

Modern Dating Rituals in Australia, 1940-1970

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Abstract

This research maps out a history of romantic rituals in Australia from 1940 to 1970. In doing so, it analyses changing conventions as modern forms of ‘dating’ replaced ‘calling’ throughout Australian society, bringing romantic behaviour into the public eye. It also investigates the construction of these conventions, and situates them clearly in a social, political and economic context. There is a particular focus on the tension between the regulation of dating behaviour as a precursor to marriage and subversion of these norms and expectations, and how these varied among different groups of Australians. Dating regulations were used as a form of attempted containment by various authorities, including governments, churches, the medical establishment, and legal institutions. However, dating could also be experienced as an act of escape and pleasure: as a site of resistance (in a Foucauldian sense) to seemingly inescapable discursive power. For some, this rebellion was a necessity as much as a choice, as many individuals were explicitly excluded from the accepted norms of dating behaviour. Gay men and lesbian women were not able to marry or publicly date their partners, and the social and romantic lives of Aboriginal Australians were subject to surveillance and intervention by state and federal governments. For European migrants to Australia in the post-war period, romance and marriage were inextricably tied up in the act of migration and were taken very seriously. This work explores the discourse around dating as it varied due to gender, age, sexuality, and race, represented through these groups’ own experiences of, and often resistance to, the rituals of dating in Australia in the mid-twentieth century.

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I wrote this thesis on the land of the Awabakal people, where sovereignty has never been ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

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Introduction

In wartime Australia, young women found the streets full of Americans, offering whistles, lines, and invitations to dates.¹ Adelie was dazzled by the gentle way the Americans treated women, noticing the small gestures they made like opening car doors, bringing flowers.² Venus, an Aboriginal woman born in North Queensland, grew up in a dormitory on Palm Island Reserve. When her boyfriend visited, he had to ask permission from the Matron, and the pair would sit on the grass to talk under her watchful eye. They married in 1947.³ Kevin rode his bike to a local beat in Newcastle, and met Keith, a local businessman who had to be very discreet. They would use Keith's car and go to the park, and meet up with Keith's friends, and go to privately organised dances with other same-sex attracted men, introducing Kevin to a social world he hadn't known existed.⁴ Ginette arrived in Australia in the late 1950s and her aunt helped set her up with eligible young men right away. Ralph, who like Ginette was Jewish and had grown up in Egypt, arrived on the doorstep with chocolates and the lyrics to a French song, and took her out on his Vespa to discover Sydney.⁵ In the 1960s, Alison and Brian loved going out in his car on a Saturday night, to the drive-in at Bass Hill, or the speedway at Sydney Showground. Afterwards they would kiss goodbye in the car until her dad would flick the porch light off and on again, telling her it was past time to go inside.⁶

The stories of these young people and the ways they experienced dating and romance form the foundation of this work. The dominant narrative of dating in the three post war decades is that young people met and romanced each other in public, going out together and finding privacy outside the family home. However, these kinds of dating practices were built on freedom and independence for young people, and as such were not always accessible for

¹ Trixee, interviewed by author, 2018, phone interview; Betty Greer quoted in Annette Potts and Lucinda Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier: Australian War-Brides and Their GIs* (Crows Nest, NSW; ABC Enterprises, 1987), 31; Elaine Barstow, quoted in Catherine Dyson, *Swing By Sailor: True Stories from the War Brides of HMS Victorious* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2007), 55.

² Adelie Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

³ Venus Wyles interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, May 1, 2000, Townsville QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218299614>.

⁴ Kevin Coleman, interviewed by John Witte, 15 May 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Collection*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/66939>.

⁵ Ginette Matalon interviewed by Frank Heimans, January 13-14, 2013, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219968733>.

⁶ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>.

Aboriginal people, whose lives were surveilled and regulated by the state, recent immigrants whose options were restricted by community expectations or same-sex attracted people who had to conduct their romances in secret. Listening to their stories shows how young people pushed against and reshaped dating conventions to create new ways to meet each other, socialise, and perhaps fall in love.

Social Scripts and Rituals

Dating rituals and behaviours were subject to overlapping and often conflicting ideas about social and sexual mores. The study of these conventions, of who created them and how, sheds light on contemporary understandings of gender, sexuality and social customs more broadly. Social scripts and rituals do not consist of clear or fixed guidelines. They are created through discursive tensions and are subject to different interpretations based on standpoint and experience. Authorities such as Christian churches and the media worked to construct a set of dating regulations that would clearly define the ritual as a precursor to white heterosexual marriage. The already changing conventions that this effort attempted to contain were however also based on cultural shifts including mass consumerism and increasing independence for women.

