162). That sexuality is one area in which gendered relations of power are maintained is undeniable. However, a deeper, more nuanced understanding of sexuality, intimacy and relationships is needed, especially when looking at intersections of gender with class, ethnicity and sexualities. Sexuality is a space in which normativity can be cemented, yet it is also a space where such normativity can be challenged (Beasley 2011; Rossi 2011). Centralizing working-class masculinities are deeply embedded within normative discourses around sex and sexuality. For example, centralizing working-class masculinities are almost always heterosexual *and* heteronormative.[99] A deeper analysis of class, gender and sexuality shows that sex and sexuality are far more complex than such discursive representations will accommodate.

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[99] Recognizing the difference between heterosexuality and heteronormativity is crucial because heteronormativity is not only rooted in normative conceptions of sexuality, but also in normative conceptions of gender (and class and race). As Beasley argues, 'The equation of heterosexuality with heteronormativity—with an unchanging and inequitable conformity—is problematic in terms of social change … because it reduces heterosexual subjects to the status of cultural dopes, of social robots' (2011: 30).

There is a wide spectrum of sexual experience that needs to be taken into account in any analysis of men's relationships and intimacies. Lynne Segal explains,

> Male sexuality is most certainly not any single shared experience for men. It is not any single or simple thing at all—but the site of any number of emotions of weakness and strength, pleasure and pain, anxiety, conflict, tension and struggle (2000: 108).

Men's sexual experiences, particularly their heterosexual experiences have lacked the same sex-positive analysis that has been undertaken elsewhere, such as in queer theory (Beasley 2011: 35). It is important to recognize that embodied power inequity based not only on gender, but ethnicity, class and sexuality is sustained through some sexual practices and experiences. Indeed, as Whitehead argues, 'sexuality, perhaps more so than even gender, is riven with powerful stereotypes and discursive models' (2002: 162). However, as Beasley makes clear, by only recognizing the problematic nature of heterosexual penetrative sex in particular, gendered and sexualized binaries may actually be reproduced, 'with the truth of an all-powerful rampant phallic heteromasculinity and passive abject womanhood' (2011: 34). What also needs to be considered are the ways that sexualities and sexual experience can be positive or beneficial in renegotiating power and providing pleasure, even within 'mainstream' (heterosexual) sex.

As there is no one, singular, 'male sexuality' there is no one 'working-class sexuality'. Unfortunately studies of sexuality have often ignored class as an intersecting factor (Jackson 2011: 12). This has left class analysis outside of much of

the work focusing on sexualities. When sexuality and class are discussed together the focus is often the excess of, or middle-class shame about, embodied working-class femininity (Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008). Sexuality is one way individuals are ordered hierarchically within the working-class. As Jackson explains, 'women from the poorer segments of the working classes are often branded as improperly feminine—for example as overly fecund, promiscuous welfare mothers' (2011: 16). Women within the working classes are, therefore, encouraged to conform to the correct classed sexuality, a more respectable, traditional sexuality; a sexuality that is working-class, yet respectable, heteronormative and of the appropriate femininity (Jackson 2011: 17). This monitoring of working-class women's sexualities establishes a dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' sexual behavior[100] that intersects with gender and class. While in Australia the Chav/White-Trash working-class identity is largely absent, working-class feminine sexuality is notable by its exclusion from the Australian cultural lexicon. [101]

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[100] One example of 'bad' sexuality from the United Kingdom can be found in Greer's description of the 'Essex girl', a description that uses a middle-class, educated feminist lens to view and comment on transgressive and disgust-aligned working-class sexuality in terms of dress, mothering and sexual behaviour (quoted in Skeggs 2005). 'She used to be conspicuous, as she clacked along the pavements in her white plastic stilettos, her bare legs mottled patriotic red, white and blue with cold, and her big bottom barely covered by her denim miniskirt. Essex girls usually come in twos, both behind pushchairs with large infants in them. Sometimes you hear them before you see them, cackling shrilly or yelling to each other from one end of the street to the other, or berating those infants in blood-curdling fashion … The Essex girl is tough, loud, vulgar and unashamed. Her hair is badly dyed not because she can't afford a hairdresser, but because she wants it to look brassy. Nobody makes her wear her ankle chain, she like the message it sends … she is not ashamed to admit what she puts behind her ears to make her more attractive is her ankles. She is anarchy on stilts' (Greer, 2001 in Skeggs, 2005; 966-967).

[101] However many examples of this 'disgusting' working-class feminine archetype can be found in mainstream media 'infotainment' such as *Today Tonight* and *A Current Affair*, particularly in representations of the working-class single-mother on welfare. This was also seen in the SBS Documentary on asylum seekers *Go back to Where You Came From* (2010). Rachael, one of the participants was particularly demonized for her racist views (which were shared by most other participants) *because* of her classed position. In particular she was receptive to outright ire from the shows largely middle-class viewership. Another example that is both a 'disgusting subject' (Skeggs: 2005), and yet is also about desire is the character of Katrina Skinner from the film *Suburban Mayhem.*

If feminine working-class sexualities are policed in this way, then how do centralizing working-class masculine sexualities become marked? If sexualities associated with centralizing working-class masculinities are highly limited,[102] the question is how does this translate to the sexualities of those who engage performatively with centralizing working-class masculinities? In answer, there are certain social and cultural limitations on the sexuality of working-class men that are related to class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. It is these limits that shall be explored in more detail—particularly in relation to how these sexual parameters permeate through to wider cultural attitudes and expectations about sexualities. In particular, being working-class is problematically linked with heterosexuality in both gendered and classed ways. As Jackson points out, 'it is necessary to consider not only the intersections between class and heterosexuality but also between both and gender, since heterosexuality is founded on gender differentiation and inequality' (2011: 12).

Connell has undertaken research in both working-class protest masculinities (1995) and working-class gay masculinities (2000). She discovered in her research on working-class masculinities that many men from working-class backgrounds, particularly those engaging with protest masculinity, enacted compulsory heterosexuality as part of their embodied masculinity (1995: 103). Indeed active homophobia was part of the way that the men in Connell's study marked themselves as masculine. For working-class men, sexuality is still an area where they (at least

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[102] There are several different ways to 'do' working-class sexuality including the respectable boyfriend/husband and the more predatory single man 'on the prowl'. However, the types of transgressive heterosex described by Beasley (2011) would be unlikely to be as widely socially accepted, as they are often acts that challenge normative gendered sexuality, and discursive mainstream constructions of working-class sexuality are heterosexual and heteronormative.

outwardly) conform to traditional roles, engaging with heteronormative social expectations. Enforced heterosexuality is not only linked with class. As Whitehead assays,

> Invariably the term 'male sexuality' assumes heterosexuality as the 'norm'. But, as with gender what is considered 'normal' sexuality is not necessarily 'natural'. In speaking of a singular 'male sexuality', we immediately imply a gendered embeddedness to sexual practice (2002: 163).

Homosexuality is also distanced from being working-class through the way it is represented within mainstream media and social discourses. As Connell found in her research on working-class gay masculinities; 'surveys have regularly found respondents from gay community venues to be highly educated and affluent in comparison to the general population' (2000: 103). Television shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* reinforce the notion that being gay is intrinsically linked with consumption, cultural capital, and 'taste'—all things not connected with the working-class. Research has often overlooked the classed nature of representations of homosexuality, or has focused on GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) communities that are often middle and upper-classed. In her research on gay men from working-class backgrounds, Connell points out that gay communities like Oxford Street in Sydney are often isolating and exclusionary for men from the working-class (2000: 112). As she states in reference to those she interviewed, 'a number of them reveal a strong sense of class distance from "Oxford Street", and experience of exclusion, whether cultural or economic' (2000: 112). For working-class gay men local 'beats' were a more popular way to become part of the gay scene rather than becoming involved in the urban gay community (2000: 113).

For men from the working-class, sexuality is an important part of connecting to and engaging performatively with, centralizing working-class masculinities. However, only certain sexual experiences are legitimized. Donaldson found that for working-class men, marriage and the maintenance of a significant relationship with a woman was given great priority (1991: 25).

> In the face of an uncompromising labour regime, the sex act assumes a considerable importance. Because capital does not directly control masculine sexuality, this is one of the few areas left to working men which they can develop and express. As labour has been steadily degraded by capitalism, sex has become increasingly important (1991: 26).

In Donaldson's research, it is the act of *heterosex*, not the act of sex itself that is important. It can be hypothesized that engagement with sexual experiences and expressions outside the normative will not have the same payoff. As Connell found, there is tension between non-normative sexualities and working-class identity.

The intersection of class, gender and sexuality is an area that has received limited attention, and is an area in which more research is needed. As McDermott explains, 'the marginalization of class from sexualities research raises epistemological questions about whose experiences are being used to generalize understandings of sexual and intimate life?' (2011). It was interesting to note that none of the interview participants presented as gay (which was a question I did not

directly ask). Some respondents were aware of the ways in which sexuality created inequality,

> I don't believe gay couples receive recognition as such as being equal in society. They're definitely placed in a minority I think Australia, though it may not be as bad as it used to be is still generally a fairly conservative society, yep, I'd definitely say that gay couples, um, I mean it's better in terms of the types social rights in, but even in terms of things like being able to leave your superannuation to your partner, but they don't receive the same rights as some other countries and states (T, union worker, 41, married).

Yet others were much more traditionally inclined, and are especially concerned when non-normative sexualities were involved or engaged with the highly heteronormative sphere of the family,

> Um, as for the gay thing not to be a bit of a homophobe, I've always grown up with conservative parents, as in this is right this is wrong so, in a way I see two mummies or two daddies as not being right but then I also see it as if you've got two chicks and a boy and a girl there you're still acting like a family so I'm a bit sort of split with that (M, manufacturing worker, engaged, 35).

This comment is highly revealing in that it shows the normative associations attached to 'the family' particularly around sex and sexuality. Yet it also illustrates the awareness that such attitudes or ideas may not be 'right'. The ambivalence illustrated here may be indicative of a wider ambivalence about sex and sexuality. While centralizing working-class masculinity is both heteronormative *and* heterosexual, other ways of doing sexuality and doing masculinities may be gaining

more social and cultural ground. And, of course, sexuality cannot be separated from emotion, intimacy, relationships, and families.

Intimacy and Relationships

Intimacy, much like sexuality, is an area where little research has focused on class. Indeed intimacy is an area that has received limited attention in sociology. As Ann Oakley argues in relations to sociology,

> [it] has catered more efficiently for social action and inaction in the public than in the private realm; it has favored those structures, processes and interactions associated with the typically unselfconscious world-view of dominant group, at the expense of insights to be gained from privileging the world as seen by minority groups. Emotions and personal relationships are, of course, the very stuff of life itself (1998: 22).

Intimacy and relationships was an area only covered briefly in the interviews, yet it yielded some very rich, telling, data. This highlighted the lack of research in this area and suggested it was an area that is ripe for detailed academic exploration. Intimacy is as yet an underexplored as a part of the 'private realm'. Pocock argues that, 'while our public life has a large focus on sex and sexuality, the focus on intimacy is much weaker' (2003: 106). Intimacy is posited as a feminine concern, and is thus marginalized. The intersection of masculinity, class and intimacy is, much like the intersection of masculinity, class and sexuality, under-researched. In order to look at

how class and masculinity interact with notions of intimacy this section explores several common themes in intimacy and relationship-based scholarship. The first area to be considered is the 'pure relationship'.

The 'Pure Relationship', a commonly discussed term in intimacy research, is defined by Anthony Giddens as,

> one in which external criteria have become dissolved; the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that the relationship can deliver. In the context of the pure relationship, trust can be mobilized only by a process of mutual disclosure (1991:6).

The pure relationship is conceptually part of 'high modernity' (Giddens 1991, 1992), which is characterized by 'globalization, disembeddedness, enhanced sense of risk, dominance of experts and abstract systems, and reflexivity' (Jamieson 1999). Indeed, it is the 'reflexive narrative of self' (Giddens 1992) that is most important to this critique of the pure relationship. Giddens' posits that, 'people are now the reflexive authors of their own biographies' (Duncan 2005) and that while inequalities are still in existence, individuals are the determiners of their own life trajectories through the construction of not only an outer self, but a deeper inner self (Jamieson 1999; Duncan 2005). The pure relationship, 'necessarily requires equality between the parties in the relationship, that is a shared sense of self-disclosure and contributing on an equal footing to the relationship' (Jamieson 1999: 478).

The need for gendered equality is relatively evident, but there must also be equality based on class (and other ways in which individuals are marked and embodied). This raises some issues with both the 'pure relationship' and 'reflexive narratives of self' as, arguably, this approach negates class as causing a major impact on how an individual forms their narrative of self. Giddens actually argues that class is, 'empty of conceptual use in social analysis' (Giddens 1992 in Johnson & Lawler 2005). However class and gender affect the narratives an individual has access to (Skeggs 2005). This includes their relationships, their education, their self-awareness and confidence, and their ability to engage in the 'pure relationship'. The ability to engage in the 'pure relationship' is also affected by economic, mundane factors—which are often particularly important to the working-class. Arguably the 'pure relationship' present in much of the intimacy literature is a middle-class construct.

The theorizing of class often concentrates on employment and economic issues, while paying less attention to the more intimate, personal ways of doing class. Yet class impacts on the intimate and personal. As Lawler and Johnson explain, 'when related to personal issues such as love, class is ruled out of an analysis of matters deemed more 'cultural' than economic' (2005: 1.2). Yet they state that it is,

> doubly important to analyze class in terms of the personal and the domestic ("home"): first because class has *always* been forged in the private sphere, as well as the public; and secondly because we need to investigate the ways in which class

continues to matter despite a rhetoric which would place inequality 'within' the person (Lawler & Johnson 2005: 1.5).

Indeed, they found that class is still a major structuring force that determines how people will enact and experience their personal relationships (2005).[103] The limited research available on class and relationships has shown that people tend to partner off with members of their own class grouping (Weis 1990, 2004, 2008). Furthermore, when heterosexual couples come from different classed backgrounds it is more likely to be the women who comes from a working-class background and the man who comes from the middle/upper-classes (Johnson & Lawler 2005: 5.5) arguably reflecting the need to maintain gendered hierarchies of power within relationships. Johnson and Lawler found that heterosexual romantic relationships were not only based around class, but maintained classed and gendered hierarchies within them (2005: 5.9). Class then exists as a determining factor in creating an intimate relationship, while it is also replicated within intimate relationships. For working-class men their gender and their class intersect in ways that shape their intimate relations. Furthermore, their class and gender are embedded within each other in ways that create unique spaces for the forging of intimate relations and sexualities that may either maintain or disrupt gendered and classed intimacies.

Jamieson (1999) notes that intimacy is often a site for the reiteration of gendered divisions, and that often, even in relatively egalitarian sexual relationships,

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[103] Links between class and personal relationships have been explored in the University of Adelaide research into Student Experience in the University Preparatory Program (2013), in which we found that for working-class women in particular, studying at university challenged their classed position which had a ripple-on effect on their personal relationships including relationships with friends and partners. This theme will be explored in a forthcoming paper.

the focus is phallocentric and that women are often posited as the 'sexual carers' (1999). Beasley argues, however, that heterosex can be a site for challenging gendered and sexual norms (2011). Furthermore, she posits that heterosexual intimacies can challenge normativity and that heterosexuality is not automatically heteronormative. One assumption that such non-normative heterosexuality may challenge is that men are more concerned with sex and women more concerned with intimacy (Jamieson 1999). Emotion, specifically emotional maturity, is often constructed as feminine, or as Whitehead posits,

> The idea that emotional maturity is the province of the female, and that men are emotionally incompetent, only serves to further reinforce the gendered public and private dualism at the heart of most societies, modern or otherwise (2002: 175).

The relationship between intimacy and sexuality becomes fraught when intimacy and sexuality are separated along gendered lines. Connell (1995) found that intimacy, sexuality and equality were difficult for men to reconcile in light of embodied masculinities. Centralizing working-class masculinities in Australia are constructed as being tough and unemotional (Murrie 1998), while also being represented as sexual (in an aggressively heterosexual, phallocentric sense). This creates tension between socially constructed centralizing working-class masculinity and the lived experiences of men who may or may not want more intimacy, both sexually and emotionally, in their lives.

