CHAPTER THREE

THE SAMPLE: DEMOGRAPHIC, GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

3:1: Introduction

This chapter details the demography, geography and socio-economic characteristics of the research sample which comprised 135 subjects. Details of specific variables used for generating these data were described in the previous chapter (see Table 2:6; p.74).

At the outset 176 people responded to the invitation to participate in this research but 41 of those subjects did not complete both the questionnaire and the telecommunications diary forms. Accordingly, these respondents were eliminated from the sample. Where appropriate, data presented highlight distinctions and similarities which exist between Rural and the Remote Subjects and between Newcomers and Natives. Table 3:1 outlines the variables used for generating data about the sample.

TABLE 3:1: Foci used when completing Demographic Analysis

Focus	Specific Variables
Demography	Gender; age; marital status; offspring; grandchildren; ethnicity; principal language spoken.
Geography	Distance to town; time of residency in bush & elsewhere; property size; property type.
Socio Economic	Education completed; financial year income; usual income; usual occupation.

3:2: Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Of the 135 subjects within the sample, 72 (53.7%) were female and 62 (46.3%) were male. The proportion of females and males within the sample was compared against the null hypothesis of there being an equal distribution of females and males using a Z test for equality of proportions. The computed value was 0.87 and the critical value of Z (at α=0.01) using a two tail test was 2.58. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

The age distribution of the sample is shown in Figure 4:1 below. The sample tended to be drawn from the older age bands. Of the females, 43 (59.8 % of females) were between 30 to 60 years of age while 35 males (56.7% of males) were aged between 30 to 60 years. Thus the majority from both sexes fell within this broad age range (n=78 or 58.2% of all

subjects). The observed frequency of females and males for each age category were investigated using the Chi-square statistic and it was discovered that there were no significant differences with respect to the distribution of males and females for each age bracket (Chi-square=0.57, p=0.965).

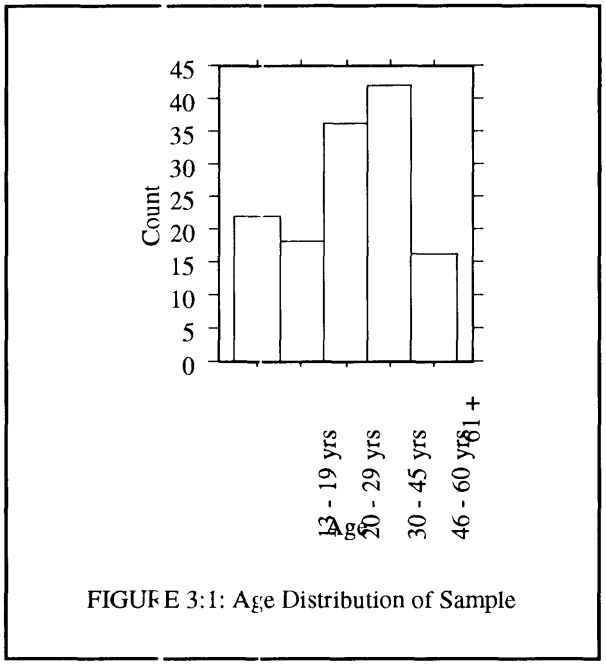


FIGURE 3:1: Age Distribution of Sample

Almost two thirds of the subjects were married (n=82; 64.6%) and nearly three quarters of the sample were parents (n=90; 72.0%). Only ten respondents (7.9%) indicated that they were not living with a permanent partner, or were divorced, separated or widowed. Parents, including those few living with a permanent partner, had an average of almost three children each (Σ n children =261; $\bar{x}$=2.8). Offspring comprised 54.4% females (n=141) and 45.6% males (n=119). Given the modal age category of sample members (i.e. 46-60 years), it is not surprising that offspring tended to be older with many having left home. The average age of offspring was about fifteen years ($\bar{x}$=15.5; SD=6.6 years) with only 104 of all offspring (39.9%) living at home. Of the 157 (60.1%) not living at home, 18 (11.6%) were at boarding school, 30 (19.1%) were completing higher education, 43 (27.4%) were married and the remainder who were not at home were classified as either working, or having left home, or as being overseas or as deceased (n=66; 42.0%). The age distribution of the sample can be seen in Figure 3:1.

The sample included 36 subjects who were grandparents (26.7%) with an average of two grandchildren each (n=76; $\bar{x}$=2.1 grandchildren). Aboriginals were not represented in the sample although non-Australian (migrant) cultures accounted for almost 13% of subjects

(n=17; 12.6%) with more than half of these (n=9; 52.9%) identifying themselves as English. The principal language spoken in all homes was English.

3:3: Geographic Characteristics of Sample

3:3:1: Distinguishing Between Rural and Remote Subjects

One of the critical concerns of this research is the identification and description of informal learning networks within rural and remote communities. It is therefore essential to be able to distinguish between *rural* and *remote* subjects. Numerous approaches have been used for defining the terms *rural* and *remote* (Arundell, 1991; Griffith, 1992; Dept. of Health Report, 1991; Huntley, 1991; Newton, 1992). Indeed, the imprecision of the terms is demonstrated by the fact that at a recent Federal Conference on the matter, the only real agreement to emerge between participating bureaucracies was that the terms are imprecise and difficult to define and that in due course, the Federal Government should try to achieve a standardised approach to defining rural and remote (Garnaut, pers. comm., 1994). Thus, as is the case in this study, individual departments and individual researchers have routinely devised and employed, and continue to devise and employ, their own unique criteria for defining the terms *rural* and *remote*.

Griffith (1992) for instance, when writing about the delivery of education services within the Northern Territory, reasoned that time spent travelling from the nearest town to provide client services was an important consideration in classifying rurality and remoteness for budgetary purposes. Huntley (1991), found that an individual's perception of remoteness is a highly personal matter with urban dwellers sometimes describing their situation as remote. Thus, using *practical* criteria appropriate to her study of the continuing professional education of rural and remote health workers, Huntly based her scale of *rural* and *remote* on the number of hospital beds available to various densities of population. In short, both writers devised criteria appropriate to the circumstances they were studying.

For this study, distance from the subject's home to the nearest centre of population was seen as an useful measure to use for distinguishing between Rural and Remote. Hence, the decision was made that those living less than 25 kilometres from town would arbitrarily be classified as *Rural* and those living 25 kilometres or further away from their nearest town (or approximately 20 minutes travelling time) would arbitrarily be classified as *Remote*.