People who participated in dating rituals also took part in their creation and through their behaviour and their response to social guidelines, took an active role in reshaping conventions themselves. This research addresses the tensions between the creation of dating conventions and their reworking by those resistant to this guidance or oversight. Dating, especially among young people, stirred social anxieties about premarital sexuality and changing social mores. Conservative authorities, then, often sought to contain pre-existing behaviours and desires for pleasure in a framework of productive preparation for marriage. Young people who chose to define themselves outside, or against, normative dating behaviour participated in rebellion against these conventions and expectations, and against their society's idealisation of monogamous matrimony.

The Purpose of Dating

As outlined above, for mainstream Australian society, the primary goal of dating was a successful marriage. Mid-century Australia was marked by social and political pressure to build a strong nation on the foundation of middle-class nuclear families. There were many

young people who explicitly and enthusiastically participated in dating for this purpose, encouraged by images of romance, companionate marriages and economic prosperity. However, there were also other competing and often overlapping purposes of dating. During the Second World War, many young men and women courted and married quickly, seeking emotional stability and romance in an uncertain time. They also, however, established dating as a part of the infrastructure of social life and leisure. Young women were encouraged to go dancing with Australian and American servicemen in order to fulfil their patriotic duty through chaste comfort and good company. Marriage was often impractical or even impossible during the war, but men and women continued to go on dates as a social activity even if they were not looking for romance.

After the war, dating retained its position in the social lives of young people. Moral authorities including mainstream churches, the media, educators and parents shifted their attention to adolescents, as the 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of the teenager as a new social category and market force. Marriage remained the goal and key purpose of dating for many young people, but now this period of preparation lasted longer. Anxieties about youth and sexuality meant that dating rules were tightly focused on containing pleasure in socially codified behaviours. Dating became a key part of a teenager's social life, and an important aspect of youth culture. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, both religious and medical authorities worked to define adolescent dating as a time of social and psychological development, while teen attitudes varied. Most young people saw themselves as on an inevitable path to marriage, and experiencing pleasure and fun, or exploring rebellion and freedom. For those without the freedom to marry for love, dating still served a purpose. Gay men and lesbian women in the 1950s and 1960s dated for casual relationships, long-term partnerships, sexual pleasure and to find a community. For those who were not able to marry their partners, dating still held a purpose outside the normative social scripts.

Terminology and Scope

Dating is itself a simplified way to describe a range of behaviours and rituals, and it was often not the term used by young people themselves. Their preferred nomenclature – *going out* or *going with* – provides insight into the important aspects of romantic rituals at this time. As Chapter One illustrates in more detail, dating generally consisted of a couple, or group of couples, going out and participating in a leisure activity together, with a romantic purpose. These dates typically involved the male partner spending money, on movie tickets,

or something to eat, and both parties involved presenting themselves carefully in terms of fashion and grooming. Obviously, there were exceptions to this. Many dates did not cost money, gay men and lesbian women also dated outside heterosexual bounds, and for many young people, the lines between dating and socialising in a mixed group were blurred. A study of the purpose or use of dating therefore includes analysis of friendship, leisure, sex, romance, love and marriage.

Herein, *dating* is used to differentiate the rituals of the twentieth century from the practice of *calling*, also referred to as courtship, in the nineteenth century. Calling involved men visiting women in their family homes, at the invitation and under the supervision of their family. The shift to dating was seen by Gail Reekie as a turn to a “male-initiated” system, where women accepted “a more hazardous invitation into the world of men.”⁷ Reekie and Lyn Finch also emphasised the economic change, as dating, unlike calling, was explicitly a consumerist activity.⁸ Beth Bailey, in a study of American dating, described this shift in the United States: “courtship became more and more a private act conducted in the public world.”⁹ The rise of the mass produced car enabled this movement in Australia. The term courtship continued to be used as a description of romantic behaviour into the twentieth century, although mostly only by older generations and the media.

As Reekie, Finch, Jill Julius Matthews and Lisa Featherstone have made clear, changes to dating culture were occurring at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰ For the first few decades, modern and traditional forms of courtship coexisted uneasily. The arrival of modernity in the early twentieth century brought with it a range of anxieties about new forms of sexuality, romance, and public displays of desire.¹¹ This work begins with the Second World War, when these new conventions became ever more visible and began to be consolidated across society more broadly. The tone was different from that of the interwar period. In the 1920s and 1930s, young women who dated publicly were labelled flappers:

⁷ Gail Reekie, *Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), xv-xviii.

⁸ Reekie, *Temptations*, xv-xvi; Lyn Finch, “Consuming Passions: Romance and Consumerism During World War II,” in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105.

⁹ Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 3.