During the interview process, some of the most interesting responses came about when discussing relationships. While I asked very few in depth questions

about intimacy (for reasons discussed in the methodology chapter), several of the men were quite forthcoming about their relationships and what they defined as important in their intimate lives. For the interviewees between the ages of 30 and 45, there were some very specific and very emotive responses when asked about their partners, their lives and what was important to them.

> You don't need heaps of money, because if you enjoy each other's company it's half the battle. Like if you can sit all night and have a talk with no TV on or anything you're laughin' I reckon, y'know there are lots of people that are materialistic … to have love, to be able to get along, I mean there's plenty of simple things you can do like you can go for a walk or whatever just if you enjoy each other's company that's the biggest part of it. You're not entertaining yourself with outside influences like you can come home and just sit and watch TV for like, five hours, and say, "we have a relationship" but you're watching telly, you're not talking and to have a great relationship you've got to be by yourself as you are straight and normal. (M, manufacturing worker, engaged, 35)

This response not only illustrates the importance of intimacy to this participant's life, it also shows that the respondent has no concerns over discussing intimacy which inverts the notion that intimacy is something 'done' by women and that 'real' men, as portrayed in popular cultural representations of centralizing working-class masculinity, are largely unconcerned with intimacy and relationships. Indeed, one interviewee stated that the qualities he would associate with being an 'Aussie' man would be,

Qualities of being a man would be, I think, mostly is to be a person that … is loving and caring. I guess a person that understands people, understands their families and contributes not only in a monetary sense but in an emotional sense as well (T, union worker, 41, married).

These responses show that emotional intimacy is important to these men, not only as part of their relationships, but as a part of their embodied masculinity. When these two men answered questions about their family it became clear that for them, enacting intimacy was not a way of subverting dominant discourses about masculinity, but was in fact a part of an embodied Australian working-class masculinity. This illustrates a very important division between working-class men doing intimacy and centralizing working-class masculinities. Indeed, centralizing working-class masculinities are constructed as individualistic, unemotional and averse to any real, deeper forms of intimacy that could be construed as feminine, while these men were not only happy to discuss intimacy, it was an important part of their classed and gendered identities. This could suggest that for these men, their intimate relationships are a space in which they disrupt mainstream gendered ideologies.

As Jamieson points out, 'there is a general taken-for-granted assumption that a good relationship will be equal and intimate' (1999). However, intimacy is not necessarily correlated with gender equality. If a sense of equality is often an important part of intimacy, 'creative energy is often deployed in disguising inequality, not in undermining it' (Bittman & Lovejoy 1993 in Jamieson 1999). Therefore the

transgression of gendered assumptions about sex and intimacy, specifically the notion that men desire sex and women desire intimacy does not definitively correspond with gendered equality in the relationship. The desire for a more equitable intimacy that involves a willingness to open oneself to emotional equality in a relationship may be a contributing factor in challenging gendered inequalities within the family. This area needs much more attention.

Being a Husband, Being a Dad: Classed and Gendered Families

If homosocial groupings among working-class men offer some, limited, spaces for challenges to dominant discourses, there is another site for further challenges to dominant gendered and classed discourses; the family. Here consideration is given to how, despite that fact that working-class identity is linked with traditional masculine mores and breadwinner masculinity, the working-class family offers some powerful spaces and places for gendered change. The importance of 'family' to the working-class has been established (Donaldson 1991: 25). Certainly, the importance of family as central to having a good life was often established in the interviews,

> I think what's important in life is to have a good family life and … a good environment where you can pass that on to your kids (T, union worker, 41, married).

Family is a classed and gendered construct. While the family is seen as being central to working-class life, different aspects of family life are marked by class,

including parenting (Gillies 2005) and marriage (Johnson & Lawler 2005). Different types of families are classed, for example research shows how single parent families with several children by different fathers are associated with the subjective position of the 'disgusting' working-class woman (Lawler 2002; Skeggs 2005). In Australia, the 'working families'/'battler' archetypes so strongly linked to centralizing working-class masculinities are represented by a very classed and gendered notion of what a family entails. In part this is linked with 'breadwinner' masculinity, which creates a source of tension when well-paid, local work may be hard to find.

The intersection of performing 'correct' fatherhood with performing 'correct' masculinity is evident throughout Australian culture and is linked with the maintenance of centralizing working-class masculinity. As Marsiglio and Pleck acknowledge, 'fathering can be studied in connection to hegemonic masculinity as well as alternative constructions of masculinities that give meaning to men's everyday lives in diverse situations' (2005: 250). While the actual model of the father/provider may be in fact less common, in popular cultural representations of the ideal father there is still a heavy impetus placed on this ideal. While cultural and mainstream discourses link the provider role with centralizing working-class masculinity, in reality these days the sole provider is a largely middle/upper-class construct (Gillies 2005a; Shows & Gerstel 2009) as few working-class families can afford to live on a single income. Neo-liberal discourses about the 'deserving self' (Gillies 2005a: 836) within the family are used to once again link middle-class values of individualism and choice with 'proper' fathering. The discursive constructions of

the 'deserving self',[104] Gillies argues, 'become a resource for middle-class parent to consolidate their advantages and ensure the reproduction of privilege through the generations' (2005a: 836). In Australia, for instance, discursive constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity often reinforce the importance of making the 'right' (socially sanctioned) choices for the family (by, for example, going to work in the mines to provide a good 'middle-class' lifestyle).

For working-class men the balance between 'good father' and 'good provider' may be difficult to achieve. Men who do go to work remotely in the mining industry often do so for the sake of the family in financial terms, arguably buying into neo-liberal constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity where, 'money and financial success are highly esteemed' (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010: 404). However, financial rewards are often tempered by loss of contact, particularly with children (Torkington, Larkins & Gupta 2011: 135). The patriotism that is so often tied in to images of the mining industry is also persuasive in terms of seeking employment; to work in the mining industry is not only doing the 'right' thing in terms of family, it is doing the right thing for Australia. The problematic ways in which the mining industry is constructed as quintessentially Australian will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Mining work is often socially and culturally constructed as an 'answer' to the financial problems facing many blue-collar workers. While the provision of material

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[104] Gilles argues that the 'deserving self' is a meritocratic construction (and I would argue neo-liberal) that places the fault for poverty, and other forms of social exclusion on the individual. 'From this perspective, prosperity derives from being the right kind of (middle-class) self, while poverty and disadvantage is associated with poor self-management' (Gilles 2005: 837).

'comfort' and economic privilege through engagement with the labour market is part of providing access to choice, it is often done so at a personal and familial risk in the case of working-class families (Pocock 2003). Financial concerns are constructed as being of far more importance than being physically present. Money, and the provision of a middle-classed familial space, is often positioned as being of optimum importance. The inventive and creative ways that poorer parents provide for their families is devalued in this classed context. As Gillies explains,

> While middle-class practices of shoring up and passing on their privilege are held to be the embodiment of 'good parenting', working-class parents' resourceful actions in the context of material deprivation are identified as the cause of their disadvantage (2005a).

The choices for working-class parents are difficult, remain engaged and present with the family and struggle financially, or find work in the well-paying but remote mining industry and possibly risk family unity.[105] Even for parents who do make the 'right' choice in terms of neo-liberal individualism (going to work remotely for more money) the choices can be demonized. As Pini, McDonald and Mayes found, excess consumption by working-class people is often socially constructed as undesirable and 'crass' (2012). Yet failure to provide material goods is also a point of contention. For the working-class, there is little middle ground. Centralizing working-class masculinities are highly legitimized while actual class-based inequity is denied

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[105] A recent edition of the Australian Workers Union magazine *The Worker* had an article about the pitfalls of fly-in-fly-out work (issue 3 2011). While the report looked mostly at the effects on local communities, it did mention the low supply of suitable family accommodation. More recently the Australian Government Senate Inquiry into FIFO work has had several submissions which refer to both the problems associated with it (such as familial discord, depression, drug and alcohol use, and even high rates of STIs) and the problems faced by local communities (lack of infrastructure, young people leaving town, increased crime and a disintegration of community). http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=/ra/fifodido/hearings.htm

through neo-liberal discourses about the egalitarian nature of Australian society (Elder 2007: 49).

It becomes clear that the linkage between middle-class gendered and classed constructs of family with centralizing working-class masculinities creates a significant tension. This tension is resolved in a variety of ways. For example, Gillies (2005a) notes that working-class parents are expected to raise middle-class children in order to have access to narratives of the 'worthy' parent. Furthermore representations of working-class fathers are sometimes less than flattering—particularly when being working-class is correlated with being low-income. Once again the image of the male 'breadwinner' is used to show how despite neo-liberal discursive constructions of 'choice', only certain choices are the 'right', socially acceptable ones as a parent. For example, provision of a middle-class lifestyle, or the aspirational striving to achieve a middle-class, lifestyle is posited as the best choice. Gillies explains how this results in some choices being included as right or 'worthy' while others are not, 'the 'included' worthy citizen subscribes to middle-class values and ambitions and can therefore be trusted to raise the next generation. The excluded, however, are destined, through their own personal failings as parents, to reproduce their poverty' (Gillies 2005b: 840).

For men (and women) from the working-class, access to traditional modes of 'good' parenting connected with middle-class affluence and values may be lacking. However neo-liberal and conservative manifestations of centralizing working-class

masculinity are always aligned with being gainfully engaged with the labour market in a way that provides for the material comfort of a man's family (even if his work is blue-collar/labouring) in nature. This can create tension between the working-class dad and partner engaged with his family, and the working-class 'provider'. This is one way through which constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity help define parenting as both a gendered and classed construct, supporting neo-liberal and conservative discourses about the family.[106] Indeed, for those that fall outside this specifically classed and gendered construction of family and parenting, it can mean denial of their right to be classed as parents at all (Lawler 2002: 109).

This denial of a person's position as a parent based on embodied intersections of class and gender is not limited to women, as Lawler argues (2002). In mainstream gendered and classed discourses it is the previously discussed role of the 'breadwinner' that can be used to demonize certain 'types' of working-class fathers—specifically those who are either tenuously or not at all engaged with the employment market. Even those fathers who do work full time but cannot provide a decent living wage can be constructed as having made the wrong 'choices'. Marsiglio and Pleck discuss how the inability to provide adequately for the family can threaten a man's sense of being a good father,

> When men are unemployed or underemployed, they often find it difficult to feel good
> about themselves as fathers because the provider role continues to be an important

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[106] Centralizing working-class masculinities have recently been highly visible in constructions of the mining industry, reiterating the notion that FIFO work in the mining industry is a sensible choice for working-class men, especially those retrenched from the manufacturing industry. See, for example the Mining Australia website http://www.australia-mining.com/?G1

feature of hegemonic images of masculinity and men's fathering experience (2005: 260).

Forste, Bartkowski and Jackson go on to show how fathering is classed in the United States, with working-class/low-income fathers becoming the 'other',

> Low income men face distinctive challenges in cultivating a viable identity as a father. Although the breadwinner ideal is no longer dominant, its historical residue may lead low-income men to view themselves as inadequate providers (Lupton & Barclay, 2007). In addition, popular culture (e.g. film) often portrays low-income fathers as deadbeat dads who are sexually irresponsible and not financially viable (Waller 2002), (Forste, Bartkowski & Jackson 2009: 51).

In order to be the idealized 'citizen' father, breadwinning, or 'providing', is therefore posited as central. Yet providing can clash with actually being physically present as a parent, and can have negative consequences for not only the absent parent (often the father in the case of mining work), but also for the caretaking parent. As McDonald, Mayes and Pini point out, 'mining women struggle with inequities in their marital relationships as they … typically undertake all domestic labour' (2012: 25).

Reduced focus on providing can arguably allow for new, more involved ways to be engaged with parenting. Yet, for working-class fathers in Australia, the desire to establish themselves as 'good' fathers by involvement with their children may be tempered by the lack of family friendly workplace policies. While workplaces may be argued to be becoming more family friendly, this is often not the case, because, as

Pocock argues, 'public policy discussion about the "family friendly" workplace, and men's changing roles is revealed as more rhetorical than real' (2003: 258). While they may be able to find ways to overcome their difficulty in living up to the good provider model, the cycle of employment and the industries in which they work may then make those new ways to be a good father difficult to achieve. These narratives of 'bad' or delegitimized parenting rely on maintaining gendered and classed structural inequalities both inside and outside the family. However, some research shows that it is within these disrupted working-class families that change may be most likely to occur.

While there are some limits to working-class fathers' abilities to subvert gendered discourses about parenting, particularly the importance of the breadwinner identity as part of centralizing working-class masculinities, there are also several opportunities for them to do so as are explored below. Discourses about parenting, and specifically fathering are changing, as Pocock points out,

> Some commentators assume that a slow and inevitable convergence between men's and women's sharing of domestic work will occur in countries such as Australia, as young women assert their right to a fair sharing of work and care (2005: 91).

The desire for more equitable parenting practices is becoming more common. The 'new father' takes a more hands-on role as a parent, as Wall and Arnold explain, 'the 'new fathers' of today are ideally more nurturing, develop closer emotional relationships with their children, and share the joys and work of caregiving with

mothers' (2007: 509). In circumstances where a father is unable to fully perform the breadwinner role, due to unemployment, part time employment or lower wages, taking on the 'new father' role is more likely (Shows & Gerstel 2009). Men are more likely now to want to spend more time with children (Western, Baxter & Chesters 2007). However, often fathers are more likely to undertake what Shows and Gerstel deem 'public parenting' (2009), as is explored in the next section. What needs further exploration is the fact that despite women's increasing role in the workplace and men's increasing desire to be more hands-on, women still more likely to do more in terms of caring for children (Western, Baxter & Chesters 2007: 248).

There are several reasons for this. As explored in the previous chapter, workplaces are becoming less flexible, making it harder to balance work and family (Pocock 2003). The ACTU *50 Families* report on unreasonable work hours found that for many men and women neo-liberal workplace policies had severely affected their family lives, 'limited time at home affected intimate relationships, and relationships with children' (Pocock et al 2001: 34). In fact, the implementation of WorkChoices had further negative effects of the work/life balance (Muir 2008). Even with WorkChoices having been largely overturned, work/life balance is still a major issue for many Australians. One factor is arguably the ongoing cultural ubiquity of neo-liberal and conservative inflected centralizing working-class masculinity. Despite challenges to the gendered nature of parenting, the image of the working-class 'bloke' as a 'provider' still lingers. Furthermore, centralizing working-class masculinity is often used to reinforce notions of workplace loyalty (as displayed so fervently by the character of Kenny Smythe). Culturally, individualistic neo-liberal attitudes to

work are still deeply entrenched in the Australian psyche—particularly in relation to masculinity. Challenging the gendered nature of families, and the gendered nature of parenting, is difficult to achieve when more traditional, conservative and highly individualistic models are so often reinforced both culturally, socially, and most importantly, in the workplace itself.

Gender Within Working-Class Families: Maintenance or Disruption?

Much as there is a lack of focus on intimacy and class, particularly in relation to men, there is also a lack of research on how class shapes fatherhood (Shows and Gerstel 2009). Shows and Gerstel explored this in their 2009 paper which looks at class and fathering, and compares the fathering practices of working-class men to middle-class men. They found that working-class men employed as emergency medical technicians were not only much more flexible in their parenting practices than the middle-class medical practitioners they interviewed, but that their parenting styles were much more likely to challenge gendered notions of parenting. In particular, they found that the working-class men were more likely to engage in what they defined as private parenting, while the middle-class men were more likely to engage in public parenting. They define public and private fathering as follows:

we distinguish between "public" fathering, which entails primary involvement with children in leisure activities and events outside the home that are visible to the larger public; and "private" fathering, which entails a primary focus on the quotidian

tasks of families, typically less visible to the larger public because much occurs at home (2009: 169).

Cha and Thébaud argue that men in a single-income breadwinner role are more likely to hold traditional attitudes to gender within the family (2009: 216). Much like the public/private dichotomy that surrounds work, with public work being paid employment in the wider community and private work being unpaid labour in the home; this distinction is highly gendered. I would also add that performing the breadwinner role is often part of 'public' fathering—as it is often made highly visible through not only the public role of paid employment, but the public acquisition of material comforts.

