

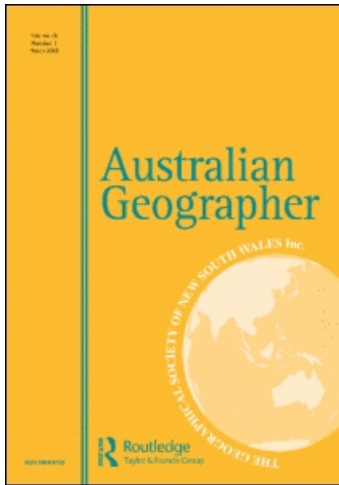
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### 'Talking Shit over a Brew after a Good Session with your Mates': surfing, space and masculinity

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# *‘Talking Shit over a Brew after a Good Session with your Mates’: surfing, space and masculinity*

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**ABSTRACT** *In this paper we critically engage with the masculinities of a group of young men who surf shortboards by investigating their love of surfing at breaks they have made their own. The aim of our paper is to reveal the fluid qualities of surfing masculinities by examining how surfing subjectivities are bound up with the spatial, discursive and the embodied. Becoming a ‘local’, and a man, at surf-breaks requires this group sharing the pleasures and pain of producing themselves as surfers. We demonstrate how emotions of pride and shame within the bonds of mateship play a crucial role in maintaining the culturally valued form of masculinity. We conclude how thinking spatially is helpful in underscoring the variability found in surfing masculinities at different breaks and conditions.*

**KEY WORDS** *Surfing; masculinities; ethnography; emotions; Illawarra.*

## **Introduction**

Our title is drawn from Daniel, one young man who consented to participate in our project, ‘Surfing the Illawarra’. For Daniel, in part the pleasure of surfing is sharing stories afterwards with male friends about what surfing feels like for him. Daniel, like many men surfing shortboards, are bonded together in small groups by the intimate ritual bonds of mateship through their love of surfing, and their shared knowledge, language, experiences and codes at particular breaks. As Kimmel (1994) argues, men’s lives are informed by relationships between men. Surfing places such as The Farm and Cowries are vital to Daniel and his mates. It is here where they can perform a particular style of masculinity, in front of, and confirmed by, other men. At The Farm and Cowries they consider themselves not only men but also ‘local’, articulated in terms of ownership over the break and enacted through surfing manoeuvres designed to defend ‘their’ waves. Both breaks are well known amongst most shortboard riders and are regularly reported in popular surfing magazines such as *Tracks* and *Waves* for their longer faced, barrelling waves, that enables—under the correct conditions—riding the wave-face while the wave-lip falls over the surfer (tube rides). Surfing with male friends at these breaks, and

talking about it afterwards, is an integral part of what enables Daniel to see himself, and to be seen by others, as both a man and a surfer.

Much has been written on surfing (Ford & Brown 2006) and myths of the Australian beach (Dutton 1985; Huntsman 2001). However, despite the predominance of men surfing in Australia, little research has examined the relations between surfing and masculinity. Notable exceptions include the work by Booth (2001, 2004) that exposes a plurality of Australian surfing masculinities, including the soul-searcher, rebel and clean-cut professional. How individuals and generations of men and women are positioned differently within relationships, social networks, professional organisations, technologies and commerce of surfing means that there is no universal surfer. Stedman's (1997) and Henderson's (2001) media analysis illustrates how *Tracks* magazine helps constitute the dominant surfing masculinity amongst young people as the 'anti-hero', 'yobbo' and 'rebel'. This pitch relies upon conventional privileging of ideas of Australian masculinity as white, confident, courageous, able-bodied, athletic, virile and heterosexual. As McGloin (2005) argues, the homosocial bonds of surfing sit very comfortably in white-settler Australian colonial and sexist historiographies. Representing the normative expression of Australian masculinity, they inherit 'the role of guardians of the Australian beach' (Evers 2007, p. 2). In short, narratives about the male surfer reveal a privileged construction of masculinity. Promoted as national leisure activity, surfing a shortboard is a significant means of ideologically promoting conventional ideas of a white-settler Australian masculinity. Enforcement of these conservative norms is most recently illustrated through the enhanced notoriety of the Braboys, a group of men who take their name from Maroubra, Sydney, and then police their claims of ownership over the surf-breaks of this suburb. The masculinity performed by the Braboys is imitated through language, ritualised tattooing, physical domination of surf-breaks, aggression, sexism, racism and homophobia (Evers 2004).

