Cultural Sustainability in Regional Australia: Young Women out and about in the Bega Valley

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Cultural Sustainability in Regional Australia: Young Women out and about in the Bega Valley

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Cultural Sustainability in Regional Australia:
Young Women Out and About in the Bega Valley

Photograph of a night out at the Commercial Hotel, Bega, by Alix Nunn and of the Bega Valley from the Bega Valley Lookout by Anna de Jong

Anna de Jong

A thesis submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements of the Honours degree of Bachelor of Science in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Wollongong, 2011
The information in this thesis is entirely the results of investigations conducted by the author, unless otherwise acknowledged, and has not been submitted in part, or otherwise, for any other degree or qualification.

Signed .................................  Dated .................................
Abstract

This thesis focuses on the ‘going out’ practices of young women in order to explore the concept of cultural sustainability. Poststructuralist feminist theories are used to argue how subjectivities are felt and performed in and through space. Such theories are central to understanding why people choose to live in a particular place. This thesis offers an example of how spaces shape and are shaped by ‘going out’ practices. The study illustrates how ‘going out’ practices in the Bega Valley are imperative to understanding how women envision, establish and maintain their sense of self and place. A non-prescriptive mixed methodology is deployed to capture the richness of participants’ experiences and situations, including: a Google mapping exercise, interviews, solicited diaries, email and Facebook. Results presented over three chapters offer new understandings of the cultural sustainability of country towns. The first explores the interplay between mobility, bodies, rurality and ‘going out’ at night. It is argued that while car mobility is imperative to young women’s social lives beyond the metropolis, driving after dark is not without dangers. The second and third results chapters draw attention to how particular styles of femininity are spatially constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced through the commercial spaces of Bega and Merimbula. Attention is given to how particular styles of femininity are spatially constituted, how particular ‘scenes’ are shaped, and shape a night out, and how young women constitute understandings of rurality through ‘going out’ practices. In view of these results, a case is argued for the importance of cultural sustainability in the planning of future governmental policies.
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1

Introduction

1.1 The Research Impetus

On May 13th, 2011 the Federal Government launched a $230 million scheme ‘Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities’. The aim of this scheme is to improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of Australia’s regional and rural areas. To achieve this, the program focuses on targeting growth to regional areas by attracting skilled workers and promoting sufficient infrastructure, such as broadband networks and affordable housing (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 2011).

While emphasis on rural and regional economic, environmental and social sustainability is important; such a focus ignores cultural sustainability. That is, the everyday practices that enable residents to maintain a sense of self while living in small, country towns. The concept of cultural sustainability is crucial to better understand migration processes as well as what enables people to stay in regional and rural areas. This thesis takes a cultural geography approach to explore the importance of cultural sustainability to better understand the lives of young women resident in regional Australia.

1.2 Research Objective and Aims

This research is part of a larger project that is examining the cultural sustainability of Australian country towns. Nestled within the larger project, the overarching objective of the present study is to investigate one dimension of cultural sustainability: the ‘going out’ practices of young women beyond the metropolis. ‘Going out’ was not defined by a set of criteria. Instead, what constituted ‘going out’ was always left open, and interpreted by the participants. Little is known about the lives of young women who choose to live in regional
Australia. Scholarly attention has been given to why young people may leave regional Australia for metropolitan centres (Gibson & Argent 2008), rather than understanding the experiences of being young in age, a woman and living in regional Australia. Equally, attention has focused on exploring how particular types of masculinities rather than femininities are produced, reproduced and challenged beyond the metropolis (Kraack & Kenway 2002). Specifically, the aims of this research are sixth-fold:

1. To situate the contribution of this project within the wider field of rural geography.

2. To develop and apply a cultural geography approach that thinks spatially about ‘going out’ practices.

3. To develop a methodology that provides rigorous and meaningful insights to participants’ ‘going out’ practices, despite the researcher and participants being some 400 kilometers apart.

4. To explore how rurality is constituted for young women through ‘going out’ practices.

5. To identify when and where young women go, and when and where they tend to avoid, when talking about ‘going out’.

6. To explore the types of femininities, which are performed in and through the spaces produced by ‘going out’ practices.

1.3 The Context: Bega Valley, New South Wales, Australia

The context for this research is the Bega Valley, New South Wales, Australia. The Bega Valley, has a total population estimated to be 33,000, and is located on the coast of New South Wales, about 400 kilometers south of Sydney and 222 kilometers south-east of Canberra (Figure 1.1). By age, the Australian Bureau of
Statistics (ABS) (Figure 1.2) census figures illustrate how the Bega Valley is one destination point in the migration process known as sea-change (Burnley & Murphy 2004). The large numbers of people aged 45 and over, indicate how coastal towns in particular have benefited from in-flows of older aged migrants in recent years. However, the Bega Valley was also a popular destination in

**Figure 1.1** Bega Valley, Map

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the 1980s for the so-called counter-culture migration. That is, many people seeking ‘alternative’ lifestyles moved to the Bega Valley in the 1980s, establishing collectives and communal farms. Furthermore, and perhaps more important to this project, as indicated in Figure 1.2, a large number of people leave the Bega Valley, who are aged in their twenties.

![Figure 1.2 Population Age Profile, Bega Statistical Local Area, 2006](image)

Source: ABS 2006

The Bega Valley is immense, covering 6052 square kilometers, much of which is both mountainous and forested. With the exception of main roads, the majority of roads are unsealed. While there is a school bus, there is no public transport connecting the towns and small hamlets in the Bega Valley such as Bemboka, Brogo, Candelo, Cobargo, Tantawangalo and Wolumla. These settlements often have a community hall. However the use of the halls is never constant, and fluctuates depending on a range of variables (for example prevalence of community groups and services). At present Candelo has a thriving arts scene and regularly hosts live music performances in the Candelo Town Hall.

The administrative center of the valley, Bega, is positioned inland on the Princes Highway. Bega has remained a conservative working country town, reliant upon providing the agricultural, government, education and community services to the region (ABS 2006b). In Bega there are limited commercial options for ‘going out’ either during the day or after dark. It has an Edwardian main street, three pubs, a
Gloria Jeans, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, a take-away pizza shop and three restaurants and three cafes.

In contrast those locations locked into tourists’ circuits - the coastal towns of Merimbula, Tathra, Pambula and Bermagui - attract large numbers of tourists in the summer months, particularly from Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. This influx of people enables a greater diversity of commercial entertainment venues than could ever be sustained by the resident population, including country clubs, cafes, restaurants, wine and cocktail bars, a nightclub, and cinema.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The aims of the thesis are addressed over six chapters. The first and second aim is the focus of Chapter 2. To achieve the first aim, an overview of the scholarship on rural geographies is provided to illustrate how this project is positioned within and contributes to rural geographies. Four strands of literature are identified that help understand social difference beyond the metropolis: migration geographies, mobility geographies, geographies of gender and sexuality and geographies of clubbing. To address the second aim, three concepts are introduced to help think spatially about the relationship between ‘going out’ practices and the self: Massey’s (2005) ‘progressive sense of space’, Probyn’s (2003) ‘spatial imperative of subjectivity’ and Valentine’s (2007) ‘intersectionality’. Chapter 3 turns to the methodological aim. It explores how the project was designed to overcome the tyranny of ‘remote’ fieldwork by applying the concepts of rigour, as outlined by Baxter and Eyles (1997), and by employing a qualitative mixed methodology, including Facebook.

The final three aims are addressed over three discussion chapters. For participants in this study ‘going out’ was understood through telling stories about events that occurred after dark, and usually involving the consumption of alcohol. Given this context, Chapter 4 explores the relationship between mobility, bodies, rurality and ‘going out’ at night in the Bega Valley. Particular attention is given to investigating how young women constitute rurality through mobility
practices. Results also explore how the car plays an essential role in producing and reproducing normative understandings of femininity when ‘going out’ after dark. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on how different femininities are constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced in the commercial venues of Bega and Merimbula, respectively, when ‘going out’ after dark. These chapters draw on empirical data to explore the spaces participants choose to socialise and choose to avoid when ‘going out’ after dark. Two styles of femininity that dominate the commercial spaces of the Bega Valley after dark will be examined throughout both chapters: ‘conservative country femininity’ and ‘sexy metropolitan club femininity’. Attention will also be given to how young women are made to feel their rurality through the different commercial spaces of Bega and Merimbula. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by evaluating achievement of the aims and summarizing the key findings. A research agenda is also outlined for cultural sustainability and regional Australia.
2

Rural Geographies and Social Difference

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline how the thesis is positioned within, and contributes to rural geographies. The chapter is structured into three parts. The first provides an overview of the scholarship on rural geographies. At the outset it is important to note that this review is restricted to Anglo-American rural geographies of the Global North. The rural geographies of the Global South were beyond the aims of the thesis. The second part focuses on four contemporary themes that examine social difference within Anglo-American rural geographies and beyond; ‘migration’, ‘mobility’, ‘gender and sexuality’ and ‘club cultures’. Works published after 1990 framed by post-structuralist concepts are of primary concern in this section. Cutting across these themes is the recognition of ‘rurality’ as a social construct that shapes and is shaped by everyday experiences, rather than a pre-existing category. The third part, discusses the conceptual framework of this thesis.

2.2 Rural Geographies: A Historical Overview

The scope of contemporary Anglo-American rural geography is extremely broad and theoretically diverse. However, this was not always the case. In the 1970s, positivism was the dominant approach and focused on agriculture and agricultural practices (Woods 2009a). Positivism tended to ‘fix’ rural space through the identification of distinctive rural functional characteristics. An important contribution to the functionalist strand was Cloke’s (1977) ‘An Index of Rurality for England and Wales’. Cloke assumed a rural-urban continuum based on 16 census variables (including for example population and land use). Rurality was measured by the intensity of change over distance from major urban settlements to rural areas (Halfacree p.24 1993). Cloke’s ‘An Index of
Rurality for England and Wales’ illustrated how the rural was defined as a space outside the city. Australian human geographers were likewise highly influenced by functionalism during the 1970s.

Clout’s (1972) ‘Rural Geography’ marked a turning point. This was the first rural geographical textbook to provide an exhaustive and unifying overview of the ‘rural’ framed by social, economic and land use aspects. In the wake of Clout’s call for a unified rural geography, Williams (1976) sought to illustrate: the importance of rural planning, the low population and density of rural areas and the increased influence of the urban and intense technological change. Crucially, in this work, geographers did not question the ‘rural’ and ‘countryside’ as pre-existing entities.

Since the 1970s, Woods (2009a) identified two additional major conceptual strands. The first influenced by neo-Marxism, was characterized by the use of political economy perspectives. This strand understood the rural as the product of broader uneven social, economic and political processes. In neo-Marxism studies, social power was invested in the authority and control that certain people had over others because of their status in society attributed by wealth or social position.

Significant among landmark contributions to this approach was Newby’s (1977) study of rural power structures. Previously, rural studies had tended to emphasize a monolithic rural community identity over class differences. Newby, building on neo-Marxism philosophies, introduced new ways of thinking within rural studies in terms of both structures and class. Likewise, Cloke (1980) called for a conceptual framework founded in neo-Marxism, which sought to rid rural geography from the applied positivism and limited deployment of theory.

Political economy perspectives in rural geography continue to be drawn upon in new ways and remain a crucial part of the sub-discipline, most notably through examinations of the role the ‘service class’ plays in rural migration (Urry 1995) and the social, cultural and economic impacts of ‘gentrification’ (Cloke et al.)
1998) and rural restructuring (Woods 1997). Indeed, Australian rural studies remains largely focused on socio-economic processes of regional restructuring. For example, Beer et al. (2003) have engaged with the uneven economic development of Australia’s regions. They have examined how emerging global economies are transforming rural lives. Similarly, O’Neill and McGuirk (2002) highlighted the socio-economic inequalities facing rural communities through their documentation of the declining economic fortunes of places outside Australia’s capital cities. Unlike corresponding geographical studies concerning urban populations, these rural studies gave little consideration to the complexity of spatial outcomes beyond the metropolis, or to the personal experiences of those affected by the process of economic restructuring. This thesis aims to address this gap.

The second strand draws upon post-structuralist cultural theories that point to fluidity, instability and difference. This strand is part of a broader ‘cultural turn’ within human geography. This term reflects and highlights the importance of cultural and feminist theorists in rethinking the ontology of space including the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gill Valentine and Gillian Rose. Of particular importance to this cultural turn was the influence of various concepts including ‘discursive structures’, the ‘performative’ and the ‘embodied’. These ideas pointed to the importance of bodies, social difference, everyday practices and meanings in making sense of a world that is always in a flux.

Of particular importance to the cultural turn was an exchange between Philo (1992, 1993) and Murdoch and Pratt (1993) in a series of articles in the Journal of Rural Studies. The first of these, written by Philo (1992) was inspired by Ward’s (1988) book, The Children in the Country. Philo observed that Ward’s account provided insights into the lived experiences of ‘rural children’, which were absent from geography. Philo claimed that the sub-discipline was in danger of portraying rural people as ‘Mr. Averages’; that is white, middle class, men. Responding to Philo’s claim, Murdoch and Pratt (1993) took this argument a step further. Murdoch and Pratt contended that rural geographers should take post-modernism more seriously, by arguing that the production of rural geographical
knowledge was archaic. According to Murdoch and Pratt, rural geography needed to shed its modernist narrative before it could address Philo’s concern of neglected rural ‘others’. This exchange provided a turning point in rural geography, underscoring the importance of situated knowledge, social differences, and how a multiplicity of rural identities were constantly contested and negotiated within and through rural spaces.

Halfacree was the first to challenge the notion of a pre-existing ‘rural’ (1993, 1994). Halfacree deployed Foucault’s (1977) argument of discursive structures and social representations to illustrate the multiple and contrasting discourses embedded within the term ‘rural’. He contrasted how academics and non-academics spoke about the rural. According to Halfacree, academic discourses of rurality were, for the most part, carefully formulated theories, something that was not apparent in everyday discourses of rurality. Halfacree claimed that if geographers continued to fixate on the production of an academic definition of rurality, everyday accounts become marginalized and excluded. Increasingly, rural research that is influenced by the ‘cultural turn’ is mindful of how previous rural geography was often underpinned by metropolitan norms and values. This led to academic discourses of the ‘rural’ as lacking social diversity and offering limited social, economic or creative opportunities. Throughout this project the researcher has remained mindful of metropolitan narratives of the rural. Furthermore, through the examination of the lived experiences of young women living in the Bega Valley, this thesis seeks to explore the normative metropolitan assumptions which frame the rural through discourses of lack and limitation.

Within the theme of social difference, particular attention within rural geography has been given to bodies and doing gender. Since the 1990s, Judith Butler’s (1990) concept of performativity has been central to rethinking gender in rural geography. Butler’s discussion on the naturalization of certain characteristics in the performance of gender undermines the ontological assumption that the category of ‘women’, or ‘man’ exists as one identity. Rather, it is contended that gendered bodies are multiple, socially constructed and fluid. Following Butler, gender is stabilized onto bodies as an outcome of the interplay
between gendered discourses and repeated actions. For example, bodies are assigned to categories of ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ through the repetitive process of how individuals dress, move, speak, use make-up and cut their hair.

Drawing on Butler (1990), feminist scholars have explored how conventional ideas of rural masculinity and femininity are produced, reproduced and challenged. Initially, the most exhaustive treatments given to gender and rurality focused on women in farming. Such work (for example Redclift & Whatmore 1990; Whatmore 1990) highlighted the patriarchal relationships in structuring the farm labour process. Whatmore’s (1990) work was essential in highlighting the analytical constraints of Marxist rural studies. She claimed that research had focused on the economic relations of agricultural production, which in turn neglected the importance of women’s unpaid labour in social reproduction. She also highlighted how previous work was uncritical of key concepts such as ‘the family’, ‘labour’ and the attributes of gender as a social division. Whatmore was not only successful in recording the work carried out by farming women, but also in explaining the patriarchal gender relationships behind the division of labour, both on the farm and within the household. Such work has been pivotal in illuminating farming women’s experiences.

2.3 Social Difference, Rural Geographies and Beyond

Since the 1990s, serious coverage of the entire field of Anglo-American rural geography was impractical. Consequently, this review is confined to four themes addressing social difference, which are particularly relevant to this thesis; ‘migration’, ‘mobility’, ‘gender and sexuality’ and ‘club cultures’. It is important to note that these themes are not limited to rural geography. Rather they cut across a number of broad sub-disciplinary strands of human geography (Figure 2.1). This coverage omits many worthy contemporary themes; including recent work on rural tourism (Waitt 1999; Waitt & Lane 2007), rural festivals (Gorman-Murray et al 2008; Gibson & Connell 2011), rural mental health and well being (Henderson & Taylor 2003; Parr & Philo 2003), rural poverty and social exclusion (Cloke et al. 2002) and rural restructuring and globalization (McManus
& Pritchard 2000; Woods 2004, 2005). In addition to the specific references discussed below, scholars benefit from general reference works including encyclopedias of geography (Kitchin & Thrift 2009), compilations of syllabi (Anderson et al. 2003; Cloke et al. 2006; Oakes & Price 2008) and literature reviews (Kurtz & Craig 2009; Woods 2009b). Journals oriented to rural geographical studies include *Journal of Rural Studies, Rural Sociology* and *Sociologica Ruralis*. These are complimented by numerous geographical journals; those most relevant to the current study are *Progress in Human Geography* and *Gender, Place and Culture*.

**Figure 2.1** Themes of Literature, Social Difference and Rural Geography

- Gender, sexuality and rurality: Territorializing and re-territorializing space
- ‘New Mobilities Paradigm’: Everyday rural mobility
- Intranational Migration: Troubling the youth exodus
- Club Cultures: Women’s involvement and everyday significance
2.3.1 Migration

At the beginning of the 1990s migration studies did not embrace the swing to the cultural as readily as most other sub-disciplines in human geography. These studies remained largely preoccupied with macro research methods that determined the push and pull factors that ‘cause’ migration and settlement to happen in particular ways in particular places at one fixed moment in time (Hardwick 2003). The pervasiveness of a quantitative approach, led to many calls for a more incisive focus on social theory. Most notably, Halfacree and Boyle (1993) argued that a re-examination of the conceptualization of migration within the situatedness of everyday life was warranted. Halfacree and Boyle claimed that previous accounts had largely presented migration as a stimulus-response model, consisting of one discrete contemplative act. Rather, they argued, attention ought to be brought to the individual as decision maker, with an emphasis on the experience and context of the migration.

Halfacree and Boyle’s (1993) call for a turn to the cultural resonated with many rural geographers interested in migration studies, fuelling a quest for in-depth qualitative research. For example, Davis (1997) analyzed the shifting socio-cultural constructions of rurality at the personal level, by examining the lived experiences of the movement of New Age travellers in England. In Australia, Gorman-Murray (2009) has more recently built on Halfacree and Boyle’s ideas through an analysis of in-depth interviews with gay and lesbian Australians about their intra-national migration decisions. Gorman-Murray suggested current queer migration literature narrowly views non-heterosexuals as oppressed and harassed in ‘conservative’ rural communities, who flee to urban environments because these places offer anonymity and like-mindedness. His study argued that while this understanding is useful in some contexts, it ignores the complexity of queer migration. Gorman-Murray argued that what is needed is a consideration of the body as the unit of analysis to help conceptualize the complexity of queer migration. Waitt and Gorman-Murray (2007) likewise contested narrow understandings of queer migration through their analyses of
older gay men in Townsville, Australia. Their work illustrated the paradoxical qualities of home space, as both urban and rural, and center and margin.

The call for social theory in rural migration geography since the early 1990s appears not to be widely recognized by many population geographers studying the rural. This trend is especially evident in the United States, where rural migration studies remain dominated by quantitative analyses. For example Fitchen’s (1995) study of a middle class exodus in a New York community deployed a review of secondary data from state government agencies, local institutions and census data, to identify the potential impacts of this population change on the remaining community. While such studies are important to understanding changing composition of rural populations, it is difficult to explain why these movements occur without qualitative analyses. Findlay (2003) suggested a resistance to cultural approaches within population geographies. He attributes the resistance to generating a polarization between population and rural geography in North America. Although not as prevalent, this trend is likewise evident within the Australian context. For example Burnley and Murphys’ (2004) work has been essential in illustrating the so-called ‘Sea Change’ migration. Drawing on ABS census data, they claimed that the long-term re-population of towns along the New South Wales coast would dramatically alter the cultures of many Australian coastal towns. Yet, their work failed to discuss how this cultural change would play out in specific contexts and they neglected to acknowledge the complexity of experiences felt by those living in rural Australia.

However many scholars in the United Kingdom and Australia have recognized the benefits of combining both social theory and quantitative analyses. Recognition of these benefits can largely be contributed to Hoggart et al. (1995). Their work called for a theoretical hybridity. This call arose from Hoggart et al’s recognition of the analytical benefits of combining statistical analysis of rural population trends with placed-based experiences. In the wake of Hoggart et al’s hail for theoretical hybridity, Halfacree (2001) called for the introduction of a qualitative approach to rural English migration to highlight its complexity.
Halfacree suggested that the diversity of lived experiences of rural in-migration in England had been ignored through the ‘counterurbanization story’ created by migrant scholars interested in quantitative research. The conventional ‘counterurbanization story’ claimed as a social fact that individuals are moving back to many rural areas in England, reversing the previous drift from rural to urban areas. According to this view counterurbanization has been presented as a relatively clear, distinctive, even objective category. However, Halfacree claimed that when scholars consider the diversity of lived experiences of rural in-migrants, it is evident that many only partially and problematically fit within this dominant understanding. Thus, Halfacree suggests migration studies ought to move beyond the simplicity of the ‘counterurbanization story’ through a utilization of qualitative approaches, thereby negating the need to categorize migration, while at the same time emphasizing the complexity of migrations social processes.

In the same way, Gibson and Argent (2008) critiqued generalized understandings of the rural to urban youth exodus in Australia. Generalized understandings claim that youth migration is a uni-directional, one off move, which is ‘blind’ to alternative explanations and interpretations. While Argent and Gibson deployed census statistics to gauge an overall understanding of the youth exodus, they highlighted that in reality young people, who leave rural areas are not a homogenous and passive group. Rather, these youth have multiple aspects to their lives, often moving between the urban and rural several times, challenging the exodus pattern. Thus Gibson and Argent claimed that while there are commonalities between places and similarities in the ways in which stories of rural migration are told, the agency of young people needs to be acknowledged in the research process. More recently McGuirk and Argent (2011) analyzed predictions of Australia’s future growth and its implications for both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Their work claimed that although Australia’s population is increasing, the continent’s settlement patterns are complex and dynamic. They emphasize how the conventional rural-urban dichotomy no longer captures the multiplicity of flows of people between capitals, large regional towns and major inland and coastal regions.
Little is known about the geographies of young people who choose to stay in rural areas. While studies of youth within geography rapidly increased during the 1990s, work has largely focused upon the metropolis and youth migration. A most notable exception is Leyshon’s (2008a) study of rural youth in the United Kingdom. Leyshon illuminated understandings of how rural youth construct and negotiate a sense of self. He illustrated how young people in the countryside experience conflicting and often contradictory feelings of inclusion and exclusion. For example while young people enjoy ‘urban’ entertainment, they are simultaneously keen to mark themselves as different to ‘urban youth’. Crucially young peoples’ identity is constructed differently at a variety of scales, locations and degrees.