For the working-class men in Shows and Gerstel's study, family time was a carefully considered part of doing overtime in order to earn more money, whereas the middle-class fathers were largely reluctant to sacrifice money for more time with their families. However, the desire for material things was not the only reason behind working-class men's heavier involvement at home, and increased likeliness to engage in private fathering. Most of these men had partners who were in the workforce and the demands of their partners' jobs, coupled with lack of resources for childcare outside the family, created a situation where they needed to be more involved parents. This study does suggest that working-class families may have more opportunity to create a space for the disruption of the inequitable responsibility for the care of children. Furthermore, Shows and Gerstel noted that the working-class fathers didn't just take an active parenting role because of necessity; they

wanted to and enjoyed this engagement. Working-class families often must rely on dual incomes to get by (Legerski & Cornwall 2010). But more importantly, their classed position means that they may have a very different relationship with materiality and socially constructed norms about not only class, but also gender which could arguably create a space in which relationships with children (and with partners) have more space to change.

In contrast to Shows and Gerstel, who found a real challenge to gendered familial roles in the families they studies, Elizabeth Mikyla Legerski and Marie Cornwall found an adherence to gender roles in working-class families in their paper on working-class families affected by male partners' job losses. Even when their partners had to work in order to maintain the household they found that, 'most couples sustained a traditional gender ideology despite the fact that women's employment was fundamentally necessary' (2011). They also found that. 'although the employment status of couples changed, gender was reinforced. Even when women were employed, their employment was folded into traditional understandings of the roles of men and women' (2011). Unlike Shows and Gerstel, Legerski and Cornwall found that an important part of the identities of their interviewees was tied up in their performance of the correct gender.

There were significant differences between the couples interviewed by Shows and Gerstel and those interviewed by Legerski and Cornwall. The first study looked at gainfully employed men whose female partners also worked, and they

were largely younger families with children. The second study looked at men who had been made partially or fully redundant; they were mostly older couples without children at home, and they were also largely religiously conservative. While these factors cannot explain entirely the differences in findings, they do go some way to explaining some to the adherence to traditional familial gender roles. Cha and Thébaud argue that men's attitude to gender, 'is distinctly related to their individual breadwinning experiences, not just the degree to which women have an overall presence in the labour market' (2009: 237). Some middle and upper-class men who earn more and are therefore more able to be the sole breadwinner of a single-income household may be more likely to have traditional views than men from working-class households (which are often dual-income). Many middle-class men have highly educated middle-class partners who are invested in their careers, and indeed, for inner-city younger middle-class couples adherence to traditional gender roles may be something they actively avoid. What is clear is that more research on the ways that gender, class and parenting intersect and interweave is needed.

The responses I received from my interviewees did illustrate some egalitarian attitudes to parenting in working-class households. However, while my respondents were relatively forthcoming in terms of fathering, none spoke about their duties around the house, or their 'work' outside of paid employment. Indeed, it seems that while parenting was something they not only spoke about, it was something that was central to their concepts of themselves as men. Yet other domestic duties were so unimportant as to not even warrant a mention. In the area of

parenting it seems that the ideology of the 'new father' is the most common, with Shows and Gerstel's findings supported by responses such as the following,

> I think you have this concept of parenting that comes from your experiences as a child, and sometimes I think that's not the best way. I think as males we have a lot of pride, and we tend to, even if we might be wrong we tend not to admit it. I think one of the best things you can do as a man is be able to learn how to say "sorry" not only to your partner but to your kids. And I think we have this perception of this macho image that we need to sort of break down and we need to realise that it's okay to even say to your son that you love him. (T, union worker, married, 41)

Much like the responses about intimacy, this response highlights a lack of concern with maintaining a façade of unemotional masculinity in favour of being open, caring and loving not only with a partner, but also with children.

While this may illustrate some disruption to gendered mores surrounding parenting, it does not prove definitively that a working-class household equals an egalitarian one. As Cha and Thébaud recognize, attitudes to gender are often, 'negotiated through private experience of norm contestation and resolution within the family' (2009: 237). However, they did note that hegemonic masculinity did have an effect on how men felt about gender within the family (2009: 238). As Flood argues,

> On one hand, fatherhood is enjoying the best of times among families with positive parental relationships and stable, committed father-child bonds and among post-divorce families with residential fathers or positive interaction by non-residential

fathers. On the other hand, 'more children do not live with their fathers, relate to their fathers on a regular basis, or enjoy the economic support of their fathers' (Doherty 1997: 221)' (2010: 330).

Attitudes to gender are not only shaped within the family, but exist when the family breaks down. Hegemonic masculinities (such as centralizing working-class masculinity) influence the way men deal with relationship breakdown as much as they influence relationships.

At present, one in three marriages end in divorce in Australia. While the disintegration of the family unit is difficult for all individuals involved, research has shown that it can be particularly difficult for men (Dudley, 1991; Kruk, 1994). Catlett and McKenry state that,

> Marriage is beneficial to men, in part, as a result of its meaning and implications for meeting the societal ideals of masculinity. Divorce would, therefore, be expected to limit those benefits and thus cause additional post-divorce despair and loss (Coombs, 1991; Kiecolt-Glasner & Newton, 2001) (2004: 166).

So what does this mean for men when familial relationships dissolve? Apart from the obvious emotional and financial impact of family separation, divorced or separated men have to contend with a challenge to their performance of masculinity.

Arguably, the loss of the family home, their major relationship, contact with children, and financial security is compounded by the loss of an important facet of idealized masculinity. As Catlett and McKenry write, 'the long standing gender-based division of labour within many families breaks down at the point of divorce. When couples stop living together, gender-structured exchanges between husbands and wives lapse' (2004: 167). Evidence suggests that family breakdown creates a challenge to the performance of hegemonic masculinity for many men. If this is the case then it can be argued that for men from the working-class, family breakdown poses even greater challenges to their performance of hegemonic masculinity as, unlike men from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds, the family may be one of the only sites in which their dominant gendered position is able to be fully enacted.

The ability to deal with the challenge to their gender is at least partially countered by the socio-economic position of an individual. For men from working-class backgrounds (and women from the working-class), the ability to retain components of hegemonic masculinity after family breakdown may be harder owing to a lack of power socially and economically. Losing the role of the head-of-household can cause instability in an individual's embodiment of a culturally exalted masculinity. Catlett and McKenry explain,

> From a gender-focused viewpoint, men occupy positions of relative privilege, and divorce calls this status into question. In particular, the reorganization of financial and parenting roles following divorce can precipitate changes in father's prerogatives in the family. Thus, the divorce process and the legal systems that it

invokes redistribute power and may well lead to a post divorce family structure in which men's perceived relative position is dramatically altered (2004: 180).

This is a cross-class phenomenon. As previously explored, the head-of-household breadwinner archetype moves beyond classed constructions. While centralizing working-class masculinity is often constructed around traditional family roles, not only working-class men identify with centralizing working-class masculinity. To reiterate Beasley's claims, it is a mobilizing ideal that moves beyond class line (while reaffirming gender norms, heteronormativity and whiteness).

Men's reactions to divorce can be linked to their personal attitudes to gender. This becomes clear when considering the men's rights and father's rights movements, which, while overlapping in some areas and differing in others, 'represent an organized backlash to feminism' (Flood 2010: 328). Groups such as the Australian Men's Rights Association, and the Men's Rights Agency are two such organizations, both of which rely on highly traditional images of gender, blaming many social and cultural issues on an attack on men and masculinity.[107],[108] Feelings of powerlessness that may occur in the face of a separation may contradict men's sense of masculinity. As Flood point out, 'painful experiences of divorce and separation, as well as experiences of family law, produce a steady stream of men who can be recruited into father's rights groups' (2010: 329). Conservative narratives

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[107] See the Men's Rights Agency http://mensrights.com.au and the Australian Men's Rights Association http://www.australianmensrights.com/

[108] When visiting the site of The Men's Rights Agency in early 2013, the lead story was one about the Sandy Hook massacre in the US. The story blamed violent video games (while ignoring the gender imbalance in video games) and the fact that Adam Lanza, the killer, lived in a single parent household with his mother. http://mensrights.com.au/fatherhood/why-did-he-kill-all-those-children/

about the family play in to the notion of the man as head-of-household reifying traditional gender norms and encouraging a sense of familial 'ownership'. Father's Rights groups play in to this, and Flood argues that 'their efforts will continue to be bolstered by wider neo-conservative panics over the status of fatherhood and the authority of patriarchy' (2010: 342).

While father's and men's rights groups are at the extreme end of the spectrum, many men feel their masculinity is challenged by divorce. Natalier and Hewitt found that men often resist paying child support as they feel it challenges their authority over their former wives and children, because.

> Financial responsibility and the associated power, once primarily the province of fathers, shifts to mothers who remain the primary day-to-day carers of children and control the household economies where children live (2010: 491).

Control over money is just one way men seek to retain control over ex-partners and children. In Australia father's rights groups have been successful in lobbying for changes to family law which make it more difficult for women and children who have been victims of violence to have no contact with their abuser (Flood 2010). Furthermore, under the Howard Government, substantial changes were made to family law, with the court being instructed to assume that shared parenting was always in the best interests of children. Despite these law changes, which do enable abusers to continue to abuse (Flood 2010: 334), there has been little increase in shared parenting between separated partners (Rhoades, Graycar & Harrison 2002). Conservative changes to the law that enshrine father's rights over the safety of

mothers and children have not created more equitable arrangements around custody of children, but may have entrenched gendered power inequalities around parenting, separation and custody.

The family is obviously an important site within which the working-class can construct themselves. These constructions can either challenge dominant ideologies around gender or reflect and maintain such ideologies. The importance of the family in this context is somewhat at odds with the neo-liberal individualism and the conservatism that is becoming an increasing part of centralizing working-class masculinities. and which is so clearly evident in the character of Kenny Smyth from *Kenny* or images of the 'Aussie bloke' engaging with the mining industry. This individualism is particularly relevant to the mining industry, which relies on a largely non-resident workforce who are willing to spend a majority of their time located some distance from home and family. The complexity and problematic nature of this individualism and conservatism will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

<u>Conclusion.</u>

This chapter on the 'private' areas of working-class men's lives has been the largest in scope. Trying to engage with friendship, sexuality, intimacy, fathering and the family as constructed classed and gendered concepts and as central areas of individual lives is a huge undertaking. However, the relevant research in these topics

does not reflect this. While research on working-class masculinities and working-class men's lives is limited, particularly in Australia, it is in the areas of intimacy and the 'private' that this lack is most pronounced. This is not to say that there is not some relevant and ground breaking research occurring recently, particularly as class as an area of study gains more traction. Shows and Gerstel noted that there was a gap in research looking at the intersection of class and gender with parenting, and they went on to state, 'we hope our findings can and will be used in future research to further specify the relationships of social class to masculinity and parenting' (2009: 183). Stevi Jackson noted the same problem with research on class and sexualities, 'there is, at present, little work on class and heterosexuality' (2011: 12). Clearly then, the ways that class and gender intersect with the 'private' parts of life is an area in which more research is needed. In particular, research in this area that focusses on fly-in-fly-out work arrangements is needed to fully understand the real-life effects of remote work as engagement with the mining industry is not only becoming more common for the working-class in Australia, it is becoming an increasing part of the construction of centralizing working-class masculinities.

Despite the lack of research, some conclusions can be drawn. Both my own and others research has shown that it is these under-studied 'private' areas of working-class life where gendered norms may be most likely to be disrupted. The interview data gathered for this thesis coupled with research such as that undertaken by Shows and Gerstel (2009) and Legerski and Cornwall (2010), shows that gendered binaries may be more likely to be challenged in working-class arenas than in middle-class arenas. This may be because many areas of 'private' life such as intimacy, sexuality and parenting have been socially constructed as middle-class,

giving those who fail to embody the 'correct' identity due to their class the opportunity to challenge not only classed assumptions, but also gendered ones. For working-class men who identify to a greater or lesser extent with centralizing working-class masculinities, this may offer them some freedom as 'private' lives are not a central aspect of this construction. Therefore, it could be argued that the 'private' realm offers the following: (a) a space in which classed inequalities provides a location to challenge gendered inequalities; and, (b) that the 'private' realm also provides working-class men with a space in which they can distance themselves from centralizing working-class masculinity. However, I would argue that there are other areas outside of the 'private' realm that also provide a space for this disruption. Some of these areas will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

'It's Hard to Be an Aussie Bloke These Days': Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity *at* Risk, Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity *as* Risk.

Chapter Seven: 'It's Hard to Be an Aussie Bloke These Days': Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity *at* Risk, Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity *as* Risk.

Introduction

The concept of 'risk' is a powerful one. It encourages protectionism, conservatism and a resistance to change. It allows for specific groups, individuals, actions, and even discourses to be positioned as a threat. Risk as a concept can be applied to a huge array of social, political, economic and personal elements including health, behavior, education, the economy, employment, and national boundaries. The central premise of Ulrich Beck's theory of a world risk society is that, as Deborah Lupton states so clearly, 'individuals in contemporary Western societies are living in a transitional period, in which industrial society is becoming "risk society"' (1999: 59).

Risk is a powerful and wide-ranging concept that can also be applied to less tangible features such as national identity, masculinity and gender, familial structures, and 'our' way of life. Risk and other closely aligned concepts such as crisis, security, and encroachment create a popular binary between the thing at risk, and the thing creating the risk. For example, when the Australian mining tax was posited as being a risk to the economy it gained massive public disapproval (*Sydney Morning Herald* March 2012). When a perceived and constructed Muslim 'other' was

presented as a risk to national security it became easy to ensure Muslims were marginalized and excluded (Levy & Moses 2009). When the hegemony of a certain group (such as the wealthy, whites, heterosexuals, men) is perceived as threatened, mainstream discourses encourage protectionism and fear, which in turn can discourage more progressive attitudes and actions (Johnson 2005). Protectionism and fear are generated through risk discourses, and both protectionism and fear can be harnessed and used as political, social and economic tools. In this way risk is often used as a policing mechanism. Risk is, therefore, a powerful factor in denying challenge and change to structural, social and political inequity.

However, risk is also a tenuous construct. It is this fragility that is explored in this chapter. Risk is considered in relation to centralizing working-class masculinities, the policing of gender, race and Australian identity, and working-class men. Centralizing working-class masculinity is increasingly utilized as a tool of neo-liberal and conservative political rhetoric. For those who engage with this ideal, there is a very fine balancing act required in order to perform the correct classed and gendered behavior without going 'too far'. This fine line is the move from being at risk to being located as risk itself. This chapter explores risk in relation to gender, class, race and ethnicity, and national identity. This discussion illustrates how these discourses of risk are linked to neo-liberal discourses about choice and individuality in ways that utilize centralizing working-class masculinity, whether through the 'battler' archetype or the deployment of 'mining masculinity', while negating the very real inequities faced by working-class people. In order to do this some data from the interviews is

used, but the majority of the material discussed comes from a wider cultural analysis and utilizes the critical discourse analysis discussed in Chapter Two.

This cultural analysis engages with political, media and social discourses that occur around specific events or phenomena. This chapter begins by examining the links between gender and class in 'crisis' discourses, and how masculinity in crisis and the 'battler' in crisis are linked. It then explores how concerns expressed over the wellbeing of men, as a homogenous block that fail to address other linked identities, create the assumption that 'men' are white, heterosexual, and of an indeterminate, but mainstream class grouping. In other words, concerns about the 'Aussie bloke' and his place in Australian society can often directly lead to the reiteration of gendered, racialized and sexualized hierarchies in which certain bodies are granted status and others are not, and in which empathy is cut off from the 'othered' body (Johnson 2005: 56). By linking discourses of men at risk, and Australian culture at risk, the discussion shows how hierarchies are maintained in ways that have a very real negative impact on working-class men as well as other groups who fail to engage sufficiently with centralizing working-class masculinity.