The aim of this article is to examine the emotional-spatial construction of masculinities. In other words, we investigate the ways in which a group of young men fulfil their longing to become surfers, and express their sense of belonging in the surf. Rather than just assuming that the gender inequalities found in the Australian surf are preconfigured by the relationships of power of patriarchal masculinity, we provide a spatial and embodied analysis through which masculinities are negotiated and legitimated. Drawing on Probyn's (2003) ideas of unstable, negotiated, fluid, spatial and emotionally articulated subjectivities, we demonstrate that what is important in doing masculinity for many young men who surf together is how they feel and present themselves as capable and 'in control'. We argue that men who surf together validate and develop an emotional history of their masculinity as surfers through becoming 'locals', and bonding practices including praising and shaming.

To achieve our aim, the paper begins by reviewing the key theoretical moves that enable us to reframe the connections between surfing, masculinity and the body through thinking spatially. Acknowledging that subjectivities are always constituted *in situ*, and therefore surfing masculinities vary temporally and spatially from break to break, time of day, climatic and ocean conditions, relationships with other surfers, surfboard, age, experience, ability, ethnicity and gender, we focus on the desires and lived surfing experiences of one group of 20-year-old heterosexual men bonded together by mateship. These bonds are fashioned at the breaks of Cowries,

and The Farm, Shellharbour, some 80 km south of Sydney (see Figure 1). We discuss how a range of methods was deployed with these seven men. Next, drawing from our grounded context of encounter we draw key themes—first relating to the bodily desires brought to the surf, before then turning to those emerging from the lived experience. We conclude, from our grounded study, that there is always potential for surfing masculinities to be reconfigured each time a surfer enters a break. Yet within the male–male social ordering of this group of 20-year-old men there seems little space at Cowries and The Farm for the reconfiguration of surfing masculinity because of the ways in which localism, emotions, heterosexuality, shortboards and big, barrelling waves are entwined.

**Grounding and embodying masculinity**

Gender is conventionally understood within the surfing literature as an attribute ascribed by patriarchy (Wheaton 2004; Ford & Brown 2006). On this account, the marginalisation between groups of men and gendered exclusions of surfing draw specifically on Connell’s (1995, p. 77) concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, which he defines as: ‘the configuration of gender practice which embodied the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’. Within the Australian surf, how gender practices are unequally configured



Cowries reef-break  
Source: Andrew Warren



The Farm beach-break  
Source: Andrew Warren

FIGURE 1. Location and illustration of the surf-breaks of Cowries and The Farm.

can be attributed to how particular styles of masculinity are culturally valued externally by national institutions and commercial organisations, while simultaneously internal power relationships subordinate 'alternative' expression of masculinity and all expression of femininity. In the Australian surf, 'superior' ways of being a male are associated with being young, white, able-bodied, and having self-assurance, physical strength, heterosexual potency and control. As Ford and Brown (2006), Booth (2001) and Evers (2004) demonstrate, surfers create hierarchies amongst themselves. Some men gain social status by remaining complicit with the hierarchy. Those men who fail to conform to hegemonic ideas are ascribed as being deficient and subordinate. For example, in the context of conducting this research, men surfing body boards were described by shortboard surfers as 'failed men'. In sum, through processes of domination, subordination, institutional authorisation and complicity, particular styles of masculinity become hegemonic in the surf, having power through defining what is naturalised as 'normal' attributes of being male.