This arbitrary classification of the variable *location* is really a measure of propinquity. The argument here is that distance from the nearest population centre provides a useful heuristic for classifying subjects into arbitrary Rural and Remote clusters and such clustering has, as its primary purpose, the facilitation of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

It should be noted, however, that some subjects categorised as rural through this arbitrary calibration procedure, lived in towns which are normatively considered to be remote or isolated (eg. Hay, Broken Hill and Bourke are usually classified as remote New South Wales towns). Nevertheless, it is contended that this arbitrary propinquity measure remains useful especially given Wurtzel and Turner's (1977) contention that telecommunications provide *symbolic proximity* for individual users. Accepting Wurtzel and Turner's metaphor, it can be argued that reliance upon telecommunications for the creation of symbolic proximity will be inversely proportionate to propinquity – i.e. telecommunications reliance will increase as physical distance and travelling time away from population centres grow.

In accordance with the criteria of *location* described above for distinguishing between *Rural* and *Remote* subjects, 50 respondents within the sample (37.3%) were classified as Remote and 71 (52.9%) were identified as Rural. A further 14 subjects (9.7%) were unable to be classified because they had provided incomplete data.

The Rural sample comprised 35 females (49.3%) and 36 males (50.7%) while the gender split for Remote subjects was 29 (58%) females and 21 males (42%). Thus Remote males comprised the least represented group within the overall sample. Although grouping the sample by gender and location greatly reduces the size of each category, the modal age of Rural respondents was in the 46-60 year age band whereas the modal age band for Remote subjects, was age 30-45 years. Additionally, more Remote subjects fell into the older age categories whereas more Rural respondents fell into the younger age categories.

3:3:2: Distinguishing Between Locals and Newcomers

Given this study's concern with not only identifying and describing rural and remote networks, but also with describing how particular networks impact upon the use of telecommunications for informal and incidental learning, *residential* status is perceived to be an important variable. In both rural and remote communities, inhabitants tend to readily distinguish between *newcomers* and *locals* or, as they are more commonly known – *locals* and *blow-ins*.

As will be demonstrated, such distinctions frequently govern, in an informal way, membership inclusion and participation rights within rural and remote networks. In that sense, the attributional status of being a *newcomer* or a *local* conforms to a system of social stratification which is described by Bell and Newby, as *local subjective* stratification (Bell and Newby, 1971), that is, subjective stratification classifications exist within 'the heads' of residents although, as Bell and Newby point out, such classifications may diverge from *scientific objective* classifications devised by the researcher. Such classifications may also

vary to a greater or lesser extent from a *practical* and purely *arbitrary* classification system such as that created for this study.

The semi-structured interviews completed in this study clearly demonstrate that distinguishing between locals and newcomers is not only a *local subjective* matter, but is also an *individually subjective* matter. The following interview excerpts illustrate this. Allan for instance, believes that those who migrate into an area never become locals:

Jens: Now how long have you lived there for?

Allan: (Long pause) Oh – Jesus – now you've got me?

Jens: Well your wife was saying somewhere around thirty odd years – 36 years.

Allan: Yes it must be 35, 36 – I'd say.

Jens: Right. And how old are you?

Allan: Me? 74.

Jens: So you've lived there almost half your life?

Allan: Yeah.

Jens: Right. Now are you a local?

Allan: Am I a local?

Jens: Yeah.

Allan: No I was born in old Bag town, Griffith.

Jens: Right.

Allan: I wasn't a local to Goolgowi.

Jens: Are you considered a local now?

Allan: Oh – no you're never a local.

Jens: All right – then what are you?

Allan: An immigrant.

However unlike Allan, June, who has lived in her community for twenty-two years, believes that after her extended period of residency, she has the *right* to think of herself as a local. She's been asked if she will ever become a local:

June: I suppose I just about qualify for that. So much time has passed that they think that I have been here for a lot longer than what I have and they forget that I came as a married woman and they think I came here as a single teacher and I stayed. They say 'Oh you remember so and so' and I say 'Oh no that was before my time', And they go 'But you were with...' and I say 'No I was never with such and such' So I suppose over the years they've forgotten ... or they're forgetting ... that I wasn't here.

Jens: So, how do you see yourself?

June: Oh, as a local.

Jens: Right, so you just abou , almost, qualify.

June: Almost, yes.

Jens: When will you qualify?

June: Oh, a couple of years, I suppose. A couple more years.

Jens: Is there a time criteria '

June: I suppose there isn't It's just how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you. I see myself as a local.

A practical approach which facilitated data analysis was therefore adopted for this study. In short, for the purposes of analysis, a *newcomer* was arbitrarily considered to be a person who had lived within their community for less than ten years whereas a *local* was arbitrarily classified as a person who dwelled within their community for ten years or longer. Accordingly, distinctions were made between *newcomers* and *locals* within both the rural and the remote sample populations.

However the term *Native* is used within data presentation tables and within the text of the Chapters that follow in order to avoid confusion (later) with the notion of a 'local' telephone call.

When the *residential* criteria for distinguishing between *Newcomers* and *Natives* were applied, it was discovered that 61.9% of the sample (n=75) were Natives while the remaining 38.1% (n=43) were Newcomers. Table 3.2 below gives details about the number of female and male Natives and Newcomers.

TABLE 3:2: Rural Native, Rural Newcomers, Remote Native and Remote Newcomers by Gender

	Remote	Rural	Total
Total Count	**50**	**71**	**121**
Total Percen	41.3	58.7	100.0
Female Native, Count	**13**	**26**	**39**
Female Native, Percent	33.3	66.7	100.0
Male Native Count	**12**	**24**	**36**
Male Native Percent	33.3	66.7	100.0
Female Newcomer, Count	**15**	**9**	**24**
Female Newcomer, Percent	62.5	37.5	100.0
Male Newcomer, Count	**8**	**11**	**19**
Male Newcomer, Percent	42.1	57.9	100.0

(Note: As specified above, the term *Native* is used within data presentation tables in order to avoid confusion (later) with the notion of a 'local' telephone call. The term Native is also used within the text of the Chapters that follow.)

3:3:3: Family Details

The majority of the sample indicated that they were married with a higher percentage of the Remote subjects (n=37; 75.5%) reporting that they were married compared to Rural subjects (n=40; 57.1%). Remote subjects, including the one remote person who was not married but was living with a permanent partner, had marginally more children per marriage (n=124 children; $\bar{x}$=3.3) than did Rural respondents, including the two subjects who were not married but who were living in a permanent relationship (n=124 children; $\bar{x}$=2.9).