Before looking at actual social and cultural phenomena where 'risk' is invoked there will be a brief consideration of the theoretical background of 'risk', looking in particular at Ulrich Beck's account of a world risk society. Risk will then be examined in relation to three specific areas: alcohol, car culture, and racial violence. This analysis will aim to uncover how working-class masculinities can be presented

as being at risk, but also as being risky. The discussion will closely examine the so-called 'Cronulla riots'[109] and the resultant discourses that arose from that incident to argue that the real risk is not either posed to or by centralizing working-class masculinities, but is often created through the ways such masculinities are represented in the mainstream media and political rhetoric about authentic Australian identity. Alcohol and drinking culture have been chosen because it is an area closely associated with risk, yet participation within drinking culture—especially pub culture—is central to both Australian working-class masculinity *and* Australian national identity. As Hugh Campbell explains, 'male pub drinking practices have not persisted as a nostalgic memorial to a simpler life; they persist because they are a site of male power and legitimacy' (2000: 563). This is also true of car culture, Linley Walker speaks of an apparently, 'distorted masculinity produced by young working-class men's obsession with cars' (1998:28). Both drinking and car culture are performed along classed and gendered lines, and participation in both can either be a marker of engaging with gender and class in an acceptable manner, or a marker of excess and 'bad' choices, as illustrated by Linley Walker's previous statement. Therefore, both drinking and car culture provide examples of the limitations created by engaging with centralizing working-class masculinity, limitations where risk is used as a policing mechanism.

The consideration of the Cronulla riot will not focus on the actual events that transpired, but rather will be looking at the kinds of discourses that occurred as a result of these events. Cronulla provided a catalyst for academic, media and political

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[109] On Sunday the 11th of December 2005 on Sydney's Cronulla beach a crowd of approximately 5000 white youths rampaged, 'around the vicinity of the beach, shops and railway station attacking anyone of 'middle-eastern' appearance.' The event became colloquially known as the 'Cronulla Riots' (Noble 2009: 1).

discourses about ethnicity, masculinity and class. As Greg Noble points out, 'the consequences, both short and long term, are still being worked out' (2009: 2). Cronulla provides such an important entry point for discussions of Australian centralizing working-class masculinity because it is the ultimate example of the fragility of risk discourses, particularly as policing mechanisms. Cronulla occurred in part because of a sense of risk, or threat, perceived in an ethnic 'other' and a need to protect spaces marked as both masculine and white (Moreton-Robinson & Nicoll 2006; Johns 2008; Evers 2009). Protecting oneself, one's 'mates' and one's 'women' against a perceived risk is a highly acceptable part of performing Australian masculinity, particularly Australian centralizing working-class masculinity, and that, for some subjective identities, it is not only acceptable but expected.[110] This is the reason for choosing to look at Cronulla, to examine the political, media and social narratives that encouraged this display of violent protectionism, and how these narratives shifted in the aftermath. These narratives about the right and wrong ways of 'doing' class, masculinity and national identity are still resonating today. Consideration of the Cronulla riots and the resultant discourses exposes the implied risk *to* centralizing working-class masculinity which often masks the risk *in 'doing'* centralizing working-class masculinity.

After looking at Beck's world risk theory, drinking and car cultures, and at risk, protection and violence in relation to the Cronulla riots, this chapter examines the neo-liberal and conservative discourses around 'choice' and 'individualism'. This is done with particular reference to centralizing working-class masculinity as a

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[110] This is particularly true of the protectionism that is built into the iconoclastic ANZAC archetype (Moreton-Robinson & Nicoll 2006; Johns 2008).

discursive political tool, a construction that allows for the maintenance of inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality in ways that work to the detriment of not only the working class, but many other marginalized groups in Australia. It is argued that the centrality of this identity construct allows for the legitimization of complex power structures that deny certain groups the status of being 'Aussie', while marking other identities as unquestionably and authentically so. The notion of authentic 'Aussie-ness' is finally explored in relation to the mining industry, and the emerging debates around risk, fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workers, the environment and the economic and cultural importance of mining in Australia.

Crisis, Risk and Risk Management.

The idea that men—be it men as a homogenous block of specific groups of men—are in crisis is not new (Connell 2000; Edwards 2006). Concern over boys' educational performance, men's health, alcohol and drug use in young men, men's emotional wellbeing and men's roles in the family have maintained both media and cultural attention (Edwards 2006: 8). When discussions of men—or masculinities—in crisis arise, invariably the main identifier of difference is sex. Other intersecting identifiers such as class, ethnicity and sexuality are subsumed by gender as the ways in which people are marked, identified and qualified. That 'masculinity in crisis' discourses often go hand in hand with attacks on feminism and changes to the status quo of gendered inequality means that gender must be portrayed as the biggest single differentiation between people in terms of ability, access and means.

This analysis will eschew normative gendered discourses of crisis and mainstream pop-psychological reasoning to look at how gender intersects with other identifiers to create these 'myths' about men in crisis that carry over into neo-liberal narratives about citizenship, and the 'right' way of being an 'Aussie'.

Throughout this study, within the media analysis, the interview process and the review of literature about Australian masculinity, it has been consistently argued that in this country, centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a shifting position of hegemony and complicity that is both highly legitimizing and highly legitimized. The media, political discourse and popular culture have in varying ways used centralizing working-class masculine as a political ideal in order to evoke social, cultural and psychic links with the 'mainstream' and with 'authentic' Australian-ness. Even in the interviews, the authenticity of my white, working-class participants 'Aussie-ness' was never questioned. This can be illustrated by the answers received when I asked about cultural background:

I'm an Australian, fun-loving and easy going (B, unemployed, 18, living with partner and her family).

Just an average Aussie (M, manufacturing worker, 31, engaged).

Interestingly, on participant did recognize race, describing himself as;

White Australian (G, contract worker, 25, single).

For the most part, whiteness and 'Australian-ness' were indistinguishable. This becomes problematic when this identity is enmeshed with narratives about risk, about 'real' Australian identify being at 'risk' from marginalized 'other' groups and from changes and challenges to mainstream discourses.[111] Before looking in more detail at phenomenological examples of the fine line between being risky and being at risk, risk as theory needs to be unpicked, with specific reference to Ulrich Beck's work on the world risk society (1992).

Beck's theory of the world risk society, which originated in his book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity?* (1992), has been much contested in the social sciences (Mythen 2007: 795). Beck's theory, while detailed and complex, in summary refers to the production of 'risks' and the negative consequences of capitalism (Mythen 2007: 797). His theory states that in pre-industrial times, risks were largely natural, whereas in modernity risks are 'manufactured' which will lead into a 'risk society' where such manufactured risks are global and universal (Mythen 2007: 796). Beck discusses the risk society as a leveller, one in which previous categories of distinction are no longer ascribed, but are something people elect into (Beck & Williams 2004: 68 in Mythen 2007). He explains this as a supersession of the commonality of anxiety (fear of the impending risks) over the commonality of need,

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[111] For example conservative commentator Andrew Bolt regularly attacks feminists, aboriginal activists and asylum seekers in both his column and his television show (*Herald Sun*, Andrew Bolt archives; http://www.heraldsun.com.au/opinion/andrew-bolt; *The Bolt Report* Channel 10) in such a way as to maintain that they threaten Australia's 'way of life'.

> The driving force in the class society can be summarized by the phrase: *I am hungry!* The movement set in motion by the risk society, on the other hand, is expressed in the statement *I am afraid!* The commonality of anxiety takes the place of the commonality of need (Beck 1992: 49).

What most applies to this thesis is Beck's argument that the risk society is based not on actual destruction, but on the perception of risk, 'where the *perception* of threatening risks determines thought and action' (Beck 2000: 213). Certainly, many perceived risks (particularly those used to police gender, race and sexuality) are instrumental in determining 'thought and action' particularly in terms of mainstream cultural attitudes.

However, Beck's theory has an ambiguous relationship with this thesis in particular with the way that risk is tied in to centralizing working-class masculinity as a political ideal. Beck argues that risk is a leveller, that there is,

> a symbiotic relationship between risk and individualization as expressed through changes in structures of class, gender and work. Whereas in industrial society class, identity, occupation and gender relations were ascribed, in the risk society they have to be elected (Beck & Willms 2004: 68 in Mythen 2007: 797).

This thesis argues that such categories as class, gender, and ethnicity can only be chosen by the non-marked body—that is the white, male, heterosexual normative body. Such an approach suggests that Beck's individualization theory is problematic. Risk narratives often presume that categories of identity no longer apply, often

homogenizing people into a singular at-risk group. At other times the risk is provided by an easily identifiable binary to the mainstream, as described by Lupton as, 'the polluting or "risky" other' (1999: 104). In either case, while actual categories may still be very much applicable, particularly for certain subjective identities, the existence of such categories is often denied through 'risk' narratives. Risk is viewed as affecting everyone in the same way, yet, as Mythen points out, 'risk is not a universalizing principle, but one more likely to affect those with less social, cultural and economic power, the routine dispersal of risk reinforces rather than transforms existing patterns of inequality' (2007: 800). It is risk as a tool of reinforcing systems of privilege and inequality is of particular interest here.

On this basis, aspects of Beck's theory of risk, particularly of risk being a perception that occupies a powerful space in modern life, is highly applicable to this thesis, insofar as Beck states that perceived risks,

> are the whips used to keep the present-day moving along at a gallop. The more threatening the shadows that fall on the present day from a terrible future looming in the distance, the more compelling the shock that can be provoked by dramatizing risk today (2000: 214).

Risk is a powerful method of control, and fear is a great human motivator. Yet risk can also be a great source of pleasure (Mythen 2007: 806), and, certainly, risk is an expected part of enacting certain types of working-class masculinity in Australia. Yet even risk as pleasure is tempered by notions of individual responsibility, as is explored here through consideration of car and alcohol culture. Risk is a highly

complex notion, yet Beck's theory and many of its critiques are to do with the individualism that is involved in making choices about risk. While this thesis clearly rejects the notion that social 'categories' no longer exist, risk and choice as intertwined through neo-liberalism in particular will be examined in more detail in the next section looking at phenomenological examples of 'risk' as pleasure and anxiety when connected with centralizing working-class masculinity.

The following section considers the narrow parameters of authentic and socially sanctioned behaviors associated with centralizing working-class masculinity, looking specifically at drinking and alcohol culture and car culture. Special consideration is given to how both alcohol consumption and engagement in car culture are expected as part of performing working-class masculinity, yet, there are social and cultural expectations about *how* alcohol and cars will be engaged with. Furthermore, to engage in either alcohol or car culture in excess shifts an individual from being a legitimate 'bloke' to being risky, or indulging in risky behaviors. As already explored in terms of schooling and education in Chapter Four and work in Chapter Five in terms of neo-liberalism, individualism and 'choice', this then can be used to blame individuals who for whatever reason fail to engage with alcohol and car culture in the 'right' way.

From Larrikin to Lout: Excess, Choice, Alcohol and Car Culture.

There are two traits linked to the idealized 'Aussie bloke' that are both socially celebrated and yet are often the focus of national concern and government intervention. These are the alcohol and car cultures. As one participant stated when asked about what he did in his free time,

> Riding motorbikes, playing music, that's what we mainly do, sitting around drinking listening to music (G, contract worker, 25, single).

Australians have a highly ambiguous relationship with both alcohol and car culture. Alcohol use and participating in car culture are simultaneously closely linked with Australian national identity yet also cause moderate social concern. What is relevant here about drinking and car culture, and the places and spaces in which they so often come together, is the ways in which they are such a part of our national identity, but are also closely related to choice, and the ability to *choose* to participate *in the right way*.

There are three areas in which participation becomes problematized. The first is excess; either excessive or 'problem' drinking, or acquiring and using cars in ways that are outside of the law. The second is accessibility and capital, especially in relation to car culture and the acquisition of the 'right' kind of car, particularly within the parameters of the law. The final area is inclusion and exclusion; who has the

'right' to drink in front bars, and who has the 'right' to own and race fast cars. This final area specifically considers the way that certain ethnic groups are often marginalized by their very participation in cultures so identified as being authentically 'Aussie'. In discussing Lebanese Australians in relation to the Cronulla riots, Ghassan Hage points out that their behaviors, and tastes were, 'quintessentially Australian: working class Australian perhaps, but Australian nonetheless' (2009: 258). Whereas these behaviors, the driving of certain types of car, the wearing of certain types of clothes, may have been perfectly 'normal' when done by white bodies, it was viewed as highly problematic when done by Lebanese bodies. The same statement can be made in regards to drinking and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. White Australians drinking in public in a group is social, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders drinking in a group in public is problematized and pathologized. Inclusion and exclusion in drinking and car culture is highly reliant on having the correctly gendered and racialized body. This will be discussed with regard to the Cronulla riots, but first consideration will be given to the neo-liberal discourse around 'choice' and participating in drinking culture the 'right' way.

Gender, Class and the Balance between 'Social Drinking' and 'Problem Drinking'.

As has been observed above, Australians have an ambiguous relationship with alcohol. While as a culture we revel in having a 'drink' as a social endeavor, alcohol consumption can also be problematic. The 2008 government research report

The Avoidable Costs of Alcohol Abuse in Australia and the Potential Benefits of Effective Policies to Reduce the Social Cost of Alcohol, (Collins & Lapsky 2008) illustrates this ambivalence. The authors state that, 'alcohol has been an integral part of the Australian way of life since the first fleet … Consumed in moderation alcohol is a product which is widely enjoyed by the Australian community' (Collins & Lapsky 2008: 1). David Collins and Helen Lapsky are not alone in recognizing the importance of alcohol to Australian culture. Lindsay notes that, 'drinking alcohol is …central to Australian culture; it is inherently a social practice strongly associated with pleasure and celebration' (2009: 371). Moreover, the consumption of alcohol, specifically beer, is intrinsically linked with Australian masculinity, or doing 'Aussie blokedom'. Australian identity is masculine (Elder 2007), which creates a pressure to conform to cultural expectations around alcohol in terms of gender *and* national identity. Drinking is also classed, often according to both drink choice and drinking location (Lindsay 2003). Arguably, the most popular image of drinking in terms of Australian national identity would be a few 'mates' having a beer in a suburban or rural hotel's front bar (Kirkby 2003). Indeed, as Elder argues, 'for most of the twentieth century, the local pub was the preserve of men' (2007: 101). The masculinized space of the front bar in particular marks it as a place where centralizing working-class masculinity is often on display in exclusionary ways.

Despite the powerful links between alcohol consumption and Australian culture, alcohol is also heavily associated with risk. Collins and Lapsky list the areas in which alcohol either exacerbates or is the sole cause of risk and adversity (2008). They found that health issues, reduced life expectancy, reduced productivity,

accidents, drink driving, violence and crime resulted in a $15 billion dollar cost to the nation in 2004/2005 (2008: 1). In particular, young drinkers are presented as problematic. In 2008, 'binge drinking by young Australians was a major news story, a subject for heightened anxiety and much hand wringing' (Lindsay 2009: 371). The Australian government, at both the federal and state levels, has spent millions in research and policy implementation to tackle the problems associated with alcohol. So, while alcohol consumption is celebrated as being an authentically 'Aussie' activity, excess alcohol consumption becomes a site for hand-wringing concern over the 'risk' to 'the Nation's' health, safety and productivity. This concern is often threaded with paternalistic and nationalistic sentiment about the dangers of excess alcohol consumption on 'our' youth, an exclusionary narrative that either denies the existence of non-normative ethnic and sexual groups, or demonizes them as the 'worst' offenders.[112]

Furthermore, as Lindsay argues, much of the public health discourse that has surrounded alcohol has been focused on individual responsibility (2009). This is where drinking as 'risk' ties in with this thesis on centralizing working-class masculinity; alcohol is simultaneously celebrated and problematized with little recognition of the complexity of issues around drinking and 'Aussie' culture. As Lindsay points out,

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[112] In September 2012 News Limited launched the 'Real Heroes Walk Away' campaign, which, while aimed at tackling violence also had a focus on alcohol and drinking culture. Images on the News Limited website are of white, young men, and the language used is highly exclusionary in terms of gender, race and sexuality. For example the campaign discusses the 'terrible waste' of young (white, heterosexual) male life. Furthermore, the campaign has a strong message of personal responsibility and individualism as discussed above. See http://news.com.au/features/real-heroes-walk-away-join-the-campaign-against-senseless-street-violence/story-fneygm-1226474133605

> Mainstream Australian culture is … inherently contradictory on alcohol control. On one hand, consuming alcohol is viewed as central to adulthood and as an indispensable element to socializing and celebrating, while on the other hand young 'binge drinkers' are demonized and alcoholics are marginalized and viewed as irresponsible and amoral (2009: 372).