While we recognise the importance of heteropatriarchy in fashioning Australian surf spaces, proceeding exclusively from this point reflects a fixed subjectivity in which all men who surf are positioned as all powerful and superior in relation to women surfers and non-heterosexual men. Rather than assuming that surfing masculinities can be theorised exclusively within universal terms of patriarchal analysis, we turn to the influential work of Probyn (2003, p. 290) who calls our attention to the lived experiences of surfers through her concept of the 'spatial imperative of subjectivity'. First, as Probyn (2003, p. 298) has argued eloquently, subjectivity and space are co-constituted: 'In space, we orient ourselves and are oriented.' Furthermore, Probyn demands a rethinking of subjectivity not only *in situ* but also through the sensual body. The fluidity of subjectivities *in situ* points towards an understanding of power as productive rather than solely in terms of control or superiority. Rather than subjectivities being structurally defined within a heteropatriarchal gender order they are understood to be fluid and connected with space through the various points of contact that attract, or repel, in both visceral and symbolic ways. Probyn's notion of the spatial imperative of subjectivity also gives way to an idea that locates masculinity within and between embodiment, desires, practices and feelings of surfing. Evers (2004, 2006) has already ably put these ideas to excellent use to explore the fluid and embodied masculinities of surfers. Evers demonstrates the types of relational points of disconnection/connection that Probyn is thinking of, through demonstrating an appreciation of the situatedness, fluidity and contextual underpinning of how masculinity plays out at particular surf-breaks.

Second, Probyn's conceptual framing allows close attention to the *feelings* of those who express a love of surfing to play a crucial role in fixing and bounding spatialities of the surf. Embodied experiences of space and self are necessarily inflected by emotions. Such ideas help illuminate how circumstances, desires, acts and experiences are all essential to understanding how space inhabits the bodies of surfers and surfers inhabit space. Again, Evers (2006) discusses what it feels like to do surfing masculinity. He argues that when attention turns to experiencing the doing of surfing masculinity it becomes impossible to separate the surfing body from the wave. Feelings derived from the habitual practices of surfing, besides being conceptualised as integral to both affirming/denying surfing masculinities, are also crucial to the multiple processes of boundary making that operate to

territorialise surf-breaks by helping to forge commonalities among, and differences between, various groups of surfers. As Preston-Whyte (2002) acknowledges, the process by which groups of surfers begin to lay claims to breaks relies upon an embodied knowledge of how a wave will break—a territorialising process that may spill over onto the shore, illustrated through graffiti tabs declaring ‘Locals Only’ (Evers 2007).

### **Surfing fieldwork and methods: auto-ethnography, sketches, photo-diaries, diaries and video-narratives**

Feminist geographers initiated discussion of the gendered dimensions of fieldwork (Katz 1994), and demonstrated the importance of reflexive gendered positionalities (Nast 1994). Vanderbeck (2005) argues that many male researchers conform to, rather than confront, the dominant ideas of ‘manliness’ by adopting particular tactics to enhance their status. For this project, Andrew did not have to deploy strategies to legitimise his masculine credentials. Andrew already conformed to the expected embodied gendered norms of the surf-breaks as a white, athletic, able-bodied, strong and confident, 20-year-old man. Instead, Andrew was confronted by how his style of masculinity, embedded him within locally understood systems of social hierarchies, shaped the project. On the one hand, at the break, the conventionality of his surfing masculinity operated to exclude the participation of women, who were immediately suspicious of his approach to participate in ‘research’. On the other hand, the pre-existing credibility of his masculinity within his surfing fraternity opened-up opportunities for participation of a group of men who would otherwise most likely not have consented to participate. Surfers can be highly sceptical of ‘research’ and ‘outsiders’ as well as demanding respect of surfing ability.

This project in part relies upon the writing styles of an auto-ethnography completed by Andrew. Fiske (1990, p. 90) outlines the advantage of auto-ethnography in terms of opening ‘up the realm of the interior and the personal, and to articulate that which, in the practices of everyday life, lies below any conscious articulation’. Andrew’s body already is a vast reservoir of ‘local knowledge’, being familiar with how feelings are an integral part of the ongoing process of how subjectivities are negotiated at Cowries and The Farm. Integral to interpreting masculinity in terms of the becoming-of-the-now through the break is Andrew’s familiarity with the body language of his mates and meanings, habits and routines.