¹⁰ Reekie, *Temptations*, xv-xviii; Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105; Lisa Featherstone, *Let’s Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 121-2; Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (Collingwood: Black Inc, 2012), 161; Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace: Sydney’s Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 90-95.

¹¹ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 122; Matthews, *Dance Hall*, 92.

“creature[s] devoted entirely to pleasure, consumption, and excess.”¹² These young women were associated with the “amateur prostitute” or “privateer,” and their freedom was only seen as temporary, before they “ended their youth in marriage and babies, as their mothers had done before them.”¹³ During the Second World War, and with the arrival of the American soldiers, public, consumerist dating rituals became more widespread and mainstream. Women who participated in sexual activity with servicemen were still condemned as amateur prostitutes, but more broadly men and women meeting and dating in public became the norm. As Finch argued, this also led to an active campaign to reject the hedonism of the flapper and call for the return of traditional courtship as a precursor to marriage.¹⁴ This moment of conflict and tension provides the starting point for this study.

While this work examines the experience of men and women, women are often in the foreground. This is for a number of reasons. Dating was and still is largely seen as a female domain, even while men were gaining more control as it moved into the public realm. Twentieth-century gender roles meant that women were also seen to be responsible for ensuring romantic behaviour stayed within the bounds of social and moral acceptability. This meant that much of the advice about dating in the media was directed at young women, who in turn chose to participate in the creation and adaptation of dating scripts and behaviours. As dating was constructed so explicitly as a precursor for marriage, women were encouraged to take it very seriously as a preparation for their lives as wives and mothers. Chapter Three explores in more detail the different assumed roles and responsibilities for young men and women in the 1950s and 1960s.

There is also a political reason for this foregrounding of women. Jill Julius Matthews has frequently called for further research into the fun and pleasure of female lives as a feminist objective.¹⁵ In relation to the romance and glamour of modernity in the interwar years, Matthews wrote: “too often historians have allowed their subjects only one life, and by embracing romance I hope to bring their other lives into the light.”¹⁶ In this sense, this research contributes to the growing scholarship on pleasure and recreation, and particularly focuses on the ways women sought to take an active role in their romantic lives.

¹² Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 122.

¹³ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 122; Matthews, *Dance Hall*, 95.

¹⁴ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 109, 114.

¹⁵ Jill Julius Matthews, “They Had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women’s League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars,” *History Workshop* 30 (1990): 23, call repeated in Jill Julius Matthews, “History of Gender, Then and Now,” (Keynote Address, Australian Women’s History Network, Sydney, July 8, 2015.)

¹⁶ Matthews, *Dance Hall*, 7.

Aims

The history of gender and sexuality has proven to be a valuable and important area of inquiry, bringing to light many unexplored aspects of everyday life. As Stephen Garton has articulated, histories of sexuality can “offer a means of investigating the clash of instinct and culture – how seemingly timeless and natural behaviours shape and are in turn shaped by history.”¹⁷ Examinations of the complex nature of constructed femininities and masculinities, and how they have altered over time, are vital to understanding gender relations. It is how these structures and processes were created, and relate to each other, and how individual men and women defined themselves within or against them, that provides the historian with a valuable insight into gender roles and processes in the past. And as Joy Damousi has argued, the integration of gender as a “‘process’ and ‘symbolic system’” provides a richer account of our history.¹⁸ A history of dating, then, is an opportunity to examine many aspects of Australia’s social world in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, using gender as a category of analysis. As a practice so closely linked to marriage and reproduction on the one hand, and pleasure and recreation on the other, it also gives space for analyses of the way these concepts were created, consolidated, and rebelled against in the mid-twentieth century.

The aim of this work is to trace a history of dating and one of pleasure in romance through the consolidation of modern courtship rituals and their progression into apparent sexual revolution in mid-twentieth century Australia. Such an examination does not yet exist, and this work therefore aims to extend understanding of ideals of femininities, masculinities, relationships, gender roles and concepts of pleasure and desire throughout historically specific periods. In the United States, dating and courtship rituals have been examined by sociologists and historians, often tracing the history of ‘modern dating’ to the 1920s. Beth Bailey has written a more extensive history of courtship in America, in which she highlighted the relationship between recreational dating, youth culture, and pleasure.¹⁹ Such a study, however, has not been attempted in Australia. As outlined in the literature review below, discussions of courtship have been included in the context of colonial gentility, American

¹⁷ Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2004), ix.

¹⁸ Joy Damousi, “Writing Gender into History and History in Gender: Creating a Nation and Australian Historiography,” *Gender and History* 11, 3 (1999): 613-4.