2.3.2 Mobility

Transport geography is overwhelmingly based within a functionalist framework and is mainly concerned with planning how individuals get from A to B. For example, Nutley (1996, 2003, 2005) explored the relationship between car ownership and social exclusion in rural areas of the United States, Britain, Ireland and Australia. Through an analysis of census data, Nutley challenged the urban myth that lack of access to a car in rural towns is necessarily problematic. His results suggested that in Australia, the lowest levels of car ownership exist in the regions most remote from urban centres, and that within these remote regions there is no predictable relationship between any of the obvious variables (for example income, employment, gender or age) and car ownership.

Functionalist approaches have predominately explored the relationships between different forms of mobility and various demographic attributes through statistical methods and model building. However, these approaches lack the conceptual and methodological tools to explore the everyday meanings and consequences of mobility. Hence scholars frustrated by the inability to explore everyday mobility experiences turned to cultural theorists. Like rural geography, transport geography was also informed by the so-called ‘cultural turn’, as
scholars searched for a way to move beyond narrow understandings of how and why individuals move from A to B. Sheller and Urry (2006) defined this theoretically driven way of thinking about mobility as the ‘new mobilities paradigm’. Thinking in terms of networks, their aim was to challenge the a-mobile nature of pervious social science literature. They claimed that previously in mobility studies places had been viewed as fixed destinations with given categories, which either push or pull people to visit. Rather Sheller and Urry claimed that the new mobilities paradigm views places as complex, and connected to people through performance and bodies. Place is conceptualized as always more than a backdrop to movement. Their work highlighted that mobility does not end once the destination is reached; rather mobility remains continuous within places.

Unfortunately, the new mobilities paradigm has had relatively little to say about rural areas. This is largely a result of scholars preoccupation with movement over large distances, while interest in daily mobility has to date remained largely urban centric. The present thesis aims to address this gap and thus the remainder of this section will review current mobility studies more generally, acknowledging rural literature when relevant.

Urry (2000) is one of the key scholars who informed this new approach to mobility. Urry's work advocated a ‘sociology beyond societies’. Primarily, he argued how society, identity and space are produced through networks of people, ideas and things moving, rather than the inhabitation of shared space such as a city or region. Urry claimed that in a globalized world the very notion of a ‘society’ becomes problematic once consideration is given to networks and the porosity of borders. Rather than taking the fixity of borders, places and identities for granted, Urry urges us to instead start with the notion of mobility.

To illustrate this claim Urry (2000) discusses how different forms of mobility (specifically walking, trains and cars) create different understandings of the rural. For example, the introduction of rail in Europe during the late eighteenth century allowed urban dwellers to overcome the tyranny of distance, providing
greater access to the rural. With this greater access, walking in the countryside became regarded as a leisure activity by the highest echelons of society. This activity was viewed as an escape from the urban, where the walker understood that they could become ‘re-created’ through a nature understood as pristine. Walking for pleasure was a physical activity that largely ignored the lives and habitats of those dwelling in the countryside. Similarly, Urry discussed how the dominance of the car in the early 1900s transformed conceptions of the so-called ‘wilderness’, shifting it from an elite space approached by rail, to a space for the masses to stay in and rejuvenate from city life.

The embodied experience of mobility is of particular importance within the new paradigm. Conventional approaches to mobility have largely ignored, firstly how the body experiences movement; and secondly how mobility shapes and reshapes the reciprocal relationships between bodies and space. Cresswell (2006) has been highly influential in illuminating the importance of the body in mobilities literature. Cresswell claimed that to understand mobility without recourse to material corporeality is to miss the point. How we experience mobility and the ways we move, Cresswell argued, are intimately connected to meanings given to mobility through representations, while the way we represent mobility is based on the ways in which mobility is practiced and embodied.

Similarly, Laurier et al. (2008) sought to bring attention to the often overlooked ordinary episodes of what happens in the car during car travel, through an analysis of car videos in Britain. They state that traditional accounts of car travel have formulated journey time in terms of something that is lost, in relation to either time or cost. Yet Laurier et al. urged us to reconsider the time we pass in the car, with families, colleagues or friends as significant in ways beyond time or economic value. In another example, Bissell (2009) has explored how various experiences of quiescence emerge in the course of a railway journey, through an investigation into the practices of passengers on long-distance railway journeys in Britain. For example the study observed how the kinesthesia of the train serve to fatigue and tire the travelling body. Bissell’s work demonstrated how mobilities have the capacity to transform the travelling body in a multitude of
complex ways. Again this illustrates the importance of recognizing the corporeal body and its capacity to be effected by process and events when travelling.

Gender and daily mobility is a pivotal theme within the new mobilities paradigm. Over a decade ago, inspired by the work of Cresswell, Law (1999) called for a new research agenda that situated studies of gender within wider intellectual traditions concerning mobility (that Sheller and Urry (2006) eventually labeled the ‘new mobilities paradigm’). Law stated that transport geography’s traditional approach to this theme had remained largely stagnant and narrowly concerned with ‘journey to work’ research. Her call to take up feminist and post-structuralist thinkers was embraced by several scholars. For example, Murray’s (2008) discussion on motherhood and mobility is a worthy successor to Law’s work. Murray illustrated that for some English middle class mothers, mobility produces various kinds of constraints and coercions. For the reason that English middle class culture constructs ‘good’ mothers as risk averters, while those who do not practice risk aversion become labeled as ‘bad’ mothers. This dominant ideology is practiced through everyday mothering and extends to the imposition of risky mobility, where it thus becomes the mothers responsibility to control and supervise their children when travelling. Murray claimed that this either results in the loss of independent mobility and an increase in parental escort trips on behalf of the mother, or for others immobility because the only way to avoid risk is to remain relatively immobile. Furthermore, driving is one way to rethink gender and sexuality as simultaneously performative and embodied. The next section further explores the theme of gender and sexuality.

2.3.3 Gender and Sexuality

Prior to the 2000s, geography and cultural studies of sexuality had almost exclusively focused on the urban (and that of gay men). Kramer (1995) and Bell and Valentine (1995a) both noted how naturalized assumptions that connect rurality with heterosexuality operated to make alternative sexualities invisible, like lesbians and gay men. Sexuality was initially raised within the context of rural marginality and otherness. Naturalized assumptions of the rural as a
threatening, oppressive and isolating place for sexual difference are illustrated in arguments that position the urban as a ‘gay homeland’. Gorman-Murray’s (2007) review of work on the intranational migration of sexual dissidents, outlined how there has been a focus on rural to urban migration, conceptualizing ‘queer migration’ through a symbolic rural-urban binary, which ontologically presents the urban as a place to come out of the rural ‘closet’. Gorman-Murray states that while this framework is important to queer migration, further dimension is needed that incorporates the embodied motivations of individual migrants.

Likewise, Bell (2000) was troubled by the idea of the rural idyll as naturally heterosexual, outlining the importance of the gay rural idyll. Rather than a place of oppression, the gay rural idyll imagines the rural as place of belonging, a sanctuary from the city. In Bell’s wake, the work of Waitt and Gorman-Murray (2011) provided insight into the complexities of lesbian and gay experiences in rural Australia through their examination of ChillOut, ‘Australia's largest rural gay and lesbian event’ (Waitt & Gorman-Murray 2011). They argued that Daylesford (a regional town in Victoria) is no more or less homophobic than other places. They demonstrated how the ChillOut festival provides opportunities to produce, as well as challenge, conventional understandings of sexuality.

Prior to 2000, geographers rarely paid attention to the intersection between gender, heterosexuality and rural space. In part this was due to the interest in identities beyond the hegemonic and partly because heterosexuality was visible, pervasive and normative (Bryant & Pini 2011). Attempts to unpack rural masculinities and femininities more generally led to a focus on the construction and performance of more mainstream heterosexual masculinities and femininities in rural spaces (see for example Kimmel & Ferber 2000; Woodward 2000; Kraack & Kenway 2002). Little (2003, 2007) expanded geographers’ understandings of rural heterosexual identities through an exhaustive treatment of rural marriage in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. She argued that marriage is the identifying symbol of normalcy. Furthermore, Little claimed that the ‘natural’ surveillance, which is part of the caring rural community, acts as a
powerful disciplinary tool for policing the maintenance of heterosexual norms, while marginalizing those relationships that do not conform to the model of the heterosexual family. Similarly, Bryant and Pini’s (2011) study of the everyday experience of marriage for young Australian farming couples revealed that with in-laws in close proximity, young farming women’s gendered and heterosexual identities are closely monitored. Both studies suggested that moral codes in rural communities of the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia reinforce stereotypical versions of heterosexuality and sexual identity, which in turn reinforce narrow understandings of femininities and masculinities. According to these works, ‘good’ rural heterosexuality is understood as domesticated, practical, ‘agriculturally aware’ and ‘down to earth’. While ‘bad’ rural heterosexuality is constituted as fashionable, independent and intelligent.

Likewise, the theme of community surveillance over gender and sexuality emerged in the work of Campbell (2000) and Leyshon (2005). They explored the performances of (hetero) sexualities in rural pubs in Ireland (Leyshon 2005) and New Zealand (Campbell 2000). They demonstrated how surveillance operated through adult validation, rather than an act of youth rebellion for young men. When consuming alcohol in rural pubs, young men actively sought affirmation from adult males to validate their identity through bodily drinking performances. Thus, for the young men who frequently visit the rural pub it becomes a crucial space to publicly perform their masculinity and for them to be validated and confirmed by other males. Leyshon identified that in contrast young women who visit pubs in rural Ireland are commonly categorized as ‘promiscuous’ and ‘unladylike’. This operation of power served to marginalize women and reiterate that the rural pub is a masculine dominated space. On the rare occasion that women did enter the pub they would seek a secluded corner away from the gaze of the young men. Further, young men in meaningful heterosexual relationships prevented female incursions because femininities were not valued within pub spaces and threatened the traditional male preserve.

Skeggs (1997) work on the performance of respectable femininity is of particular relevance within this context. Skeggs suggested that behavior and identity
formation is regulated, monitored and judged by others in relation to commonly held assumptions about what constitutes respectable femininity and masculinity. Thus respectability is ultimately an individual’s response to moral and social expectations. Skeggs claimed that women strive for respectability through their dis-identification from fixed one-dimensional subject positions, which label and judge them as possessing specific kinds of femininities; for example females aimed to dis-identify with the ‘promiscuous’ and ‘unladylike’ labels given to the women, who frequent the rural pubs described in Leyshon’s (2005) study.

Similarly Bryant (2006), in a study of young people at an Australian agricultural college, identified how young men engage in a discourse she labeled ‘raw heterosexual masculinity’. This masculinity is performed in a way which is necessarily ‘publicly observable’ and involves the boasting of heterosexual activity, the objectification of women and excessive drinking. In contrast, she argued that young women noted the need to maintain ‘respect’ through limited drinking and involvement in heterosexual activity. Bryant argued that how some young women choose to perform their sexuality and gender renders them spatially contained and marginalized.

Such studies illuminate societal processes that produce and reproduce rural spaces through tapping into circulating ideas of heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity. Heterosexuality and heteropatriarchy is naturalized to the point of invisibility, with deviations from the norm policed and marginalized. Hillier et al. (1999) further illustrated this premise in their Australian study of rural youth and sexuality. They identified that for young people aged fifteen to seventeen years, sexuality was synonymous with heterosexuality, and heterosexuality was understood through the sexual act of heterosexual penetration.

Additionally, the implications fear has on constraining the spatial mobility of women is of growing interest to geographers. However, feminist literature on the geography of women’s fear has to date remained largely connected to the urban. This may in part be because the urban is constituted as a masculine space, where
women must be constantly on their guard (Little et al. 2005a). The work of Pain (1997), which focused on the metropolis, is of particular relevance as the research reveals how women regulate their own bodies when ‘going out’ to avert fearful situations. For example, women may ‘dress down’ to avoid attention. This practice is informed by the desire for women to enact respectable femininities when negotiating certain spaces.

In contrast there has been relatively little research regarding the geography of women’s fear beyond the metropolis. An exception to this is the work of Little et al. (2005a, 2005b). Little et al. interrogated the notion that the rural community is ‘safe’ and ‘tight knit’. Their work analyzed how women use space in rural areas in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, in order to gain an understanding of the experiences, concerns and feelings of rural women in relation to personal safety. Little et al.’s results indicated that despite the dominant constructions of the relationship between safety and rurality, feelings of fear are present amongst women in the rural. They suggested that these idyllic constructions may serve to conceal violence or prevent others disclosing fear. Panelli et al. (2004) have also aimed to highlight the binary of fear/safety through a study of women’s fear in rural New Zealand. They claim that to view these terms in opposition ignores how women negotiate personal feelings of safety and fear in complex and fluid ways. Similarly Warrington (2001) has focused on the spatial aspects of domestic violence in rural England. Warrington was concerned with how women experience varying spatial constraints once they leave their partner, as they continue to live in fear. She identified how many women who have experienced domestic violence rarely venture outside the home except for specific timed or accompanied trips.

According to Hubbard (2008), the current turn in rural geography has aided in disrupting and deconstructing the stable and fixed category of heterosexuality, allowing an acknowledgment of the diversity of sexualities that exist within the rural. Yet, as Bryant and Pini (2011) have recently noted, unpacking sexuality and exploring the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect in everyday practice is under theorized and still in need of further attention.
This current research, by exploring how young rural women perform heterofemininities and non-heterofemininities in and through various social spaces of the Bega Valley, contributes to the limited, but growing body of work on rural sexualities.

2.3.4 Clubbing Cultures

A nightclub is an important venue for the participants in this project. However, to date no literature has explored the intersection between rurality and clubbing. Hence, this section turns to work that examines more generally clubbing cultures. Early work mainly explored the embodied experience of dancing (Mellechi 1993; Rietveld 1993; Malbon 1998, 1999) and the subcultural divisions of dance scenes and the influence of the media (McRobbie 1994; Redhead 1994; Thornton 1994; Gibson & Pagan 2001). While influential, these works largely ignored how individual’s performed or felt their sense of self in club spaces. This was in part because scholars argued that identities disappear (Rietveld 1993) and meaning evaporates (Mellechi 1993) as clubbers’ bodies connect through music, dance and drug taking (Jordon 1995).

Early research also lent little attention to the role of women in club cultures. For example Thornton’s (1994) work was pivotal in illuminating the relationship between ‘underground’ ideologies of youth club cultures and media constructions of culture. However Thornton gave scant attention to the place, practices and experiences of women within club cultures. Similarly, while McRobbie (1994) acknowledged the limited involvement of women in the production of the club scene, no consideration was given to women’s involvement at other levels, such as the consumption of clubbing.

The work of Pini (1997, 2001), concerning British clubbing scenes, was paramount in highlighting the absence of women in clubbing literature. Pini claimed that youth cultures have become synonymous with masculinity, rendering female experiences invisible. Until Pini’s work there had been little
consideration of why young women felt the practice of clubbing to be ‘liberating’ and a ‘declaration of independence’. In Pini’s wake, Hutton (2006) challenged dominant understandings of clubs as unproblematic and empowering environments. Her work in Manchester in the United Kingdom, illustrated the paradoxical nature of club spaces. She showed for example, how women seek pleasure in clubs because they are an environment in which they can challenge traditional signifiers of femininity (such as de-feminizing particular articles of clothing), yet women are simultaneously forced to negotiate harassment and inequality as a result of their gendered position in these spaces.

More recently in Australia, Northcote (2006) sought to understand the cultural significance of clubbing for young people through an ethnographic study of a Perth nightclub. Northcote claimed that there had been a general failure in clubbing literature to explore the relationship between the youth practice of clubbing and wider life transitions. His work indicated that clubbing is a ‘right of passage’ for many youth. This is because it serves as a means of adjustment for young adults undergoing a transitional phase from youth to an independent adult identity. Similarly Gregory’s (2009) work highlighted the significance of clubbing by researching women’s changing participation over time in Toronto’s club scene. Gregory claimed that participants mainly ceased their involvement in the club scene because they reproduced and internalized dominant discourses about what it means to be a ‘socially responsible adult’. That is, participants understood increasing adult responsibilities, such as being a mother, employee and student, to be incompatible with a clubbing identity.

It is an important aim of this current study to contribute to the clubbing literature in the rural context by reporting and evaluating the experiences of young women in the only club of the Bega Valley – the Lakeview.
2.4 Conceptual Framework

This section sets out a spatial conceptual framework for ‘going out’. For young women in the Bega Valley the times and places of ‘going out’ are multidimensional. Capturing this complexity is an essential, albeit difficult task. For this reason the conceptual framework draws on scholars who likewise acknowledge the multiplicities, fluidity and spatiality of identity. In order to understand how young women situate themselves within discourses of ‘going out’ a spatial approach offers an account of how young women envision, establish and maintain their place in the Bega Valley.

The conceptual framework draws on three strands of post-structuralist feminist philosophies. The first strand is Doreen Massey's (2005) reconceptualization of space that is instrumental to post-structuralist feminism. Her concept of a ‘progressive sense of place’ has allowed scholars to move past essentialist understandings of space as fixed, determined, closed and representational. Rather, Massey conceptualized space as never finished and never closed: space is constantly under construction, where the embedded relations of multiple entities are always in the process of being made. In doing so she argued that space is a product of multiple relationships, a constellation of connections, and disconnections, between both human and non-human entities. Consequently each of the human and non-human entities has their own trajectories and ‘stories’ to tell. Hence, discourses of ‘going out’, in the context of the present study, provide insights to the sets of ideas that inform this embodied practice and are just one version of the Bega Valley, through which people sustain both the Valley, and their sense of self.

Massey's (2005) conceptualization of place allows an understanding of the dynamic and shifting connections and disconnections individuals experience in forging particular places. Massy pointed to how people are constantly negotiating the ‘here’ and ‘now’. Massey (2005 p.140) referred to this negotiation in the here and now as ‘the event of place’.
Massey's (2005) ideas provide a framework for interpreting how participants in the current study negotiate certain social places at particular temporal moments. Her ideas therefore enable the Bega Valley not to be conceptualized as a fixed, closed identity but dynamic and always shifting. Massey's claims can be applied to illustrate how the geography of the Bega Valley is not fixed, bordered and frozen in time, but is rather an open process, constantly in production, yet never determined. Equally, each of the places that are told as part of the ‘going out’ story are always conceived as unfolding, and never finished. However, participants draw on particular sets of ideas that aim for some sort of fixity to ‘going out’ places. The borders that ‘fix’ ‘going out’ places are always permeable, and possibilities for change always exist.

The second strand is Elspeth Probyn’s (2003) ‘spatial imperative of subjectivity’. Probyn’s theory extends upon Foucault’s (1977) notion of surveillance and Butler’s (1990) ideas of performativity. Foucault’s notion of surveillance claimed that modern subjectivity developed as a result of the drive to self-monitor through the belief that one is constantly under the surveillance of society. According to Foucault, ‘the norm’ is the primary instrument of social control and surveillance in everyday life. The individual subject is formed, defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of these structures of governance. The norms of society are not literally internalized, but incorporated and permanently produced around, on and within the body. Hence, one example is the set of ideas governing ‘sexual attractiveness’ that is then embodied through wearing particular clothes, having a particular body shape or having a particular haircut.

Judith Butler (1990) extended upon Foucault’s (1977) account, primarily analyzing its implications for gender. Similar to Foucault, Butler claimed that the categories of sex and gender are merely performances that gain authority through reiterative practice. There is nothing ontologically innate to these ideas; rather they are constructed in the service of a system of regulatory and reproductive sexuality. Butler pointed out how the categories of ‘masculine’ and
‘feminine’ are naturalized and self-disciplined to comply with regulatory fictions of heterosexuality (Butler p.141 1990).

Echoing the work of Doreen Massey (2005), Elspeth Probyn’s (2003) spatial imperative of subjectivity considered the importance of space in relation to both Foucault’s (1977) and Butler’s (1990) concepts. For Probyn space is an imperative element for understanding the construction of the self in society, because it is impossible to conceive of ourselves outside the space we inhabit. This notion emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between space and subjectivity: ‘we experience our subjectivities, the way we are positioned in regards to ourselves as subjects, in terms of both space and time’ (Probyn p.290 2003). Probyn further argued that our subjectivities are always multiple.

Different subjects are hailed into existence by a range of ideological systems, which depend upon the site and space of production. Akin to Foucault and Butler, Probyn also highlighted the importance of the body as the site of production of knowledge, emotions and history. The doing of identity of the subject is felt as well as performed in and through space. And as the body is in constant contact with others, it can never be thought of as a contained entity; separate from the space it is situated within.

Probyn’s (2003) concept is essential to the investigation of how participants sustain a sense of self in and through the different ‘going out’ spaces of the Bega Valley. The ideologies that operate to produce and reproduce particular embodied subjectivities in and through ‘going out’ spaces will be unraveled through the stories of participants.

The third strand is Gill Valentine’s (2007) attention to intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality refers to the ways individuals construct their identities in spatial and temporal moments, in relation to the intersections of their subjectivities, including for example age, class, gender and sexuality. Initial efforts by feminists to theorize intersectionality involved utilizing mathematical metaphors to calculate oppression (Crenshaw 1993). For example a black woman at the intersection of two forms of oppression would necessarily be more
oppressed than a white woman, who only experiences one form of oppression. However scholars gradually argued that this approach was essentialist because of the way it presented each social category as separate, fixed and comparable. To overcome this West and Fenstermaker (1995) turned attention to the way individuals make identities. Their worked emphasized that the categories of race, class and gender were not naturally given or socially constructed but emergent properties, where identities occur in interaction. This enabled scholars to understand identities as socially situated.

However it was Valentine (2007) who highlighted the significance of space in processes of subject formation. Her worked argued that the way specific identities emerge for a particular individual does not occur in a vacuum. Rather identities are undetermined and situated, with space and social categories being intimately connected. Valentine's recognition of intersectionality as spatially constituted and experienced has allowed scholars to empirically address the multiplicity of social categories that intersect to form identities in particular temporal and spatial moments.