The tightly woven links between gender, (hetero)sexuality, youth, national identity and drinking culture are either ignored or denied in favor of simplistic individual-based solutions to problem drinking. The common narrative is that order to participate in drinking culture an individual must do so in the 'right' socially sanctioned way. What is left out of this 'story' is the ways that these social and bodily practices are both classed and gendered.[113]

One of the most visible of these social and bodily practices occurs in public drinking and displays of masculinity, or as Campbell defines it, 'pub(lic) masculinity' (2000). In his ethnographic study of drinking culture in a rural New Zealand town, Campbell found that there was a hierarchical ordering of bodily and social practices. This was done in ways that made visible certain 'othered' or outsider behaviors or groups, while rendering hegemonic and legitimized practices invisible through their normativity (2000: 566). Campbell's study outlines wider gendered and classed representations of 'risk' that occur in many mainstream discourses around drinking and drinking culture. Lindsay also found in her study that the young people she interviewed placed a great impetus on 'control', and she found that men in particular

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[113] There are various classed and gendered ways of doing drinking 'right'. For example, for the middle-upper classes long lunches and the consumption of large quantities of wine is acceptable, while for the working-class front bar locals and beer drinking are doing it 'right'. For young people losing control may be the accepted form. The accepted mode of alcohol consumption varies according to class, ethnicity, age and gender.

viewed loss of control in terms of public drunkenness in a negative light (2008: 377). In both studies issues of consumption and risk were not the main concern, particularly for men, but rather keeping up the appearance of control was critical. Other studies have found that complete loss of control was accepted (for instance in young people or in mining communities). This will be explored further in regards to what Campbell calls 'drinking fitness' (2000: 571) and social and political discourses about 'problem drinking' in relation to representations of class, sexuality, gender and age.

'Pub(lic)' drinking is strongly linked with idealized images of Australian 'blokedom', and involves specified bodily and social practices. 'Drinking fitness' as defined by Campbell is one of these practices. 'Drinking fitness' basically describes the ability to consume large quantities of alcohol, 'and yet maintaining the appearance of total sobriety and self-control' (Campbell 2000: 571). This ability is an important marker of manhood, to be able to maintain the illusion of sobriety after heavy drinking is a sign of toughness. West explains the phenomenon, saying, 'toughness means being able to "hold your liquor" or drink vast quantities (binge drinking) without serious social consequences' (2001: 373). Campbell found that men who were openly publicly intoxicated were derided and lost status within the front bar setting (2000: 575). While the linking of drinking fitness with toughness and idealized manliness is somewhat expected in the typical Australian front bar setting (which is both highly masculinized and very working-class). In other circumstances, excessive drinking and loss of control are not only accepted, but celebrated.

Excessive drinking is often normative gendered and classed behavior in rural mining communities among fly-in-fly-out workers. Carrington, McIntosh and Scott (2010) argue that they found a 'work hard, play hard' mentality among (specifically) young, blue collar, non-resident workers (404). As they explain, 'for those employed in the resources industry, concentrated time off allows for some time to "run amuck", "get on the booze", brawl and party hard' (2010: 405). Long hours (12 hour days), and large pays combine to create a culture in which when there is time off there is little to do and much money to be spent. However, the problem of fly-in-fly-out workers behavior is more complex than time and money. The highly masculinist nature of rural resource communities combined with the distance from home and family create a space in which non-resident workers may act-up in order to fit in the community (Carrington, McIntosh & Scott 2010 406), which can be splintered when there is a large FIFO workforce (McDonald, Mayes & Pini 2012: 24).

While recognizing the highly gendered nature of mining communities, Carrington, McIntosh and McDonald may miss some of the complexities involved with this issue. Mining communities and the mining industry itself are not only gendered spaces, they are deeply nationalistic, heterosexual and classed. As is explored further in this chapter, links between mining and Australian identity are often forged at the site of centralizing working-class masculinities. Therefore, engagement with drinking culture is expected in such a homosocial and masculinized 'Aussie' space. Just as alcohol advertising in Australia (as explored in Chapter Three) used nationalism to sell a product, the mining industry also uses powerful nationalistic images to engage with and link itself to Australian culture. The

fine space between doing mining masculinity 'right' and getting it wrong, whether through familial breakdown, excess alcohol consumption or 'cashed up bogan' status (Pini, Mayes & McDonald 2012), is as fine a line as that between doing drinking culture 'right' (in a socially sanctioned way) and doing it to excess.

Not all aspects of drinking culture are as ambiguous as the shifting and complex relationship between drinking and drunkenness. One area of drinking culture that is usually reinforced is its gendered and heteronormative nature. As Elder argues, 'the story of the pub privileges the respectable heterosexual man (and, by association, woman) as the real Australian' (2007: 101). Narratives of drinking culture as gendered and heteronormative are illustrated in some anti-drinking government advertising. The 2010 series of Government advertisements in the *Don't Turn a Night Out Into a Nightmare* [114] campaign show excessive drunken behavior and the negative consequences for the individuals involved. This advertising campaign relies on a fear of potential risk as discussed by Beck (1992; 1999).[115] Aimed mostly at young people the series of advertisements uphold gender dichotomies and heteronormative assumptions about sexuality and gendered behavior. The men in the ad are largely making fools of themselves; their intoxication is positioned as unattractive and, more crucially, unmanly. The advertisement

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[114] This campaign, aimed at underage drinkers from 14-17 and at young adults aged 18-25, as well as parents of teenagers ran from 2008 to 2010. It included a website with information for parents and teens, a television advertising campaign and a series of posters all depicting the negative results of binge drinking. http://www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au

[115] Advertising and awareness campaigns based on fear of potential risk have long been a strategy of national health promotion. Campaigns warning against the risks associated with drinking, drug use, smoking and various dangerous driving behaviors, particularly drink driving, often rely on the fear of the worst case scenario (see Beck 2000). In early 2013, just before this thesis was submitted, another series of ads from the long running 'Quit' campaign (a national health initiative aimed at getting people to quit smoking) began airing. It includes this ad, http://quitnow.gov.au/ in which a man is in a waiting room about to receive news as to whether he has cancer. Not only do ads such as these play into a fear of possible risk, such campaigns are also deeply rooted in notions of 'choice' as instructed by neo-liberalism.

focusing on a female drinker shows a young girl at risk of sexual violence and supports mainstream victim-blaming discourses. As Leigh argues, 'the typical image of drunkenness in men includes mostly elements of aggression and violence, images of drunken women often are composed of qualities of sexual disinhibition and promiscuity' (1995: 416). The gendered aspects of drinking are never clearer then when linked with sex; for men drinking is advertised and culturally represented as a means to an ends in terms of acquiring sex (West 2001: 385). By contrast, for women, drinking to excess is shown as making them partially to blame if they are sexually assaulted.[116]Therefore, drinking becomes a risk for women as it is argued to place them at greater risk of being victims of sexual violence (Payne-James & Rogers 2002). Both drinking culture and anti-drinking campaigning are embedded with gendered discourses in which women can be partially held responsible for the violence directed against them.[117] In interventions against excessive alcohol use choice as a construct becomes demarcated by gender.

The notion of choice is a factor in the Collins and Lapsky (2008) paper on Government policies to reduce the social costs of alcohol. Their paper looks at 'avoidable' costs to the public in the form of costs that can be alleviated with changes

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[116] Another example of anti-alcohol advertising using victim-blaming comes from a 2011 Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board advertisement which features a girls legs with her underwear around her ankles and the tagline 'She didn't want to do it but she couldn't say no'. For a deconstruction of the ad and its role in victim-blaming in sexual assault see http://feministing.com/2011/12/07/pa-liquor-control-board-to-teens-rape-is-your-and-your-friends-fault/. Another good discussion of victim-blaming young women for their rapes can be found at Hoyden about Town 'Drinking While in Possession of a Vagina' http://hoydenabouttown.com/20071011.1025/drinking-while-in-the-possession-of-a-vagina/. See also Cameron and Stritzke (2003).

[117] Cameron and Stritzke found that in cases of acquaintance rape, when the victim was sober and the perpetrator intoxicated the *victim* was found to be at fault. However, when the victim was intoxicated and the perpetrator intoxicated, the victim was *still likely to be partially held responsible for her own rape*' (2003). For women it seems the choice to drink, or not to drink, has little impact on the way they will be viewed as complicit in their own assault.

to policy and behavior (Collins & Lapsky 2008: 3). In doing so, while Government intervention is recommended, it becomes an individual's 'choice' to change their behaviors. However, while the paper recognizes the importance of alcohol in Australian social and cultural life, it fails to analyze this on any deeper level. This is where alcohol becomes paradoxically problematic; it is both central and yet needs intervention, a part of our culture but a risk to our culture simultaneously. 'Doing' drinking culture is a balancing act that involves specific bodily practices and social performances that are anchored in class and gender. Even within governmental discourses surrounding drinking and health it is *drunkenness* that often comes under scrutiny as opposed to *drinking.* This establishes choice and bodily performance as the main sites of concern as opposed to the liquor industry, pub culture or links between drinking, masculinity and national identity. It offers simplistic solutions to a highly complex issue that also involves gender, sexuality, race and class.

Sites where drinking becomes a discursive gendered and classed practice are rendered invisible much in the same way that masculinity is rendered invisible. Choice and individual control become the methods by which dangerous drinking can be controlled. The *Drinking Nightmare* website states that its aims are to encourage people to, 'reconsider the acceptability of the harms and costs associated with drinking to intoxication; assess their own drinking behaviour; and make changes to their own behaviours where necessary' (*Drinking Nightmare* 2008). Through engaging with this central component of centralizing working-class masculinity *in the wrong way*, particularly if the body involved is not white or male, individuals can be marginalized and pathologized. As Lindsay points out, 'the individualization of risk

enables governments and the media to blame young people for the social harms of deregulation' (2009: 382).

Awesome Fun or Awesome Risk? Car Culture

If Australians have an ambiguous relationship with alcohol and drinking, the same can also be argued for car culture. Furthermore, much like drinking culture, car culture is paradoxically linked with being Australian and being a man while also the cause of national concern and 'crisis' narratives. Arguably, the relationship between national identity and car culture is even more confusing than that between national identity and drinking culture for two main reasons. The first is that car culture is linked with sporting culture. Car racing is one of Australia's most popular and successful sporting events. The second is that while 'hoon driving'[118] provides continual fodder for 'risk' and 'crisis' discourses, professional car racing as a sport is granted a national iconic status. Much like the difference between participating in drinking culture and problem drinking, there is a fine line between car racing and legitimized participation in car culture, and problematized 'hoon' driving and drink driving. Also, like with drinking culture, many of these distinctions center around notions of class, race, gender and 'choice'.

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[118] 'Hoon driving' or simply 'hooning' are colloquial Australian terms used to describe risky driving behaviors such as, but not limited to, speeding and street racing, doing car 'stunts' such as 'burnouts' (where the wheels are spun while the brake is on producing excess smoke and leaving visible tyre marks). Such terms can be used in the negative to describe risky and lawless driving behavior. Yet, in some spaces such as car shows like 'Summernats', 'hooning' is recognized as a legitimate spectator and competition sport. Like many terms related to car culture in Australia, the linguistic relationship to 'hoon driving' or 'hooning' is ambiguous.

Motorsport is the third most popular spectator sport in Australia, ranking behind only Australian rules football and horse racing in attendance numbers (Tranter & Lowes 2009:154). Large events such as the Formula One in Melbourne and the Clipsal V8 supercars in Adelaide draw huge crowds and are argued to provide their host cities with not only national and international exposure, but also with serious economic benefits (Tranter & Lowes 2009). This thesis will focus on V8 supercars, as they occupy a very specific place in the Australian national psyche and are arguably represented as a much less 'elite' and much more working-class event. Tranter and Lowes define the V8 supercars as,

> a category of motor racing unique to Australia … exclusively for Ford and Holden V8 engine cars. V8 supercars are race-modified versions of the publicly available Australia-made Ford Falcon and Holden Commodore sedans (2009: 154).

That the cars raced are available to the general public is a crucial distinguishing factor in the V8 supercars events—as are the cars links to Australian industry. As previously mentioned, the motor vehicle industry was one of the mainstays of the manufacturing industry, and is still linked with 'better times' in the minds of many Australians, especially the working-class. Furthermore,

> these cars are regarded by motor racing fans as the quintessential Australian 'muscle cars' and are similar in appearance to publically available cars of the same name. Consequently many Australian drivers can identify with 'their' racing car (Ford or Holden) (Tranter & Lowes 2009: 154).

This identification allows for a deeper and more complex participation with the race that goes beyond mere spectatorship. An individual can become part of this specific culture not only through attending the races, or watching at home, but through their ownership of the same types of car. That motorsports encourage risky driving behaviors has been noted in several studies (Warn, Tranter & Kingham 2004; Tranter & Warn 2008). The iconographic status of racing drivers and the cultural zeal with which motorsports are embraced makes this hardly surprising. However, to engage successfully with car culture an individual must have some access to capital. Even to engage in amateur racing or a day spent doing laps is prohibitively expensive to many from the working-class.[119] While, on one hand, young people from the working-class are encouraged to participate in car culture as an integral part of engaging with centralizing working-class masculinity, on the other they are expected to have the capital to do so in the 'right' way.

What is interesting is the contradictory way in which 'hoon' drivers are marginalized for their behaviors—the same behaviors involved in Australia's third most attended sport. 'Hoon' driving attracts the same hand-wringing concern over a posed social and economic 'risk' that binge drinking does. Moreover, much like binge drinking, attempts to challenge 'hoon' driving are often simplistic and threaded through with gendered, sexualized and racialized narratives. These narratives ignore the complex nature of the relationship between gender, class, Australian identity and car culture which in turn makes these links between masculinity, car culture and national identity difficult to challenge. There is a conflation between risky driving

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[119] Working-class people are being discussed here as increasingly more women are participating in car culture in Australia, and while car culture is still a masculinized space, for some women, particularly those from the working-classes, it may provide an access point to Australian-ness and these masculinized spaces. This is examined below.

practices and bravery, which has been established as a central component of centralizing working-class masculinity. As Graham and White note,

> Certain types of driving behaviour are perceived as 'macho', and young men may engage in these behaviours to assert their masculinity, personal skill and control, as well as subvert conservative driving norms and rebel against authorities (2007: 32).

Indeed, disregard for authority combined with bravery and risk-taking behaviour are central to both participation in 'hoon' driving *and* 'larrikinism', which has been shown to be just one version of centralizing working-class masculinity. However, 'hoon' drivers are highly stigmatized (Graham & White 2009) as both being at risk and posing a risk to others. Furthermore, this stigmatization is often linked to class, as defined negatively through mainstream discourses surrounding hoon drivers. Their position is not that of the 'battler' or even the 'larrikin', but that of the underclass 'hoon'. Through participating in behaviour that may otherwise enable identification with centralizing working-class masculinity, these boys are excluded. They move swiftly from being at risk (as boys, as young men, as working-class 'lads') to being a risk to other, more legitimized members of society.

Alcohol, Car Culture and Displaying Gender, Race, Sexuality and Class

While young women are becoming more involved in both drinking and car cultures, their involvement is becoming problematized in mainstream media, as well

as in political and social discourses.[120] When young women engage in 'hoon' driving or drunken behavior they meet with concern over their health and wellbeing, and their effect on the community, but there is also a deeper concern. Their transgression of normative gendered practices, while possibly providing them with some access to masculinized culture, is seen as being both deviant and more threatening. Their choices are viewed in a far more negative light than the same behaviors performed by a male body.