¹⁹ Bailey, *Front Porch*.

consumerism, or wartime desire, yet dating has not been investigated as a specific subject over a longer time period.²⁰

This research analyses the many competing and at times overlapping purposes for dating as understood at the time, from preparation for marriage to pleasure. It examines the way dating and courtship rituals changed from 1940 to 1970 in Australia, and what was involved in the creation of these changes. It also analyses the ways people subverted social mores, and explores tensions between regulation of sexuality and pleasure, and resistance. It is interested in the way pleasure as a concept features in this history, and particularly in its possible articulation as a site of resistance against social control. To do so, an understanding of these concepts through the lens of Michel Foucault is necessary.

Gender, Sexuality and Pleasure

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault outlined the “specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex” which he argued worked to produce the “historical construct” of sexuality, beginning in the eighteenth century.²¹ He analysed the discursive production of sexuality, and thus power, arguing that it was “in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together.”²² In his refutation of the “Repressive Hypothesis” – that the Victorian era was marked by repression of sexuality – Foucault argued that power mechanisms, hidden in and generated by discourse, were spread across the wider population through the “medical and judicial systems [taking] sexuality under their control.”²³ This resulted in a system where people experienced regulation of their sexuality before they had taken part in any sexual acts. Foucault argued that these institutions were not monolithic sources of power, but that they enabled the production of discourses that shaped society and individuals’ understanding and experience of sexuality. Foucault’s analysis of the way discourses spread through these institutions can assist in tracing the power created by such

²⁰ Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 133-140; Marilyn Lake, “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations Between Australian Women and American Servicemen During World War II,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, 4 (1992): 621-633; Hsu-Ming Teo, “The Americanisation of Romantic Love in Australia,” in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* ed. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2005), 171-192; Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105-116.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 103-105.

²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 100.

²³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 120-122.

authorities and their work in regulation and oppression in other historically specific contexts.²⁴

Importantly, Foucault's ideas about discourses and the localisation of power are useful to any work that engages with both regulation and resistance. Foucault envisaged power as multifaceted, localised, and omnipresent, existing and being created at every point.²⁵ He also argued, however, that resistance too was a complex web of localised points, and indeed could be produced during the construction of power.²⁶ In a discussion of sexuality, the site of such resistance is posited to be the body, and the pleasure it can experience.²⁷ This idea of specific, localised, and multifaceted resistance informs this work.

However, Foucault's positioning of power as omnipresent and inclusive of any resistance against it tends to strip individuals of their hard-won agency and rebellion. His work is also dismissive of the ongoing impact of juridical power alongside disciplinary modes of power.²⁸ Philosophers and historians have challenged the assumption that individual agency is impossible.²⁹ Featherstone's scholarship on pleasure as a site of resistance, agency, change and transformation, as well as pleasure for its own sake, provides an important framework.³⁰ Joan Wallach Scott also argued for the existence of agency "within these processes and structures" of dispersed and multi-faceted power.³¹ Judith Butler, too, argued that their theory of performativity enabled destabilising the "moral, socio-political, and cultural frameworks that condition its formation and thus holds possibilities for political change, social transformation and resistance to oppressive structures."³²

Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* is limited by its androcentrism, and a lack of acknowledgement that gender, like sexuality, has been constructed and

²⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 48, 122.

²⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 48-9, 62, 136.

²⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 95.

²⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol 1*, 157.

²⁸ Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 12.

²⁹ Lisa Featherstone, "Foucault, Feminism, and History," in *Feminist Alliances*, ed. Lynda Burns (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 80-81; Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 96.

³⁰ See Lisa Featherstone, "Rethinking Female Pleasure: Purity and Desire in Early Twentieth-Century Australia," *Women's History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 715-731; Lisa Featherstone, "'The One Single Primary Cause': Divorce, the Family, and Heterosexual Pleasure in Postwar Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 37, 3 (2013): 349-363; Lisa Featherstone, "The Science of Pleasure: Medicine and Sex Therapy in Mid-Twentieth-Century Australia," *Social History of Medicine* 31, 3 (2017): 445-461; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 11, 21, 35 – 37, 177, 271, 288.

³¹ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, 5 (1986): 1067.

³² Parisa Shams, *Judith Butler and Subjectivity: The Possibilities and Limits of the Human* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 3.

controlled.³³ However, his framework is flexible and mutable enough to allow alteration and extrapolation. Foucault rejected essentialism when it came to sexuality, and historians of gender and sexuality are able to apply aspects of his work to challenge such essentialism when analysing the construction of gender itself.