Remaining alert to the concept of intersectionality in this project underscores how participants are always negotiating their sense of self while ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley. ‘Going out’ reveals places where only particular attributes of their sense of self are allowed to fluoresce or to be lost.
2.5 Conclusion

The literature review has identified the emergence of social difference as a key theme in Anglo-American rural geography. Informed by post-structuralist concepts, four, sometimes overlapping strands of work were identified to contribute to this understanding of social difference beyond the metropolis: migration geographies, mobility geographies, geographies of gender and sexuality and clubbing geographies. The thesis draws on three sets of ideas: Massey's (2005) reconceptualization of space, Probyn's (2003) spatial imperative of subjectivity; and Valentine's (2007) idea of intersectionality. These areas of thought draw attention to how 'going out' in the Bega Valley can be conceptualized as an ongoing process that provides insight into how a sense of self is spatially negotiated in and through the relationships that comprise space. The next chapter turns to the methodology, with the aim of illustrating how a qualitative mixed methods process provides rigorous and meaningful insights into participants ‘going out’ narratives.
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold. The first is to explore how rigour was achieved in this project. As outlined by Baxter and Eyles (1997) rigour in qualitative research draws on a different set of concepts to quantitative research. Baxter and Eyles (1997 p.105) explained that this is because qualitative research aims to capture the richness of context dependent sites and situations rather than following standardized procedures that characterize quantitative research. To ensure this aim was achieved, rigour was incorporated into all stages of the research process: design, data collection and analysis. The second aim is to highlight the methodological challenges of conducting rigorous ‘remote’ fieldwork. In this project, the fieldwork was conducted in the Bega Valley, some 400 kilometers south of the University of Wollongong. Working within the constraints of a research budget of $1,500 dollars; how could in-depth insights be achieved, while dealing with the issue of distance (see Crang p.650 2002)? And, what strategies were deployed to overcome being positioned as an ‘outsider’ from Wollongong?

These aims will be addressed through four sections. The first section outlines the ethical considerations involved with qualitative research. The second discusses recruitment and sampling techniques and how rapport was established in the field. The third details the non-prescriptive methodology, while the fourth describes the application of narrative analysis.
3.2 Ethical Considerations

Geographers are currently shifting their approach to ethical practice; moving away from only thinking ‘inwards’ to guidelines and policy, to thinking ‘outwards’ in terms of the interactions between the researcher and the researched. This section explores the ethical implications for this project of thinking both ‘inwards’ and ‘outwards’; this includes the formal application process of the University of Wollongong (UoW) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the personal process of negotiating ethics while conducting fieldwork.

Looking ‘inwards’ to the ethics application – ticking the formal boxes

All research conducted at the UoW involving human ‘subjects’ necessitates ethics approval through the HREC. This conventional application process involves identifying the ethical considerations of the project design, which in this project include participant informed consent, confidentiality and harm.

Informed consent, as discussed by Israel and Hay (p.61 2006), requires participants to have an understanding of the project and their role prior to voluntary agreement. A Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendices A & B) assured informed consent. The PIS outlined the project purpose, methods, aims and objectives. An explanation was provided, which outlined what was expected on behalf of the participant. The PIS was distributed two weeks prior to the commencement of the first activity providing participants with the time to familiarize themselves with the project and ask questions.

Confidentiality in research, according to Wiles et al. (p.287 2006), is concerned with data access and use. The Consent Form addressed confidentiality. The Consent Form provided participants with the option to use a pseudonym or real name. This choice was mindful that some people might wish to retain privacy through anonymity. Formal ethical guidelines often fail to recognize that not all participants want their identity concealed (Wiles et al. p.291 2006). Despite
having the option of utilizing a pseudonym, the majority of participants in this project preferred to be identified. Participants wished their personal stories to be told.

Guillemin and Gilliam (2006 p.278) defined ‘harm’, as the setback to a person’s interests in any aspect of their life. This researcher was alert to the possibility that participant’s might share, through their stories of ‘going out’, experiences of harmful behavior. Narratives might describe consumption of high levels of alcohol, illicit drug consumption or ‘unsafe’ driving practices. Alternatively, ‘going out’ stories could cause participants to relive traumatic experiences; such as car accidents, intoxication experiences and violent encounters. For this reason, each participant was provided with contact numbers for women’s resource centres, counselling and health services (Appendix C). The research process was designed to minimize harm to participants. To ameliorate harm to the researcher, her contact details were provided to family members before entering the field. The HREC suggested that a personal phone number should not be divulged to the Bega community to alleviate any harm to the researcher. Box 3.1 discusses the ethical implications of this request and how this suggestion was negotiated. Ethics approval was provided, ethics number: HE11/152 (Appendix D).
Box 3.1 – *Negotiating the Ethical Implications of ‘Friend’ and ‘Researcher’*

It was ‘suggested’ by the UoW HREC that I should not provide my mobile phone number to the Bega community, in the interests of safety in the field. In the age of new media this suggestion was impractical.

How could these young women, from whom I was asking so much, trust me as a friend, while I remained uncontactable? If I were to act on this suggestion my participants would forever consider me the disconnected ‘outsider’, forever the researcher.

I had to be available to participants, in the same way they were available to me. For social friendships to truly be established and to initiate my repositioning as ‘insider’, I would have to use technology in the many ways that the participants and their friends did, be it Facebook, email or through the humble mobile phone, even if this involved the ‘compromising of my safety’. And I could not simply cut off their friendship once four months of data collection had been completed, rather I had an on-going commitment and responsibility to these young women.

*Looking ‘outwards’ at ethics– reflexivity and negotiating ethics in the field*

Critical reflexivity is vital to negotiating ethics in the field. Research is a dynamic and social process that constantly presents conflicts and dilemmas. Thus, it is imperative that researchers adopt a reflexive methodology throughout the research process and not just at the beginning (Reeves p.257 2007). One aim of critical reflexivity is to provide transparency in regards to the researcher’s changing relationship to the research. According to Pain (2004), too often the motivations and positionality of the researcher remains unknown. Following the advice of Rose (p.305 1997) and Baxter and Eyles (p.505 1997) it is necessary to
make ones changing research position known through the deployment of a positionality statement.

Further acknowledging the researchers partiality, through the deployment of a positionality statement, is imperative to creating a rigorous research standpoint (Appendix E). It also serves to contest objections that qualitative research is biased. A positionality statement describes the dynamics of positionality, as the researcher shapes, and is shaped by the research (McDowell p.413 1992).

A research diary was maintained to provide space for positionality statements and critically reflexive thinking throughout the project. The research diary highlighted the changing thoughts, motivations and desires of the researcher. Box 3.2 illustrates what critical reflexivity and positionality mean in practice. Figure 3.1, adapted from Reeves (2007), illustrates how ethics was negotiated throughout the research process in relation to the subjectivities of the researcher.

Becoming alert to the changing position of the researcher is always important. However, for a project that utilized the Internet, in addition to conventional research tools, the need to remain reflexive was perhaps heightened for a number of reasons. Firstly critical reflexivity helps illustrate how the role of the researchers ‘self’ both shaped and was shaped by the project design, as well as demonstrating how the researchers position as ‘friend’ and ‘researcher’ was constantly negotiated. Examples of the complex process of negotiation between researcher and researchees subject positionality is illustrated in Box 3.2 and Box 3.3. Secondly, critical reflexivity is imperative when thinking about how uneven social relationships play out when conducting a research project. Box 3.4 illustrates how such uneven relationships affect the types of individuals recruited. Thirdly, the researcher must remain alert to the potential for harm while conducting the research. Box 3.1 illustrates how having built up a rapport with some participants and positioning them as co-researchers brought new responsibilities. It was not ethical to ‘cut off’ a relationship that had been
nourished over four months simply because the process of data collection had finished.

**Box 3.2 – Negotiating Positionality**

Throughout the research process my position as ‘researcher’ was constantly negotiated from both the perspective of the participants and myself. This was especially so on Facebook, where many of the interactions took place. Facebook is a space far removed from the conventional setting of fieldwork. Once online there was little to remind the young women or even myself that I was researching. After all, Facebook is a site where ‘friends’ meet to share the social lived experiences of their offline worlds.

The unconventional and social aspect of Facebook allowed me to better establish a strong rapport with some of these young women. The richness of these intimate and personal experiences often placed me in a powerful position as researcher, and the possibilities of Facebook as a site for data collection was overwhelming. I needed to be mindful as to who was being told these stories; the ‘researcher’ or ‘friend’? It was necessary to remain vigilant of the danger of abusing the relationship and trust, which had been established between the participants and myself.

This process was easier said than done, as I was often confused myself as to which position I was performing. Had I asked Steph if she had travelled home safely on Saturday night because I genuinely cared or because I wanted to learn how she had negotiated the situation? Such questions are not clear-cut. In such cases it was necessary to ask the participant personally which experiences could be used for my project and which were to be kept private.
Figure 3.1  Ethics as a Process of Ongoing Negotiation
(Adapted from Reeves 2007)

- Ethical Negotiations
- Success of Rapport and Social Relations
- Discourse

- Empathy
- Personal Knowledge
- Personal Beliefs/Ideas

Researcher

Young Woman

UoW Honours Student

Human Being

- Insider knowledge of ‘country areas’
- Empathy
- Familiarity

- Research Experience
- Quality Thesis
- Time Constraints
Box 3.3 - How the Researcher Shapes, and is Shaped by the Research

At the onset of this year I was in a confused position, indecisive as what my next step should be. With my undergraduate study completed I was unsure along which vocational path I should venture. In a round about way the offer of Honours research developed and my short term future was determined.

Once in the field, listening to the young women’s lived experiences was a powerful and rewarding opportunity. Not just because they were sharing such in-depth experiences with me, but also because I felt as if I was in a position to do something meaningful with these experiences. This was an opportunity that I did not want to leave in the present. Yet how could I make this opportunity come to fruition in the future?

Working closely with the Women’s Resource Center also allowed me to appreciate the function of community development organizations and how they could prove to be a place of employment, where my most recently acquired skills could be applied in practice: a place where individual’s experiences were listened to, and acted upon daily. It seemed that my fieldwork in the Bega Valley had strengthened aspirations for a career in community development.

3.3 Recruitment, Sampling and Establishing Rapport in the Field

Participants were required to meet three main selection criteria; they needed to be women, between the ages of 18 to 29 and currently living in the Bega Valley. Although no other selection criteria was specified, the recruitment process aimed to be as inclusive as possible, engaging women from a range of social situations and backgrounds. Initially, this section explores how the sampling and recruitment process favoured particular young women by ethnicity, education, mobility and stable family contexts. Later I describe how the constraints of time, cost and distance involved with the physical presence of fieldwork were overcome by the deployment of the Internet. The following discussion also
illustrates how the criteria of transferability and credibility were in part achieved through the recruitment, sampling and rapport design.

**Sampling and Recruitment Strategies**

Two sampling strategies were deployed in this project; targeted and purposeful sampling. A targeted sampling strategy was employed to work across the social diversity of young women living in the Bega Valley (Appendix F). Targeted sampling involved contacting a range of Bega Valley institutions specifically designed to support women. These included the Women’s Resource Centre, Auswide Projects, Campbell Page Employment and the Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

In addition, purposeful snowball sampling was deployed to ensure a sufficient amount of ‘information rich’ cases were garnered within the available project timeframe. Information rich cases refer to those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the study (Patton p.169 1990). Purposeful snowball sampling is a process whereby participants are invited to participate through a recruitment process that builds on preexisting social networks to enable other relevant participants to be discovered (Bradshaw & Stratford p72 2005). Appendix G illustrates how the purposeful snowball strategy operated through personal networks. A summary of the participant’s attributes is provided in Appendix H.

**Partiality**

Although alert to the social diversity of women living in the Bega Valley and despite employing a sampling strategy designed to recruit through organizations that represented some of the more marginalized social groups, partiality seeped into the recruitment process. Analysis of ABS data suggests that some voices are missing within the sample (Appendix I). For example there is an underrepresentation of Indigenous females and women with children in this study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007 p.43) noted: Having access to
participants is not merely a matter of physical presence. Clearly making contact in a public setting with the most marginalized social groups can be a difficult and protracted process.

What explanations can be offered to account for this partiality? At one level, those most socially marginalized may never have received an invitation to be part of the project. At another level, despite the researcher spending over a month in Bega, there may well have been insufficient opportunity to build up a rapport with these same women.

Furthermore, the attributes of the researcher also shaped who participated, and their level of participation. As discussed in Box 3.4, similar life experiences often resulted in greater openness and rapport between the researcher and participant. The attributes of the researcher shaped participation in the project. These attributes include being a young woman, growing up in a country town, having a low income and being simultaneously a student and casual worker.

For the above reasons, this is a study of young women who live in the most stable family contexts and are perhaps the most socially aware, educated and mobile. The study allows in-depth analysis of how these women, who might be described as the most privileged in the Bega Valley, create a sense of self when ‘going out’. Strong social networks exist in the Bega Valley. These social networks influence how and where individuals choose to socialise. This study represents particular social networks of young women.
Box 3.4 - Partiality in the Recruitment Process – the loudest and clearest

It quickly became evident that the young women who had consented to take part in the research were those who I had ‘connected’ with most during the recruitment process. These were women similar to myself: Anglo-Australian, ‘Indie’, middle class, students, casual workers and growing up in a coastal town. The result was the silencing of voices from particular young women with incomparable social positions.

This trend was amplified through the mixed methods process as my friendships with particular participants influenced which methods they would complete. Those that I held the strongest rapports with were likely to participate in more or all of the activities and thus it is these participants whose voices were heard the loudest. The participants that I had the most difficulty establishing a rapport with during the initial activity were less likely to contribute further.

It was imperative that I remained sensitive to this partiality and power relation throughout the research process...

Online Worlds as Field Work Sites

The Internet was utilized to overcome the constraints of time, cost and distance involved with the physical presence of fieldwork. The researcher spent a total of four weeks in the field (Appendix J). Yet this was not a great deal of time, as rapport with twenty-three participants needed to be established. Additional time in the field was not possible due to the limited budget and the distance between the field of study and researcher’s place of residence. Limited time in the field also made it unfeasible to experience ‘going out’ with participants.

Online worlds have the potential to collapse such space and time, as they are a simultaneous form of communication. Such worlds are also powerful in young
people's lives as they offer a cost free form of communication, aside from the expense of Internet connection. Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) stated that social networking sites and email are popular forms of communication with friends and family members from their offline worlds. Thus following the advise of Subrahmanyam et al. (2008), rapport initiated in the field was further developed through email and the social networking site Facebook. This allowed the researcher to have a constant online presence with participants. It served to overcome the constraints of distance, time and costs one faced when physically in the field. Yet, due to the unconventional nature of online worlds (Box 3.4), this established an entirely different set of relationships between the researchees and researcher. The deployment of this method is illustrated in Appendix K.

3.4 Non-Prescriptive Qualitative Mixed Methods

The following section provides a detailed outline of the methodologies employed to collect the empirical data. According to Nairn (p.148 2002) there are shortcomings of each qualitative method. For example, solicited diaries are time-consuming for participants and shift responsibility for the project away from the researcher. In comparison, when conducting one off, semi-structured interviews it may be difficult to establish a strong rapport. Through the use of multiple qualitative methods it is possible to compensate for such shortcomings. Furthermore, Baxter and Eyles (1997) have claimed that a mixed methods approach ensures credibility through prolonged engagement with the participants, creating trust and the opportunity to investigate possible distortions, by both the researcher and the researched (Appendix E). These were important considerations in conducting remote fieldwork.

Following Hesse-Biber (2010), a non-prescriptive approach was employed. Participants were given free choice in their selection of methods to share their lived experiences. This served to empower the participants, who were positioned more as co-researchers and less as the researched. In addition, a non-prescriptive approach reduced the burden of involvement, in what would otherwise have been a time-intensive commitment for each participant. In
practice this meant that participants could choose from a range of methods including; a Google mapping exercise, semi-structured interview and solicited video, photograph or written diary. Nairn (p.148 2002) noted the importance of compatibility when employing the mixed method approach. Each method should be appropriate to the characteristics of information that could expect to be garnered in relation to its phase in the research process.

There were three phases of empirical data collection. Participants were first invited to create a Google Map, as this required a low degree of involvement and could be completed at a time that suited each respondent. Furthermore, it enabled participants to become familiar with the research and established a researchee-researcher rapport. Next, participants were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Finally, participants were invited to select from a range of solicited diary techniques. How each method was employed in this project is discussed in the following sections and is illustrated in Appendix K.

Google Map

Participatory mapping is beneficial to qualitative mixed method research. Gibson et al. (2010) claimed that participatory mapping, as a methodological tool in qualitative research, is on the increase as the technical possibilities of digitally illustrating lived experiences are explored. This has blurred the boundaries between the traditional categories of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Yet, it is important to highlight the benefits and constraints that participatory mapping can bring to qualitative methodologies in order to justify its use. The next section examines this discussion.

Brennan-Horley et al. (2010) identified that participatory mapping enables participants to develop a different attitude to the research process in a study uncovering the creative areas of Darwin. Respondents were asked to map the creative areas, which prompted participants to think visually about their connection to various spaces and places. Maps then allowed respondents to express themselves in ways not possible through more traditional verbal
methodologies. Similarly, a study focused on the creative places of the Illawarra (Gibson et al. 2010), claimed that participatory mapping techniques allowed what is invisible to become visible. Participants were invited to draw on hard copy maps where they thought ‘cool’ and ‘creative’ places were. Predictably, high visible creative places were readily identified, yet those same places were rarely thought of as ‘cool’. Thus preconceived ideas of what constitutes creativity were challenged through the employment of participatory mapping. These studies illustrate that participatory mapping not only challenges accepted institutionalized ideas, allowing the invisible to become visible, but also provides a new forum for participants to express themselves thereby allowing a move away from dependence on verbal communication (Gibson et al. 2010).

Unlike the traditional Geographic Information System (GIS) software employed in the studies outlined above, the use of online mapping sites, such as Google Earth and Google Maps, are yet to make their mark within feminist research. More generally however, as noted by Tulloch (2007), they are used extensively for empowerment and raising awareness. Butler (2006) for example has identified that tribal groups in the Amazon Rainforest are being empowered by Google Earth as they work with non-for-profit organizations to map resources of interest. Tulloch (2007) likewise highlights how a community group in New Jersey, with the aim of raising awareness of spatial patterns and housing density, employs Google Maps to locate older homes that are soon to be replaced. Such examples indicate that individuals feel that they can express themselves and become empowered through online participatory mapping tools like Google Earth and Google Maps. It is for these reasons that a participatory Google Mapping exercise was used as part of the non-prescriptive methodology for this project.

Each participant was emailed instructions and a link to their personal Google Map of the Bega Valley. The Google Map exercise involved asking participants two spatial questions about ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley. The two questions were:
• ‘Where are the places you go to make friends and socialise in the Bega Valley?’ and;

• ‘Where are the places you avoid when socialising in the Bega Valley?’

These questions were written on each personalized Google Map. Different coloured place markers represented answers to the two questions (Appendix L). The Google Maps allowed participants to start thinking spatially about different aspects of ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley. The map encouraged participants to consider what constrains and enables their movement. For those participants that completed the mapping exercise, the maps provided the basis for the semi-structured interview.

Elwood (p258 2009) outlined oneshortcoming of participatory mapping that stems from the complexity of participants lived experiences. She argued that it is easy for the complexity of lived experience to become lost through the representation of that experience. For example, the complexities involved with why individuals avoid certain places in the Bega Valley cannot solely be represented through the placement of a marker on a Google Map. Furthermore, while the Google Map exercise is a successful tool for highlighting the permanent social spaces, such as pubs and clubs, temporal social spaces, such as bush and house spaces were hidden through this method. Elwood (2009) explained that maps are a successful technique in mixed methods research, despite these constraints, because participatory mapping operates as a triangulation tool to ensure credibility (see Appendix E). Moreover, the Google Map provided an unobtrusive starting point to enter into dialogue with individuals about the very complexity of the lived experience and was a useful familiarization strategy for the researcher.
In-depth Semi-Structured Interview

According to Crang, (p.649 2002) the semi-structured interview is the most common qualitative method. This is largely due to the fact that interviewing is an excellent way of gaining situated knowledge about events, opinions and experiences. As outlined by Dunn (p.80 2005), the researcher has a chance to ask face-to-face questions in an attempt to obtain responses from the participant. The face-to-face quality of the interview also provides an opportunity for the researcher to check, verify and scrutinize preconceived ideas they had brought to the project through conversation with informed subjects who have experienced the phenomena under investigation (Dunn p.81 2005).

Furthermore, as noted by Valentine (1997b), the participant is often empowered through this methodology because it provides a platform for them to voice their lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews may allow intricate behaviors, motivations, opinions and experiences to be recalled and recorded. However, as noted by Watts (2006), semi-structured interviews are paradoxical. Participants may be empowered by telling their stories, but become simultaneously disempowered by being identifiable. For example, within the Bega Valley the social networks operate in ways that moves against anonymity. Participants concerns regarding confidentiality may result in the silencing of certain lived experiences or anxiety among respondents, who chose to disclose certain events. It is for this reason that participants were ensured that confidentiality would be a paramount consideration during the research process (see Appendix A & B). Strategies utilized to secure confidentiality included providing the choice of a pseudonym to all participants; the researcher transcribing each interview, negating the need for a third party and making clear to each participant that they were free to withdraw from the project at any reasonable time.

A semi-structured format ensured key issues were covered, while enabling enough flexibility to allow the participant to discuss themes that were important to them. For this reason, while there was an interview schedule (Appendix M), interviews differed depending on the respondent’s level of involvement. If the
conversation began to digress from the research topic, the interviewer refocused the discussion. Each interview was designed to take 30 to 60 minutes. Once the interview process began, and as new topics arose, the interview schedule was adjusted. Interviews conducted at a later date could explore and cross check relevant emerging themes. The semi-structured interview format retained its initial key two questions from the Google Map exercise. However, the wording of questions in each section was reviewed after each interview in order to explore the emerging themes raised by participants.

As stated by Bryman (2001) the semi-structured interview is a time intensive methodology, requiring the participant and researcher to meet at a mutually convenient time and place. In this research the recruitment locality was some 400 kilometers south of the University of Wollongong, while the fieldwork area itself covered 6052 square kilometers (Bega Valley Shire Council 2011). Thus, the semi-structured interview placed a considerable amount of effort, time and travel costs upon both the participants and researcher. While considering such constraints, Bryman (2001) argued that the face-to-face qualities of this methodology are invaluable to the research. As argued by Dunn (p.103 2005) semi-structured interviews bring people ‘into’ the research process. This allows informants the opportunity to utilize their own vernacular to describe their experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview provides the researcher with additional information that may be invisible through other less intensive and less personal methodologies such as voice, intonation and body language. Thinking about how something was said, as well as what was said, helps to ensure rigour (see Geertz (1973) for an extensive elaboration on these complex issues).

Solicited Diaries

Meth (p.150 2009) emphasized that the term ‘solicited diaries’ is quite deceptive as it covers a broad range of approaches, often generically categorized under this one heading. Such a generalization overlooks the differences and similarities between the various types of solicited diaries employed in qualitative research
including written, photo and video diaries. For example Meth (2009) highlights that hand written diaries are a cheap and accessible medium for informants to explore themes of primary concern, however they are dependent on the literacy skills of the participant. To overcome issues of literacy, participants were encouraged to sketch their ‘going out’ experiences within the written diary. As Meth (2009) noted this opportunity provides further engagement and reflection on the subject matter through a medium that is not solely dependent on technological or literacy skills, creating a potentially empowering experience.