As is argued throughout this thesis, centralizing working-class masculinity is only granted a hegemonic status when linked to a white, male, heterosexual body. This is true of neo-liberal and neo-conservative manifestations of centralizing working-class masculinity, manifestations which become discursive examples of the claimed egalitarianism of Australian culture. As Elder explores in relation to Australian business mogul Kerry Packer, 'Packer's Australian-ness was said to be represented in his deep understanding of the lives of the working man' (2007: 44). National characters such as Kerry Packer, John Elliot and Alan Jones[121] demonstrate a risk-taking nature in terms of personal gain and business while they also present the face of a classless Australian society through their performance of centralizing working-class masculinity.[122] Their privilege as white, upper-middle and

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[120] It must be pointed out that concern over the transgressive and 'degenerate' effects of alcohol (and drug) consumption have long been part of the policing of women's gender, both in Australia and internationally (Leigh 1995: 422).

[121] Conservative Australian 'shock jock' Alan Jones became a catalyst for a national discussion on sexism and misogyny after making several inflammatory comments about Prime Minister Julia Gillard and other women in power, and saying that women who were involved politically were 'destroying the joint'. A Facebook page and, later, website, dedicated to challenging sexism in Australia were created in the backlash to Jones's comments. The website http://www.destroythejoint.org/ and Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/DestroyTheJoint have become national spaces for people to talk about and challenge sexism in Australia.

[122] Alan Jones has remained an exemplar of centralizing working-class masculinity despite his status as a gay man. This could be argued to be partly because of his traditionalism in other areas (such as his whiteness and lack of 'elitist'

upper class, rich men is both *reinforced* and yet made *invisible.* Displays of 'Aussie bloke-dom' such as liking a drink, liking sport (including car racing), being a bit of a joker, taking risks and being most comfortable around 'mates' are celebrated when in the body of a white, heterosexual, (apart from Jones), and working-class inflected (yet class-less) man.

When these traits appear in a body not usually aligned with centralizing working-class masculinity they are represented as problematic—particularly when those traits are linked with the two areas discussed above, drinking and car culture. Drinking culture, particularly social drinking culture is an intrinsic part of displaying centralizing working-class masculinity. However, the very same behavior in Aboriginal bodies is demonized in the media and socially derided as being 'anti-social'. This is but one example of the way that white bodies are rarely policed to the same extent as black bodies. As Moreton-Robinson argues, 'white bodies are rarely subject to such overt governmental control and surveillance, unlike the bodies of … Aboriginal women, men and children (2011: 429). Likewise, when drinking culture manifests in a female body narratives of 'concern' become overridden with both paternalistic and victim blaming narratives that both deny an individual woman's agency and yet place total responsibility for the criminal behavior of others on her (Cameron & Stritzke 2003). The drunken woman is simultaneously at risk, and a risk. Furthermore, she transgresses appropriate gendered behavior. As Meyer argues,

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pretention). His long-running position as an ultra-conservative 'shock jock' has allowed him to remain a popular right-wing figure.

Women binge drinkers contravene values such as moderation, self-restraint, or decency, which are central to conservative ideas of appropriate selfhood, especially for women (Hey 1986). Moreover, women who binge drink … violate a number of norms of femininity, such as passivity, quietness, or fragility (Whelehan 2000, in Meyer 2010).

When 'hoon' driving becomes a cause for media concern the youth in focus is often either visibly from the lower end of the class hierarchy, or linked to a marginalized ethnic group—this is particularly common in terms of youth from non-white backgrounds (Hage 2009). Furthermore, since the Howard Government's Northern Territory Intervention[123], the criminalization of Indigenous driving has increased dramatically (Anthony & Blagg 2013: 51). Car usage is a colonial process, as Fredricks explains,

Not only have motor vehicles facilitated access to land by non-Indigenous peoples, road travel is one of the ways by which white belonging is enacted … Clearly, in the context of Aboriginal Australia, issues of automobility are tethered to tensions that are extant in the histories and contemporary politics of Australia (2011).

Drinking and car culture are complex issues. On one hand there is an undeniable link between doing centralizing working-class masculinity and engaging with drinking and car culture. Indeed, drinking and car culture are deeply woven into the Australian 'story' about being an 'Aussie', masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality. On the other hand, drinking and car culture clearly have some problematic outcomes. 'Risk'

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[123] The Northern Territory Intervention began being implemented in 2006 and was theoretically put in place to tackle child abuse in remote communities. It involved various interventions including the garnishing of 50% of Indigenous people's welfare, increasing the police presence, and increased arrests (leading to increasing Indigenous incarceration) (Anthony & Blagg 2003:53).

discourses such as these serve a social and cultural purpose that is more insidious—they delineate who is allowed to access centralizing working-class masculinity and who is not, and who is worthy of concern and who is not. This is an important delineation that marks some bodies as more problematic than others, and often the most problematic bodies are those that are not white.

Protecting what's 'Ours': Legitimized Violence, Racism, Masculinities, Gender, Class and Cronulla

In December 2005 what came to be known as the 'Cronulla riots' took place on Sydney's Cronulla beach. Despite the amount of time that has lapsed since this occurrence, the Cronulla riots and the resultant political, media, academic and social discussions about what happened have left an indelible mark on the national psyche. As Greg Noble points out, 'the consequences, both short and long term are still being worked out' (2009: 3). The Cronulla riots did gain extensive social and cultural attention. As Noble points out,

> mainstream media—in particular talk-back radio and tabloid newspapers—took up the incident …and made it into a national debate about crime, ethnicity, violence, multiculturalism and the 'threat to the Australian way of life'(2009: 3).

Arguably the Cronulla riots acted as a catalyst in both academic and mainstream discourses for explorations of not only race, but also gender and class. Of particular interest to this thesis is the constant reiteration of 'protectionist' discourses that

surrounded these events—in terms of protecting not only a sacred 'white' Australian space (the beach, white women's bodies), but also an Australian identity—and how these discourses can be tied into discourses surrounding centralizing working-class masculinities. Before exploring entitlement and protectionism in relation to both the tangible (the beach, space and white women's bodies) and the intangible (a right to claim citizenship and identity) whiteness and its role in discourses surrounding these events will be considered.

Invisibility, Normativity and Whiteness

Much like masculinity, whiteness is often rendered invisible by virtue of its privileging as the 'norm'. While much attention was granted to multiculturalism, ethnicity and culture around the events at Cronulla, whiteness, as problematic, hardly registered. Whiteness was simultaneously made invisible through the denial of racism, and yet, remained a central (yet still an invisible norm) through protectionist anti-multiculturalism rhetoric (Poynting 2006: 89). This in turn allows for a reiteration of neo-conservative discourses about citizenship and 'home' which establish whiteness as the norm. The racialized 'other' becomes dichotomized from the invisible white norm, as illustrated by this response to a question about equality:

K: Is Australia really equal as far as opportunities and privileges go?

M: (long pause) That's a curly one. Yes and no, I believe there are opportunities where, say like Aboriginals didn't get a fair go because they're black. But I also think

Australia is becoming more multicultural that that gap is probably changing a bit as well because it used to be like, well, there was the Aussie guys and the Aboriginals and then there's a lot of Asians and Nigerians it's a lot more multicultural than what it used to be. I do. I think they have had a lot of opportunities where they haven't been given a fair go but I also think there's a bad element that takes advantage as well which I can see, but that's the same in white people. There's good and bad in white people too so, I'm not really sure on that one hey, I have my opinion but it's a very curly question with no right or wrong (M, manufacturing worker, 31, engaged).

What is interesting about this response is both the way that the respondent separates white people from a racialized 'other' but also the way that when he lists different groups, 'Aussie guys' is the descriptor used to describe white Australians. Authenticity and a claim to the land is granted to white people, as Damien Riggs and Clemence Due discuss,

In Australia, despite the powerful presence and voice of indigenous peoples, popular perceptions of the country tend to place such homely rights firmly in the laps of white people, who, through images of white nuclear families in front of white picket fences perceive themselves as already and rightfully at home in Australia (2008: 210).[124]

Gender and class intersected with whiteness in such a way as to both legitimize the racist violence at Cronulla, and to blame such violence on the perceived 'intruders' or

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[124] This can be seen in the narratives around home and belonging to the land that were so present in *The Castle*, particularly in the ways that Aboriginal stories in relation to the land were appropriated by this very white family. As Moreton Robinson argues, 'What is overlooked in the narration is how *terra nullius* enabled white men to have property rights in the first place' (2005: 125). This was discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

'invaders' of white spaces (Moreton-Robinson & Nicoll 2007: 154), spaces which are deemed not only white, but which are also afforded value based on class and gender, and the adherence to 'correct' behaviors (Wise 2009: 143). It was the argued 'failure' of Lebanese men to adhere to these behaviors that created the need for protection of space (the beach) and property (which included white women's bodies).

Protecting 'Our Beaches': Space and Place at Risk.

An important narrative that threads through centralizing working-class masculinity is the protection of space and place, in particular the space of the beach as iconoclastic to (white) Australian national identity. Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll argue that,

> The beach marks the border between land and sea, between one nation and another, a place that stands as the common ground upon which collective national ownership and identity are on public display; a place of pleasure, leisure and pride (2008: 149).

The beach is linked to the centralizing working-class masculinities of several national identity archetypes: the surfer, the lifesaver, and the ANZAC (Johns 2008: 14). While the surfer and the lifesaver identities may not be specifically classed identities[125], the

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[125] The 'surfer' in particular is a complex identity in terms of class. While the 'surfie' has roots in the middle-class, they have also rejected the work ethic of their parents, opting instead to spend their days in the pursuit of leisure. Class lines can be

ANZAC is closely linked with both the traditional battler identity, and the newer 'Howard's battlers' that have become so intertwined with centralizing working-class masculinities. What can be argued is that all three identities are white and highly celebrated, while at the same time presented as 'at risk' from various 'others'. This allows for narratives of entitlement and protectionism of the kind that were so common after the riots, defending this act of group violence on the grounds that it was a battle over space that needed protecting. Johns argues in this context that,

> The central work of the Anzac tradition … has created a space where the surfer and lifesaver can be articulated together, re-endowing the broken (white) body of the multicultural nation with a new vision of race pride and social order, regulated by white, Australian rules (2008: 14).

The whiteness of bodies associated with beach culture has long been established. Furthermore, the body that can claim 'ownership' of the beach is not only white but also male (Taylor 2009: 121). White women's bodies are not able to claim ownership of the beach. They are, in fact, claimable by the white male body as another site of ownership. The ownership and paternalism that is often attached to any narrative around women's (especially white women's) bodies has already been explored in relation to drinking culture and 'concern' over protecting women from sexual assault by policing their behavior and not that of their attackers. Such narratives of ownership are even stronger when running through xenophobic discourse about 'other' groups of men.

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seen in the ongoing animosity towards 'Westies' (formerly Anglo—now often Lebanese), a working-class group who access 'their' beaches and 'do' beach culture wrong (Wise 2009: 141). However, there is also tension between the surfie and the working-class as the surfies were often seen as 'bludgers'. The documentary *Bra Boys* (2006) discusses the 'surfie' archetype, and is interesting in that it features an overwhelmingly working-class 'surf gang'.

Protectionist Discourses and Owning Women's Bodies.

The events at Cronulla were gendered in both protectionist discourses surrounding 'our' white women (Evers 2009: 195), and the masculinities being enacted (Jacubowicz 2009: 170). Protectionism and masculinity are, of course, intertwined in terms of gender. Not only were the masculinities which were inscribed onto white bodies responsible for the protection of white women in such a way as to lay ownership to them, white *men* were wholly responsible for the protection of 'their' territory, which included white women's bodies (Redmond 2007: 336). Adopting this protectionist stance supports a gendered and racialized script whereby women lose their status as independent citizens, and instead become property that must be protected from the invading 'other'. Furthermore, the ways in which Lebanese men treat 'their' women was also highly disapproved of (Johns 2008: 12). That these groups of men came to the beach to 'perve' on white women because of a presumed 'sexist order insisting that [their] women be covered up' (Johns 2008: 12), was viewed as socially unacceptable—particularly in such an 'Australian' identified location (Wise 2009). The Muslim 'other' was marked and marginalized through their difference in terms of their attitudes to women. Examination of these two gendered ways that women's bodies became yet another place where protection was warranted will show how gendered and racialized dichotomies are continually upheld in mainstream discourses.

Class, Race, Gender and Citizenship: Dichotomy and Identity

Discussions of white working-class social change, and being at risk (through their own actions and 'choices') encircled the Cronulla riots. Conversely, the young Lebanese men who were the intended recipients of this outpouring of xenophobic violence have also been discussed with particular reference to their embodied masculinities as dichotomized from the 'acceptable' or 'normal' masculinities of white 'Aussies' (Lattas 2007: 305). The intersection of masculinity with ethnicity, culture and class is where the violence at Cronulla can be linked with centralizing working-class masculinity, embodied variously by both the white and Lebanese participants.[126] Their performance of this masculinity when linked to their ethnicity, their youth, and their class marks them as 'other', particularly in the middle-class domain of the beach. They are marked as not knowing how to 'fit in', as unassimilated. Arguably, part of the problem is that they are in fact over-assimilated as argued by Hage (2009). While Lebanese youth culture has many different cultural and social influences, in some areas (such as their adherence to car culture) they are performing centralizing working-class masculinity. However, their bodies, as non-white, are made hyper-visible (Lewis & Simpson 2010: 3) and their attempts to engage with Australian culture (whether through car culture or their physical presence on the beach) are often rejected.

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[126] Defining the intended victims of the violence as 'Lebanese' is highly problematic, as is the definition 'white' or 'Anglo'. For the purpose of this study I will be using the term 'white' to describe the rioters and 'Lebanese' to describe the intended victims, however, as these are the most common usages in the literature referenced (see Tabar 2009: 251; Lattas 2009: 216).

The young Lebanese men who were the intended victims of (yet were largely blamed for) the events at Cronulla are multiply marginalized by virtue of their class, their race, and their attempt to engage with certain aspects associated with centralizing working-class masculinity. While the white rioters themselves were also derided in some of the prevailing discourses their representation was much more ambiguous. This ambiguity can be seen in the media and cultural reactions to the events at Cronulla. The rioters were both celebrated and derided: celebrated for their protectionist stance and doing what many right-wing commentators argued needed to be done, yet derided for their 'thuggery'. For example, the Prime Minister at the time, John Howard, exclaimed that, 'mob violence will not be tolerated' and that the riots were a result of, 'the always explosive combination of a large number of people at the weekend and a large amount of alcohol' (*Sydney Morning Herald* December 12 2005). Andrew Jacubowicz discusses how the news media reflect social and cultural power structures in relation to ethnicity, and how studies of media representations of ethnicity,

> demonstrate the ways the media reflect the structure of social power within a society, and thus reflect its wider ethnic relations. The media work with a set of assumptions about news values and social hierarchy, and locate minorities within narratives generated by these assumptions (2009: 176).

In the case of the media coverage of Cronulla, ethnicity and class were combined in media narratives about blame, responsibility, inclusion and exclusion. While the white rioters themselves were partially marginalized for their excessive 'reaction' (as demonstrated in Howard's above quote), their 'right' to both the beach

and to 'Australian' as an identity allowed them to escape some blame. Meanwhile, the correlation between being 'Lebanese' and being 'Muslim' was continually reiterated by the media, despite that fact that 53% of Lebanese Australians are actually Christian compared to 40% Muslim (ABS 2007). This correlation between Lebanese and Muslim allowed conservative media spin and political rhetoric about the apparent 'danger' of the Lebanese 'other' to be bolstered by Islamophobia. The media and political focus often centered on the failure of the Muslim 'other' to 'fit in' (Jacubowicz 2009: 179), highlighting a constructed cultural and religious difference.

One example of this can be seen in a speech former Prime Minister John Howard made after the events at Cronulla, where he made a clear distinction between acceptable 'Aussie' behavior and unacceptable and un-Australian behavior. Howard argued that,

> Put simply, most Australians want a nation where, irrespective of their background and always respecting the right of people to maintain affection for their own culture. […] we should encourage to the maximum extent possible everybody to become part of the integrated Australian community (*Sydney Morning Herald* 12 December 2005).

While seemingly discussing the racism of the rioters, a deeper analysis of Howard's meaning shows that he is encouraging assimilation to Australian national identity, a part of which is some engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity.