The work of Joan Wallach Scott discusses the potential uses of ‘gender’ as a category for historical analysis.³⁴ She argued that an analysis based on physical difference leads to essentialism and ahistoricity.³⁵ If we instead view gender as a concept that is constantly being constructed, we can analyse the historical processes informing its construction.³⁶ Scott argued against ideas of inherent male and female-ness, and instead called for “a refusal of the fixed and permanent quality of the binary opposition, a genuine historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference.”³⁷ Butler also argued against essentialist ideas of gender or sex, instead proposing a “theory of subjectivity accounting for how performative acts (or the linguistic and bodily reiteration of social norms that constitute the subject) destabilise identity categories.”³⁸ Working within this understanding, this research analyses constructions of gender and sexuality but does not assume that these “normative positions” are inherent, instead viewing them as borne from social conflict and tension about their meaning.³⁹

Butler also analysed the construction and relationality of sex, gender and sexuality. One of the most compelling reasons to examine the history of dating is to investigate the constructions and assumptions about sex, gender and sexuality that are being created or broken down through these romantic rituals. It is necessary to acknowledge this interplay in order to understand the way people experienced these rituals, as well as the way they used them to position their own identity. Butler argued that the relationality of gender and sexuality were important, although not inherent, because “under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality.”⁴⁰ Their work *Gender Trouble* posed, among many, the questions: “Within a language of

³³ Angela King, “The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 5, 2 (2004): 30, 32; Featherstone, “Foucault, Feminism, and History,” 79; Jana Sawicki, “Foucault, Feminism and Questions of Identity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 297, 310.

³⁴ Scott, “Gender,” 1053-1075.

³⁵ Scott, “Gender,” 1059.

³⁶ Scott, “Gender,” 1064.

³⁷ Scott, “Gender,” 1065.

³⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), xxxi; Shams, *Judith Butler*, 2.

³⁹ Scott, “Gender,” 1068.

⁴⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xii.

presumptive heterosexuality, what sorts of continuities are assumed to exist among sex, gender, and desire? Are these terms discrete? What kinds of cultural practices produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance among sex, gender, and desire and call into question their alleged relations?”⁴¹ Working within this nexus of sex, gender, and sexuality, it is important to acknowledge the relationality of their constructions and the information their creations provide about social and political pressures of the time. Regulation of gender roles through dating conventions can certainly be read as a way of safeguarding heterosexuality.

When using gender as a category for analysis, it is crucial to understand the way it is created in relation to other constructions such as class and race.⁴² Much of the instruction on dating by moral authorities illustrates an attempt to ensure productive white, heterosexual, middle-class marriages. The ideal dating, and then married and reproducing, couple was constructed as explicitly white. Aileen Moreton-Robinson outlined the way that the middle-class white woman is a historically constituted “subject position” that is “represented in Australian culture as the embodiment of true womanhood.”⁴³ This is clearly the assumed subject-position of the dating woman in prescriptive literature and the wider discourse studied here. As Scott argued, the needs of the state could influence changes in gender relationships.⁴⁴ After the Second World War Australia found itself in a state of anxiety about its geo-political vulnerability and aimed to bolster its strength through pronatalist policies and white immigration, as encapsulated in the slogan of the day: “Populate or Perish.”⁴⁵

Histories of Gender and Sexuality

These constructions are vital to the understanding of the field of gender history in Australia. Works on sexuality, gender and personal relationships have rested on new understandings of the constructed nature of gender, and the importance context holds in understanding specific forms of masculinity and femininity. Many histories of gender and

⁴¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxxii.

⁴² Judith Butler and Elizabeth Weed, *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 4.

⁴³ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St Lucia, Qld.; University of Queensland Press, 2000), xxiv.

⁴⁴ Scott, “Gender,” 1071, 1074.

⁴⁵ Carolyn Holbrook, “The Transformation of Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, 4 (2016): 408. Slogan used by Federal Opposition leader in 1913, Joseph Cook: “Must populate this continent or perish.”; James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11. Used in the 1930s by former Prime Minister Billy Hughes, taken up by Arthur Calwell, Immigration Minister for the Chifley Government, in reference to post-war immigration policy.

sexuality in Australia have focused on these constructions, as well as the oppression and regulation that often stemmed from a belief that gender was in fact immutable. Marilyn Lake, Judith A. Allen, Matthews, Damousi, Moreton-Robinson and Featherstone have all contributed important works to this area of research, emphasising the co-existence of various constructions of femininity and masculinity through time.⁴⁶