Video diaries likewise overcome the issue of literacy while additionally offering different ways of seeing. They are an opportunity for informants to represent themselves with minimal interference on behalf of the researcher (Pink 2008). This provides good academic understanding of how informants represent their identities in a place that is private and comfortable. However, as noted by Meth (p152 2009) issues such as access to electronic equipment and technological skill competencies potentially exclude participants from the deployment of this technique. In comparison, Gill et al. (p46 2009), claim that photography provides a simple technological platform for participants to express their feelings of ‘going out’, while the cultural framing of the photograph allows insight into what is valued by the participant. Embedded within photographs are indications of what certain places mean to participants at certain points in time (Gill et al. p46 2009).

It is important to note that solicited diaries are produced specifically on the researcher’s behalf and thus with the researcher in mind (Morrison p90 2010). Hence the content of the diary is shaped by the informant’s awareness of the research aims and the themes covered in previous participatory methodologies. This consequentially determines what the participants have chosen to share and omit. It is for this reason that solicited diaries embody the subjectivities of both the participant and researcher (Meth p153 2009).

Alert to the debates around diaries, and drawing on arguments for non-prescriptive qualitative methods, this project invited participants to create a diary through a number of mediums: paper-based (written and/or illustrated),
video and photo formats. The diary provided an opportunity for participants to bestow further insight into ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley. Diaries differ from Google Maps and interviews because they are conceived as offering an opportunity for more personal and reflexive expressions. As Meth (2003) noted, diaries offer participants an alternative and perhaps more comfortable medium to share their experiences. Nairn (2002) further suggested that rigour is maintained through the deployment of diaries because of the opportunity for both inter-textuality and triangulation (see Appendix E).

Only five participants accepted the invitation to keep a solicited diary. This may reflect the time and effort that diaries demand. Interestingly, the participants most eager to keep a diary were those where connections between the researcher and researchee had established the greatest rapport. The number of participants using each format is illustrated in Appendix K.

3.5 Narrative Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data. Silverman (2000) reminds us that the application of narrative analysis is not to uncover universal ‘truths’, in the manner of analysis driven by hypothesis testing. Rather, the objective of this methodology is to treat the data as a cultural story through which people describe their worlds. Narrative analysis was considered a pragmatic tool for conducting data analysis in this study because it enables insight into each participant’s situated knowledge in relation to her ‘going out’ practices in the Bega Valley.

Narrative analysis is based on arguments that claim interactive talk is integral to how people interpret and construct understandings of themselves in and through their everyday worlds. For this reason narratives provide a useful tool for geographers undertaking qualitative research. The aim of narrative analysis is to unpack how individuals connect intimate details of experience to broader social and spatial relations (Wiles et al. 2005). Insights are provided to the mutual constituting of place and subjectivities.
Narratives are reflections. Importantly, they are often structured attempts to make sense of our lived experiences through arranging a concise linear account of events. For this reason, when interpreting participant’s narratives, it was important to remain mindful of how they are stories of particular spatial and temporal moments, incomplete and indeterminate (Waitt & Gorman-Murray 2011b). How stories are framed provides insights into which events are the most important in a person’s life. In the case of this project, participants focused on telling stories of ‘going out’ to commercial venues at night. This emphasis on nighttime ‘going out’ stories suggested that after dark leisure activities were very important to how participants made sense of themselves as young women living in the Bega Valley. Following the work of Waitt et al. (2011b) and Wiles et al. (2005), narrative analysis required exploring the layers of embedded meanings by a process of familiarization through repeated reading, coding, indexing and identifying analytical themes.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter addressed two main aims. The first aim sought to explore how rigour was achieved in this project through the deployment of a qualitative mixed methods process. This methodology ensured credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were accounted for while capturing the richness of context dependent sites. The second aim was to highlight the methodological challenges involved with conducting rigorous ‘remote’ fieldwork. The challenges of remote fieldwork included distance, time, cost and the tight-knit social networks of small communities. When in the field, the researcher is constantly negotiating the fact they are not from the Bega Valley. Due to the partiality of the recruitment and sampling process, the voices of the more marginalized social groups are missing from this study. To overcome the limitations of remote fieldwork a number of strategies were employed including the Internet, mobile phone text messaging and solicited diaries. Perhaps the most successful was the Internet. This enabled the researcher to maintain an online relationship with participants, clarify points that arose and investigate possible misinformation or distortions introduced by the researcher or the participants. At the same time, building an online relationship posed ethical dilemmas as the status of the researcher was blurred with that of a friend. Only materials told as a ‘researcher’ are used in the project.

The interpretation of data is presented over three results chapters. What follows is an interpretation and discussion of the empirical data as it relates to the research questions. Chapter four explores the issues of mobility, bodies and rurality. Chapters five and six will focus on nights out at commercial venues in Bega and Merimbula, for the reason that participants’ narratives emphasized nights out in commercial venues located within these specific towns.
Mobility, Bodies and Rurality

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between mobility, bodies, rurality and ‘going out’ at night in the Bega Valley. Foucault’s (1977) notion of surveillance and Butler’s (1990) ideas on performativity provide a framework to conduct a critical reading of the relationship between mobility, bodies and rurality. Participants’ bodies are under constant self-surveillance during a night out, as they negotiate the formal rules of road governance, unwritten rules of transport within trusted social relations and normative ideas of respectability. This chapter highlights the strategies implemented when negotiating different types of rules, and how they produce, reproduce or challenge social, cultural and spatial boundaries. Attention is also given to the ways in which participants’ understanding of rurality is forged through mobility. The chapter is divided into
three sections: mobile bodies, intoxicated bodies and colliding bodies, exploring the intersection of each in relation to ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley.

4.2 Mobile Bodies – and a sense of independence

Different types of formal governance create control and order over bodies ‘going out’ at night in the Bega Valley, including trespassing, driving and drinking. This governance impacts how and where participants can go and what they can do. Particular regulations constantly resurfaced in many of the participants’ narratives as they explained how they planned for ‘going out’ after dark. The participants told stories about the importance of learning to drive, tactics they used to negotiate when not holding a driving licence, the provisional licence (P1 licence), alcohol consumption and attending bush parties.

For example in New South Wales the minimum age requirement to obtain a provisional licence is 17 years. Sallee (18 years old, gap year, lives in family home 10 kilometers from Bega) spoke of the difficulties when ‘going out’ after dark without a provisional licence:

Interviewer: So what did you do before you had a licence?

Sallee: Before that, it was horrible, it was just, you know, Mum can you drive us here and relying on the very few people who had their P’s back then. So that was pretty difficult, so that meant and that was during school, so during summer holidays it was pretty difficult, you couldn’t like, I remember there were like weeks at a time when you couldn’t really go out much cause Mum would be at work or couldn’t really drive. And my brother, he had his P plates so he would drive me a bit but it was horrible. I remember, oh what would have it been like? It would have been 16 when you have your L’s or 15 or something like that and it was just really hard to go out places.
Interviewer: So I suppose getting your P's is a really big thing for someone that lives in the Valley?

Sallee: Yeah, a really big thing. So that’s why we’re all so nervous when we go for them. Cause we’re like: ‘Oh so much is riding on this’. It’s not in the city when they’re like: ‘Oh, if I don’t get them I’ll just catch a cab tomorrow, or train’ or whatever you catch. But yeah, it’s a pretty big deal here I guess.

(Interview, February 2011)

Sallee’s dialogue illustrates how acquiring a driving licence gave her a sense of independence from her family and ‘the very few people who had their P’s’ when socialising. For Sallee this formal governance ‘is a pretty big deal’ because she feels that there are no alternative forms of mobility in the Bega Valley. Through the imperative of driving when ‘going out’, she differentiates her after dark practices with those she imagines in the city. Without a provisional licence ‘going out’ after dark becomes ‘really hard’ and ‘difficult’. Moreover, the importance she places on learning to drive, and the lack of alternatives, helps to define her understanding of rurality.

Decisions made in regards to taxis and public transport when planning a night out also highlighted participants’ understandings of rurality. Taxi fares in the Bega Valley are expensive because of the often large distances and limited availability. As Chloe (18 years old, gap year, lives with mother in Tathra) explained:

Like there's no way to get back from Merimbula [to Tathra] if you're drinking sort of thing. Like a taxi is about a hundred bucks. So we generally try to avoid them. And it's not like you can just jump on the train or anything.

(Interview, May 2011)
Madison (18 years old, gap year, lives with mother in Tura Beach) also discussed the limitations of catching taxis in the Bega Valley when asked about public transport:

I can't remember the last time I used public transport. I mean a couple of times we get a taxi from like the Lakeview or somewhere home. But the taxis are like for a 10 minute drive it's like $40 or something. So even that costs heaps of money, so we generally just try and organize lifts cause like yeah we don’t have trains or buses like you know going around a lot. And it would be like a two hour walk or something.

(Interview, February 2011)

Chloe’s and Madison’s narratives illustrate the lack of options for mobility in the Bega Valley. For many of the participants, taxi fares were considered too prohibitive to justify their incorporation in the planning of a night out. As Chloe states, ‘we generally try to avoid them’. Chloe’s and Madison’s understandings of rurality are emphasized through the lack of trains and buses and the impossibility of walking home. Travelling in private vehicles was considered the only viable option for most participants when ‘going out’ at night.

Hazel (17 years, shop assistant, lives in family home in Bega) further illustrated this point when she spoke of the ‘freedom’ a licence allows when ‘going out’:

Hazel: If I didn’t have my licence that would be a challenge but I do so it’s so much more freedom and it’s pretty great.

Interviewer: So did you go and get your licence like the day that you turned the right age?

Hazel: Not the day, like a couple of weeks after. But I actually failed my first test and I was devastated.

Interviewer: Yeah, cause it's such a big thing?
Hazel: Yeah it is. Cause like in the city there's like so much more transport everywhere...but here you have to drive to go out.

(Interview, February 2011)

Sallee’s and Hazel’s narrative resonates with Jones’ (1992) argument that mobility is severely limited in rural areas for those who are not old enough to hold a driving licence. With limited public transport in the Bega Valley failing a driving test that secures independent mobility in Hazel’s world is ‘devastating’. Sallee and Hazel employ their dependence on the car to differentiate their ‘going out’ practices from those in the city.

Car Ownership – a symbol of independence

Car ownership was therefore of equal importance as obtaining a licence for many of the participants. Stephanie (18 years old, student, lives in family home in Candelo) spoke of the independence of car ownership:

My parents and my friends used to have to ferry me around everywhere and mainly it was my boyfriend, who, I’d be like: ‘Look I need a lift, can you give me a lift?’. Yeah so my car gets fixed in two weeks so I just have to wait for my car to get fixed and then I’ll be like uber independent, drive around everywhere [laughs].

(Interview, April 2011)

For Stephanie, personal car ownership represents ‘uber independence’ and the opportunity to travel everywhere at anytime. Without her own form of mobility Stephanie remains dependent upon her family, friends and boyfriend.

Many participants spoke of how their parents understood car ownership in the Valley to be essential for mobility and independence. For this reason, many reported that parents assisted in the purchasing and financing of their first car
(Table 4.1). As Ariane (18 years old, UoW 2011, lives with father in North Bega) explained:

Interviewer: Since you don’t have a job is it your parents that have to fund the car for you?

Ariane: Yes.

Interviewer: Does that cause issues?

Ariane: No not really, I think the thing was, it all kinda started because I used to be doing so much and I’d be coming in on Saturdays and stuff for dancing and my parents didn’t want to have to drive me back and forth because that meant that they would actually have to do two trips, so me having a car meant that I would only have to do one trip in and back, especially from Mum’s, and moving, going back and forward is a lot easier for both of my parents if I have a car and stuff.

Interviewer: So when you got your car was it really important?

Ariane: Yeah. It’s funny cause I actually think it improved my relationship with my parents because than I didn’t have to rely on them to get me places and stuff and I s’pose it made me appreciate them driving me everywhere and stuff.

(Interview, February 2011)

In this narrative parents are also positioned as benefitting from the financing of car ownership since this eliminated the need for multiple return journeys. Ariane has a new found appreciation for her parent based on their past driving and because she is no longer dependent on them for mobility. The significance of car ownership in defining rurality and independence in the lives of young people is mirrored in the work of Heath and Cleaver (2003).
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Alix (23 years old, chef, lives with partner in Bega), unlike most participants in the Bega Valley, chose an alternative form of mobility – the motorbike. Crucially, in New South Wales, individuals can ride a motorbike alone at 16 years and nine months:

Interviewer: So I’m interested to find out why you chose to ride a bike?

Alix: Well the main reason would be like if you haven’t got your car licence yet. Then it’s easier to go for your L’s on your bike than it is for a car because you can ride by yourself straight away. And it only takes three months before you go for your P’s and then whatever after that. (Interview, May 2011)

Alix explains that it is ‘easier’ to obtain a motorbike licence as the process allows independent mobility more quickly, compared to a car driving licence. For Alix the opportunity to ‘ride by yourself straight away’ is the ‘main reason’ she decided to obtain a motorbike licence. Alix has self-managed the control imposed on young drivers by choosing to obtain a motorbike licence, thereby achieving independent mobility at a younger age. This self-management has allowed her to remain within the boundaries enforced by formal governance while providing her with independence when ‘going out’.

Such a contrast between the mobility chosen by Alix and the other participants may be interpreted through the notion of respectability (Young 1990; Skeggs 1997). When planning what to wear on a night out most participants aimed to conform to a particular understanding of respectable femininity. This involved doing their hair and makeup and wearing revealing clothing to look attractive and sexy in the manner promoted by dominant cultural images (Young 1990). Stephanie detailed her understanding of the dominant dress code:
Most girls generally wear tight tops, skirts or short dresses. Do something with their hair and have fun with make-up. But not too dressed up because it is the country. But it is important to look good.

(Diary entry, May 2011)

Remaining attractive, with hair, clothing and makeup in place, was essential to achieving respect upon arrival at social events. However, Stephanie emphasized that there is a particular ‘country’ look, which it is important to reproduce. Overdressing, as well as undressing, may become a source of ridicule.

However, Alix described performing an alternative style of femininity, as she explained through her description of an outfit worn one Saturday night:

How I dressed was pretty normal for me. Pretty much the same outfit you saw me in that day, but different. LOL [laugh out loud]. Black pants, bonds t-shirt and braces over the top. No make-up or hair done. Just me, just comfortable.

(Email, April 2011)

For Alix, unlike most participants, arriving at a social event in revealing clothing, with perfect hair and makeup is not important. For Alix to feel ‘comfortable’ she wears no make-up, black pants and bonds t-shirt. It is not important for Alix to arrive conforming to the normative ideas of being attractive and sexy. The motorbike is therefore compatible with Alix’s style of doing femininity. For other participants who aim to arrive conforming to dominant understandings of feminine respectability, with perfect hair, makeup and revealing clothing, riding a motorbike is not a viable option.

Regulating mobile bodies: The Provisional Driving Licence

While participants spoke of the independence and freedom of car ownership, of course as drivers there are a series of formal licensing, driving and road rules to follow. Once a provisional drivers licence is obtained (allowing individuals in
Australia to drive unsupervised without a fully licenced driver) different forms of governmental control and law enforcement influenced how the participants planned a night out. For instance, Lauren (17 years old, gap year, lives with mother 5 kilometers from Bega) explained the importance of her friendship circle in negotiating the New South Wales government rules of a P1 licence. Importantly, when on a P1 licence, if aged less than 25 years old, you may only carry one passenger under the age of 21 years old between 11 pm and 5 am. Hence, in Lauren’s friendship network the tactic of the ‘camp-over’ is an essential part of their night out together:

Interviewer: Do you normally stay over?

Lauren: Yeah, we usually camp. Because of the curfew, barely anyone says you can’t camp in my backyard. Like it’s kinda rude now, it’s like a courtesy to stay, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, just cause of the curfew?

Lauren: Yeah...say if I want to go back to my house and we want to take like a third person in the car or something like we have to, say we would have to get someone who was on their green P’s to drive to their house and than say I would have to drive to my house. So than you’ve got two designated drivers for just three people.

(Interview, February 2011)

Lauren’s friendship networks decision to encourage backyard camping illustrates how they negotiate the law for P1 drivers aged less than 25 years old, legally termed the ‘one passenger condition’. For Lauren it has become ‘rude’ to not allow the option of staying over when holding a party. This driving regulation is understood by participants as a ‘curfew’, an attempt to control how young people socialize by reducing the mobility of large groups late in the evening. The practice of backyard camping enables the party to continue after 11 pm, and for her friends not to run the risk of loosing their driving licence. As
Foucault (1977) argued there is a need to self monitor the law as a result of the belief that one is constantly under surveillance. For this reason individuals incorporate governance, where it is produced on and through the body. Lauren internalizes the rules of driving governance through her self-management of the curfew, in an effort to conform and remain a ‘good’ citizen. Interestingly at house parties, however, less attention may be paid to the self-management of alcohol consumption as advised by the Australian Drug and Alcohol Association.

In comparison, Sallee and her friends manage the 11pm ‘curfew’ in an alternative manner:

Pretty much it always just ends up being, like generally go out, we go out in twos. Because of that whole curfew thing. For example, I’m a red P plater so it’s generally we go out and one of us has to be the designated driver. But yeah it just kind of depends, but generally it’s just car-pooling and designated driver.

(Interview, February 2011)

Sallee alerts us to how she negotiates the ‘curfew’ by ‘going out’ in twos, appointing a ‘designated driver’ and ‘car-pooling’. Hence, Sallee and her friends have adapted their ‘going out’ practices to conform to the P1 (red plate) regulations. Rather than staying home, or returning home before 11pm, Sallee now finds herself ‘going out’ in twos as the designated driver travelling after dark with a friend that may be intoxicated.
4.3 Intoxicated bodies: driving under the influence?

Another illustration of how governance operates over driving is the zero alcohol blood levels enforced when driving on a provisional licence. In New South Wales this legislation is underpinned by medical and road accident data that points to how novice drivers with any level of alcohol in their blood are at a high risk of crashing (Transport Roads and Traffic Authority 2011). Negotiating blood alcohol levels is an integral part of planning a night out. Madison understands the dangers of drunk driving. During a night out she plans to drink until at least 4am in the morning. She is also aware of not wishing to be caught the morning after, and will stay at a friend's house when she is uncertain of her blood alcohol levels, but is confident she can drive:

Interviewer: Would you ever take alternate routes to avoid the cops?

Madison: Um...I would never drive if I was drunk. Occasional, say if it was 10 in the morning and you stop drinking at say 4am and your unsure and say my friend lives in Coopers Gully, which is over the Bega Bridge, than we might drive to a friend's house in Bega and hang out in Bega and not drive over the Bega Bridge cause that's usually where the cops are. But I never drive drunk but occasionally but sometimes your like: 'I know I'm OK to drive, but I have no idea if I'm still a little bit over'.

Interviewer: Do you think that's cause you don't want to get caught or cause you don't want to take a risk, like put yourself in danger?

Madison: Well with that, it's like when it's the morning and I know I'm all right to drive, that's well I don't want to get caught, but when it's 4am in the morning and I'm drunk it's I don't want to die.

(Interview, May 2011)

Madison's dialogue illustrates how driving laws impact her choices as a driver. While Madison feels 'all right to drive' after 'going out', she chooses to remain in
Bega to avoid judgment of being a ‘drunk driver’, and disciplinary power from police that could eventuate in the loss of her licence. In the morning, the dilemma for Madison is that her embodied knowledge of being drunk, and the legal definition of ‘drunkenness’ may not be the same. She is confident she can drive but knows the penalties if her blood alcohol exceeds the permitted level. Hence, she chooses to drive, but attempts to avoid the Bega Bridge where the police may have set-up a random breath test. This narrative illustrates the tensions between formal medical and legal definitions of drunkenness and lived experiences. For Madison it is her body that is the final judge of drunkenness.

Responsible Driving Bodies – Whose turn is it?

Formal governance was not the only type of control that impacted how the participants planned a night out. Interestingly very few participants spoke about the role of parents or guardians in regulating their nights out. Instead, within the social relationships that comprised the friendship network another set of informal rules and regulations applied around the discourse of ‘responsibility’. For example, Chloe explained how her friendship group decided on a designated driver when ‘going out’:

Interviewer: How do you decide whose going to drive?

Chloe: Yeah, well you definitely try and take it in turns and like who has to work the next day or who doesn’t feel like drinking or um who doesn’t want to embarrass themselves in front of this person and so they’ll decide you know I’m not going to drink tonight. Or whose turn it is.

(Interview, May 2011)

In Chloe’s friendship group it is crucial to ‘take it in turns’ and consider the context of each social event when choosing a designated driver. To remain acknowledged as a ‘good’ friend, it is essential to constantly self-manage this code when planning a night out. Drawing on Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity, there is nothing innate to being a ‘good’ friend. Rather, Chloe
remains a ‘good’ friend, from the perspective of planning a night out with her friendship group, through the reiterative naturalized performance of ‘taking it in turns’ to drive. The notion of friendship is never fixed. Rather, Chloe is constantly in the process of becoming a friend through the negotiations surrounding the practice of driving.

Within Sallee’s friendship group the unwritten rules of a night out also impact the drinking practices of the passenger:

Interviewer: Would the passenger be drinking in the car, since say it’s a half an hour trip or something?

Sallee: No, not really. Like if one of us is designated driver we don’t, like the other one generally stays pretty much sober. Like they’ll drink a little bit but they don’t wanna get plastered and it’s the same, we’re a pretty empathetic or sympathetic I should say to the other person, so we wanna, like we always have manners and I always, or we always think that it’s pretty rude to get really hammered when they have to put, like you know drive you around and stuff. Generally it’s like say for example I’m designated driver my friend will have a couple of drinks before they go out, just to get, you know, giddy I guess, an than we’ll like drive but they won’t be drinking while we’re in the car and stuff.
(Interview, February 2011)

Sallee is aware of what is expected of becoming a responsible passenger within her friendship group. It is essential to ‘stay pretty much sober’ and not drink while being a passenger in order to remain ‘good’ friends.

When men and women went out together, they were often denoted specific roles along gender lines. This was generally a result of normative reiterative gender performances of drinking. Women usually assumed responsibility within coupled-friendship groups because of experiences where the men would become intoxicated. For example Joccoaa (18 years old, real estate, lives in family home
10 kilometers from Bega) discussed how ‘girls’ are expected to drive when ‘going out’ with their male partners:

Joccoaa: I tend to feel with the girls, it’s not, they go out to have a good time and they might have a few drinks. But boys go out to drink. And that’s why usually a lot of girls are the designated drivers cause they’ve just more responsible, they don’t care about getting absolutely off their face.

Interviewer: Does that bother you?

Joccoaa: Sometimes. Cause on the weekend um, I went out to my friends place, she lives at Candelo, with her boyfriend, and um she drove, yeah she was driving the whole time. And we were saying next time the guys are going to drive us around and we’re going to have some fun, so.

(Interview, April 2011)

Joccoaa articulates that it is the women in her coupled-friendship group that are normally expected to drive. Joccoaa position’s women as ‘more responsible’ and that they ‘don’t care about getting absolutely off their face’. In contrast, the boys ‘go out to drink’. However, this practice is not without contention, as is evident through Joccoaa’s statement ‘next time the guys are going to drive us around’.