Alongside the auto-ethnography, this project required trialling a number of methods. One-off semi-structured interviews were deemed inadequate to explore a spatialised understanding of the unfolding of being-in-the-now. Instead, over a 6 month period, with the consent of his seven friends, a range of techniques were used including: sketches, diaries, photo-diaries and video-narratives of surf sessions. Like other male-centred cultures, amongst men who surf there is a well-developed culture of storytelling (see Evans 2005). All participants refer to and told ‘surf warries’: heroic, war-like stories about surviving a ‘wipe out’ or a shark attack; and some told ‘sex warries’: meticulous stories of their heterosexual encounters and prowess. In contrast, participants had difficulty articulating any emotions that showed them to be not ‘man enough’. Only by working alongside these surfers before, during and after a surf session did this allow us to develop a deeper insight

into the ways in which surfing masculinities are negotiated under the very particular circumstances of the surf-break. A range of methods was used to interpret their sketches, diaries and interviews, including content, narrative and discourse analysis guided by Moss (2002), Rose (2001) and Waitt (2005).

### **Bodily desires brought by surfers to Cowries and The Farm**

In this section we explore the bodily desires brought to the surf-breaks. Participants' stories, diaries, sketches and photographs all subscribe to surfing as a quest to ride the 'perfect wave', described as 'big' (around 12 ft), 'hollow' and 'barrelling' (see Figure 2). As outlined by Ford and Brown (2006), professional 'big-wave' riding has recently rescripted the style of surfing masculinity within the mould of the aggressive rebel. As Mark explains, he subscribes to this refashioned identity:

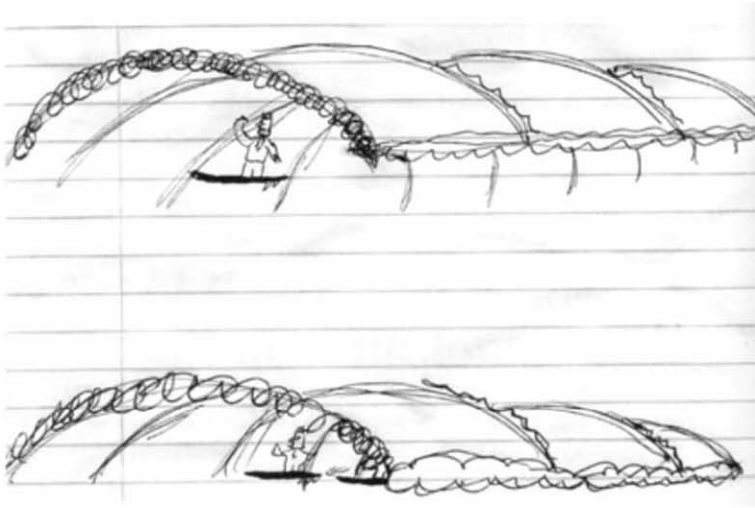
Yeah, for me my ideas of surfing are just [pauses], yeah they're from riding my own waves and then, you know, watching surfers like Kelly [Slater] on TV surfing in Tahiti or Hawaii in perfect tubes. You see it in *Tracks* and in videos as well, [pauses] the waves are always massive with big barrels [curls his arm] and ah, yeah, you know I guess that's what my idea of surfing is too. (Mark, interview, July 2006)

Crucially, as discussed by Ford and Brown (2006) big, hollow waves become imagined as performing a particularly heroic expression of surfing masculinity, framed by the norms of patriarchy which values courage, self-assurance, aggressiveness, bodily fitness and strength. Paddling out into dangerous surf cannot be separated from the desire to become, style and prove themselves as men. As Daniel explains:

I kinda want to test myself in the larger, sucky stuff you know [pause] I mean, I would [pauses] I would love to get barrelled and spat out on a twelve foot bomb but, fuck I really don't think I'm good enough to do that kinda shit, hey. Ah, most guys [pauses] ah, you know they might say they would, but when it comes down to it they don't have the balls to go out there in that stuff. It's still my idea [of surfing] but, I mean that is pure surfing. (Daniel, interview, July 2006)

According to Daniel, 'pure' surfing is an act of courage and defiance of mortality. His ability to surf larger waves becoming the litmus test for his masculinity. The quest to surf larger waves appears pervasive in this group. This limits the successful ways to become a 'real man' to include gruelling physical training, vanquishing fears of death, and expressing a competitive, aggressive edge. For instance, Jack reminds us of how the intense pleasure of surfing in the moment mixes with death and heroism to fashion his surfing hero, the American big-wave rider Laird Hamilton:

Well surfing in big waves is intense. You know that if you fall or get caught on the inside you're just going to get smashed and [pauses] I've only surfed waves to about 10 foot, mate. I mean the guys like Laird [Hamilton], mate, they are incredible. They surf these massive mountains



Jake's sketches of his idea of surfing. In the top sketch, the surfer is 'setting-up' for the barrel, as the surf 'throws' over him. The bottom sketch, depicts the surfer deeper in the barrel.