In the development of early stages of gender and feminist history, historians often investigated the repression and regulation of women. As women were frequently absent from traditional history, the first efforts to write gender history regularly concentrated on female subjugation.⁴⁷ Historians then moved to analyse gender as a process and write histories with gender as one of its many “categories for analysis,” and challenge the male-centric field of history more generally.⁴⁸ This led to examinations of the nature of gender and sexuality itself, and research into the historical constructions of femininity and masculinity. Featherstone and Frank Bongiorno have both authored overviews of the history of sexuality in Australia, tracking changes in human relationships placed within their social and political context.⁴⁹ Such works have allowed for the examination of full three-dimensional lives of women in the past, as subjects as well as objects, as agents as well as victims. Histories and studies of girlhood and the complex stages of female adolescence have allowed teenage girls to be seen as central to this field.⁵⁰ As Melissa Bellanta noted, historically “female youth has been used as a testing ground for constructions of sexuality, subjectivity, and decision-making capacity in modern democracies.”⁵¹ Female self-representation is crucial to this project. Historians including Penny Russell, Lake and Katie Holmes have argued for the importance of female

⁴⁶ See for example Marilyn Lake, “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II,” in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60-80; Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984); Lisa Featherstone, “Sexy Mamas?” *Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s*, *Australian Historical Studies* 36, 126 (2006): 234-252; Damousi “Writing Gender”; Judith Allen “Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History,” in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, eds. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (New York: Routledge, 2013), 173-189; Judith A. Allen, “Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians on Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood,” *Radical History Review* 82 (2002):191-207; Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman*.

⁴⁷ Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 8-9.

⁴⁸ Allen, “Evidence and Silence,” 173-189; Scott, “Gender,” 1066.

⁴⁹ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*; Bongiorno, *Sex Lives*.

⁵⁰ Melissa Bellanta, “Rough Maria and Clever Simone: Some Introductory Remarks on the Girl in Australian History,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 34, 4 (2010): 417-428; Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Lesley Johnson, *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993).

⁵¹ Bellanta, “Rough Maria,” 420.

subjectivity in historical work.⁵² This can be particularly insightful when exploring the history of the private realm, traditionally associated with women. The study of romance and dating benefits from this approach.

The Second World War

A number of works have concentrated on the visible and modern forms of romance present during the Second World War and their links to the American presence.⁵³ Lake, who has produced extensive resources on the history of feminism, gender and sexuality in Australia, has brought attention to female desire and agency during the War through analysis of the relations between Australian girls and American men, actively sought and enjoyed by both parties.⁵⁴ She uncovered a sense of agency wielded by these young women, and the language of romance and love that characterised the telling of their stories.⁵⁵ Hsu-Ming Teo and Finch have both explored the consumerist culture associated with the United States, and its effect on dating conventions in Australia during the war.⁵⁶ Teo's work articulates the transnational nature of romantic conventions, as US social norms and ideals were marketed heavily to Australia through mass media and advertising in an age where romance and consumerism were becoming inseparable.⁵⁷ Mark McLelland's work also foregrounds the effect American dating conventions could have on occupied countries, noting specifically the importance of pleasure in an examination of US dating in occupied Japan after the Second World War.⁵⁸ Investigating the impact of the Americans but also war more broadly, Kate Darian-Smith has examined the social and sexual lives of young women in her work on the Melbourne home front and on memory and romance during the Second World War.⁵⁹ Darian-

⁵² Lake, "Female Desires," 69; Penny Russell, "Feminist Biography," *Australian Feminist Studies* 19, 43 (2004): 15-16; Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s* (St. Leonards NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1995); Katie Holmes, "Past, Present, Future: The Future of Feminist History," *Lilith* 15 (2006): 10.

⁵³ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 621-633; Teo, "Americanisation," 171-191; Finch "Consuming Passions," 105-116.

⁵⁴ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 621-633.

⁵⁵ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 621-633; Lake, "Female Desires," 69.

⁵⁶ Teo, "Americanisation," 171-191; Finch, "Consuming Passions," 105-116.

⁵⁷ Teo, "Americanisation," 171-191.

⁵⁸ Mark McLelland, "'Kissing is a Symbol of Democracy!' Dating, Democracy, and Romance in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, 3 (2010): 509, 524-5.

⁵⁹ Kate Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance: Memory, Gender and World War II," in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117-129; Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Darian-Smith, "Remembrance, Romance and Nation: Women's Memories of Wartime Australia," in *Gender and Memory*, eds. S. Leydesdorff, L. Passerini and P. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 151-164.