Similarly, Jessica (20 years old, finance, lives with partner in Pambula Beach) illustrated how women in heterosexual partnerships often assume the role of responsibility by choosing not to drive:

I just don’t, I can have fun without drinking, so it doesn’t bother me, and I like to be able to go home. Yeah, I don’t like to be stuck somewhere and go: ‘Oh I need to find a way home or somewhere to stay’.

(Interview, April 2011)
For Jessica alcohol is not imperative to enjoying a night out. Equally, remaining sober is crucial to avoid becoming ‘stuck’.

4.4 Colliding Bodies: – ‘That’s my biggest fear, animals on the country roads’

The constant co-presence of animals, primarily wombats and kangaroos, on particular stretches of road was integral to planning a night out that involved driving. The co-presence of wombats and kangaroos was a constant reminder of how the body is soft and penetrable. Alix spoke of the dangers posed by wildlife:

The wombats will rip the whole under your car apart if you directly hit it, and a roo will probably go right through your window screen and make you lose control of the car and you could end up dying!! Truckers and big buses are not allowed to try and avoid roos or wombats because it is harder to control a vehicle of that mass. And it won’t really hurt the truck or bus.

(Email, August 2011)

In particular participants talked about their fear of driving with kangaroos present at known locations and times. As Sallee explained when asked if she feared driving at night:

Just wombats, especially on country roads, which is you know pretty much everywhere around here you have to break every couple of seconds or every couple of minutes cause there’s a wombat or a kangaroo. So that’s my biggest fear more than crashes with other cars or anything. I donno, I mostly just fear the animals on the country roads.

(Interview, February 2011)

Participants talked about a number of tactics involved in planning a night-out in the co-presence of kangaroos including avoidance of particular kangaroo ‘hot-spots’, installing Shu Roo devices to their cars, and avoiding travelling at dusk.
The most extreme measure was avoiding particular roads at night. For instance, Rosie (25 years old, radiographer, lives with partner in Tathra) spoke about avoiding driving between Tathra and Merimbula (Figure 4.1) at night:

I probably would go [to Merimbula] but it is quite a drive, like it’s 25ks and just kind of getting home and that roads a bit, like there’s lots of kangaroos. I wouldn’t really want to drive it, I don’t like driving it at night because of that.

(Interview, April 2011)

Rosie’s understands that there are ‘lots of kangaroos’ along the Sapphire Coast Drive between Tathra and Merimbula. The presence of kangaroos at night on the road constrains Rosie’s mobility and her desire to socialise in Merimbula at night.

Likewise, Madison described how she avoided Sapphire Coast Drive when driving home to Tura Beach at night:

Interviewer: Do you have any different routes that you might take?

Madison: Well I, if I dance in Bega … Well I drive back at 9 o’clock at night or something and I always come back through Merimbula instead of Tathra … because you can come this way towards Tathra … because Merimbula’s a highway and there’s a lot less bush on the road whereas here [Tathra] it’s sort of lots of bush and all the shrubs look like kangaroos.

(Interview, February 2011)

Madison points out how she is very alert to the danger of kangaroos on the road. Her alertness is manifest in the fact that even shrubs become imagined as kangaroos. Madison anticipates a kangaroo, rather than a pedestrian, to be crossing the road. Rosie’s and Madison’s choice to avoid Sapphire Coast Drive when driving at night illustrates how the co-presence of wildlife creates spatial
and temporal control on ‘going out’ practices. Kangaroos in particular influence routes and destination choices when ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley after dark. However, Rosie and Madison were atypical in their decision to avoid particular routes.

As indicated, less extreme and more common measures participants spoke about included avoiding driving at dusk, using ShuRoo’s to scare kangaroos and modifying driving speed. For example, Joccoaa reflected when asked about how the presence of wildlife affects the planning of a night out:

Oh well, you sort of … you have to go out a little bit earlier so that you don’t … you’re not there at dusk, because that’s when they all come out. So, I would have to go a little bit earlier to hit that time before it, or like much later when it’s dark. And a lot of us get ShuRoo’s which are like these little … I don’t know what they are … you stick them on the car, and they put out this really high-pitched noise so that they scare kangaroos. (Interview, April 2011)

Joccoaa planed her night out around the co-presentation of wildlife at dusk. Thus the high presence of wildlife at this time places a temporal boundary on the planning of a night out. Sallee discussed how she modified her driving-speed at night to avoid hitting wildlife:

When we go out for the night we generally stay out pretty late. The only thing I really get scared about is just the animals. There are so many animals on the road and with my car the brakes aren’t the best, so I generally drive pretty slow. (Interview, February 2011)

The practices implemented by Joccoaa and Sallee are typical of the strategies deployed by many of the participants to avoid collisions with wildlife when driving. Thus through their reiterative practice, these safety strategies to avoid
collisions with animals become naturalised as part of becoming a ‘rural driver’ in the Bega Valley and understandings of rurality.

4.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the relationship between mobility, bodies, rurality and ‘going out’ at night in the Bega Valley. The results suggest that mobility, particularly through car ownership, is crucial to forging a sense of independence from family and friends. How participants negotiated the regulation of car mobility played a crucial role in where they went after dark, how they understood friendship, and the amount of alcohol they drank. The car also played an essential role for participants to produce and reproduce normative understandings of femininity when ‘going out’ after dark. Participants who prioritized reproducing conventional ideas of femininity talked about how travelling to events by car enabled them to arrive with make-up and hair intact. Car mobility to attend events after dark was also integral to fixing participants understanding of rurality. Participants spoke about how their sense of rurality was informed by the lack of alternative forms of mobility, the physical distances and possible collisions with kangaroos. The next chapter explores the ‘going out’ spaces of Bega. I do so with the aim of exploring what types of femininities are performed in and through the commercial spaces of Bega.
‘Going out’ After Dark in Bega:
‘I remember even my Dad saying its always been the same, its always had that bad reputation’

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how different femininities are constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced in the commercial venues of Bega when ‘going out’ after dark. After dark, young women appear to constitute two differently styles of femininity. These are termed in this thesis, ‘conservative country femininity’, and ‘sexy metropolitan club femininity.’ Valentine’s (2007) idea of intersectionality, Probyn’s (2003) spatial imperative of subjectivity and Massey’s (2005) conceptualization of space will provide the framework for understanding how the social spaces of Bega are constantly configured at particular temporal moments through emotions, performances and social and material relations. To
this end, the first section explores the imagined geographies that configure two venues in Bega as ‘violent’ and ‘scary’ – The Grand and The Bank. Such imagined geographies serve to spatially constrain where participants choose to socialize at night. The next section considers the pub, which participants prefer when ‘going out’ after dark – the Commercial. Attention is given to how the highly gendered and sexualized hierarchies of the Commercial press against women to inform their performed identities. The final section explores Café Evolve, and how particular subjectivities are made to feel in and out of place when socialising in this venue.

5.2 Bega

In Bega, the options for ‘going out’ to commercial licensed venues after 6pm are limited to the Commercial Hotel, the Bank Hotel, the Grand Hotel, Café Evolve [Thursday to Saturday] and Bega Bowling Club. Unlike many of the coastal towns in the Valley, Bega is not on the tourist circuit. Considering the service role of Bega and the population size may help explain the limited choice of licensed premises both during the week and at weekends. Figure 5.2 is a composite map from participants’ individual Google maps, and illustrates the commercial venues in Bega where participants chose to go and avoided on a night out. With the exception of the bowling club, participants’ maps and narratives emphasized the importance of nights out at these commercially licensed premises. The Commercial, the Bank and the Grand may be described as ‘mainstream’ pubs offering alcohol, meals and accommodation. Café Evolve is an important exception. The café is popular among some of the participants because it offers what may be thought of as an alternative commercial space to the pub by combining a mix of live music, easy chairs, food and alcoholic and soft beverages.
Figure 5.2  Composite Google Map of Bega

Key: Participants:  1. choose to go:  

2. avoid:  

Source: Google Maps
5.3 The Grand Hotel and the Bank Hotel: ‘Its always had that bad reputation’

The Grand Hotel is located at the northern end of Carp Street, the main road of Bega. The Grand Hotel has remained relatively unchanged since its construction in the late 1930s. This pub features art deco detailing (Figure 5.3), a central round bar and a large back room where occasional live acts perform, leading to a small ‘beer garden’. There is an accompanying Chinese restaurant, Chinese Pearl.

For many participants the Grand was talked about as a pub they avoided. A range of different sets of imagined geographies configured the Grand as a ‘violent’ and ‘scary’ place. As Jessica explained:

Interviewer: How come you don’t go to the Grand?

Jessica: Um, there’s too many Indigenous, it’s very violent and it’s just yeah, it’s too scary. It’s a very dodgy pub, like you go in there and it smells horrible. You can smell the alcohol, like it’s been in the carpet, it’s just awful, so....I remember even my Dad saying its always been the same, it’s always had that bad reputation. So it’s like for generations before me, its always had that bad reputation.
(Interview, April 2011)

Jessica makes a whole range of moral judgments about the people who socialize at the Grand. At one level Jessica is threatened by her understanding of the Grand as a place for violent, dodgy people. At another level she is made aware of her ethnicity as a non-Indigenous person. And yet at another level, the ‘horrible’ smell of alcohol in the carpet triggers revulsion, and confirms the stories she has been told by her father that the Grand has always had a ‘bad’ reputation.
Similarly Tess (18 years old, UoW 2011, lives with parents in Tathra) spoke of avoiding the Grand because of the types of subjectivities that flourished within her imagined geographies of this pub:

I have to admit I’m not really into the pub scene. So I try to avoid the pubs in Bega, particularly the Grand. It’s not my kind of atmosphere. It’s a scary old looking pub, down the other end of town. There’s no dancing, and unless you’re a heavy drinker you probably won’t fit in. I’ve also heard of a lot of fights going on there, just scary.

(Facebook, April 2011)

In this narrative Tess marginalizes the Grand as being at the ‘other end of town’. She imagines heavy drinking and fighting to be naturalized performances of Grand clientele. Tess emphasizes that she would probably not ‘fit in’ due to her drinking practices and preference for dancing rather than fighting. For these reasons the Grand is not her ‘kind of atmosphere’ and is constituted as ‘scary’. Jessica and Tess were not atypical in their labeling of the Grand as ‘violent’ and
'scary'. This imagined geography resulted in many of the young women choosing to avoid the Grand when 'going out' to drink. Those who did choose to go out at the Grand spoke specifically about the restaurant or how family connections to the owners gave them a sense of authority and legitimacy when socialising in this space.

**Figure 5.4** The Bank Hotel, Bega

The Bank Hotel was similarly understood by many participants as a place to be avoided when ‘going out’ after dark to drink. The Bank Hotel is located on Church Street, one block east of the main street. The building has not been renovated since the 1960s (Figure 5.4). The Bank has a main bar, featuring two open fires; a back-room (to accommodate various club meetings); a ‘games shed’ and ‘beer deck’ (extension built in 2009); and a bistro (Robbery’s Restaurant). Decisions to avoid the Bank were informed by narratives that forge the venue as a place for ‘hard drinkers’. For example, Lindsay (23 years old, radio host, lives in share-household in Bega) retold this version when asked why she avoided the Bank at night:

I’ve been told before, friends have said, and neighbours have said: ‘Don’t go there’. Like it’s not the best place to go, unless you’re into hard drinking or anything like that. Personally I haven’t seen, I haven’t
witnessed any of that but that’s what I’ve been told and I’d prefer not to take those chances I’d prefer to go where I know it’s a little bit safer, where there’s going to be people that I actually recognize and I feel safe around.

( Interview, February 2011 )

Lindsay’s decision to avoid the Bank illustrates how the circulation of power/knowledge within social networks operates to sustain particular imagined geographies and practices. Power/knowledge is a term deployed by Foucault (1977) that claimed the power to define ‘truth’ is located on the level of the individual, where meaning is embedded in everyday worlds and is negotiated through the affects of discourse. Discourses of the Bank, circulating amongst friends and neighbours, portray it as a place for alcoholics and drunken-fuelled violence. These narratives are enough for Lindsay to choose to avoid this space when ‘going out’ at night. Fear operates to constrain her movement after dark in Bega. Lindsay’s dialogue confirms Eldridge and Roberts (2008) argument that for some people planning a night out often involves defensive strategies, including avoiding sites evaluated as dangerous. Interestingly they also stated that the threat of danger might not be a deterrent when there is a desire for inclusion or risk taking. Alcohol consumption may also modify an individual’s choices and bodily performances when choosing where to socialise in Bega.

Likewise, Stephanie spoke of the bar at the Bank as a place to avoid ‘like the plague’:

Stephanie: Bank Hotel, it’s dodgy, it’s in one of the off streets. It’s not on the main road, it’s on one of the little off streets and just all the dodgy people go there.

Interviewer: Have you ever been there?
Stephanie: I've been past it, and you look in, it doesn't look very inviting and also I'm scared I'm going to get some date rape drug in my drink, kind of thing [laughs], yeah that's what it feels like.

Interviewer: So you would feel unsafe if you went there?

Stephanie: Definitely. Bank Hotel - avoid it like the plague. Don't go there.

Interviewer: Do you think that's a general consensus?

Stephanie: I think that a lot of, I mean young women especially don't want to go to the Bank Hotel. I mean I've heard some stories and you know I'm scared of it pretty much. Yeah just do not want to go there, do not want to put myself in a bad situation.

(Interview, April 2011)

Similarly, Stephanie is aware of the narratives circulating in the Bega Valley that position the Bank's bar at the center of moral disrepute. The version of the Bank she has heard frames this pub as a place where young women may be drugged and raped. Consequently, she frames the clientele as ‘dodgy’. For Stephanie the material geography of the Bank only confirms this pub's moral geography. Stephanie describes the Bank's location as on ‘one of the little off streets’, and its interior décor as ‘uninviting’. As Green and Singleton (2006) argued the apprehension of risk can serve as a powerful mechanism of self-exclusion from public spaces and places. In this case, the apprehension of risk at the Bank is fashioned by the moral geographies of alcohol and drunkenness that position women as vulnerable. Participants who spoke of ‘going out’ to the Bank did not mention drinking in the bar, but rather emphasized the significance of the games shed and the restaurant for lunch or an early evening meal.
5.4 The Commercial Hotel: I’ve been brought up around guys, I’d much rather it’

The Commercial Hotel, located at the southern end of Carp Street, dates from the late nineteenth century. New ownership, in 2005, has recently completed renovations to appeal to a wider mainstream audience. The venue now features poker machines, a Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) and a lounge area. Coinciding with these renovations was the introduction of crab races, live ‘rock’ music (Figure 5.1) and trivia and poker nights. The Commercial also has a ‘beer garden’ and bistro style restaurant. However, this pub continues to retain many of its original features, including a large veranda on the second floor exterior (Figure 5.5). Crucially it was coupled participants from Bega, who highlighted the Commercial as a socially important space.

Figure 5.5  The Commercial, Bega

Some participants spoke of the shifting image or brand of the Commercial since the new ownership. For example, Stephanie discussed how the Commercial had become ‘more comfortable’:
The Commercial used to have a really bad reputation, every night, somebody got glassed or bashed but it’s quieted down. I think it’s the new owners. So that’s, yeah, it’s a lot more comfortable to go there.

(Interview, April 2011)

Similarly, Alix suggested the new owners have transformed the feel and image of the Commercial:

We used to call it the ‘swinging arms’, back in the day. There were always fights there. But since the new owners it’s not as rough. Probably because there seems to be less drinking. Like the other night it was cool everyone was just there for the band. Just chillin. There was drinking but it wasn’t central. It seems to be working for them, the place was packed.

(Email, May 2011)

Like the Bank and the Grand, discourses reinforced the view that the Commercial had been a place where violence was once endemic. However, the Commercial has diversified from a narrow dependence on alcohol consumption in its operations to catering for a market demanding live music, food and other forms of entertainment. The refashioning of the pub, according to Stephanie and Alix, has created a more ‘comfortable’ and ‘chillin’ space. Their ability to relax may be because this space is no longer understood to help configure the pub-drinker as a drunken, violent, that is masculine identity. These understandings echo Chatterton and Holland’s (2003) discussion of the refashioning of country pubs in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, data released by the New South Wales police on the number of assaults contradict the imagined geographies of the Grand, and the Bank, as more violent than the Commercial. From September 2007 to July 2008, the Grand and the Bank had a total of 31 and six reported alcohol-related incidents respectively. In contrast, the Commercial experienced 37 alcohol-related incidents, the highest in Bega.
Stephanie and Alix were not alone in their choice to socialise at the Commercial. Many of the participants who lived in Bega spoke of favoring this pub because here the interpersonal relationships helped to configure them as ‘locals’. This was evident in Jessica’s dialogue:

I go to the Commercial cause I usually know most of the people, like cause I’m from Bega, so, it’s just yeah friendly faces.

(Interview, April 2011)

This narrative exemplifies Leyshon’s (2008b) claim that individuals create a sense of emotional attachment when drinking in the village pub through interactions with ‘friendly locals’. For Jessica the enjoyment of a night out at the Commercial stems from the ‘friendly faces’, where a sense of being local is sustained through friendship networks. In turn, these interpersonal relationships may help reproduce her sense of place-based attachment and belonging to Bega. Jessica was far from alone in her reasoning. Many participants who had grown-up in Bega favored the Commercial because the interpersonal relationships that helped to territorialize this space as local shaped their sense of belonging and, in turn, their sense of belonging helped territorialize the pub as their local.

*Territorializing the Commercial as ‘local’*

Although participants who claimed to be ‘local’ spoke of feeling a sense of belonging and legitimacy through regular visits, the gendered politics of territorializing the Commercial was far more complex. The Commercial is a highly gendered and sexualized space. For this reason a night out requires women negotiating a particular version of femininity, naturalized by the dominance of the male drinking culture. This was evident in the way participants spoke of socializing at the Commercial. For example, Joccoaa described how she frequented the Commercial with her partner and other heterosexual couples:
The main place we go out is the Commercial, it's a pub. So that's sort of like a Friday night, dinner and a few drinks but um not much else ....me and my boyfriend and then my sister and her boyfriend and then there've got some friends which my boyfriend is friends with. So it's kind of just a general group that we just go out with.

(Interview, April 2011)

Joccoaa's dialogue illustrates Holloway et al.'s (2009) argument that having a male partner may help to legitimize the presence of women in pub spaces. Without the company of a male partner and male friends Joccoaa may not experience the same sense of belonging in the Commercial. Joccoaa was not alone in her practices, most of the young women who chose to socialise at the Commercial did so with a male partner.

Jessica was aware of how men belong more in the Commercial than women:

If you go to the pub [the Commercial] there's a lot of guys there, a lot but I guess most of the girls don't really feel comfortable around it. I've been brought up sort of around the guys and I'd much rather it.

(Interview, April 2011)

As Jessica explained, negotiating a night out at the Commercial requires mainly interacting with men. Jessica prefers this as she has 'been brought up around the guys'. Yet, Jessica understands that women will come under the gaze of men predominantly in this space and that may cause many of the women to feel uncomfortable. Jessica is alert to particular occurrences of this judging male gaze. For example:

Some of the girls ended up dancing to the band that was playing. I don't feel comfortable dancing; I'm too self-conscious, with all the guys standing around looking and judging you. I just went and talked to the men.

(Diary, June 2011)
To avoid being sexualized by the gaze of men (Figure 5.6), Jessica negotiates her femininity by talking to them instead. Jessica’s diary illustrated Young’s (1990) claim that the harsh judgments of the male drinkers favor ‘respectable’ women, who are modest, exuberant and repress their sexuality.

Alix also spoke of negotiating the gendered politics of the Commercial. In April 2011, Alix spoke of how the interpersonal relationships of the Commercial sustained her sense of belonging, having lived in Bega her entire life:

Commercial’s good, I know a lot of people because I have lived here [Bega] all my life.

(Interview, April 2011)
Yet, in August 2011, Alix spoke of how this sense of belonging in the Commercial relied upon the assumption of heterosexuality. As Alex wrote:

> So I’m never going back to the Commi [the Commercial] again after Friday just gone, I got verbally abused at the pub by homophobes and when I was walking home I got jumped by around ten of them.

(Email, August 2011)

Alix is subjected to homophobic fuelled physical and verbal assaults. Alix’s subjectivity as a lesbian challenged the naturalized assumptions of heterosexuality in the Commercial. Alix’s words confirm Leyshon’s (2005) argument that pub spaces are often marked as heteronormative, excluding or marginalizing those considered ‘other’ to reaffirm the dominant ideology of heterosexuality. While Alix’s subjectivity as a local once gave her a sense of belonging within this pub space, it was always contingent on the naturalized assumption of heterosexuality. Place-based attachments of being a local are not stable and require to be continually reproduced. In the case of the Commercial, it would appear to require reproducing the norms of heterosexuality.

**Drinking and Drunkenness**

At the Commercial, drinking practices played a central role in heightening an awareness of the self within the relationships that comprise the pub and Bega. For instance in an email Alix explained why she drank alcohol to become drunk at the Commercial:

> I usually get drunk when I’m at the Commercial, mainly because there’s so many people that I know, but also don’t really know. So drinking lots just helps me get passed all my worries and just become relaxed and talkative. Also everyone else is generally pretty drunk, it’s just what you do.

(Email, May 2011)
For Alix, the pleasures of intoxication were associated with relaxations about the self. Echoing the results of Waitt et al. (2011), alcohol use enables time-out from a particular rationale of self that is more reserved and shy. Alix understands that drunkenness is a normative expectation within this space, ‘it’s just what you do’.

In a parallel vein, Jessica wrote of feeling ‘left out’ when not consuming alcohol:

> There was his [boyfriends'] close friends and family there [the Commercial]. I felt a bit left out as I was the only one not drinking alcohol. But I will not drink and drive.
> (Diary, July 2011)

Jessica is alert to how drinking and drunkenness operates as a tool for social inclusion within the pub. While consuming alcohol may be a source of pleasure and relaxation for many participants, it may simultaneously be a source of self-regulation and surveillance.

However, for Alix, consuming alcohol at the Commercial also made her aware of the social hierarchies within Bega:

> Alix: Well I feel like when I’m out at the Commercial, if there’s older people that I know that are there, which are my mum’s friends, type of thing, I have to play a higher role model, type of thing. Like be at their level, instead of just being: ‘woo!’.

> Interviewer: So you’re conscious of it?

> Alix: Yeah. Unless I have one too many and than it’s just like, who cares.

> Interviewer: Is that one of the reasons that you drink, so you can get passed that?

> Alix: Hmm, no, it just gets funnier as you get more drunk.
> (Interview, April 2011)
Alix is alert to how drinkers at the pub are constantly under the moral gaze of others. Alix is also aware to how she may modify her drinking practices to reproduce normative understandings of a ‘higher role model’ in Bega, when under the surveillance of her Mum’s friends in the Commercial. Equally, she speaks about how one of the pleasures of drinking is how intoxication disrupts the naturalized understandings of what she thinks should reproduce a respectable Bega femininity in the pub.