Roger's photographs illustrate his idea of surfing. In his word this is: "Riding barrels at Cowries with my mates."

FIGURE 2. Big-wave surfing: participants' sketches and photographs of their ideas of surfing.

[signal with his hands above his head], and are just fearless. Yeah those blokes must be crazy. (Jack, interview, July 2006)

These young men arrive at Cowries and The Farm seeking bodily thrills, a pleasure derived from an ability to successfully perform a particular expression of masculinity fashioned by physical strength, flexibility, grace and agility, as well as overcoming fears and internalised competition. The possibilities of becoming ‘real’ men through surfing is further facilitated by how the ocean is scripted as a combat training ground—replete with ‘trenches’, ‘bombs’ and ‘firing’. Manoeuvres that require grace, agility and flexibility, and thus may be regarded as a feminising activity, are erased by terms that include the ‘rip’, ‘cut’, ‘slash’ and ‘kill’. Hence, not only is ‘how to surf’ fashioned within a discourse of heroic masculinities but also how the ocean is scripted as a respected, dangerous enemy to be killed. As discussed by Johnston (2005), the masculine/feminine binary is crucial to construction of places and bodies. We next turn to explore how our participants either chose to accept or resist the desires they bring to Cowries and The Farm by exploring their embodiment of surfing masculinity.

### **Capacities for performing masculinity outside the hegemonic ideals as a ‘local’**

As Evers (2006, p. 234) argues, when surfers are conceptualised as ‘bodies-in-relations’, capacities always exist to reconfigure masculinity in the surf. Each time a surfer enters the ocean they begin a complex process of negotiation through their bodies to configure and stabilise their subjectivity through making connections with the surf conditions and people. This relies upon a sensual economy of masculinity—the nods, pats and looks that transfer respect, pride, shame and disgust. For example, Andrew writes about the sensual economy of masculinity following the arrival of a group of older surfers from Maroubra and how this threw up a moment that intruded upon his sense of self as a ‘local’:

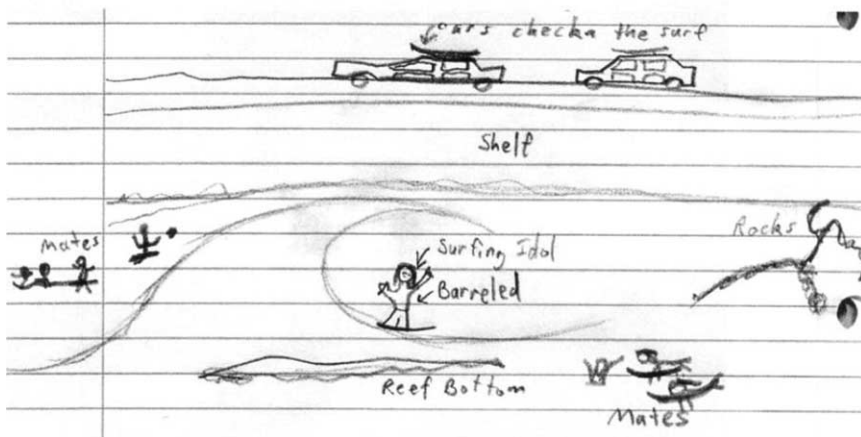
The surf was excellent this morning, a solid four foot on the sets that were pushing through from the south west. I was surfing with a couple of my mates, and we were actually the first guys in the water ... At about 7.40, Mark and I noticed a white commodore pull up in the car park and five blokes hop out. We immediately became pissed off. When these blokes paddled out, we know they weren’t from around here ... Straight away four of them paddled on our inside and tried to give us the big stare down ... When some sets came through we decided we were going to just go, regardless of where they were sitting. The first wave pushed through, and I turned to paddle, but Roger looked keen, so I turned around as one of the Maroubra blokes paddled frantically toward the suck. I saw Roger and this bloke both take off down the face as the next set came through. I let this one go, but hard for the last set, which was a beauty. I took off and heard, this ‘Oi, fuck off!’ But, I wasn’t giving my wave up to this other bloke ... Even though we were locals out here, these blokes didn’t care. Every wave from then on was a real shit fight and the hassling got pretty bad ... Getting changed in the car park we chatted about how uncomfortable

things got out there, which really spoiled a good session. (Notes from participant observation, June 2006)