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, and has been explored in this reflection on the events at Cronulla at the end of 2005, centralizing working-class masculinity is not often accessible to non-white bodies. This is made clear by the 'othering' that occurs around the attempts of Lebanese young men to engage with certain aspects of centralizing working-class masculinity. Ghassan Hage posits that Lebanese youth often engage with a *hybrid masculinity* (2009: 257); one in which they adopt a, 'working/under class hybrid culture' (2009: 258). As Hage makes clear, their attempt as assimilation was met with rejection and increased othering not because they had failed to assimilate, but because they had assimilated (in some areas) too well (2009: 258).[127] Their way of 'doing' centralizing working-class masculinity, which included engagement with car and alcohol culture and some very culturally-specific links to protest masculinity (such as certain ways of dressing which arguably have roots in African-American masculinity) were seen as both too much assimilation (forgetting their place as 'other') and too little (failing to willingly slide into invisibility). Hage argues that,

> behind the monocultural assimilationist claims that the Lebanese boys were unintergrated was the fear that they seemed over-integrated. Too integrated for their own good: no sense of their assumed marginality: arrogant (2009: 258).

Hage's statement illustrates the exclusionary nature of centralizing working-class masculinity. By acting as though they had some claim to the space of the

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[127] As previously mentioned, Lebanese youth culture is not merely a replication of working-class 'bogan' culture (although in certain areas there are definite correlations). In other areas they adopt sub-hegemonic African American rap/gangsta culture (for example music and dress). Furthermore, these discussions relate to common (often 'othering') representations found in the mainstream media. Indeed, Islam is not even the majority religion for Lebanese Australians. Young Lebanese men are not a monolith, and being young and male and Muslim is not a monocultural experience. Unfortunately, mainstream discursive constructions of young Islamic men often ignore this.

beach, but also to a working-class Australian identity, these Lebanese young men had transgressed beyond their marked territory. They had attempted to engage with centralizing working-class masculinity without paying heed to the marginalized position of their cultural and racial identity. Indeed, their behavior indicated that they had 'they lost sense of the marginality of their culture' (Hage 2009: 259). The appropriation of aspects of an identity used to exclude is represented culturally and socially, through the media and political rhetoric as being both transgressive and highly risky when done by a subjectively marginalized body. This is not only the case for subjective ethnic positions; it can also be the case for other non-white/male/hetero bodies. Even bodies that somewhat fit this limited framework can be excluded, for example, on the grounds of being 'too' poor. While there are many factors that led to the violence at Cronulla, it may be this reaction to an ethnic group 'over-assimilating' that may be the most illuminative, particularly in the context of the exclusionary nature of centralizing working-class masculinities in Australia. Centralizing working-class masculinity is powerfully exclusionary. It operates to marginalize those that fall outside of its narrow parameters, even if they have tried to engage with this highly normative identity.

There is a very fine line between doing centralizing working-class masculinity in Australia the right way, and doing it the wrong way. Enjoying motorcycles and cars, playing and being a spectator of sports,[128] attending racing events and owning performance vehicles is doing masculinity the right way, making the 'right' choices.

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[128] Another frequent complaint about the Lebanese 'other' in the lead up to the Cronulla riots was that their use of the beach for playing sports was 'wrong', as Wise pointed out Anglo-Australians tend to use the water for activities at the beach and the sand for relaxing (2009: 130). By infringing on this unwritten code of behavior young Lebanese men were transgressive normative cultural usage of the space of the beach (Wise 2009: 131).

However, street racing, drink-driving, and 'hoon' behaviors are making 'bad' choices. Being a blue collar 'battler' demonstrates that one has made the right choices. Being out of work, particularly needing government assistance demonstrates the bad choices have been made. Enjoying a beer is expected, indeed it is considered 'Australian', even to the point of intoxication. Having a drinking problem (or drug problem) registers as making 'bad' choices. Even fine spatial definitions are enforced; people living in Adelaide's North Eastern suburbs (such as Tea Tree Gully, St. Agnes or Ridgehaven) are not marginalized and pathologized in the same way as those living a 15 minute drive away in Adelaide's Northern suburbs (for example Elizabeth North or Davoren Park). Neo-liberal discourses position 'choice' at the forefront, placing the responsibility for failure on the individual. Working-class people absorb this narrative of choice and individualism which can then be reflected in self-blame when things 'go wrong' as opposed to recognizing the inequity embedded within systems of privilege and inequality. Furthermore, these narratives encourage white working-class men to blame other, more marginalized groups and individuals for their inability to 'succeed'. The absorption of this discourse was illustrated in the interviews when respondents were asked about equality in Australia:

K: Do you think Australia is equal as far as opportunities and privileges go?

G: Yep. For sure.

K: Why do you think it's equal?

G: Because it's made so easy. It's all out there if you want it and you're motivated to do it. You can do whatever you want, you can get there. There's nothing stopping

you. I think people that complain about not having options half the time, I mean, there's obviously people who don't have jobs, but most of the time it's just laziness (G, contract worker, 25, single).

This statement illustrates how neo-liberal approaches to individual responsibility place the blame for failure on the individual, totally masking the ways that systemic inequality creates a very uneven playing field. Instead, life outcomes are constructed through 'choice'. As Lindsay points out, 'as reflexive selves we are now "forced to be free" and we must make a myriad of choices and decisions to optimize our health and minimize our exposure to risk' (Beck 1992 in Lindsay 2009). For men who engage with centralizing working-class masculinity there is a balancing act between making the right choices in order to do masculinity, class and 'Australian-ness' without going 'too far' and placing themselves or others at risk. Furthermore, other, more marginalized groups and individuals (such as working-class women, non-whites, people with disabilities) can be blamed for their 'failings' through these discourses without ever having to question the systems of privilege and inequality that denied such groups equal opportunity.

This is where centralizing working-class masculinity as a discursive political tool is so successful. Not only is it a legitimate way of being a man in Australia, it is also *legitimizing.* It gives weight not only to certain groups, but to certain discourses as well. Furthermore, it counters any real challenges to mainstream scaling of bodies hierarchically (Cooper 2006) in very powerful ways. Centralizing working-class masculinities, whether present as aspirational markers of doing manhood (Howson

2011), or as actual embodied ways that men 'do' gender (Beasley 2011), allow for the maintenance of the hierarchical scaling of bodies (Cooper 2006). Clearly, this occurs in relation to gender, with the privileging of the male over the female (especially in relation to Australian national identity). It also occurs in relation to sexuality, ethnicity and embodied physicality. Furthermore, when aligned with neo-liberal 'choice' discourses, it denies the existence of any real class distinctions, despite *being* a classed construct (Elder 2007). This it achieves through creating a limited space in which working-class identities are acceptable. Yet, they are acceptable only insofar as they are aligned with neo-liberal capitalist constructs while maintaining an active distrust of both elite and lower classed identities (Dyrenfurth 2005). This creates a juxtaposition between acknowledging class boundaries (through the derision of the elites at the top and the lower classes at the bottom), and denying they exist as a source of inequality. As Elder argues,

> class, as it is deployed in … stories of being Australian, obscures social and economic inequalities, and encourages citizens to see themselves as 'much the same' … Myths and stories of egalitarianism—that is, stories which reinforce the idea that there are no real ramifications resulting from class difference—encourage the primacy of the notion that being Australian is about being part of a nation all pulling together for the same end (2007: 46).

This then is the risk created by centralizing working-class masculinity; it maintains a discursive space in which this identity can be used to deny any claims of marginalization by the very group it purports to represent. Moreover, centralizing working-class masculinity—when linked with neo-liberalism—is used as both an identity and as an ideal which supports the continuation of social and cultural

inequalities while such inequalities are rendered invisible in the wider Australian cultural lexicon.

Conclusion.

This chapter has explored notions of 'risk' and centralizing working-class masculinity. It focused on three areas which demonstrate the tenuous gap between making the 'right' choices and the 'wrong' choices when 'doing' centralizing working-class masculinity. Those three areas: alcohol, car culture, and xenophobia (which was explored through the Cronulla riots), are sites in which the problematic nature of centralizing working-class masculinity, of maintaining that fine balance between doing enough but not doing too much, is manifest. There are other areas in which this fine balance exists—in fact embodied gender and class affect each and every part of life. In actuality, the previous three chapters looking at youth and schooling, work, and intimacy have already examined the difficulty with which people navigate centralizing working-class masculinity, trying to make the 'right' or legitimized choices. This is in itself a risk, making the wrong choices opens up the possibility for the individual to be blamed for making the wrong choices and it delegitimizes their experience of both gender and class. As Lupton explains,

> Risk has become an increasingly pervasive concept of human existence in Western societies; risk is a central aspect of human subjectivity; risk is seen as something that can be managed through human interventions; and risk is associated with notions of choice, responsibility and blame (1999: 25).

Centralizing working-class masculinity is most effective as a neo-liberal and conservative political ideal when it is associated with 'risk'. By being both at risk (when it is associated with the 'right' bodies) and being risky (when associated with the 'wrong' bodies), centralizing working-class masculinity encourages protectionist, exclusionary discourses. Furthermore, centralizing working-class masculinity is discursive and, consequently, fluid. It can call on different archetypes in different situations and it can be adapted in ways that create powerful social, cultural and political meanings around belonging in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class.

Conclusion

Privilege, Marginalization, Mainstreaming and Centralizing Working-Class Masculinity

This thesis has explored the ways in which working-class masculinity is central and centralizing in Australia, and has contextualized this identity in relation to various phenomena. Centralizing working-class masculinity, as it has been defined throughout this thesis is implicit in both the construction and the performance of a legitimized Australian identity. As Beasley argues, '[t]he Australian "every-bloke" is presented as that which *is* Australia. That which distinguishes Australian-ness as authentic masculinity' (2009a: 64). Centralizing working-class masculinity does not occupy a position of dominance in the sense of a simplistic vertical hierarchy of power, but, rather, is positioned as a legitimate mainstream identity, regardless of the actual power wielded by working-class men. Its social and cultural power does not rest on dominance, but its centrality. As Beasley goes on to note, the 'in-between' location of this working-class masculinity involves '"an ambiguous ambivalent identity" which is nevertheless somehow centralized' (2009a: 64). Indeed, as has been argued here, centralizing working-class masculinity slips between hegemony and complicity, but is always visible and legitimized. In Australia 'mainstreaming' often makes real systems of class, race and gender-based inequality and privilege invisible. The construction of power as a hierarchical apex with a 'cultural elite' (Scalmer 1999) ignores the more nuanced and discursive ways that power operates in Australia.

In Australia these discursive power structures are far more complex than the ways that they are usually represented. The simplistic notion of a forgotten mainstream, one that is white, male and heterosexual, precludes any wider social questioning of systems of inequality and privilege, indeed, the existence of such systems is often denied. This thesis has looked at this phenomenon by focussing on the dual hegemony and complicity of centralizing working-class masculinity and its position as a mobilizing ideal. The 'mainstream' as represented by centralizing working-class masculinity occupies a legitimized position of both victimhood *and* cultural hegemony—it is therefore both hegemonic and complicit. Centralizing working-class masculinity is woven into social and cultural discourses to argue against progressive social and cultural change, particularly when it is aligned with neo-liberal and neo-conservative discourse. This is shown in Chapter Four in the analysis of education, in Chapter Five when exploring industrial relations, and in Chapter Seven when considering risk.

In such political manifestations centralizing working-class masculinity may actually aid in the entrenchment of systems of inequality and privilege while making these systems invisible. The application of neoliberalism in Australia often relies on a sucessful construction of centralizing working-class masculinity. Furthermore, the existence of marginalization based on class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality is not only denied through mainstreaming discourses, but marginalized groups and individuals and their interests are pitted against a constructed 'national good'. Mainstream values are therefore set against the values and interests of the 'other'.

As this thesis has shown, those who are deemed to be located in the mainstream are able to reject the views and needs of minority groups when such views and needs are constructed as being in conflict with the views and needs of the mainstream. However, the 'mainstream' community is an entirely imagined one, albeit in a very socially, culturally and politically powerful imagining. Part of the power of the 'mainstream' rests in its homogeneity, and this homogeneity is white, male, heterosexual and working-class affiliated (while denying the existence of any real class-based inequity). In other words, it is a centralizing working-class masculinity. This thesis has examined the ways in which centralizing working-class masculinity operates as both a discursive political and cultural tool, and as an identity with which people engage. While this is a mainstream identity, very few individuals can perform it as it is largely exclusionary. Furthermore, as this thesis has shown, even those who can engage with centralizing working-class masculinity fully, owing to their whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality, often do so at risk.

Overall this thesis has contextualized centralizing working-class masculinity in relation to a variety of social and cultural phenomena in Australia. Each chapter in this thesis has explored a different area in which centralizing working-class masculinity has very real and tangible affects in terms of representation, systems of privilege and inequality, and individual life outcomes. While Chapters One and Two examined the theoretical and methodological story of centralizing working-class masculinity, Chapter Three showed how pervasive centralizing masculinity is in terms of media images. The chapter explored how, while images of centralizing working-class masculinities may seem fairly diverse (in terms of different bodies and ages), they are nearly always white and heteronormative. Chapter Three also

examined the ways that media images (as explored through film) of centralizing working-class masculinity may shift in line with political and cultural change—as shown in relation to the neo-liberalism so evident in the film *Kenny*. Chapter Four considered centralizing working-class masculinity and anti-elitism in relation to schooling, exploring the classed nature of the educational institution and how this puts it in conflict with the classed nature of centralizing working-class masculinity. This creates tension between an involvement in education and a working-class identity which can often lead to a failure to connect with the environment of academia—a failure that is often blamed on the individual.

Chapter Five explored the changing face of work, and how centralizing working-class masculinity has been used as a neo-liberal tool in the promotion of individualism. It has also been employed to foster the kind of collectivism that is often so beneficial to the working-class (as can be seen in relation to the Your Rights at Work campaign). Yet, as considered in this chapter, centralizing working-class masculinity is often currently aligned with the mining industry, which reinstates the legitimacy of individualism, aspirationalism and neo-liberalism. Chapter Six considered the under-researched field of intimacy. What was uncovered was that in terms of parenting, partnering and domesticity in particular, the image of centralizing working-class masculinity as head-of-household and traditionally gendered may be very different from the actual lives of working-class men who are adopting new, more progressive ways of being intimate in these spheres. However, mining industry discourse may be re-establishing the gendered head-of-household, particularly in relation to fly-in-fly-out work. This is an area that needs further exploration. Chapter Seven considered the 'risk' associated with centralizing working-class masculinity,

and found that there is a complex relationship between bodies associated with centralizing working-class masculinity being 'at' risk (particularly by a racialized 'other') and these bodies being 'risky'. In particular this chapter found that discourses around risk and panic are deeply embedded with normative discourses around gender, race and sexuality.

This thesis has found that class and gender not only intersect, but are enmeshed to create centralizing working-class masculinity as both an archetypal representation of 'real' Australian 'blokehood' and as a set of practices which govern not only gender and class, but ethnicity, culture and sexuality. Class-based constructions of the 'mainstream' are used to police gender, whiteness (and non-whiteness), and sexuality—this has been illustrated throughout this thesis in relation to educational outcomes and schooling, employment and workplace practices, and intimacy, sexuality and familial relationships. For example, certain types of educational achievement are highly gendered, but in very classed ways, therefore, for young working-class men such educational achievement is discouraged both on a gendered and classed basis (as was explored in Chapter Four). In many men's lives the balance between performing the necessary 'provider' role and being actively involved in the family also provides a site of friction. Gendered expectations dictate a need to be engaged with the labour market, but the shift from manufacturing as a major source of blue-collar work to mining (specifically fly-in-fly-out work) is incompatible with the roles expected of a father or partner. Men's choices are once again limited, but when they make the 'wrong' choices they are blamed for their failures under the rubric of neo-liberal 'choice'. When men (and women) make choices that are judged by others as lacking (for instance the choice

not to go work in mining and to remain partially reliant on government benefits), or as having unacceptable associated costs (such as the health and community costs of 'hoon' driving), they are blamed completely for their own failure. Even national health campaigns rely on individualistic notions of 'choice' with little regard to the cultural factors that may encourage people to drink to excess, or drink drive, or smoke cigarettes. This places many working-class men in a difficult position; they have access to social and cultural power through the practices associated with centralizing working-class masculinity. However, these practices limit the ways in which they can 'do' their gender (through class as a policing agent) and their class (through gender as a policing agent).