Smith outlined the way women, when looking back at their wartime experiences, have “employed romance in their life stories to convey a sense of themselves as the subjects of the narratives.”⁶⁰

While historical sources exploring pleasure are rare, those outlining various forms of control and regulation of female sexual desire are more prolific.⁶¹ Indeed, much work has been done in Australia on the regulation of female behaviour and sexuality, and these works are vital for understanding the social environment in which dating occurred. The disruption of the Second World War, and the resulting loosened restraints on social conduct led to a panic about sexuality, particularly female sexuality. The influx of American servicemen ensured that many Australian women had access to a new and different type of suitor. As Darian-Smith noted, this “friendly invasion” heightened tensions “between the overt expressions of female sexuality and consumerism that dominated popular culture in the inter-war years, and the reconceptualisation of a modern femininity that emerged from the war.”⁶² Historians have explored the way Australia reacted to the increased visibility of dating rituals, and the attempted social and moral control of young women that gained considerable traction in response.⁶³ At the time, many argued that women were in danger or caught up in the middle of a battle between the allied Americans and Australians. Historians who have echoed these views have been criticised for privileging the official record, which ignores the experience of those women who were able not only to survive but thrive in the unfamiliar and in many ways relatively unrestrained environment.⁶⁴ Eileen Hennessey has criticised John Hammond Moore for relying on “patriarchal official sources.”⁶⁵ Similarly, Michael Sturma, although arguing that “women were not mere pawns... but played an active role” at times played into the portrayal and understanding of women as victims of a battle between men, due to a

⁶⁰ Darian-Smith, “Remembering Romance,” 127.

⁶¹ Featherstone, “Rethinking Female Pleasure,” 716-7.

⁶² Kate Darian-Smith, “World War 2 and Post-war Reconstruction, 1939-49,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia* ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 100.

⁶³ Michael Sturma, “Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 24 (1989): 3-17; Monica Dux, “‘Discharging the Truth’: Venereal Disease, the Amateur and the Print Media, 1942-1945,” *Lilith* 10 (2001): 75-91; Helen Pace, “‘All the Nice Girls...’ A Case Study in the Social Control of Women, Melbourne 1942,” *Hecate* 18, 1 (1992): 38-59; Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, “‘To Combat the Plague’: The Construction of Moral Alarm and State Intervention in Queensland during World War II,” *Hecate* 14, 1 (1988): 4; Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 176-224; Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: WWII* (Scoresby, Vic.: Five Mile Press, 2014), 240-253; John Hammond Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid and Over Here: Americans in Australia 1941-1945* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 143-149, 160-161.

⁶⁴ Eileen Hennessey, “... the Cheapest Thing in Australia is the Girls’: Young Women in Townsville 1942-45,” *Queensland Review* 1, 1 (1994): 64.

⁶⁵ Hennessey, “The Cheapest Thing,” 64.

reliance on police incident reports.⁶⁶ As Hennessey argued: “the dark side of women’s experiences of US military personnel, which has been portrayed as typical, becomes much less significant when ordinary women are given the opportunity to speak.”⁶⁷ Yorick Smaal’s work on homosexuality in the services and civilian life during the Second World War is an important exception to this trend, as his methodology makes use of a combination of sources, including court records, to trace networks of love and friendship between gay men in wartime Britain.⁶⁸

Lake, Hennessey, Helen Pace and Monica Dux have outlined how the real frustration and difficulties for women stemmed from moralistic sanctions imposed by Australian society, not the exotic, glamorous and desired American servicemen.⁶⁹ Hennessey argued that the positioning of the relationships between Australian women and American men as “a transfer of property rights” is insulting, and ignores the pleasure women found in such socialisation.⁷⁰ Although in many ways war offered women greater opportunities, Dux has demonstrated that those who dared to take them were condemned and restricted in their behaviour.⁷¹ The attempted social control of women often took the form of constructing women as either “sexually threatened” or “sexually uncontrollable”: both needing to be kept off the street and away from men.⁷² Darian-Smith has outlined the way that women were targeted for surveillance and regulation in the context of the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STI), assumed to be spread by women, who were therefore considered a threat to the Australian and American forces.⁷³ The moral panic over STIs enabled Australian authorities to implement restrictions on women’s behaviours that were clearly an attempt to “enforce morality.”⁷⁴ Despite the panic about unrestrained desire and sexual pleasures, however, the enduring ideology of motherhood and marriage remained strong among many Australian

⁶⁶ Sturma, “Loving the Alien,” 4, 5, 8-9, 12, 15.

⁶⁷ Hennessey, “The Cheapest Thing,” 70.

⁶⁸ Yorick Smaal, “Friends and Lovers: Social Networks and Homosexual Life in War-time Queensland, 1938-1948,” in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* eds. Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2011): 168-187.

⁶⁹ Hennessey, “The Cheapest Thing” 62; Pace, “All the Nice Girls,” 5-6, 10 of 18; Dux “Discharging the Truth,” 80; Lake, “Female Desires,” 67-69; Lake, “Desire for a Yank,” 626.

⁷⁰ Hennessey, “The Cheapest Thing,” 64, 66.

⁷¹ Dux, “Discharging the Truth,” 76-77.

⁷² Pace, “All the Nice Girls,” 8 of 18.