Andrew's narrative disrupts the idea of surfers constituted as a violent hyper-masculine group of yobbos. The surf session was spoilt. Instead, his narrative confirms Evers' (2007) argument that the potential for violence emerged from a set of assumed privileges that territorialise the ocean and demand respect from strangers. In this instance unwritten rules of surfing are consciously broken to assert their local status over the assumed threat posed by the 'Maroubra blokes'. The surfing session becomes a process of asserting authority over the ocean, building solidarity and conferring belonging. Localism demanded the 'hassling' and 'shit fight' to convey to the 'Maroubra blokes' they were not yet part of this place.

How localism becomes deeply ingrained within the flesh is illustrated by how the sensual economy of masculinity operates to sustain feelings of pride and shame. Diary entries reveal how localism helps dictate their gendered surfing subjectivities through the feelings of being recognised, or not, by their mates (see Figure 3). Participants' diary entries consistently refer to feeling 'stoked' or the praise lavished when a mate successfully surfs a large barreling wave, or performs a valued style. For example, Jake suggests the pride derived from his mates witnessing his achievements; the moment of pleasure and recognition transforming his ability to 'carve' waves into a confirmation of his masculinity and belonging:

I took off on a set in the alley [at The Farm], bottom turned and the wave just lined-up perfectly. I made 3 or 4 sharp cutbacks, turned up the face again and floated down with the lip. That wave was awesome and I really



Ty sketched his idea of surfing. His drawing demonstrates the association between the subjectivity of the 'surfing idol', the presence of danger (rocks), and being 'barreled' inside the breaking wave.

Further, his drawing illustrates the importance of male friends (mates) who can potentially enhance the pleasures of surfing through sharing stories, and witnessing surfing acts.

FIGURE 3. The surfing idol: participant's sketch of his idea of surfing.

carved it, even my mates commented how good that wave looked. (Jake, diary entry, April 2006)

In contrast, Daniel was confronted at some level with the feeling he did not belong as a 'local' after falling off a wave in front of his mates:

I took off on this awesome set, which was lining up in front of me. I made the take off but as I've gone to straighten out from my bottom turn my nose-dived. I came up [after falling off] dirty with myself and looked up and Ty was looking at me shaking his head in disappointment. (Daniel, diary entry, February 2006)

There is a sensual bodily memory that informs their sense of belonging in the lineup. Constant 'bagging out' for not living up to the normative ideas of surfing undoubtedly hurts because it relies upon drawing attention to limits of the body to confirm to normative ideas of what it means to be a man at 'their' break. As Probyn (2000) discusses, shame has the capacity for people to judge their own effects. Shame operates so that surfers feel their ability and masculinity. Within the context of this surfing fraternity, experiences of shame are jettisoned in favour of pride. To live up to the expectations of caring and bonding within the group requires defending 'their' waves, and reconfiguring the body to match the dominant expectations of surfing masculinity—conventionally for shortboard surfers this is a body that is fitter, leaner, stronger, muscular, more flexible and more agile.

Even if the ocean is declared 'dead' at weekends because small, sloppy surf makes it impossible to configure the homosocial male bonding through surfing, an alternative social space is occupied to enact the culture of mateship, such as drinking in the pub. In our case it happens to be through watching surf videos together in a mate's house.