Class: Both Appropriated and Disregarded.

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, class is a contested concept, with arguments in both academic and mainstream discourse that it no longer exists as a relevant social category. The relegation of class to a 'zombie category' (Beck 2000 in Johnson & Lawler 2005: **1**.1), fails to recognize the myriad of ways in which class is still a chief definer of people, both structurally and socially. For example, many structural institutions such as schools, the legal system, and the health service industry are all classed in very specific ways. Social systems are also classed, albeit in ways that are much less tangible. The classing of structural institutions has been explored in this thesis, for instance in Chapter Four in the case of the middle-class structure of educational institutions and the ways this pits their mechanisms against individuals who align themselves with centralizing working-class masculinity—

especially those who come from actual working-class backgrounds. In this section of the conclusion the more amorphous ways in which class is social and cultural needs to be revisited, as does the question of how, when centralizing masculinity is taken into account, both social and structural class inequalities can be hidden or downplayed.

It is in the downplaying of structural inequality that the power of centralizing working-class masculinity as a 'mobilizing ideal' can be fully realized. This is certainly the case with political rhetoric. Both recent federal governments, Howard's Coalition and the Rudd/Gillard ALP, have used classed imagery and notions of solidarity that have previously been associated with working-class struggle. Examples include in neoliberal 'choice' in education as explored in Chapter Four, the individualization of the workplace as explored in Chapter Five, and the pressure to 'provide' middle-class options as parents as explored in Chapter Six. These political discourses have deployed such classed imagery to mainstream policy to the exclusion of many minority groups 'through their rhetorical calls to "Aussie battlers" (Howard) and "Australian working families" (Rudd/Gillard). As Dyrenfurth points out, 'when Howard, as with other political leaders, extols and employs values, he also shapes and distorts their (historically contingent) values' (2007: 212). The values of the 'battler' or the 'Aussie family' are posited as the values of wider Australian society as a whole. These values, by being linked with highly classed and gendered archetypes, become inviolate. As has been explored throughout this thesis, to challenge the values which are associated with the 'battler' or the 'Aussie family' is to challenge both mainstream values, and the values associated with legitimate Australians. Furthermore, for groups whose values, cultures or lifestyles do not mesh with the

image of the 'battler' or the 'Aussie family', any challenge they strike against the hegemony of this group becomes a challenge to 'real Aussies'. This authenticity so closely linked with class is, indeed, legitimizing, creating a space in which some are included, but more importantly 'others' are excluded.

Exclusionary language is often termed in gendered and classed ways. This is true with regards to the 'cultural elites' and the way this group is commonly positioned as a direct threat to Australian mainstream values. As previously discussed in Chapter One, in Australia, 'elites' is a term used not to represent 'military power or capital,' but a constructed, cultural, left-leaning, ruling class. As Scalmer notes when discussing the variety of terms used to define the 'elites', 'this family of terms all evoke the same basic image: a bureaucratic knowledge-class attempting to reshape Australia and refusing to pay attention to "ordinary Australians"'(1999: 154). 'Elites' is a powerful term, particularly when used to argue against progressive change. It associates any individual or group who are agents for such change with wealth and power, while aligning them directly against Australian 'values'. This is particularly true when the 'elites' are pitted against groups who are aligned with centralizing working-class masculinity; the ANZACs, the 'battlers' the 'larrikins', or the 'Aussie families'. The prevalence of anti-elitism in the media was examined in Chapter Three. Then it was explored in relation to education, anti-elitism and academia in Chapter Four. It is also apparent in the pervasive cultural and social power wielded by the mining industry, as explored in Chapters Five and Six. Anti-elitism was also examined in several contexts in Chapter Seven—most notably in relation to any challenges made to the ongoing systemic racism that is such a part of Australian culture. Systems of inequality and privilege are able to go unchecked, or

any challenge to them can be countered as being 'un-Australian', while narratives from outside the mainstream are able to be effectively quashed.

It is not only the 'elites' and their allies whose narratives are denied legitimacy through the constant reaffirmation of centralizing working-class masculinity. Many actual working-class people have many of their own narratives distorted and appropriated. This is especially true for those members of the working-class who fall outside of the social and structural parameters that allow for engagement with any form of centralizing working-class masculinity. This includes but is not limited to those not in gender specific male bodies, non-whites, and non-heterosexuals. Other factors such as age and ability come into play, as does employment status, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. While many white, heterosexual men from the working class face various challenges presented by centralizing working-class masculinity, they may also receive dividends in regards to their gender, race and sexuality being legitimized (as has been shown by centralizing working-class masculinity's definition as complicity as well as hegemonic). Working-class women and members of the queer community have their various identities intersect with their classed position to create an axis of marginalization. This is even more pronounced for Aboriginal, migrant and non-white members of the working-class in Australia. They have their voices *as* members of the working-class effectively silenced. Their reality prevents them from being *legitimately* working-class, and, as explored in Chapter Seven, narratives of centralizing working-class masculinity as the mainstream prevent them from being *legitimately* Australian.

This is possibly the biggest problem posed by the ongoing cultural and social hegemony and complicity of centralizing working-class masculinity. Its centrality places it within the heart of mainstream narratives, yet through its extremely limited parameters, and the limited set of practices with which it is associated, it excludes far more people within Australian society than it includes. This, in effect, creates a space in which the 'mainstream' narratives and interests become that of a limited group who already occupy a highly legitimized space. As Scalmer notes,

> Sad ironies abound. In an historical moment when class politics has supposedly superseded identity politics, Australian conservative intellectuals have taken up the old cultural tools and concepts of the left in order to create a new language of class (1999: 154).

Class inequities are able to be negated through the utilization of *working-class narratives.* Neoliberals from both political parties and in various media, social and cultural roles, have been able to take some of the language of working-class solidarity and appropriate it to champion individualism and neo-liberal discourses— neither of which are concerned with the problems faced by those from the working classes. Moreover, the legitimacy of being aligned with the working-class has created a situation where class, despite being a powerful social and cultural tool, can limit life choices which then, under the rubric of individualism, can be blamed on the personal choices of those who fail to succeed economically.

Gender, Class and Other Intersecting Identities in Australian Culture: Inclusion, Exclusion and Legitimacy.

The strength of combining the invisibility and anonymity of the 'mainstream' masculinity with narratives of need and victimization is palpable. This is arguably the most important way in which centralizing working-class masculinity benefits both conservative and neoliberal discourses. This can be seen in the media chapter's reflection of the film *Kenny* and the character of the same name. Kenny Smythe has access to narratives of privilege *and* marginalization. In many ways his privilege is a result of his gender and his marginalization is a result of his class. However, as previously noted, it is much more complex than that. Kenny is portrayed as a victim of a culture that has placed the welfare of 'other' groups over his, particularly in regards to his gender. As a white heterosexual male, Kenny is positioned as the real victim of a culture that ignores its mainstream. It is little wonder that conservative commentators such as Andrew Bolt embraced the film so wholeheartedly. As Carol Johnson observes, 'the privileged identity is asking for empathy as it purportedly finds itself under attack from minority special interests' (2005: 45). *Kenny* was hailed as a film for mainstream Australians, both a piece of media and a character that could be used to encapsulate the grievances of the mainstream. He was represented as trapped between the left leaning 'elites' at the top and those at the bottom those who took advantage of the state: ethnic minorities, single mothers, welfare recipients and so on. Kenny himself was also wholly engaged with the neoliberal capitalist economy at the exclusion of all else.

Kenny Smythe was in many ways the ultimate neoliberal citizen. But more importantly, particularly in terms of the massive popularity of both the film and the character, Kenny was the quintessential Aussie 'bloke', the ultimate example of centralizing working-class masculinity. With the exception of his neoliberal devotion to his work, he displayed all the traits, characteristics and practices linked with this archetype. He is enterprising and self-actualizing, a 'good bloke' who loved sport and his family. He was able to occupy a space of cultural idolatry, while simultaneously being utterly and immutably *ordinary*. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, *ordinary*, particularly when linked with *Australian,* is male. It is white. It is heterosexual. And, while not needing to *be* working-class, *ordinary* should seem *aligned* with the very limited mainstream neoliberal version of the working class discussed throughout this thesis. It is for all these reasons that Kenny as a character is the most powerful example of the hegemony (and complicity) of centralizing working-class masculinity made flesh (or celluloid flesh as the case may be). He is not dominant, nor particularly powerful. However, he is the exemplar of a legitimate Australian citizen.

Reappropriation and Subversion: Finding New Ways to do Gender, Class and National Identity.

This thesis has looked at the ways in which centralizing working-class masculinity is an important aspect of creating and maintaining mainstream ideologies and discourses that are exclusionary. This thesis has explored the ways that this archetype and its offshoots (the 'battler', the 'bushman', the 'working-family') create a

limited space in which to do gender, class and Australian-ness—a space that is gendered, heteronormative and wholly white. Centralizing working-class masculinity is highly problematic in that it limits legitimacy to those who either cannot fully engage with it due to their embodied subjectivity, or who choose not to engage with it. Furthermore, centralizing working-class masculinity as a tool of mainstreaming, masks the very real systems of privilege and inequality that exist within Australia. It creates the illusion that neo-liberal discourses surrounding individualism and choice are in the best interests of the 'battler', and that more progressive discourses are a direct risk to Australian values. The appropriation of working-class iconography into conservative and neoliberal discourses, such as the importance of 'choice' in education, in the construction of mining masculinity, and the problematic representation of both cultural 'elites' and those who are truly culturally and economically marginalized is one of the main ways in which centralizing working-class masculinity operates as a neo-liberal political ideal.

As explored in relation to the Your Rights at Work campaign, it is possible for centralizing working-class masculinity to be mobilized in more inclusive ways. Indeed, as Howson argues,

> By implying the simplistic, though neat, conceptual imbrication of hegemonic masculinity as the ideal gender type upon a patriarchal system, there is constructed within the masculinities literature a belief that just as the system must be removed, so too, its ideal type because their joint project is to close down any movement towards openness and social justice (2006: 5).

In the case of centralizing working-class masculinity, which is *an* ideal type, not *the* ideal type, maybe the whole identity does not need removal, but reimagining and reappropriating. One example of this, discussed in this thesis, is the way that Howard's 'battlers' were reimagined and reclaimed as the ACTU's 'working families' in the Your Rights at Work campaign (Muir 2008). Another example of such positive reappropriation can be seen in the ways that some actual working-class men are *doing* intimacy, as explored in Chapter Six. As the interviewee who talked about being able to tell his son he loved him, or the other interviewee who spoke at length about the importance of maintaining intimacy with his fiancée showed, despite their engagement with centralizing working-class masculinity, in some areas they are actually challenging mainstream discourses in powerful and subversive ways. They are challenging gendered binaries and reductive roles in the home and in their relationships in ways that are in contrast to the individualism that has become such a part of neoliberal and conservative constructions of centralizing working-class masculinity.

Therefore, it is argued that within certain discursively shaped subsets of these working-class masculinities, methods for resisting and challenging privilege and oppression may exist, and may not only be being practiced in organizations, but by ordinary working-class men in their day-to-day lives. And while some powerful traits such as collective action have been downplayed in the representation of the average 'Aussie bloke', they can still be found. In this way, the centrality of working-

class masculinities can be utilized for the advancement of social justice and reforms to the way Australians think about gender, class, sexuality and race.

While other research has considered the legitimacy of working-class masculinity in Australia (Nile 2000; Murrie 2000; Elder 2007) this thesis provides something new in that it not only examines the dual hegemony and complicity of working-class masculinity in Australia, but it also contextualizes this hegemony and complicity. This allows for a deeper understanding of the reasons behind Australia's long-running championing of the 'Aussie bloke', the political purpose of what has been defined here as centralizing working-class masculinity, the exclusionary nature of this identity, and the complex and problematic ways in which individuals engage with or 'do' this identity. This research has teased out the many interlocking strands of Australian identity in terms of class and gender, overwhelming whiteness and heteronormativity, and considered what is often seen as a representation of Australian's mainstream, 'average' national character as a far more concerning phenomenon. Through looking at a combination of academic theory, popular cultural representations, media images, political rhetoric, and empirical data, a unique and more nuanced understanding of the ways that centralizing working-class masculinity works has been presented. This thesis is only a starting point, but one that opens the way for much more research in this area. Intimacy and men's emotional experiences, images of masculinity and the mining industry, the experiences of fly-in-fly-out workers, anti-elitism narratives and the effect they have on working-class people accessing education: these are all areas in which further study could be (and should be) undertaken. What this work does is provide a platform for future research on this pervasive and culturally legitimized image of Australian masculinity.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study if to explore the lived experiences of low to middle income men to the popular cultural and media representations of working men. The aim is to increase understanding of how images of working men in Australia may help reflect and shape popular opinion, social policy and perceptions of national identity. If there are gaps between the lived experiences of working men and their image in Australian popular culture does this create any unrealistic expectations of the nature of manhood? The study is a PhD research project undertaken by Kirsty Whitman from the school of Social Science at the University of Adelaide (see below for more information about Kirsty).

Expectations of the Participant

If you agree to participate you will firstly take part in one or two one-to-one interviews in which you will be asked questions on such topics as: key moments of change in you lives such as leaving school, starting work and starting a family. There will also be some discussion of leisure activities, forms of entertainment and popular culture, social relationships and social and political issues. You may also be invited to take part in a focus group with 5-7 other men of similar age to yourself. The focus group will contain similar questions to the interviews and will also include a media package which you will be asked to respond to. The focus group will take between 1 and 2 hours.

Location of Interviews

The location of the interviews will be decided between the interviewee and the interviewer, taking into account where you live and your mobility. We will establish a convenient location and reimburse your transport costs to attend. If at any stage during the interview process you feel uncomfortable you are free to withdraw form the study.

Benefits of the Study

This is the first study of its kind undertaken in the last fifteen years in Australia. There has been limited attention paid to the lives of working men in recent years. It will therefore enable individuals who identify themselves as working men to have their voices, opinions and experiences heard. The wider community will then have the opportunity to hear form a group that often doesn't get a chance to express their views in a wider social arena. The possible benefits of this study, however, cannot be assured and are by no means guaranteed.

Statement of Withdrawal

If at any time during the interview process the participant wishes to withdraw form the study for whatever reason you are free to do so.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is assured. You may be given an alias and any personal details can be disguised.

Possible Risks and Inconvenience

There will be no physical risks associated with this study. However there may be some inconvenience to the participants mostly involving the demands placed on their time and the possibility of them having to travel to locations where the interviews and focus groups will be conducted. However everything possible will be done to minimize this

inconvenience including reimbursement for travelling expenses and making sure that the time and location of the interviews will be the most convenient possible for the interviewee.

Contact Numbers in Case of any Grievances

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About the Researcher

Kirsty Whitman is undertaking a PhD in Gender Studies and Politics form the University of Adelaide in the School of Social Science. I come from a working background myself and before returning to university I spent twelve years working in front bars and sporting clubs. My interest in this topic stems from noticing the lack of research done in this area.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

STANDARD CONSENT FORM
FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE PARTICIPANTS IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

1. I, …………………………………………………………… *(please print name)*

    consent to take part in the research project entitled: **A Hard Road?**

2. I acknowledge that I have read the attached Information Sheet entitled: **A Hard Road? Information Sheet for**

    Participants *Kirsty Whitman BA (Hons) PhD Candidate, Department of Gender Work and Social Inquiry*

    (60%) and Politics (40%), University of Adelaide.

3. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.

4. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.

5. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.

6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

7. I am aware that I should retain a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

    …………………………………………………………………………………………...

    (signature)   *(date)*

☐ I agree to the interviews being tape recorded

☐ I would like a copy of the results sent to: ……………………………………………
    ………………………………………………………………………………………….
    ………………………………………………………………………………………….

WITNESS

I have described to ………………………………………………….. *(name of subject)*

the nature of the research to be carried out. In my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Status in Project**:** ………………………………………………………………….

Name: …………………………………………………………………….…

…………………………………………………………………………………………..
(signature)   *(date)*

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