Remote offspring comprised 55.6% females (n=69) and 44.4% males (n=55) and Rural offspring included 53.2% females (n=66) and 46.8% males (n=58) but the mean ages of offspring differed between the two groups with Remote parents having generally younger children ($\bar{x}$ age=13.3; SD=4.1 years) than Rural parents ($\bar{x}$ age=19.8; SD=4.1 years). Almost half of the Remote offspring still resided at home (n=58; 46.%) whereas for Rural families, slightly more than one third still lived at home (n=43; 35.7%). But despite this, Remote families still had a higher proportion of offspring living away from home at boarding school or in pursuit of higher education (n=21; 16.9%) than did Rural families (n=12; 9.6%). The remaining offspring were classified as either having left home, or as working elsewhere, or as being overseas, or as deceased. For Remote families, offspring accounted for 29 children or 23.4% within these categories and for Rural families there were 33 offspring or 26.6% within these categories.

The Remote subjects included 18 respondents (36.7%) who were grandparents. These respondents had an average of almost two grandchildren each (n=33; $\bar{x}$=1.8 grandchildren). There were 16 Rural subjects (22.6%) who were grandparents to an average of slightly more than two grandchildren each (n=34; $\bar{x}$=2.1 grandchildren). As indicated earlier, the sample was predominantly Australian and English was the principal language spoken at home. Non-Australian cultures accounted for five subjects within the Remote sample and eleven Rural respondents were non-Australians.

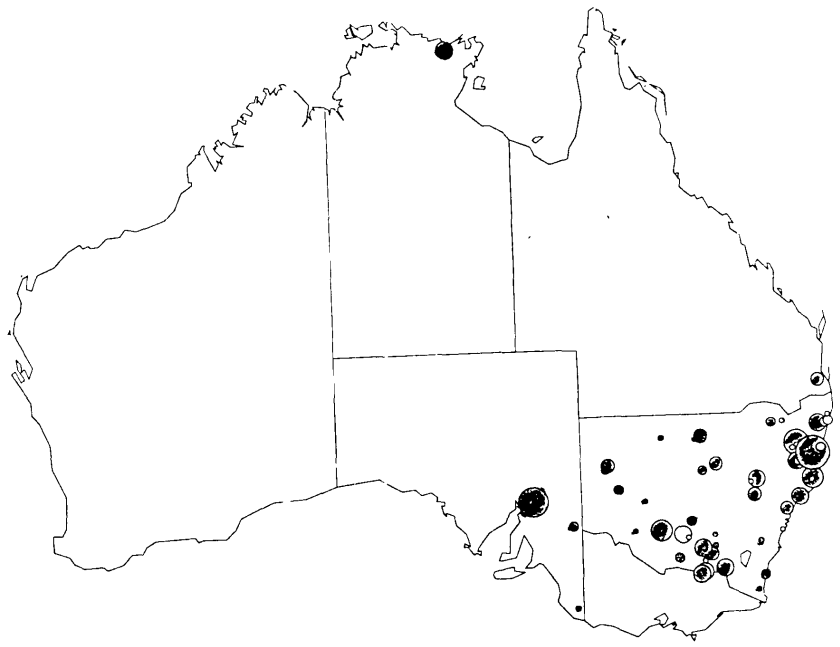
3:3:4: Geographical Location of Sample Members

Given the distinction made between Rural and Remote subjects, a number of additional points about the geographical location of the sample can be made. First, the sampling area used for this research excluded metropolitan centres and their surrounds. Hence Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and Canberra were excluded from the sampling area within New South Wales. Equally Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane were excluded from the Victorian, South Australian and Queensland states respectively. Thus all subjects came from non metropolitan areas – i.e. they were drawn from rural or remote areas.

But as can be seen from Table 3:3 below, the majority of the sample (n=106; 82.8%) were drawn from New South Wales. The remaining subjects (n=22; 17.2%) were recruited from Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate their postal code and these data were plotted onto a map so that the location of respondents could be visually illustrated. However, it should be noted that the maps showing the geographical location of subjects as plotted by postcode refers to the centroid point of each post code and not necessarily to the precise dwelling place within the postcode area of each respondent.[1] (See Figures 3:2a and 3:2b)

TABLE 3:3: Derivation of Sample by State

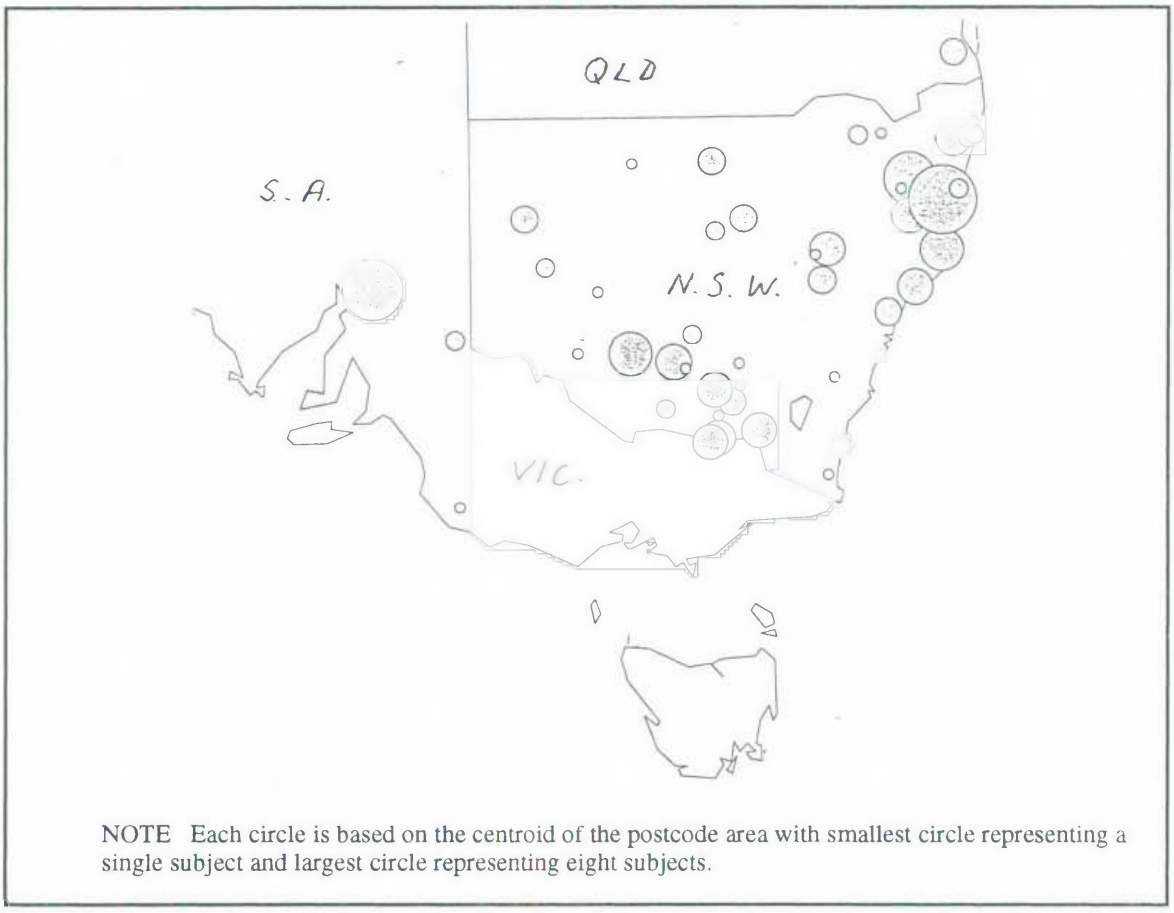
	Count	Percent
NSW	**106**	82.8
Vic	**5**	3.9
SA	**10**	7.8
Qld	**3**	2.3
NT	**4**	3.1
Total	**128**	100.0