We checked The Farm today but the swell has really died, so we decided to head back to Mark's house and watch the movie *Blackwater*. A couple of the lads had already seen it before but Ty and I hadn't watched it yet. Basically the movie is centred on the wave at Teahupoo, in Tahiti [known as Chopes]. It has some incredible scenes with guys towing into 12 to 15 foot waves that suck so much they actually drop below sea level. There were about 8 of us just watching this movie in Mark's lounge room, and all of us were totally amazed at these waves. When a rider wiped out or made a barrel the boys would shout things like, 'fuck . . . no way, that's bullshit' or 'look at that shit'. When the surf's flat it's fun to do things like this together and it was interesting for me to sit back and kind of watch the different facial expressions and reactions from each of the boys when they were watching the movie. We don't watch movies together all that often really, but this time was pretty special. (Notes from participant observation, February 2006)

Even when opportunities to perform a style of masculinity are denied through the 'death' of the ocean, gender expectations are reconfigured through the homosocial bonds derived from the communal banter and pleasures of watching surf videos. Just as Flood (2003) argues that heterosexual male friends gather to watch pornographic movies to express the bonds between men through heterosexual

practices, the homosociality of watching a surf video cements their relationships of care through providing representations of their surfing desires.

For men-who-surf together it is hard to overemphasise the historical weight that the ideology of heterosexuality has on defining the pleasures of surfing, mateship and belonging. Heterosexuality pervades the intimate narratives through which surfers make sense of their gendered and sexed lives. In the lulls between sets, the surf becomes a space for telling 'sex warries'. Social status within the group can be enhanced by narrating their sexual achievements: who they had sex with, what acts they performed, and how many times they 'had scored'. Ty's diary entry illustrates how conversations 'out the back' are often about enforcing group and individual heterosexual norms by condemning or praising women as sexually desirable:

Between waves we were talking about last night when we all went out for a few beers that turned into a dozen or more. We were talking shit again, joking about our surfing and stuff like that. Oh yeah, and fuck, we were giving Mark so much shit about the chick he was with last night. (Ty, diary entry, May 2006)

Mark is shamed within the group about dating a woman who does not confirm to the conventional norms that prescribe the sexual attractiveness of women for these men in terms of blue eyes, blonde hair, tanned skin and a slim, gym-toned figure. Further, the intimate homosocial bonds operate to block possibilities of thinking surfing masculinity outside of discourses which position the point of contact with young women as primarily objects of sexual desire. For example, Daniel wrote the following in response to the question 'What do you think about more women in the surf?': 'Yeah, more chicks surfing is great, I mean boobs are what I surf for, and [they are] nice to look at on the beach' (Daniel, diary entry, May 2006).

As Daniel's diary entry suggests, women are narrated as welcome to 'their' turf, but primarily objects of sexual desire. Similarly, Ty's diary entries suggest how at the break he becomes a voyeur of women:

The majority of surfers today were riding a mixture of Mals [longboards] and shortboards with 5 or 6 girls also surfing near me. I must admit I'm more interested in how the girls look rather than how they surf. We always perv on the chicks walking along the beach. (Ty, diary entry, March 2006)

Daniel and Ty were not alone in discussing how women surfers are continuously scrutinised under a masculine heterosexual gaze as 'chicks' rather than 'surfers'. These narratives suggest that when in 'their' turf these young men continue to perform a masculinity privileging views of women as 'fair game'.

## Conclusions

In this paper we have sought to demonstrate the ways in which space always limits, informs and produces subjectivity. Given the diversity of surfing styles, technologies and motivations we are not advocating that all young surfers subscribe to a hegemonic masculinity. Instead, we are arguing that the subjectivities of surfer are always contingent upon how the spatial, temporal, desires, abilities, practices and experiences of bodies reside in each other. Working with the context of one prized Australian shortboard break, and a small group of 20-year-old white, heterosexual

men who speak of the waves here as 'their' territory, we have pointed to the importance of localism and the sensual economy in how masculinity unfolds at this break. How the young men in this study come to know, feel and perform like men at these breaks, we have argued, is shaped by their strong commitment to caring for each other, their sense of ownership over a break and a surfing identity fashioned by big-wave riding. As locals, this constrains their legibility of their surfing masculinity at Cowries and The Farm within norms of a patriarchal ideal. There is huge scope for further research to explore the ways in which surfers' sense of self changes not only at different surf-breaks in Australia and overseas but also over the course of their surfing 'career'. Equally, taking Pritchard *et al.* (2004) as a starting point, there is scope to explore how Australian women surfers respond to gender inequalities perpetuated by some men who surf.

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