Likewise, in response to the smallness of country towns, some young women in this study spoke of monitoring their alcohol consumption in the Commercial. For instance Chloe self-governed her alcohol consumption to avoid judgment from other Bega residents:

I think yeah so now I have the job at the Solicitor's, it's like I, I was more of a um social girl just in my age group and now I know a lot of people and am recognized by a lot of people that are older and just the whole community. So it's definitely like, I wouldn't want people to see me doing, like drinking too much or smoking a cigarette or something, in public cause yeah everyone knows everything around Bega [Laugh]. (Interview, May 2011)

Chloe’s dialogue illustrates Jayne et al’s (2011), argument that rural young people exercise more self-governance over their drinking practices because of the limited anonymity in country towns. For Chloe, it is impossible to carve out anonymous, private space within the pub. Acknowledging how intoxication can facilitate changes to bodily performance, to remain respected with work colleagues at the solicitors, it is essential to self-govern her alcohol consumption and to not smoke at the Commercial.

Similarly, Jessica discussed how she avoided becoming ‘drunk and disorderly’ through managing alcohol consumption:
When I go out and drink I never get to the point that I cannot walk properly, talk properly, I never get drunk and disorderly. I always know when to stop drinking. It makes it hard to understand how and why some girls drink so much that they get out of control. They just don't care how they act or what people think.

(Diary, July 2011)

Following Skeggs' (1997) notion of respectability and bodily comportment, Jessica dis-identifies her drinking practices from women whose bodies ‘get out of control’ when drinking. The drunken body does not conform to conventional notions of femininity, as one that is restrictive of risk taking and big movements. Jessica claims that it is ‘hard to understand how and why some girls drink so much’ because it is essential for Jessica to remain in control over her body, and be judged as respectable when socializing at the Commercial. Jessica positions women who drink to excess in problematic ways because they become ‘disorderly’ and do not care ‘what people think’.

Dress code - Conservative country femininity and a sexualized club femininity

How participants present their bodies on a night out at the Commercial is central to understanding the gendered relations that exist within this space. Participants suggest an ever-present country conservative gaze, and so favoured casual clothing of a conservative country femininity rather than heels and short-skirts of a sexualized club femininity. As Joccoaa explained:

Interviewer: So say when you’re at the Commercial, do you dress up to go there?

Joccoaa: Hmmm, sometimes. Depends what, mainly jeans and a nice shirt. It’s not really a club area down here. Well I guess everyone knows its just Bega and if someone, everyone sort of just wears jeans and maybe like just a nice dress or something. If anyone goes hard-core out with the heels or anything everyone goes: ‘Wow, hang on, what’s going on here?’ But um,
you get a few of that down in Merimbula just because of the atmosphere, it’s different down there.

(Interview, April 2011)

Joccoaa is alert to how women are made to feel their gendered identity in the Commercial. For this reason Joccoaa states that the dress code of ‘jeans and a nice shirt’ allows women to pass relatively unnoticed. Following Young (1990), being judged respectable in the Commercial, entails repressing sexuality by conservatively covering the body. Women become the object of scrutiny if they trouble the boundary of respectability by choosing to perform a ‘hard-core’ femininity, or what Connell (1987) has coined ‘emphasized femininity’. For Joccoaa, a high-heel femininity is out of place at the Commercial, for the simple reason that ‘everyone knows its just Bega’. The implications of ‘just Bega’, suggests everydayness. Conforming to an everyday dress code enables women to pass relatively unnoticed in the highly judgmental Commercial. In contrast, part of the pleasure of ‘going out’ to Merimbula is dressing-up and performing contemporary understandings of sexiness and being seen by others.

Similarly, Lucy chose to dress down when ‘going out’ to the Commercial:

Interviewer: So do you dress up, like say tonight [spoke of going to the Commercial], will you dress up?

Lucy: Um, I’ll dress up a little bit but not too much really, not here. Like I wouldn’t wear heels or anything like that.

Interviewer: How come?

Lucy: Mainly cause I donno just, it’s not the right place I don’t think. Like I wouldn’t feel comfortable, I just think it’s more casual but a bit more than casual, like I’d probably wear jeans and a nice shirt and maybe some flat shoes. I don’t think I’d wear high-heels. Or anything like that.

(Interview, April 2011)
Akin to Joccoaa, Lucy understands that this is not a pub in which she would feel comfortable performing contemporary understandings of a sexy femininity by wearing high-heels. Also like Joccoaa, she understands that sexualized bodies would come under critical gaze of others in the pub:

Interviewer: Do you feel comfortable at the Commercial on a Friday night?

Lucy: Yeah usually. Sometimes it can be uncomfortable because there’s some like older men there that kind of freak me out a bit sometimes. Just because, not that I think that there trying to do anything but they can come across a bit freaky I reckon. I’d dress up definitely more for the Lakeview [in Merimbula], yeah, it’s more like younger people, like dance music and stuff.

(Interview, April 2011)

This dialogue illustrates the importance of age in how Lucy constructs her appearance. When under the objectifying gaze of those whom she understands to be ‘freaky’, ‘older men’ at the Commercial, attention is avoided by dressing ‘a bit more than casual’. For this reason Lucy prefers to reproduce a conservative country femininity. In comparison, under the objectifying gaze of younger men at the Lakeview, Lucy chooses to ‘dress up’ in ways that conform to conventional ideas of sexual attractiveness. This narrative highlights how when ‘going out’, Lucy negotiates particular versions of femininity in relation to the dominance of the male drinking culture.

Women’s bodies in the Commercial are not only under the objectifying gaze of men, but also women. Jessica wrote of witnessing women performing a sexualized femininity in the Commercial. For Jessica, rather than being sexy, these women are devalued and labeled as ‘slutty’:

A lot of young girls when going to the pub [the Commercial] wear tiny tight little skirts, tops and dresses. I don’t believe that looking slutty
makes men attracted to you. I wish girls would just be themselves. They are more likely to get men to like them.

(Diary, July 2011)

Jessica’s words illustrate how in the Commercial bodies are under the contradictory and conflicting gaze of men and women. Jessica suggests that the ‘young girls’ performance of a sexualized femininity, aimed at attracting the attention of heterosexual men, is disempowering rather than empowering. Jessica constitutes women who perform this version of femininity as ‘slutty’ rather than ‘attractive’. Jessica wishes ‘girls would just be themselves’. Hence, women who conform to the naturalized femininity that dominates the Commercial are less likely to draw the critical gaze of women. Jessica favoured the casual clothing of the conservative country femininity. As was evident in a diary entry detailing a night out at the pub:

I just wore tights, boots with a skirt and knitted jumper. It was casual dress.

(Diary, May 2011)

Paradoxically, Jessica’s version of conservative country femininity and the young girls she dis-identifies from are both constructed in relation to masculine ideologies. These results illustrate Waitt et al’s (2011) findings that sexualized femininities are constantly interpreted by others on a fine line between sexy and slutty.
5.5 Café Evolve: ‘You have to be different to fit in’

Café Evolve, located at the centre of Carp Street, opened in 2006. The proprietors promote this licensed venue as a ‘cultural icon’ of the Bega Valley and ‘a destination for live acts and music performances’ (Café Evolve Blog 2011). The café is open to the street, and has a mix of seating styles (Figures 5.7, 5.8). An internal door links the café with Candelo Books. The venue has late trading hours

Figure 5.7 Lounge Area at Café Evolve, Bega

and hosts live acts Thursday to Friday. Musicians come from a range of music ‘scenes’ including: jazz, folk, blues, country and reggae. The venue also hosts open-mic(rophone) nights and talent quests.

Café Evolve was talked about by some participants as an ‘arts scene’. Hence, when crossing the threshold of Café Evolve they were aware of the absence of the judgmental male drunken gaze. For instance, Madison spoke of the ‘cool’ and ‘relaxed’ atmosphere of Café Evolve in comparison to the ‘crowded and rowdy’ ambiance at the Commercial:
The only place I really enjoy going to in Bega is Evolve. It’s such a cute little café. They get some great performers as well, so it’s cool to just have a meal, relax and listen to some live music. It’s great, no one really cares what you do and there’s no drunk bogan guys trying to interfere. It’s worlds away from the Commercial, it’s not crowded or rowdy. And its part of the arts scene so everyone’s really different, lots of styles. No one really feels that they have to dress in a certain way. It’s fantastic really.

(Facebook, July 2011)

For Madison, Café Evolve is ‘worlds away’ from the harsh judgments that are part of a night out at the Commercial. Unlike the pub scene, Café Evolve enables a space for social difference. In Madison’s words, there are ‘lots of styles’. At Café Evolve, Madison explains there is no need to conform to a particular style of femininity. The absence of the heterosexual male gaze of ‘drunk bogan guys’ helps Madison to relax.

Likewise, Alix highlighted the different sets of ideas that inform the social relationships of Café Evolve:
Well it is a more mellowed out place, the crowd is completely different to the Commi. You can’t fit all that many people into Evolve so you have to book tables before hand. Way less judgement if any at all at Evolve. People are there to enjoy the company of others and to listen to the talent not to judge other people. Drinking is much lower there because it isn’t a place to get blind drunk it’s a place to mellow out and chill and chat. Everyone that goes there dresses differently to one another and no one seems to care. I think the main attitude you get at Evolve is: 'I am who I am. Not what someone else thinks I am. I am myself and proud of it'
(Email, September 2011)

Like Madison, Alix talked about Café Evolve as ‘mellowed out’. Similarly, in contrast to the highly gendered and sexualized space of the Commercial, Alix understands Café Evolve as a place that ‘no one seems to care’ how patrons choose to dress or what identity they perform. For Alix, the possibility to express her individuality in a public space is very important. Café Evolve is a venue where it is apparently unnecessary to conform to the gendered and sexed hierarchies that play out in the pub scene.

Yet, the possibility to perform ‘alternative’ styles of femininity in and through the spaces of Café Evolve did not sit comfortably with all participants. Those who performed a conservative country femininity tended to avoid Café Evolve. For example, Joccoaa wrote:

I’m not the biggest fan of going to Café Evolve at night. Mainly because it’s kind of the alternative scene. I sort of feel like you have to be different to fit in. Like I don’t really listen to that sort of music and I’m not into dressing crazy or anything. I just like wearing my jeans or a nice dress and not having to think about it. So I’m not really into it as much as say the Commercial.
(Facebook, September 2011)
Joccoaa understands Café Evolve as opening a space for an ‘alternative scene’, favoring individuality and ‘crazy’ outfits. In Joccoaa’s words: “you have to be different to fit in”. At Café Evolve, she becomes aware of how her style of femininity ‘fits’ more within the gendered hierarchies of the Commercial.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to illustrate how particular styles of femininities are spatially constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced in and through the commercial spaces of Bega after dark. The results suggest that imagined geographies of violence and threats are powerful in their ability to physically constrain where young women choose to socialize after dark. Ironically, the stories of venues that are the most violent is contradicted by the number of reported alcohol-related assaults.

The results suggest when crossing the threshold of the Commercial, participants must negotiate the gendered and sexed social hierarchies of Bega. Participants also spoke about how they were constantly negotiating the gaze of others in the Commercial. To belong in the Commercial participants spoke of producing and reproducing a conservative country femininity, underpinned by localism, heterosexuality, constantly self-managing levels of alcohol consumption and dressing casually, yet smart. Harsh judgment results if these naturalized subjectivities and performances are disrupted.

For this reason, those participant’s who did not conform to a conservative country style femininity spoke about the importance of Café Evolve as an ‘alternative’ space that is more accepting of social difference. IN a similar approach the following chapter explores the commercial spaces where participants choose to go and choose to avoid when socialising in Merimbula.
6

Figure 6.1 Lakeview Hotel interior on Saturday of Easter long weekend, 2011.
Photograph by Lakeview Hotel

‘Going out’ After Dark in Merimbula:
‘It’s not cool, it’s a necessity’

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I draw attention to how particular femininities are constructed, negotiated and reproduced when ‘going out’ after dark in and through the evening commercial spaces of Merimbula. Massey’s (2005) reconceptualization of space as unfolding relations, Probyn’s (2003) spatial imperative of subjectivity and Valentine’s (2007) emphasis upon how subject positions are always intersectional, will allow an illustration of the ways in which a sense of self is constantly configured and reconfigured through what bodies do, feel and sense. This chapter also explores how participants are made to feel their rurality when socialising in particular commercial venues.
Initially the importance of pre-drinking and how participants choose pre-drinking commercial venues when ‘going out’ in Merimbula was examined. Some emphasized a preference for intimate and inexpensive social spaces – the Bowling Club and Returned and Services League (RSL). Others chose the Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar to distinguish themselves from others at the Bowling Club and the RSL. Secondly I explore the interplay of dress codes, drunkenness, music and dancing in the only Bega Valley nightclub – the Lakeview Hotel. Attention is given to how the Lakeview is positioned as abject. At one level, this club is thought to offer excitement and possibility by providing opportunities for escape from the everyday, feeling and looking sexy and performing a sexualized club femininity. At another level, the Lakeview is a reminder of participants’ rurality and disgust for bodies out of control.

6.2 Merimbula

Merimbula is plugged into tourist circuits along the Far South Coast of New South Wales. It is a popular coastal tourist resort particularly for people living in Canberra and to a lesser extent Melbourne and Sydney. The town’s economy is firmly rooted in the service industry and thus has a diversity of entertainment venues, exceeding neighboring coastal towns such as Eden. Despite Eden’s natural beauty it has largely retained its identity as a working town, allowing Merimbula to attract the majority of tourists (Ryan 1965). The mix of venues in Merimbula includes the Bowling Club/Club Sapphire, RSL, Lakeview Hotel, Merimbula Golf Club, Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar, Zanzibar Café, the Waterfront, Wharf Restaurant and Bar, Santa Fe and Pier One Cocktail Bar. Figure 6.2 is a map detailing the diversity of commercial venues in Merimbula.
Figure 6.2  Commercial Venues, Merimbula

Source: Google Maps 2011

Key:
1. Wharf Restaurant and Bar
2. Lakeview Hotel
3. Pier One Cocktail Bar
4. Waterfront Café
5. Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar
6. Santé Fe
7. RSL
8. Club Sapphire / Bowling Club
9. Golf Club
10. Zanzibar
11. Bar Beach Café
12. Cheeky Mango Bar and Grill
13. Vicolo
14. Top Fun

Figure 6.3 is a composite map of participants’ individual Google maps, illustrating the commercial venues in Merimbula where participants chose to go and avoided on a night out. Participants emphasized the importance of ‘going out’ after dark to commercial venues in Friday and Saturday evenings in their narratives. The venues included: the Merimbula Bowling Club/Club Sapphire, the RSL, the Lakeview Hotel and Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar. Both the Bowling Club and the RSL may be described as ‘mainstream’ country town venues offering alcohol, meals, entertainment and commercial music. Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar offers an alternative to the commercial venues, typically found in a country town by combining international live music, tapas and a large selection of alcoholic beverages. The Lakeview Hotel\(^1\) unlike other pubs in the Bega Valley

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\(^1\) From May, 2011 the Lakeview Hotel was no longer legally permitted to play amplified music following a clause found by the Bega Valley Council and Merimbula Police in the Hotels license (Brown 2011). The majority of data for this research was collected prior to this date.
offers a ‘nightclub’ experience, featuring a dance area and regular disc jockeys (DJs). For most participants going to the Lakeview Hotel was central to a Friday and Saturday night out in Merimbula. Participants who spoke of avoiding the Lakeview Hotel when ‘going out’ emphasized a generalized categorization of this venue as a ‘dance club’.

**Figure 6.3** Composite Google Map of Merimbula
6.3 Merimbula Bowling Club/Club Sapphire and the Returned and Services League: ‘My friends and I are quite cheap and stingy so it’s meet and greet at the Bowling Club’

Merimbula Bowling Club is located on Main Street, at the northern end of Merimbula’s central business district. The club recently completed a renovation estimated to cost $7 million dollars (Figure 6.4). Following the renovation the Bowling Club was renamed ‘Club Sapphire’ and rebranded as ‘the premier dining, entertainment and social and community venue for the Merimbula area’ (Club Sapphire 2011). In addition to lawn bowling, this ‘country club’ provides gym, golf and tennis facilities as well as free child minding. The ‘clubhouse’ features two restaurants, lounge areas, poker machines, TAB and games area, free entertainment, poker and bingo nights, ‘broadband for seniors’ and regular cover bands specializing in music from the 60s, 70s and 80s. Membership for Club Sapphire ranges from full membership to social, gym, tennis, golf and bowling across the categories of junior, cadet and student (Club Sapphire 2011). The Merimbula Returned and Services League (Figure 6.5) is also located on Main Street and offers similar facilities to Club Sapphire. However RSL membership is restricted to men and women who served Australia in the theatre of war or peacekeeping.

For many participants, Club Sapphire and the RSL were integral to a night out in Merimbula. Participants spoke of meeting with friends and drinking at these venues before going to the club in the Lakeview Hotel. For example Katie (21 years old, Auswide Projects, lives with partner in Tura Beach) spoke of her ability to relax in these venues:

Interviewer: So what venues do you go to, say when you’re getting all your friends together?

Katie: We’ll start off at the R’y [RSL], we’ll have a few quiet drinks there and than some of us will pop along to the Bowling Club and if we don’t go there it’s straight down to the Lakey [Lakeview Hotel].

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Interviewer: Yep. So what makes you choose those to go to for pre-drinks?

Katie: Um, they’re a lot quieter, you’ve got your own group of people. You can go and play a game of pool without having to sit your dollar on the table, waiting for it, and everything. You can basically do what you want when you want and you don’t have to worry about anyone interfering with what you want to do that night.

Interviewer: So you feel like it’s...

Katie: A lot more relaxed kind of thing, yeah.

(Interview, April 2011)

For Katie, it is the interplay of these perceived benefits, which work towards forging an intimate space for her friendship circle, where she does not have to ‘worry about anyone interfering’. For Katie, at the weekend, Club Sapphire is a
space where women are free from harsh judgments when drinking or playing pool. Furthermore, the quiet sounds of the club facilitate conversation between friends. Overall, Katie has a stronger sense of control through the social relationships that comprise this space. Katie was not alone in this preference, many participants spoke of the importance of beginning the night socialising and becoming drunk with close friends at Club Sapphire and the RSL.

In addition to cultural relations, economic relations were also important in comprising the spaces of these clubs. Several participants spoke about the low price of alcoholic beverages. As Alana (20 years old, student, lives with partner in Merimbula) explained:

My friends and I are quite cheap and stingy so it's meet and greet at the Bowling Club. We generally try and drink as much as we can so we don’t
have to buy drinks at the Lakey, way too expensive. There aren’t really any other options. So even through it’s really not cool, it does the job. (Facebook, June 2011)

For Alana, and her friendship circle, cost is central in determining where to socialise and how a night out is structured in Merimbula. Drinking alcohol to become drunk is paramount when ‘going out’ for Alana and her friendship circle. The lower cost drinks made the Bowling Club an attractive venue. Thinking of herself and friends as ‘cheap and stingy’ the Bowling Club is the only option in Merimbula where drinking to become drunk is cost effective. Although Alana does not consider the Bowling Club a ‘cool’ space to hang out, the space becomes an integral part of a night out because of the necessity of drunkenness.

Participants who chose to avoid the Bowling Club and the RSL on nights out in Merimbula constituted the people there as old, and the venue as lacking ‘vibe’. For example Madison’s spoke about these dimensions of the Bowling Club and RSL when discussing the closure of the Lakeview Hotel:

There’s the Bowling Club and the RSL, I don’t think there going to become the popular places... so it’s sought of, everyone just goes and there’s a lot of old people there and stuff so it doesn’t have the same vibe. (Interview, May 2011)

While these spaces offer an affordable option for becoming drunk and a quiet space to forge intimate social bonds before a night out, Madison understands them to be a compromise, ‘everyone just goes there’, because of limited affordable alternatives available in Merimbula.

Similarly, Laura (20 years old, waitperson, lives with mother in Wolumla) expressed how her subjectivities could not fluoresce through the spaces of the Bowling Club:
There’s really nothing for us at the Bowling Club. Bad music, cover bands that my Dad would most likely love, children running around. Harsh lighting. Not where I want to spend my Saturday night thank you. (Facebook, July 2011)

The ‘harsh lighting’, ‘bad music’ and ‘children running about’ work against the types of pleasures Laura seeks on a Saturday night out. Laura’s narrative illustrates Malbon’s (1998) argument that darkness and a connection with music are important when ‘going out’ because an individual’s sense of space changes as they lose sight of other individuals, while darkness allows a sense of escape from the everyday. Unable for her sense of self to shine and be differentiated from the everyday through the relations that comprise this space, she comments that: ‘There’s really nothing for us at the Bowling Club’. Those who chose to avoid the Bowling Club and RSL emphasized the social distinction brought by drinking at the Cantina.

6.4 Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar: ‘It’s a higher class of people’

Cantina Tapas and Wine Bar is located on Market Street, the main street of Merimbula (Figure 6.6). The restaurant specializes in Mediterranean cuisine. The bar features a wide selection of wines, beers and cocktails. Live musicians regularly perform on Friday evenings. Musicians come from a diversity of music ‘scenes’ including: jazz, rock, classical and folk. However, the venue does not feature a dance floor.

Cantina was important to some participants because it enabled them to differentiate themselves from the people ‘going out’ to Club Sapphire or the RSL. For example, Sarah (25 years old, self-employed, lives with husband in Bega), talked about the Cantina in terms of being ‘younger’, ‘lively’ and ‘comfortable’:
Interviewer: So why do you go to Cantina in Merimbula specifically as opposed to some of the other options that you could go to?

Sarah: Like in Bega?

Interviewer: Well anywhere.

Sarah: Oh, just different environments, it’s not just, we kind of only have restaurants but it is only an Asian restaurant in Bega that’s it, as in the night time zone, besides pubs and it’s just more of a lively environment.
They’ve got a lot of younger people, foods better, everything. I don’t really go to the pub, I must say I don’t really drink, so I don’t really go to the pub because there are a lot of yobo men. As you can see them all working [trade men on construction site close to interview]. I do feel more comfortable in Merimbula, it’s a higher class of people that live there, they have more money. So people tend to dress better and are more polite, it’s more comfortable.

(Interview, April 2011)

Sarah, who lives in Bega, dis-identified her nightlife from Bega. She associated the pubs of Bega with the performance of a particular classed style of masculinity: ‘yobo men’. She understood the population of Merimbula to comprise of a ‘higher class’ of people. Hence, the comfort she expressed in ‘going out’ to the Cantina, in Merimbula, was along the lines of enabling class distinction from ‘going out’ in Bega.

Similarly, within Merimbula itself, Laura talked about the Cantina as enabling a form of class distinction in comparison to ‘going out’ to the Bowling Club or RSL:

Laura: Oh Cantina’s good. It’s like...

Interviewer: For dinner?

Laura: Bar thing, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you go there often?

Laura: Um, well if we ever want to like meet up for drinks we go there. If we ever go out, we always start there and then make our way through all the pubs and stuff.