NOTE Each circle is based on the centroid of the postcode area with smallest circle representing a single subject and largest circle representing eight subjects.

FIGURE 3:2:a: Map of Australia (minus Tasmania) Showing Sample Distribution

[1] My thanks to Dr John Kleeman from the Vice Chancellor's unit of the UNE, Armidale. John entered postcode data into a program called MapViewer™ (Schmitz, Smith and Wall, 1993). The program locates the *X* and *Y* coordinates of each postcode entry onto a map and generates circles which correspond in size to the number of times that the postcode appears.



NOTE Each circle is based on the centroid of the postcode area with smallest circle representing a single subject and largest circle representing eight subjects.

FIGURE 3:2:b: Sample Distribution from Queensland, NSW, Victoria & SA.

3:3:5: Length of Time Spent in the Country and Property Details

Respondents were asked to indicate how much time in their lives they had spent living in towns, in the country (the *bush*) and within the area where they currently resided. While *Newcomers* to Remote areas had spent an average of nearly 20 years living in Towns ($\bar{x}$=19.1 years; SD=12 years), *Natives* had lived in towns for a shorter period ($\bar{x}$=13.5 years; SD=12.8 years). Conversely, Remote Newcomers had spent only half the length of time living in the bush ($\bar{x}$=15.6 years; SD=15 years) compared to the duration indicated by Remote Natives ($\bar{x}$=30.3 years; SD=13.5 years). Remote Newcomers (not surprisingly given the arbitrary classifications described earlier) had resided in their local area for an average of less than five years ($\bar{x}$=4.5 years; SD=2.7 years). By contrast, Remote Natives had dwelt within their area for an average of 28 years ($\bar{x}$=28.4 years; SD=12.6 years). In short, Remote Native subjects not only appeared bound to the *bush* but also, seemed rooted to the one spot.

The dwelling patterns of Rural respondents appeared in many respects to mirror the patterns of Remote subjects reported above. Both Rural Newcomers and Rural Natives,

The dwelling patterns of Rural respondents appeared in many respects to mirror the patterns of Remote subjects reported above. Both Rural Newcomers and Rural Natives, appeared 'town bound' and Rural Natives especially were rooted to their local area ($\bar{x}$=24 years; SD=11.5 years). Rural *Native* subjects reported that they had spent less of their lives living in the bush than in towns but they also reported having remained within their local area for a long period. Rural *Newcomers* had spent the least amount of time 'in the bush' ($\bar{x}$=11.3 years; SD=11.9 years) but the greatest amount of time residing in towns ($\bar{x}$=23.8 years; SD=14.5 years). See also Table 3:4 below.

TABLE 3:4: Time (in years) spent living in Towns, The Bush and in Local Area

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Count	Minimum	Maximum	# Missing
Towns, Total	**18.8**	15.0	**122**	0.0	56.0	13
Towns, Native, Remote	13.5	12.8	22	0.0	33.0	3
Towns, Native, Rural	19.4	17.3	47	0.0	56.0	3
Towns, Newcomer, Remote	19.1	12.0	23	0.0	40.0	0
Towns, Newcomer, Rural	23.8	14.5	20	5.0	49.0	0
Bush, Total	**19.9**	15.7	**114**	0.0	58.0	21
Bush, Native, Remote	30.3	13.5	24	10.0	55.0	1
Bush, Native, Rural	20.2	16.2	42	0.0	58.0	8
Bush, Newcomer, Remote	15.6	15.0	19	0.0	51.0	4
Bush, Newcomer, Rural	11.3	11.9	20	0.0	42.0	0
Area, Total	**18.3**	14.0	**126**	0.0	58.0	9
Area, Native, Remote	28.4	12.6	25	10.0	55.0	0
Area, Native, Rural	24.0	11.5	50	10.0	58.0	0
Area, Newcomer, Remote	4.5	2.7	23	0.0	8.0	0
Area, Newcomer, Rural	4.5	2.7	20	0.0	9.0	0

Rural and remote subjects also lived in blocks of land which differed markedly in size. Almost one third (n=20; 32.8%) of all Rural respondents lived on a block of land comprising one hectare or less area and the mean area of Rural blocks was 361 hectares (SD=878 hectares). By contrast the mean size of Remote properties was much larger i.e. slightly more than 5000 hectares ($\bar{x}$=5062.6 hectares; SD=17775.7 hectares).

Although the response rate to the questionnaire item on property description was low (n=52), virtually all respondents who indicated that they were engaged in farming reported that they were involved in *dryland* operations. Only about 20% of properties (n=10;19.2%) were able to irrigate some or all of their property. Despite this, the percentage of land described by respondents as drylands accounted for an average of 92.5% of land described.

Clearly the type of farming operations undertaken were, in part, a function of land type. Dryland operations, including beef farming (n=38) and/or sheep grazing (n=31), were the most frequently reported farming endeavours although there were also a number of

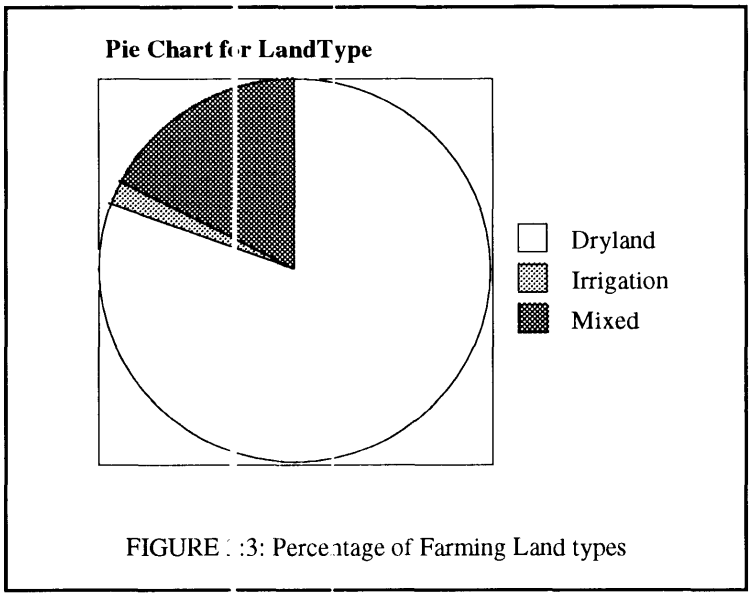


FIGURE 3:3: Percentage of Farming Land types

3:3:6: Distance from Town and Transport Modes

Subjects were asked to specify how far away they resided from the town nearest to them and a summary of data gathered is given in Table 3:5 below. The average distance from town for all subjects was 50 kilometres but for Remote subjects, the average distance from town was slightly more than 100 kilometres ($\bar{x}$=107.1 km; SD=172.4.; median=50 km). It should be noted that the four subjects from the one family in the Northern Territory (who each lived 675 kilometres from their nearest town) skewed the mean distance for Remote respondents. When the cumulative distances for these four subjects were not considered, the mean distance from town for the remaining 46 subjects was 57.8 kilometres. Rural subjects, however, lived an average of only ten kilometres from town ($\bar{x}$=9.9. km; SD=6.7 km; median=10 km; mode=10 km).

TABLE 3:5 Distance to Nearest Town

	Km, Total	Km, Remote	Km, Rural
Mean	**50.0**	**107.1**	**9.9**
Std. Dev.	120.3	172.4	6.6
Count	121	50	71
Minimum	0.0	25.0	0.0
Maximum	675.0	675.0	23.0
Median	18.0	50.0	10.0
Mode	10.0	•	10.0

Questionnaire respondents were also asked to specify which form of transport they mainly used. Results showed that the most common form of transport used by both Rural and Remote subjects was the car (n=106; 85.5%). However, the proportion of the overall

Questionnaire respondents were also asked to specify which form of transport they mainly used. Results showed that the most common form of transport used by both Rural and Remote subjects was the car (n=106; 85.5%). However, the proportion of the overall female sample who responded that they used a car as their main form of transport was lower than for males (viz. – n=60 out of 72 or 83.3% of the female sample which compared to n=46 out of 62 male subjects or 88.5%). Fourteen percent of responses to this question (n=20; 13.8%) also indicated that they regularly used a second form of transport. In these instances, utility trucks and farm bikes were most typically cited and these additional forms of transport were almost exclusively driven by males (viz. – only two females indicated that they drove the farm bike or utility).

3:4: Socio-economic Status – a composite variable of little relevance to this study

Social stratification, according to Bottomore (1965, p.15) refers to, "... any heirachical ordering of social groups or strata in a society...". However, Ramsay (1974, p.323), in elaborating on this matter, notes that social class, the articulation of social stratification, is a *summarising variable* because it amalgamates a number of elements. Ramsay's description, of course, refers to the procedure of measuring socio-economic status (SES) *objectively* (as opposed to the *subjective* assessment of SES). An expansive discussion about theoretical underpinnings to dimensions of SES and approaches to it's measurement would not be particularly relevant here. Suffice to note that writers such as Dahrendorf (1959), Bottomore (1965), and Ramsay (1975) acknowledge that SES can be measured objectively (by quantifying and ranking elements of peoples lives) and can be assessed subjectively (by having people rank themselves). Sometimes both techniques are used by researchers but each approach is imbedded in the original theoretical and seminal approaches to class enunciated by Karl Marx and Max Weber respectively.

Traditionally, when generating an *objective* measure of socio-economic status, the three interrelated elements of educational achievement, income and occupational prestige are employed and data are gathered about each variable. And indeed, data concerning each of those dimensions were gathered for this study, i.e. respondents were asked to identify their highest completed educational level; they were invited to provide information about their income and they were asked to specify their occupation.

However, because the data gathered for all three of these elements would not enable a reliable measure of SES, a composite SES ranking was not able to be generated for this study. Hence, data concerning education, income and occupation were reported as independent variables rather than as a composite variable.

TABLE 3:6: Frequency distribution of highest educational achievement

	Total Count	Total Percent	Remote Count	Remote Percent	Rural Count	Rural Percent
Left <= 15yrs	**19**	15.6	**12**	25.5	**6**	9.0
School Cert	**33**	27.0	**11**	23.4	**19**	28.4
HSC	**28**	23.0	**9**	19.1	**17**	25.4
TAFE/Trade Cert	**12**	9.8	**4**	8.5	**8**	11.9
UniGrad	**23**	18.9	**8**	17.0	**13**	19.4
Postgrad	**3**	2.5	**1**	2.1	**2**	3.0
Other	**4**	3.3	**2**	4.3	**2**	3.0
Total	**122**	100.0	**47**	100.0	**67**	100.0

From Table 3:6, it is clear that there are differences in the educational attainment levels of the two sub populations – i.e. between Rural and Remote subjects. While the population size of the Remote and Rural sub-samples became relatively small when split, results indicated that the percentage of remote dwellers leaving school at or before the age of 15 was nearly three times greater than for rural subjects (n=12; 25.5% remote left at or before the age of 15 compared to n=6; 9% of rural subjects left school at or before the age of 15). Participation in, and completion of tertiary education was higher amongst Rural subjects (n=23; 34.3% had completed TAFE or University or Post Graduate studies) than for Remote respondents (n=13; 27.6% had completed TAFE or University or Post Graduate studies).