Interviewer: So pre drinks then, dinner? Do you have dinner there or?
Laura: It’s too expensive [Laugh]. Like cocktails are like fifteen bucks each like it’s, bloody expensive but no if we ever go anywhere, we go there.

Interviewer: Why do you like it there?

Laura: It’s just classier. I guess a bit of a different atmosphere like it’s not like the RSL or the pub or the Bowlo or something like that. It’s just something nicer. So we like to go there.

(Interview, May 2011)

To enter and drink at the Cantina requires a purchasing power that enables some participants to differentiate themselves along the lines of economic class from others.

Furthermore, Laura chooses to pay for the expensive drinks at the Cantina with friends because of the ‘different atmosphere’ from the Bowling Club and RSL. In Laura’s words ‘It’s just something nicer’. Clearly, the different atmosphere is felt, but difficult to express in words. Following Anderson (2006) the affective ambiance of Cantina rubs up against Laura’s subjectivities resulting in feelings that are ‘nicer’ and ‘different’ to those felt when in the Bowling Club or RSL. Verbally Laura finds it difficult to express this embodied knowledge because how it takes place in particular spatial and temporal moments is an aporia, however there is meaning in these differences because they affect how Laura’s subjectivities are able to fluoresce.

Likewise, Madison talked of her preference to pay for the more expensive drinks at Cantina because she then is able to experience the perceived superior atmosphere and amenities that comprise Cantina in comparison to Club Sapphire or the RSL:

I think I’ve told you before, my friends and I try to avoid the horridness of Club Sapphire. I just prefer Cantina because you don’t have to worry there. Everyone’s having fun, there’s no oldies starring at you from across
the room. You can just have a meal, enjoy some good conversation, there’s live music in the background. And it’s difficult to talk once you get to the Lakeview, so it’s nice to have a space and time dedicated to just your friends. However, it is a bit expensive, so like a lot of our friends will just go to the Bowling Club or RSL instead. Which I mean they just do that so they can buy more alcohol, which I understand. But really, it just takes all the niceness of a night out away.

(Facebook, September 2011)

The affordances of the Cantina include possibilities to build intimate relationships, the absence of the judgmental gaze of ‘oldies’ and ambient background music. Together these help Madison to relax. However, the affordances of the Cantina are at an economic cost. According to Madison, the Bowling Club and RSL become favoured venues when the priority of a night out is to become a drunk and budgets are restricted.

Bourdieu’s (1984) ideas on social capital are useful to interpret Sarah’s, Laura’s and Madison’s preference for socialising at Cantina. Following Bourdieu, Cantina signifies middle-class taste and cultivation. These young women thus deploy the venue as a cultural signifier, which allows them to demonstrate their difference from those ‘below’, in other words, individuals who choose to socialise in the pubs and clubs of Merimbula and Bega. The propensity of these young women to choose Cantina when socialising suggests they secure social capital within their friendship circle through purchasing capacity.
6.5 Lakeview Hotel: ‘It’s really the only place we have where we can just put on a really short skirt, wear high heels’

The Lakeview Hotel is located at the southern end of Market Street. The venue is a pub-style space featuring accommodation, pool tables, a bistro style restaurant, ‘beer garden’ and ‘sports cinema’ (Figure 6.7). Recent renovations have incorporated dance and lounge areas, with the venue pitched as a ‘nightclub’ on Friday and Saturday evenings (Figure 6.1). Following Malbon (1998), the Lakeview Hotel comes to be visualized as a ‘nightclub’ after dark through the interactions and connections made possible between alcohol, lighting, music and bodies. During the summer months, the Lakeview is also popular with tourists. Hence, this venue is known to offer possibilities for casual sex with people from outside the Bega Valley.

The events at the Lakeview were integral to participants’ ‘going out’ narratives. In part this is because the Lakeview Hotel is the only commercial venue in the Bega Valley offering dance music late on a Saturday and Friday night. However, discourses of lack often framed a night out at the Lakeview. As Chloe explained:

Chloe: Everyone goes to the Lakeview and has fun at the Lakeview but it’s viewed negatively, like: ‘Oh no’, they call it the Lake Spew and you don’t want to go to the Lakeview because...

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Chloe: It’s just everyone has this sort of superior way of looking at things and they think: ‘Oh God it’s [the Lakeview] so trashy and bogan to be going there’, like um. It’s not like Melbourne or somewhere where you can go to a cheap bar or go somewhere that, there’s nowhere to go out when you’re eighteen. I suppose other than the Tathra pub well there’s just the Tathra pub, it’s just a bit like, you’ll go there [the Lakeview] but everyone will look down on it.

(Interview, May 2011)
Chloe is made to feel her rurality when ‘going out’ to the Lakeview, through the apparent lack of sophistication and captured small market resulting in expensive drinks. In her words you become a ‘bogan’ going to the Lakeview. In comparison, she understands Melbourne nightlife as offering a diversity of glamorous options at a lower expense. Furthermore, for Chloe, ‘going out’ to the Lakeview is regarded as both fun, and horrid. Clubbing at the Lakeview is a paradoxical space, where the intoxicated pleasures of feeling sexy and attractive may quickly slip into becoming ‘trashy’ and ‘bogan’ because sickness may spill out of the body in uncontrollable ways.

Similarly, Laura spoke of enjoying dressing-up for a night out at the Lakeview for a variety of reasons; dressing-up, being seen as sexually attractive, the potential for casual sex, the importance of drinking to become ‘really drunk’, and dancing:
During the holidays you’ll go to the Lakey [the Lakeview] and there’ll be a thousand guys there and like I said, they just want to hook up so. Like if we’d ever go to the Lakeview, we were already drunk, basically, we’d be stumbling in the door, [Laugh] which is really depressing and horrible to say but that’s just the reality of how it’s been.... I really liked it. Like getting really dressed up and getting really drunk and dance. It was a fun time. But then the next morning I ‘d go: ‘Why the fuck did I even go there?’ It just had a reputation. It’d be just like the Lakes Spew, like everyone was like: ‘Oh gross’, but everyone would go.

[Interview, May 2011]

Laura knows that during the summer months, Saturday and Friday nights at the Lakeview offer great potential for casual sex. For Laura, there are pleasures in reproducing a highly sexual club femininity by dressing up, becoming drunk, throwing-up, ‘hook[ing] up’ and dancing. In the light of day, Laura questions her practices: ‘Why the fuck did I even go there?’ Perhaps Kristeva’s (1982) concept of the abject is helpful here. The Lakeview is understood as disgusting by these women, it is nicknamed ‘Lake Spew’. However, as Kristeva reminds us the abject, that which breaks boundaries, is understood as simultaneously attractive and repulsive. The pleasures of a night out must be understood in terms of the abject and how it offers possibilities to both produce and rupture understandings of femininity.

Dress Code

How people dressed for a night-out was closely aligned with sexuality and relationship status. All participants acknowledge that the dress code at the Lakeside is ‘sexy’. Following Johnston and Longhurst (2010) ‘sexy’ is a relational concept largely dependent on particular social and cultural landscapes. What is considered to be ‘sexy’ in the Lakeview ascribes to an emphasized version of femininity, which conforms to ideals set by the beauty industry and those of heterosexual men (Bordo 1993), favoring high-heels and revealing clothing. This dress code enables the performance of what may be termed sexualized club
femininity. Yet some participants in relationships, while aware of the dress code, chose to ignore it. For example Katie is in a long-term heterosexual relationship and spoke of not performing a sexualized club femininity when going to the Lakeview:

Interviewer: Do you think that the girls there perform or dress in a certain way or is it pretty casual?

Katie: Most of the younger girls you see, dress up in their little dresses and their little skirts. Very revealing, where the people our age and older they just come in, they can be casual or they can be wearing jeans and thongs.

Interviewer: So there’s not really certain expectations to be dressed in a certain way or anything?

Katie: Not for me, no. You can see that it’s there, but no I don’t take any notice of it. I go in what I feel comfortable in.
(Interview, April 2011)

Katie’s dialogue illustrates that she is aware of the sexy dress code. However, she implies that sexy dress is for ‘younger girls’ while patrons her age (21 years) and older are no longer interested in performing sexualized club femininities and thus ‘don’t take any notice’, choosing to dress ‘comfortable’.

However, for most participants, ‘going out’ to the Lakeview was understood as special because it was the only place in the Bega Valley where a sexualized style of femininity is naturalized. As Madison explained:

It’s really the only place we have where we can just put on a really short skirt, wear high heels. I mean we just have fun getting dressed up, everything’s so moderated down here that I think it’s important for us to
have a space where we can just wear something a bit sexy. It definitely has its place.
(Facebook, July 2011)

Madison was not atypical in highlighting the importance of the Lakeview as the only commercial venue where the relation comprising this space on a Saturday and Friday night naturalized a ‘sexualized club femininity’. For some participants, this opportunity to dress-up and wear something ‘sexy’ was a source of empowerment because their body is read as ‘sexy’ and attractive. Yet, the women are simultaneously disempowered because they are choosing to conform to hegemonic ideals of sexual attractiveness.

As argued by Leyshon (2005) and Waitt et al. (2011), bodies are always constituted under multiple gazes within a club/pub scene. In addition, bodies dressed to be sexually attractive can always slip into being read as sexually promiscuous. Alert to the complex negotiation between being read by others as sexually attractive or promiscuous Alana (20 years old, UoW student, lives with partner in Merimbula) chose to only ‘dress up a little bit’ when ‘going out’ to the Lakeview:

Yeah you dress up a little bit but not too much cause if you dress up too much I kind of go: ‘She looks nasty’, which is basically what happens cause you get the people that are...that have that reputation [sexually promiscuous], the people that are always very very very dressed up, with very short skirts, so you can just basically tell. So I try to, like if I went to the actual city I’d probably dress up more because it’s the Lakeview I try not to dress up too much, you don’t want to be seen as trying too hard.
(Interview, April 2011)

Alana doesn’t want to dress up too much because she reads such bodies as being sexually promiscuous. Alana is suggesting that ‘trying too hard’ to appear sexually attractive, in the Bega Valley, may result in women being given a ‘reputation’. Alana is made to feel her rurality through her negotiation of the
Lakeview’s dress code because she understands more emphasized versions of femininity are more acceptable in the ‘actual city’. Alana’s narrative highlights the complex set of gazes women’s bodies experience when ‘going out’ to the Lakeview, where it is possible for versions of the sexualized club femininity to be simultaneously read as ‘sexy’ and ‘nasty’ by club patrons.

**Drinking and Drunkenness**

For many participants drunkenness was integral to a night out at the Lakeview. The emotional experiences derived from consuming alcohol were thought by many to heighten the enjoyment of interactions, dancing and sense of place. For instance Tanya (24 years old, accountant, lives with parents in Pambula) discussed how becoming drunk enabled social inhibitions to be overcome when at the Lakeview:

> I enjoy drinking because it puts me in a good mood and kind of gives us all something to bond over and look forward to. It’s also helpful at the Lakeview because it makes everyone relaxed, become more social, excited. I mean, I couldn’t imagine the Lakeview if no one was drinking. No one would dance, or talk or meet anyone. I mean no one would go if they couldn’t drink. I think anyway, I know at least my friends wouldn’t.

(Facebook, August 2011)

For Tanya the pleasures of conversation, dancing, and meeting people would not take place at the Lakeview without alcohol. Alcohol facilitates the ‘togetherness’ of a night out because drunkenness is expressed in terms of forming intimate social relations and shared experiences (Jayne et al. 2010). Tanya was far from alone in her deployment of alcohol as a tool to overcome social inhibitions. Many participants spoke of alcohol enabling them to talk, dance, fit in and meet new people (primarily tourists) at the Lakeview. Indeed in Alana’s friendship circle it was necessary to first become ‘slaughtered’ when arriving at the Lakeview:
Well when we get there we normally, we’re normally all reasonably tipsy and than um, I don’t know we normally um, well one of my friends, I can dance sober, I’ve done it so many times, I’ve never been one of those people that needs to drink to have fun. But one of my friends she has to be slaughtered before she can dance, so we normally always start off by drinking and than she goes: ‘Yep, now I’m ready’ and than we start dancing.

(Interview, April 2011)

Yet while alcohol was a source of pleasure, drunken bodies are out of control, existing within a borderline state that threatens the fragile relationship between inside and outside (Longhurst 2001). At the Lakeview intoxicated vomiting bodies were read as disgusting. This point was illustrated in Madison’s dialogue:

A couple of weekends ago, when the Lakeview was open, we went, she [a friend] just got totally drunk, like really, really drunk and I was having a great night. I was meeting people and everything and I had to sit in the toilet cubicle with her for two hours, clean up all the vomit, all over the floor. I had to clean up the whole bathroom in the Lakeview. It was really bad. And than we got in a taxi to drive home and than she vomited in the taxi. I mean she was like, it was disgusting, like shoes are off and she was just sitting in her own vomit and her dress was falling off and it was just really distasteful.

(Interview, May 2011)

At the Lakeview drunkenness therefore involved a complex negotiation between seeking pleasure and being a site of disgust. Madison’s narrative also highlights the important role of friendship circles when intoxicated bodies are out of control.

Interestingly while alcohol was central to a night out at the Lakeview, experiences of using illicit drugs were absent from participants’ narratives.
Perhaps, as Laura explained, this is because of the objectifying gaze from patrons:

Like I’ve had friends that have gone to Lakeview on Ecstasy everyone thinks like: ‘You’re a fucking loser’ and we just think: ‘It’s Merimbula, what are you doing?’ If you want to do that go to Canberra and have an actually, really good experience instead of being here and being like, this is crap.

(Interview, May 2011)

The use of illicit drugs at the Lakeview is controlled through the objectifying gaze of club patrons. Dominant understandings of the Lakeview as a rural club results in the labeling of individuals who choose to take drugs at this venue as ‘losers’. Following Waitt and Gorman-Murray (2010) such labeling is possible because Laura’s experiences of ‘going out’ in the city of Canberra helps to configure understandings of the Lakeview as a rural club. Laura imagines Canberra as a place where one can have a ‘really good’ drug experience, in comparison returning to the Lakeview for a night out becomes identified as ‘crap’.

Similar to Laura many participants spoke of weekends clubbing in Canberra seeking a ‘really good experience’. For example Lindsay (who moved to Canberra in July) wrote of preferring the experience of clubbing in Canberra compared to Merimbula:

In Canberra there’s options, I mean you can actually go ‘clubbing’, move from one club to another, meet lots of people that you don’t know. In Merimbula there’s one club and that’s it, everyone’s there. It’s not cool, it’s a necessity. You loose yourself in Canberra, you don’t have to say hello to everyone you meet, but you can, no ones judging you from a corner. Going out to the Lakeview is like going to a school dance in a way, everyone knows each other, there’s dodgy DJs and you wouldn’t want to take anything because it would be half way around town before sunrise. I can
just lose myself and go crazy [in Canberra] ... but I would go back to the Lakeview, it’s comforting.
(Email, September 2011)

Lindsay’s dialogue illustrates how the clubs of Canberra offer alternative forms of femininity to be performed because of the apparent anonymity and immensity of options. Following Simmel (1950) possibilities for drug taking, loosing oneself and going crazy become options in the metropolis because urban clubbers become blasé to the actions of others as a result of sensory overload. Thus the objectifying gaze that dominates the Lakeview is imagined as largely absent in the clubs of Canberra. Yet, spending time in Canberra has reconfigured the Lakeview as ‘comforting’ for Lindsay. Lindsay’s narrative illustrates the fluidity of understandings of place, which change in particular spatial and temporal moments.

Music and Dancing

The Lakeview is highly dependent upon dance music and the ability of the music to transform this space after dark. As Wood (2002) argues music has the power to influence an individual’s experience of place. Indeed many participants felt that the style of music played by the DJ largely determined how the night would unfold. For instance Madison preferred local DJs of a similar age (18 years old) because they understand the patrons music preferences:

Madison: Um, I’m not dishing [criticizing] the DJ but there’s this one DJ, DJ Grey, who’s like forty something and they call him DJ Pedo, cause he’s a bit of a pedophile. Seems a bit like a pedophile but it’s just, it’s just really bad, it’s like Katy Perry or Rihanna or Lady Gaga. And my, three guys I went to school with started like a DJ company so they did, they’ve sort of taken over, their doing DJing for all the primary schools and the high schools and they were at the Lakeview for a bit, so. And their really good, cause their our age they know what we like listening to.
Interviewer: They get it?

Madison: They really get it.

Interviewer: So how does the feel of it change when they’re DJing?

Madison: Um, it just sought of, cause you know the people you can ask for songs you want and it’s just sought of, like it’s really friendly. Like you feel like your there with your family. Whereas if it’s a DJ that you don’t know and they’ve come from Canberra and they don’t know how the nights going to go and it’s sort of a bit, this weird feeling.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think it’s interesting how much the music can change the feel of a place.

Madison: Yep, It’s all about the music.

(Interview, May 2011)

Madison’s dialogue echoes Malbon’s (1999) claim that the DJ controls club spaces because the style of music played radically alters the constitution of the crowd. However, the smallness of the Bega Valley also plays an integral role in how Madison experiences the dance floor. Her preference is for similarly aged friends to DJ who ‘know what we are listening to’. Familiarity in this context helped to sustain a sense of ‘family’ on the dance floor. In contrast, Madison dismisses professional DJs from Merimbula who are older because they impose mainstream dance music on the space of the Lakeview. Further, Madison spoke about a ‘weird feeling’ when DJs, from Canberra host a night. The binary distinctions between dance music/mainstream dance music, friend/stranger, younger DJs /older DJs and Canberra (urban)/Merimbula (rural) seems to play an important role for Madison in the construction of feelings of belonging when clubbing at the Lakeview. This mix of binary distinctions largely determined which nights she chose to socialise at this venue.
Madison was not alone in highlighting the importance of the DJ in explaining the preference to go clubbing at the Lakeview. Indeed DJs from particular dance scenes such as house, techno, electro, jungle, drum and base and dub step often drew different crowds to the Lakeview each night. For instance Laura avoided the Lakeview when DJs playing ‘techno crap’ were headlining:

I won’t go to the Lakeview to just listen to some techno crap and not really care. Like I’ll make a thing of going to ‘Stage Fright’, it’s like a special night they [the Lakeview] puts on. They actually get some half decent electro DJs.

(Interview, May 2011)

Yet, the music alone does not create the clubbing atmosphere. Alcohol fuelled dancing was the major expressive form through which the music was understood. For example Stephanie spoke of dancing pleasures in terms of chaos:

For me it’s all about dancing when I go to the Lakeview. I don’t know why. It’s fun, it’s social, we generally all dance in a circle at the start, my friends and I but by the end of the night everyone’s just dancing with everyone. No one cares. When everyone’s dancing it’s exciting, you’re just carried away with the crowd. Forget everything and just go with it. It’s chaotic; everyone’s slaughtered and just enjoying that moment.

(Facebook, May 2011)

At an individual level, Stephanie feels that the pleasure of clubbing is derived from the release of accepted social norms and customs of the ‘civilized’ social spaces of everyday life. Where social distance, inhibitions and conservative country norms of respectability are forgotten, ‘no one cares’. Furthermore, Stephanie exemplifies how clubbing lets her: ‘Forget everything, and just go with it’. These results reflect Malbon’s (1998) findings that claim dancing may be understood as an embodied statement by individuals who claim the realities and pressures of the everyday will not drag them down. At a collective level the
performance of dancing enables heightened social interaction and a sense of belongingness as clubbers become ‘carried away with the crowd’.

Yet, the practice of dancing is not without inequality. Gender norms still play a role in terms of how dance was understood. For example, Alana observed the hesitation of patrons to start dancing at the Lakeview. Alcohol consumption was necessary to initiate this activity with confidence. It is also often expected that women will start the dance, while men only began to dance once women had territorialized the dance floor. It is only at this point in the evening that dance bodies begin to mingle:

I wouldn’t say the guys’ dance as much. The girls do more dance and the guys come along depending on how many girls are actually on the dance floor. We all mingle when we’re together but it takes, I reckon it takes a little bit more for the guys to get on the dance floor. The girls seem to start it. A few times we’ve turned up and there’s no one on the dance floor and than you get three random girls that are absolutely smashed and they start dancing and than everyone slowly starts going, than the boys come on cause all the girls are on. But I don’t think boys would ever start it, I can’t imagine, but who knows.
(Interview, April 2011)

Alana is alert to how clubbing at the Lakeview remains informed by the binary distinction of men/women. Drawing on Butler’s (1990) ideas there is a naturalization of particular practices in the performance of gender. It is up to women to start a practice that is often understood as ‘feminine’ because it requires flexibility, grace and elegant. Alcohol plays an integral role in loosing the strictures of gender that prescribe that ‘real’ country boys don’t dance. The reiterative practice of ‘boys’ lined up along the bar and girls on the dance floor serves to naturalize a ‘commonsense’ conformity of gender among patrons in this club.
6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the ways in which particular styles of femininities are spatially constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced in and through the commercial spaces of Merimbula after dark. The results describe the importance of drinking to become drunk and suggest that the places selected for pre-drinking are closely associated with how economy and culture become entwined. Crucial to pre-drinking was the possibility for carving out a space of intimacy and cementing bonds of friendship through talk. The results also suggest that participants perceive the Lakeview Hotel, as not only a highly gendered and sexualized space through how women prepare their bodies and engage in dance, but also as a paradoxical space. The Lakeview is a site participants both love and hate. On the one hand, this venue enables the performance of highly sexualized club femininities. The pleasures of drunkenness and dressing-up are in part derived from challenging conservative country femininities. On the other hand, women are constantly constituted under multiple gazes and there is always the possibility of being read as sexually promiscuous.

In addition, the embodied statement of dancing is powerful because it allows individuals to challenge the realities and pressures of the everyday. Furthermore, how drunkenness results in bodies breaking their boundaries by throwing-up, configures the Lakeview Hotel as a site of disgust (Lake Spew). Finally, participants constituted a night at the Lakeview as always less than a night out in Canberra, or alternative metropolitan centers, because the metropolis is perceived to offer a range of commercial venues and dance scenes. ‘Going out’ clubbing in Canberra reinforces the rurality of their lives in the Bega Valley. Yet understandings of the Lakeview as less than urban clubs are fluid, changing in particular temporal and spatial moments. The following chapter turns to the conclusion, which identifies how the aims of this thesis have been addressed and illustrates the contribution this research has made to understanding the importance of cultural sustainability in rural and regional areas. Areas for future research will also be suggested.
Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter revisits the aims of the thesis, summarizes the key findings and outlines a future research agenda employing the concept of cultural sustainability. The concept of cultural sustainability is crucial to understanding those factors, which enable individuals to reside in particular places and make sense of their lives beyond the conventional framings of economic, environmental and social sustainability. The concept of cultural sustainability seeks to investigate how residents make sense of their life through spaces that comprise ‘the economy’, ‘the environment’ and various ‘social scenes’. In this context, the objective of the present study was to explore cultural sustainability in regional Australia through one practice; ‘going out’. Specific attention in this project was given to how young women talked about their ‘going out’ practices in the Bega Valley, New South Wales, Australia.