TABLE 3:7: Means for Highest level of Educational Achievement
for Rural & Remote Natives & Newcomers based on six point educational achievement scale

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Count
Ed Rank, Total	**2.9**	1.4	121
Ed Rank, Remote, Native	**2.8**	1.5	25
Ed Rank, Remote, Newcomer	**2.6**	1.4	22
Ed Rank, Rural, Native	**3.0**	1.3	45
Ed Rank, Rural, Newcomer	**3.4**	1.5	19

In order to try to further clarify the data about educational achievement, it was decided to assign an educational ranking score to each of the levels of educational attainment. Hence subjects who left school at or before the age of 15 were assigned an arbitrary educational ranking score of one, those with school certificate as their highest educational achievement were assigned and arbitrary educational ranking score of two, and so on through to post graduates being assigned a score of six. These data are shown in table form in Table 3:7 above. When the data about the highest completed level of educational attainment analysed using this arbitrary six point scale, it became apparent from the ensuing descriptive statistics that Rural subjects ($\bar{x}$=3.2) had a higher average level of educational achievement than Remote subjects ($\bar{x}$=2.85). Results also suggested that Rural Newcomers

($\bar{x}$=3.4) within the sample had attained higher average educational levels than Rural Natives ($\bar{x}$=3.0). Remote Newcomers however, demonstrated a lower average level of educational attainment ($\bar{x}$=2.6) than Remote Natives ($\bar{x}$=2.8).

Table 3:8 below presents a broadly categorical summary of the work activities in which subjects were engaged. The table indicates that more than one third of the sample (n= 45) could be classified as *land workers* and that a further 20% of the sample were *students* (n=26). The results also indicated that only 15% (n=19) of the sample were engaged in full time work other than land work. Occupational prestige ranking's were not therefore assigned to such a small number of subjects and were not able to be assigned to the general category of land worker.

TABLE 3:8: Categories of Work split by gender

	Total Count	Total Percent	Female Count	Female Percent	Male Count	Male Percent
Land Worker	**45**	36.3	**19**	29.2	**26**	44.1
Student	**26**	21.0	**13**	20.0	**13**	22.0
Between Jobs	**8**	6.5	**5**	7.7	**3**	5.1
Full Time	**19**	15.3	**9**	13.8	**10**	16.9
Part Time	**9**	7.3	**6**	9.2	**3**	5.1
Casual	**3**	2.4	**3**	4.6	**0**	0.0
Retired	**3**	2.4	**1**	1.5	**2**	3.4
Other	**11**	8.9	**9**	13.8	**2**	3.4
Total	**124**	100.0	**65**	100.0	**59**	100.0

Most land workers (n=45; 36.3%) designated themselves as *owner operators* but the magnitude of their farming operations (other than land size) were unknown; some respondents may have been *Graziers* while others may have been hobby farmers. Yet other respondents designated themselves as *family members helping* (n=12). Finally, a small number of respondents were *share farmers* or were *farm managers* (n=4).

TABLE 3:9: Land worker categories shown for Rural and Remote Natives and Newcomers

	Owner/ Operator	Share Farmer	Farm Manager	Family helper	Other	Total
Total Count	33	2	2	14	4	55
Total Percent	60.0	3.6	3.6	25.5	7.3	100.0
Remote, Native Count	14	0	0	5	0	19
Remote, Native Percent	73.7	0.0	0.0	26.3	0.0	100.0
Remote, Newcomer Count	1	0	2	2	1	6
Remote, Newcomer Percent	16.7	0.0	33.3	33.3	16.7	100.0
Rural, Native Count	15	0	0	5	3	23
Rural, Native Percent	65.2	0.0	0.0	21.7	13.0	100.0
Rural, Newcomer Count	1	1	0	1	0	3
Rural, Newcomer Percent	33.3	33.3	0.0	33.3	0.0	100.0

Subjects were invited to place a cross on a scale within the questionnaire which showed their approximate net income during the last financial year. Because of the recession, they were also asked to mark a cross to show what their net income might be in a more typical year. Responses to these two questions demonstrated that incomes, and especially the incomes of Remote subjects, had fallen substantially during the previous financial year. Furthermore, Remote Natives reported the greatest drop in income level (see Tables 3:10 and 3:11.)

TABLE 3:10: Actual and Typical Yearly Incomes for Rurals & Remotes

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Count	Minimum	Maximum
$c, All	**11753.2**	17377.8	119	-50000.0	50000.0
$c, Remote	**4358.5**	17360.0	45	-50000.0	50000.0
$c, Rural	**15136.4**	16354.9	66	-10000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, All	**16948.3**	18908.2	116	-50000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Remote	**17574.4**	17988.7	43	-20000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Rural	**15545.5**	19811.4	66	-50000.0	50000.0

TABLE 3:11: Actual and Typical Yearly Incomes for Natives & Newcomers from Rural & Remote Areas

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Count	Minimum	Maximum
$c, All	**11753.2**	17377.8	119	-50000.0	50000.0
$c, Remote, Native	**2922.1**	22564.2	24	-50000.0	50000.0
$c, Remote, Newcomer	**7071.4**	8237.5	21	-15000.0	20000.0
$c, Rural, Native	**14793.5**	15444.7	46	0.0	50000.0
$c, Rural, Newcomer	**16763.2**	18807.8	19	-10000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, All	**16948.3**	18908.2	116	-50000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Remote, Native	**22090.9**	19544.6	22	-20000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Remote, Newcomer	**13047.6**	15314.1	21	0.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Rural, Native	**14119.6**	20585.1	46	-50000.0	50000.0
Typical $c, Rural, Newcomer	**19815.8**	17891.0	19	-5000.0	50000.0

The tables above and Figures 3:6 a, b, c and d (below), show that Rural subjects reported that during more typical times, they earned an average of $15 545 per annum net while Remote subjects indicated that during more typical times, they earned the slightly higher average net amount of $17 674 per annum. Remote Natives reported that they typically earned more ($22 090) than Remote Newcomers ($13 047) during non recession times. Moreover, the effect of the recession clearly impacted mainly on Remote subjects rather than upon Rural subjects and upon Remote Natives more than Remote Newcomers.

Indeed, Rural subjects indicated that they had earned a mean net income of $15 136 during the previous financial year compared to the mean net income of $4 858 reported by Remote subjects. Further, Rural Newcomers reported a higher net income for the previous

mean of only $2 922. Net incon es for Remote Newcomers had also fallen during the previous financial year to a mean of $7 071.

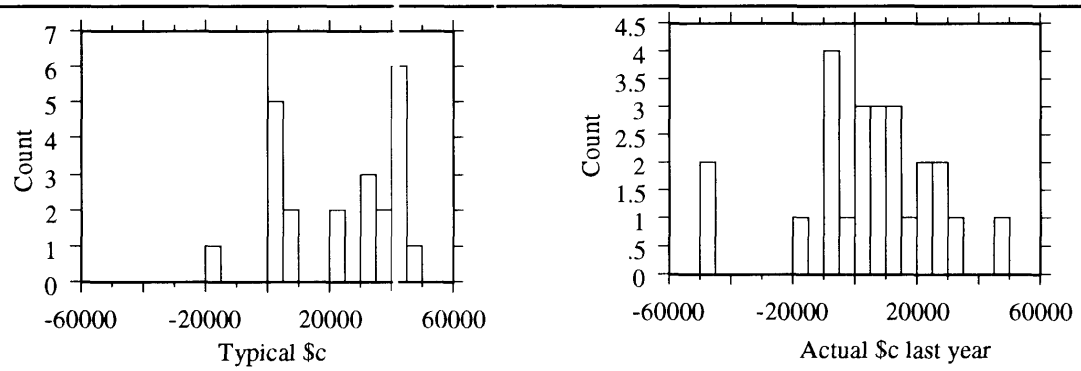


FIGURE 3:4a: Net Income, Remote Natives, for Typical year and for Last Financial Year

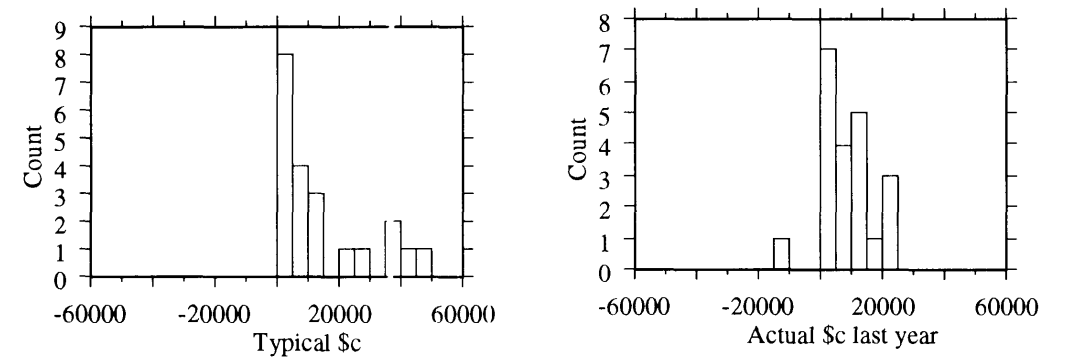


FIGURE 3:4b: Net Income, Remote Newcomers, for Typical year and for Last Financial Year

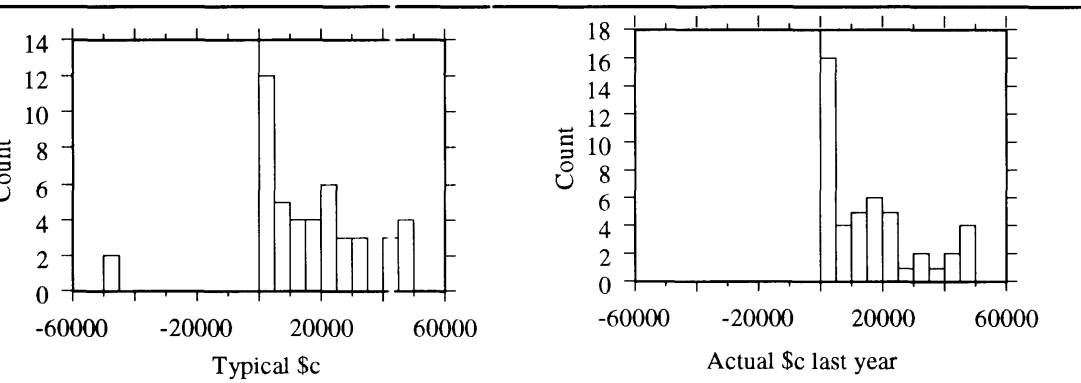


FIGURE 3:4c: Net Income, Rural Natives, for Typical year and for Last Financial Year.

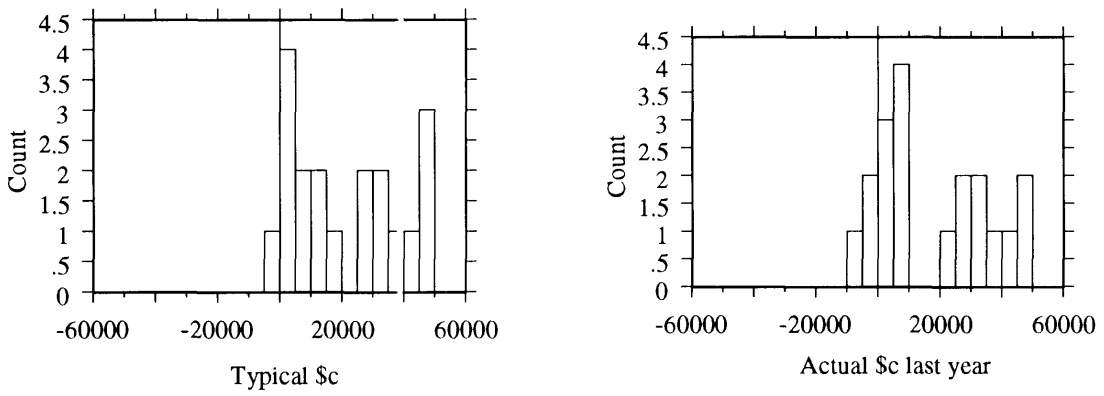


FIGURE 3:4d: Net Income, Rural Newcomers, for Typical year and for Last Financial Year

3:5: Summary and Concluding Comments

Homans (1951) reasoned that the real point of classifications is not whether they are crude or even refined, but rather, whether or not they are useful. In the case of this study, it is contended that the devised classifications of Rural and Remote and Native and Newcomer are ultimately useful in facilitating consideration of the central research questions of this study. Moreover, even if not all of the contrived classifications turn out to be especially useful, there is every reason to suspect that Homans was correct when he noted that "some classification is immeasurably better than no classification at all," (Homans, 1951, p.44). In this study, a series of arbitrary classifications were contrived in order to facilitate the drawing of distinctions between Rural and Remote subjects and between Natives and Newcomers.