The first aim was to situate the contribution of this project within the wider field of rural geography. Addressing this aim highlighted the importance of the ‘cultural turn’ for rural geography. The significance of the ‘cultural turn’ was illustrated through challenging understandings of the ‘rural’, ‘farmers’, ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ as pre-given categories and thinking along the ideas of performativity and lived experiences. Furthermore, the ‘cultural turn’ challenged bounded ideas of the rural and dualist thinking of urban/rural, and inspired thought along the lines of always unfolding networks, connections and flows. To build on these ideas and to address the second aim of this thesis, which was to develop a spatial conceptualization of young women’s ‘going out’ practices, this thesis applied three inter-related concepts: Massey’s (2005) ‘progressive sense of place’, Probyn’s (2003) ‘spatial imperative of subjectivity’ and Valentine’s (2007) ‘intersectionality’. Thinking spatially drew attention to how young women sustain a sense of self within particular commercial venues after dark, and
provided insight into where and when particular femininities are allowed to fluoresce.

The third aim was to develop a methodology that provided rigorous and meaningful insights into participants’ ‘going out’ practices, despite being some 400 kilometers apart for most of the project. This aim was addressed through a number of strategies: the deployment of Baxter and Eyles’ (1997) criteria for rigour; a non-prescriptive mixed methodology; diverse recruitment strategies; and sustaining researcher-participant relationships through email and social networking sites. These methods successfully took the physical distance out of doing research concerned with establishing rapport between researcher and participant. However, it is important to acknowledge that ethical dilemmas sometimes arose because the distinction between ‘friend’ and ‘researcher’ often became blurred. Hence, participants were always asked about the incorporation of material into the thesis.

The final three aims of the thesis were addressed over three discussion chapters. Chapter 4 investigated the interplay between mobility, bodies, rurality and ‘going out’ at night, and illustrated how participants’ understanding of rurality is constituted through mobility. Chapter 4 argued that car mobility is imperative to young women’s nights out in the Bega Valley. This is due to the immense distances between settlements, limited public transport, the huge expense of taxi services and the necessity of arriving with particular styles of hair, clothing and make-up. However, driving after dark was not without dangers. Participants talked about a number of different threats including: forms of formal governance, the loss of the trust of friendship and, the possibility of colliding with wildlife. How participants in this study negotiated these perceived threats was integral to explaining preferences concerning the when and where of ‘going out’.

Chapters 5 and 6 examined how, when ‘going out’ after dark, particular styles of femininity are spatially constructed, performed, negotiated and reproduced in and through the commercial spaces of Bega and Merimbula. Two spatially
constituted ‘going out’ styles of femininity were identified: ‘conservative country femininity’ and ‘sexy metropolitan club femininity’. To belong in the heterosexual pub spaces of Bega, young women spoke of conforming to the ‘conservative country femininity’, underpinned by localism, heterosexuality, self-management of alcohol consumption and dressing casually, yet smart. Disruption of this naturalized femininity resulted in harsh judgment. In contrast, participants talked about girls nights out in Merimbula in ways that challenged the performance of a conservative country femininity, through possibilities of performing a ‘sexy metropolitan club femininity’, constituted by drunkenness, dressing-up and casual (hetero)sexual encounters.

Chapters 5 and 6 also highlighted the different ways in which rurality was constituted through thinking spatially about young women’s ‘going out’ practices. Two important results emerged. First is the diversity of ‘scenes’ within the Bega Valley with participants making, or ‘going out’ to socialise at events that most strongly resonated with their individual and collective identities. ‘Going out’ scenes for young women include: house parties, bush parties, clubbing, ‘alternative’ art/music scenes and the pub scene. Yet, while there is a diversity of ‘scenes’ in the Bega Valley, participants often reconfigured understandings of rural and regional Australia as lacking in comparison to the range of commercial venues and dance scenes offered in metropolitan centres. Some participants spoke of their clubbing experience in Merimbula as always less than an urban clubbing experience. One way rurality in the Bega Valley was constituted was through the lack of choice in ‘going out’ for a night of clubbing at the Lakeview. Another way rurality was constituted through ‘going out’ practices was a sense of always trying to ‘fit in’ to pre-existing social hierarchies and networks. A ‘night-out’ at the pub often resulted in a heightened sense of rurality because with living in a country town there was always the constant surveillance from friends-of-friends. This constant surveillance often resulted in participants reflecting on where ‘respectable’ young women ought to be seen and behave during a ‘night out’. This constant surveillance during a ‘night out’ in the commercial venues also often resulted in people speaking about their preference for bush parties, house parties and travelling to Canberra.
7.1 Future Research

Commercial venues are only one of many types of spaces that sustain the ‘going out’ practices of participants. One future research agenda may seek to explore the importance of non-commercial ‘going out’ places, specifically those focusing around ‘the house as home’ and ‘the bush’. In this study the house as home was particularly important for participants in sustaining friendship networks because it provided an intimate space away from the judgmental gaze permeating commercial venues. The function of the house as home changed when participants had children aged less than five years old because it allowed participants to upkeep the domestic responsibilities of mothering, while simultaneously maintaining a social life. ‘The bush’ was talked about in terms of its potential to hold parties away from the surveillance of police. Participants spoke about this space as offering possibilities for underage drinking and troubling boundaries of respectable femininities. Future research would benefit from understanding how ‘the house as home’ and ‘the bush’ allow a women’s sense of self to fluoresce and consider how alternative forms of surveillance may play out in these spaces.

A second future research agenda could focus on the importance of return journeys from metropolitan areas. Participants in this project spoke about irregular nights out to Canberra when explaining why young women continue to live in the Bega Valley. Furthermore, return journeys to major annual events held in metropolitan centres appear to be understood as a ‘right of passage’ - for example the Big Day Out, held each January in Sydney. The importance young women place on return journeys highlights the value of ideas that point to space and scale as always relational and fluid rather than hierarchical and bounded.

A third future research agenda could explore online worlds, such as the role of social networking sites, blogging (an online journal intended for public consumption) and Tumblr (variation of a blog, favoring short form mixed media posts). Geographers rarely give explicit attention to the intersection of rurality, young people and their use of the Internet. However, the Internet enables space
and time to collapse, resulting in possibilities for rural and regional geographies to be reconfigured (Graham & Marvin 1996). For this reason future research may seek to better understand the role of online worlds when considering the everyday cultural experiences of individuals living beyond the metropolis. Particular attention could be given to explore the use of Tumblr and blogs that confirm existing face-to-face friendships rather than building ‘new’ friendship circles at a distance.

A fourth future research agenda may seek to address specifically the ‘going out’ practices of Aboriginal Australians in country towns. This could provide insight into how different social groups negotiate place. Such a project would require addressing the historical weight of racism, marginalization and dispossession. Crucially it would be necessary to be mindful of cultural protocols when working with Aboriginal Australians, and the importance of movement in the lives of some Aboriginal Australians.

A fifth, more immediate agenda is research into the application of the concept of cultural sustainability for incorporation into policies of local, state and federal government agencies (for example the Bega Valley Shire Social Plan, NSW Government Transport, Roads and Traffic Authority and the federal governments Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities). To reiterate, the concept provides insights into how people make sense of places, cars, roads, plants and animals that sustain individual and collective identities. A cultural sustainability approach points to the importance of policies that conceptualize ‘regional’ and ‘rural’ places as comprised of multiple ongoing interconnections and flows, rather than pre-existing and bounded entities.
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Sage Publications.


Sage.


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Appendix A  Consent Form

Consent Form

Young Women: Out and About in the Bega Valley

Anna de Jong, Gordon Waitt
School of Earth and Environmental Science, Faculty of Science

I have been given information about ‘Young Women: Out and About in the Bega Valley’. I have had an opportunity to discuss the research project with Anna de Jong who is conducting this research through the University of Wollongong. At this time I have asked any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research. I understand that participating begins with the creation of a Google map and a conversation style interview for around 30 minutes to one hour. And, that I may choose to continue to participate through creating a diary about my experiences of ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary; I am free to withdraw from this research at any time. My withdrawal from the project will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about this research, I can contact Dr Gordon Waitt (02 4221 3684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au). If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

By ticking the following list of activities and signing below I am indicating my consent to participate:

☐ Mapping responses to three questions on a Google map,
  • ‘Where are the places you ‘go out’ to when socialising in the Bega Valley?’
  • ‘Where are the places you would like to ‘go out’ to in the Bega Valley?’ and
  • ‘Where are the places you avoid when ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley?’

☐ A conversation style interview of 30 minutes to 1 hour held in a convenient place to be audio-taped by the researcher for later transcription and analysis

☐ To be provided with a copy of the transcript of my conversation for checking

☐ Creating a written, video or photo diary about your experiences of ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley:

By ticking one of the following boxes I am indicated by consent to:

☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of my given name.

☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of a pseudonym.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for an Honours thesis, scholarly publications, conference presentations and reports, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

........................................................................
Date

........................................................................

Name (please print)

........................................................................

Terms and conditions:
I understand that my personal particulars will be stored by Gordon Waitt, University of Wollongong, for a minimum of five years for record keeping and administrative purposes only and will not be supplied to any other person or organization for any other purpose.
Appendix B    Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet
Young Women: Out and About in the Bega Valley

The Project: Where do young women living in the Bega Valley go to have fun, be themselves and make friends? This project hopes to identify the challenges and frustrations young women face in ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley and the creativity involved in regards to how such issues are dealt with. The project aim is to inform local decision makers and support services through a better understanding of the ‘going out’ practices of young women in the Bega Valley.

The Focus: The focus of this project is the social lives of young women in the Bega Valley, and where they go to have fun, make friends and socialize. The key questions driving this project are: Where do young women normally go out in the Bega Valley to have fun, make friends and socialise? Where are the places young women avoid in the Bega Valley when ‘going out’? Where are the places young women would like to go out in the Bega Valley, but don’t?

What you will be asked to do: Participating in this project involves creating a Google map of the important places when you go out in the Bega Valley, a conversation around the places on your maps that will be audio-taped and transcribed, and, if you wish, to create a diary detailing a night out to explore the where, what, why and how you negotiate ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley.

You are invited to request a copy of the transcript, and to submit edits/revisions. You will also be asked if you wish to be given a pseudonym as direct quotations from the Google Map exercise, interview and diary may be used in scholarly publications.

Confidentiality will be maintained in all publications and presentations on the research unless you indicate in the consent form that you are willing to be identified. However, given the size of social networks in the Bega Valley confidentiality can not be guaranteed. Participants are reminded that your responses may still be identifiable by someone living within the Bega Valley, even with the use of a pseudonym. Further, if during the project participants disclose facts about illegal activities then the researcher’s duty of confidentiality is overridden by the public duty to disclose to the police the facts about felonies.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation and any data that you have provided within a reasonable time frame for the project. In this instance this would normally be around two months after the transcription of the interview. Withdrawal from the project will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

The Project Organizer: This project is funded by Federal Government through the Australian Research Council as a Discovery Project. If you have any enquiries about the research please contact: Dr Gordon Waitt (02 4221 3684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au) or Anna de Jong (0431675396; aldj998@uowmail.edu.au). This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
Appendix C  Contact Details

In the unlikely circumstances of participants displaying emotional distress when sharing their lived experiences of ‘going out’, or illustrate that they have put themselves at risk through their ‘going out’ narratives, the following information and telephone numbers for counselling facilities that they may require will be provided. The following information will be available at each interview;

Useful Services for Young Women in the Bega Valley

Websites:

Telephone Contacts
Alcohol and Drug Referral Line: 1800 809 423
Bega Women’s Health Centre: (02) 649 296 20
Bega Women’s Refuge: (02) 649 235 97
Sexual Health Clinic: 1300 139 887
Appendix D  Ethics Approval

INITIAL APPLICATION APPROVAL
In reply please quote: VY21 HE11/152
Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 4457

7 April 2011

A/Prof Gordon Waitt
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Bld 41.G29
University of Wollongong

Dear Associate Professor Waitt,
I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved.

Suggestion:
In the interest of protecting/safeguarding the researcher, Anna, the committee suggests that she shouldn’t provide her mobile number to the Bega community.

Ethics Number: HE11/152
Project Title: Young Women: Out and About in the Bega Valley
Researchers: A/Prof Gordon Waitt, Ms Anna de Jong
Approval Date: 7 April 2011
Expiry Date: 6 April 2012

This certificate relates to the research protocol submitted in your original application. The University of Wollongong/SESIAHS HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the National Statement and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document. As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

You are also required to complete monitoring reports annually and at the end of your project. These reports are sent out approximately 6 weeks prior to the date your ethics approval expires. The reports must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

[Name]
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Research Services Office  University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone: +61 2 4221 3386  Facsimile: +61 2 4221 4338
research_services@uow.edu.au  www.uow.edu.au/research

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# Appendix E  Rigour in Qualitative Research, Criteria and Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Transferability</th>
<th>Dependability</th>
<th>Confirmability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial – Literature Review: Review of relevant literature to place project into context</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial – Purposeful Sampling: Aim to acquire information rich cases in a small time frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial - Targeted Sampling: Aim to recruit a diversity of young women</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial – Formal Ethical Considerations: Ethics application submitted to ethics committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing – Ethical Considerations: Continuously consider ethical implications in relation to both the participants and myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing - Field Diary &amp; Thick Description: Description of study context and how constructs are developed throughout the research process</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing – Reflexivity: Awareness of ones positionality in the research process</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing – Prolonged Engagement: Mixed methodology to build a rapport between the researched and the researcher; including Google map, interview and diary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data – Triangulation: Use of multiple data sources; including Google maps, interviews, diaries, Facebook web pages and email</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data – Inter-textuality: Identifying linkages between meanings and discourses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data - Member Checking: Interpretations from interviews and diaries checked with informants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data – Mechanically Recorded Data: Interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Baxter and Eyles 1997
Appendix F  Group One, Targeted Sampling Recruitment Process

Emailed Gabrielle Powers at the Bega Women's Resource Centre (WRC). Gabrielle agreed to help with recruitment.

Phone call with Gabrielle to organize information session at WRC during Youth Week and presentations at Youth Week events. Powers also passed on numbers of possible contacts.

Phoned Auswide Projects Merimbula, ‘Reconnect’ Merimbula and Campbell Page Eden
Two participants from Auswide Projects expressed interest, Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form emailed

Media release advertising information session at WRC was emailed to:
Bega District News (article in paper)
Radio 2EC and ABC South East (radio segments)
Bega High School
Bega Cheese Factory
Bega Tafe

Presentation at Youth Week gallery opening, Spiral Gallery Bega
Six participants expressed interest and PIS and Consent Forms were emailed. Google Map exercise completed online

Information session at WRC; six participants expressed interest. PIS and Consent Forms were handed out, Google Map exercise completed online

Posters outlining project were placed on community notice boards in the Bega Valley including: Bermagui, Tathra, Eden, Candelo, Bega
Four participants emailed me expressing their interest, PIS and Consent Forms emailed, Google Map exercise completed online

Tried arranging interviews through calls, phone messages, email and Facebook. Six young women either did not reply, or stated they were too busy to participate. Twelve interviews organized with Group One.

Once the interviews had been completed respondents were given the opportunity to participate in the dairy exercise

Wait one week and remind participants of the diary exercise.
Four participates from Group One participated in the diary exercise
Appendix G  Group Two, Snowball Sampling Recruitment Process

Approached a friend/work colleague (originally from Bega Valley) to find out if she knew anyone who might be interested. It was mentioned that her sister and friends would be interested.

Contacted friends sister who expressed interest and mentioned she would ask her friends

Nine friends expressed initial interest. Participant Information Sheets (PIS) and Consent Forms sent out via Facebook and email

Mentioned to a friend that I was recruiting participants in the Bega Valley. Friend knew of a young woman, working in the Bega Valley

Contacted friend who expressed interest in the research. PIS was emailed and interview conducted, Google map exercise completed online

Upon contacting the nine young women, one had moved to Melbourne, another was away and one was too busy. Interviews and Google Map exercise organized by phone and Facebook with the remaining six young women

Once the eleven interviews from Group Two had been completed, respondents were given the opportunity to participate in the dairy exercise

Wait one week and remind participants of the diary exercise.
One participate from Group Two participated in the diary exercise

Discovered a friend had family living in Tathra, one being a young woman. Visited her at work upon arriving in Bega (18/04/11) interview was arranged, PIS and Consent From provided. Google Map exercise complete online

Each respondent was asked if they knew of any potential participants, three more young women were recruited. Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms emailed, interviews conducted and Google map exercise completed online
## Appendix H  Participants’ Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Study/Work</th>
<th>Relation Status</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Previous Residence</th>
<th>Time in Bega Valley</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hazel Baldwin</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Shop Ass. (FT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Maitland</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Gap year Work (PT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Brogo region</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Share with mother - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallee Berry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Gap year Waitress (PT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Rural Bega</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Blacker</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>UOW - 2011</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>North Bega</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Share with parents - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess Brunton</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>UOW - 2011 Casual work</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Tathra</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Since the age of five</td>
<td>Share with parents - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Gibbs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Student (FT) Shop Ass. (PT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Candelo</td>
<td>Sydney then Tura Beach</td>
<td>Since early high school</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariane Llyod-Pitty</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>UOW - 2011</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>North Bega</td>
<td>Bega Valley</td>
<td>Since the age of five</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Phillips</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Gap year Dance (PT) Shop Ass. (PT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Tura Beach</td>
<td>Merimbula</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joccooa Rogers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Real Estate (FT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Farm Bega N.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe Darling</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Gap year travel Receptionist + Waitperson</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Tathra</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Bowen</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Travel Agency Bega (FT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Beef farm Bega region</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Jesina</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Waitperson (PT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Wolumla, Bega Region</td>
<td>N. Zealand, Pambula</td>
<td>Ten years</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FT = Full time; PT = Part time; Shop Ass. = Shop Assistant; UOW – 2011 = Commencing study at the University of Wollongong in 2011*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Study/Work</th>
<th>Married Status</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Previous Residence</th>
<th>Time in Bega Valley</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elouise Russell</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Shop Ass. (FT) Waitress (PT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Tathra</td>
<td>Bermagui</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana Broder</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Studying (PT) Medical Assistant (PT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Merimbula</td>
<td>Eden</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Smith</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Auswide Projects Finance (PT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Pambula</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Ford</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Auswide Projects (FT)</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td>Tura Beach</td>
<td>Figtree, Pambula</td>
<td>Nearly entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay Ellis</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Radio Host</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>Sutherland, Tathra</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alix Nunn</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Chef (PT) Seeking employment</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - motorbike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Chapmen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Accountant (PT) Shop Ass. (PT)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Pambula</td>
<td>Melbourne, Canberra for study</td>
<td>Originally from Pambula</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Beattie</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Radiographer (FT)</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Tathra</td>
<td>Wollongong</td>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah-Jane de la Motte</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Online jewelry Volunteering</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>Bermagui</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car and motorbike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Nicol</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>History teacher</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Pambula Beach</td>
<td>Tilba, Sydney</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Cullen</td>
<td>Late 20's</td>
<td>Waitperson</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Tantwangalo</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>Own - car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FT = Full time; PT = Part time; Shop Ass. = Shop Assistant
### Appendix I  Comparison of Participants with Relevant Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Bega Valley* (%)</th>
<th>Participants (n=23) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Marriage</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De facto living together</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Household Member</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent living with parents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Completed</th>
<th>Bega Valley* (%)</th>
<th>Participants (n=23) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Degree</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aged 20-29 (%)</th>
<th>Aged 17-29 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women with Children</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Females</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics Data, 2006*
### Appendix J  Field Work Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Purpose of Field Work</th>
<th>Length of Stay (Days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recruitment of participants</td>
<td>Seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>First round of interviews</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Second round of interviews</td>
<td>Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Final round of interviews, follow-up interviews and the handing out of physical diaries</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix K  Involvement of Participants in Non-Prescriptive Methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Diary Record</th>
<th>Interview One</th>
<th>Interview Two</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Google Map</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hazel Baldwin</td>
<td>Asked via email two times</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Maitland</td>
<td>Moved from area</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallee Berry</td>
<td>Asked via Facebook two times</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Blacker</td>
<td>Moved from area</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess Brunton</td>
<td>Moved from area</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Gibbs</td>
<td>✓ Written and photographic Diary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariane Llyod-Pitty</td>
<td>Moved from area</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Phillips</td>
<td>✓ Electronic Diary via Facebook</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joccoca Rogers</td>
<td>Asked via email and text</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe Darling</td>
<td>Travelling overseas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Bowen</td>
<td>Asked via email and face to face</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Jesina</td>
<td>Asked face to face and via text</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elouise Russell</td>
<td>Asked face to face and via Facebook</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana Broder</td>
<td>Asked via email and face to face</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Smith</td>
<td>✓ Written Diary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Ford</td>
<td>Asked face to face and via email</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay Ellis</td>
<td>Asked two times via email and text message</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alix Nunn</td>
<td>✓ Written Diary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Chapman</td>
<td>Asked via email two times</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Beattie</td>
<td>✓ Written Diary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah-Jane de la Motte</td>
<td>Asked via email two times</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Nicol</td>
<td>Too busy at this time</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Cullen</td>
<td>Asked face to face, email and text</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ = completed; Facebook™ is a Social Network Internet Website; Google Map™ is a location mapping website
Appendix L  Google Map Example

Participant: Jessica Smith

Question 1: Where are the places you go to make friends and socialise in the Bega Valley?
Question 2: Where are the places you avoid when socialising in the Bega Valley?

Key:
Red marker: places avoided when socialising
Green marker: places chosen when socialising
Blue marker: places participant would like to go, but do not

Source: Google Maps
Appendix M  Interview Schedule

– semi structured, conversational

Section One: The participant’s background in the Bega Valley

Tell me about how you are living in the Bega Valley?

- how long have you lived in the Bega Valley?
- do you plan on moving, why/why not?
- what do you do in your spare time?
- what is your vocation?

Section Two: Out and About in the Bega Valley

Questions about places – incorporate Google map from stage one of project into conversation

Tell me about the places you go to have fun and make friends in the Bega Valley?
What do you like about these places?
What do you dislike about these places?
How do you get to and from these places?
Who do you go with? Who do you meet?
- how do you feel when you’re at particular places
- how do you act
- what sorts of people go there
- role of alcohol in ‘going out’
- do you ever create venues?

Tell me about the places you avoid going to socialise in the Bega Valley.
What do you dislike about these places?
How do you feel when you’re at these places?
What sorts of people go to these places?
Tell me about the places you would like to go in the Bega Valley – but can’t?
Why would like to go to these places?
What stops you going?
What surprises them about ‘going out’ in the Bega Valley
Tell me more about the challenges of having a social life in the Bega valley, e.g. car dependency, boredom, lack of activities.

Section Three: Social Network Sites

Tell me more about the importance of social network sites in ‘going out’ and about – the role they play in maintaining a social life
- do you ever prefer to sometimes stay home? If yes, what do you do at home?

Section Four: An opportunity for the participant to raise issues at the end

We have spoken about a number of places and associated issues for young women sustaining a social life in the Bega Valley – is there anything you would like to add?