Given these arbitrary classifications, how then does one describe the emergent demographic, geographic and socio-economic mosaic? After exclusion procedures had been invoked so that those who had not completed both research instruments were omitted from the final sample, the number of respondents in the sample was 135. More than three quarters of these respondents were from New South Wales. The remainder came from South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Slightly more female subjects were recruited than males but the proportion of females and males did not differ significantly There were more Rural subjects (58%) than Remote (42%) although an undetermined number of subjects lived in towns that would be classified as remote if criteria such as those of Arundell had been used. Almost two thirds of the sample were long term residents (Natives) rather than shorter term residents (Newcomers).

Typically Rural subjects in this sample were aged between 46 to 60 years compared to Remote subjects who were (modally) in the younger 30 to 45 year age bracket. The

majority of both clusters were married (with very few living in alternative relationship arrangements) and a higher proportion of Remote subjects were married than were Rural subjects. Both Rural and Remote subjects typically had three offspring and about a quarter of the sample were grandparents with an average of two grandchildren. Remote subjects tended to have more children and grand children but more children from Rural families had left home. While this meant that Remote families had a greater proportion of children still living at home, more Remote offspring than Rural offspring were reported to be at either boarding school or engaged in tertiary education.

Rural subjects generally appeared 'town bound' having spent, on average, around 24 years living in their local town area. Generally Remote subjects were also geographically immobile having mainly lived in the bush and within the same area for 25 years and longer. The majority of those sampled lived on drylands and there were substantial differences between Rural and Remote property sizes. One in three of the Rural subjects lived on properties which were one hectare or less although the average size of Rural properties was 361 hectares. The largest Remote property was 125 000 hectares but the average size of Remote holdings was approximately 5 000 hectares. Remote subjects lived on average around 50 kilometres from town whereas Rural subjects lived much closer to town with the average distance to town being only around ten kilometres. Typically, therefore, the car was important for both females and males although alternative forms of transport like utility trucks were used but were almost exclusively driven by males.

Rural subjects demonstrated a higher level of educational achievement than Remote respondents with Rural Newcomers reporting the highest levels of completed educational attainment. By contrast, Remote Newcomers demonstrated the lowest levels of educational achievement and their typical income was also lower than that of any other classification.

The income levels of all subjects, Rural and Remote, had clearly been affected by the rural recession. In particular, the recession had drastically diminished the net incomes of Remote Natives who usually earned the highest amount per year of the four groups (i.e. Remote Natives; Remote Newcomers; Rural Natives and Rural Newcomers). The reported incomes of Remote Natives had dropped by around 750% from a typical annual net income of $22 000 to approximately $3 000 net per annum. Rural incomes had also been eroded with the incomes of Rural Newcomers being the least affected. This group now appeared to earn the most of the four groups with an average net income of close to $17 000 (a reduction from a typical average annual income of approximately $20 000 net). This however, still represented a diminution of earnings to the order of approximately 15%. It should be noted that the above summary of earnings does not take account of factors like negative taxation gearing but the figures are, nevertheless, startling.

It should also be noted that because the data concerning occupations were imprecise, the intention of assigning occupational prestige rankings to subjects became impracticable. Hence, defining the SES rankings of subjects was also not realised (i.e a scale could not be devised which would reliably express the composite variable for SES because it was not possible to assign occupational prestige rankings given the nature of the data collected[1]).

A number of comments stem from this generalised overview of the demographic, geographic and socio-economic details. First of all, it should be noted that the sample size was not large and may not be representative of rural and remote Australia. However, as far as this writer has been able to determine, it seems that a sample of this size has never previously been generated in Australia specifically for studying the uses of telecommunications technologies for informal and incidental learning within rural and remote communities.

Moyal, in 1988, gathered a sample of 200 female respondents while studying the gendered use of the telephone and some of her sample were from rural and remote areas. The Australian Telecommunications Authority (AUSTEL), reported achieving some 350 responses after distributing 3500 invitations and guides to rural and remote people urging them to have their say on the adequacy or otherwise of rural and remote telecommunications (Davey, 1992). The AUSTEL report also indicates that the Centre for International Research on Communication and Information Technologies (CIRCIT), at the same time, undertook commissioned research and gathered, through various means including survey and telephone interviews, some 400 responses about people's perceptions of the adequacy of existing telecommunications services. These previously generated samples, therefore, are not really comparable to this one. Moreover, their research intentions did not align with the intentions of this study.

Clearly, networking processes and patterns as they relate to informal and incidental learning, rather than the adequacy of telecommunications services and the gendered uses of telecommunications, are amongst the central dimensions of this research. Thus the individual's status of being either *Rural* or *Remote*, and of being either a *Native* or a *Newcomer*, are seen as important influences upon networking. In short, being perceived as a *Newcomer* or as a *Native* impacts upon the individual's right of access to, and acceptance into, informal and formal groups and networks. In turn, group membership shapes networking processes and patterns which determine who talks to whom and, therefore, who learns from whom. Thus Remote Natives who have been adversely affected by the economic downturn, who reside a considerable distance from their nearest centre of population, and who have their children living away from home either at boarding school or

[1] This assumes that the summarising variable of SES comprises the aggregated scores of educational attainment, occupational prestige and income.

at a tertiary institution, are likely to demonstrate quite a different set of networking and telecommunications behaviours to those of Rural Natives who have been less affected by the recession, who live in town and have access to members of their immediate and extended families within walking distance.

It should be clearly noted that these descriptive data portray a single snapshot of a unique sample of rural and remote dwellers. In short a large, because widely distributed, sample was logistically out of the question, a representative sample was simply not sought. Therefore, this description of demography, geography and socio-economic factors form an initial and partial segment of a unique mosaic. These data, together with forthcoming data segments, will collectively form a mosaic which will detail a number of rural and remote telecommunications trends. These trends will then be interpreted in order to add to our understanding of informal and incidental learning processes – especially as these processes become manifested when telecommunications are used. Some of these forthcoming mosaic segments will detail specific telecommunications behaviours of Rurals and Remotes (and of Natives and Newcomers within the Rural and Remote subgroups) because they are descriptive. However other mosaic portions are interpretive and therefore will be concerned with describing how some of the things Rural and Remote people learn informally and incidentally are generated and moderated through network memberships, whilst yet other matters are learnt without recourse to networking and networks.