⁷³ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 186-193.

⁷⁴ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 191.

women.⁷⁵ As Featherstone argued, any notion of sexual agency was still “constrained by practical and domestic concerns.”⁷⁶

Lake and Damousi asserted that women’s experiences were often overwritten, particularly in a time marked by the masculine pursuit of war.⁷⁷ Many of the chapters included in their edited collection *Gender and War* have prompted historical inquiry into those often left off the record. Heterosexual desire and romance were highly visible during the war, and anxieties over promiscuity were accompanied by quieter, more secretive fears of not only male, but female homosexuality. Ruth Ford has produced a number of works exploring Australian lesbian experiences, and her examination of the women’s services reveals a twinned fear of “lesbians and loose women,” for both constituted a “transgression of gender roles.”⁷⁸ Garry Wotherspoon also investigated homosexuality in the context of the Second World War.⁷⁹ Both he and Ford argued that official condemnation of same-sex sexual behaviour, although dangerous and very restrictive, could in some cases enable gay men and lesbian women to find and create more visible subcultures and identities for other same-sex attracted people. Smaal has investigated the experiences of gay men during the Second World War, including those serving overseas and civilians on the home front.⁸⁰ Gay men and lesbian women’s stories within the military did not end with the war, and Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett have brought together stories of LGBTI Australians in the services after the Second World War.⁸¹ Riseman and Robinson have also used oral histories to author a broader history of Australian defence institutions and the service of LGBTI Australians since 1945.⁸² Many of these personal stories include details of love and romance.

⁷⁵ Darian-Smith, “World War 2 and Post-war Reconstruction,” 108; Featherstone, “Sexy Mamas,” 252.

⁷⁶ Featherstone, “Sexy Mamas,” 245.

⁷⁷ Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, “Introduction: Warfare, History and Gender,” in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.

⁷⁸ Ruth Ford, “Lesbians and Loose Women: Female Sexuality and the Women’s Services During World War II,” in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81.

⁷⁹ Garry Wotherspoon, “Comrades in Arms: World War II and Male Homosexuality in Australia,” in *Gender & War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 205-222.

⁸⁰ Yorick Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939-45: Queer Identities in Australia in the Second World War* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 168-187; Yorick Smaal, “‘It is One of Those Things That Nobody Can Explain’: Medicine, Homosexuality and the Australian Criminal Courts During World War II,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, 3 (2013): 501-524.

⁸¹ Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018.)

⁸² Noah Riseman and Shirleene Robinson, *Pride in Defence: The Australian Military and LGBTI Service Since 1945* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2020.)

State and federal governments, military authorities, and Christian churches were all concerned about apparent loosening of social mores during the war. In the post-war period, there was an attempt to refocus on the happy suburban family in a modern world. However, new youth cultures were also emerging, and widespread consumerism and industrialisation brought with them new forms of recreation and socialisation. Historians have worked to properly place the 1950s in its historical context. Whilst often seen in popular imagination as a time of stasis and conservatism, John Murphy in *Imagining the Fifties* argued that hindsight has obscured an understanding of the first half of the 1950s as unstable and fearful for many.⁸³ Anxieties about the Cold War and economic downturn meant that society remained in a state of instability and nervousness, despite economic growth.⁸⁴ In response to fears about economic depression and the Cold War, Australians were convinced by politicians to fulfil their responsibilities as citizens by turning inwards and committing themselves to the home and family: the building blocks of society.⁸⁵ This reconstruction of the family and home life necessarily included an examination and construction of sexuality and heterosexual relationships after the “destabilising experiences of the war.”⁸⁶ As Katie Holmes and Sarah Pinto argued, this imposed vision of suburban comfort and family, so associated with the decade, was not a natural progression after the end of war, but rather an “imagined solution” to instability.⁸⁷ According to Murphy, as the 1950s progressed, the economic boom continued and fears of a third World War faded, attention could then be properly paid to the limits of so-called ‘domestic bliss’ which were thus laid bare.⁸⁸

For young people born into this modern culture of consumerism, the 1950s and 1960s were a time of new fashion, music, and sexual and social mores. Not sharing in their parents’ anxieties, these youths participated fully in Americanised cultural offerings such as rock’n’roll and new fashion. Groups of these rebellious youths were called bodgies and widgies, and the new teenage style attracted much attention at the time and historical scrutiny

⁸³ John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies’ Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), 6.

⁸⁴ Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, “The Social Context of Postwar Conservatism,” in *Australia’s First Cold War 1945-53* ed. Ann Curthoys and John Merrit (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 1-28; Judith Brett, “The Menzies Era, 1950-66,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia* ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112-134.

⁸⁵ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 6.

⁸⁶ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 7.

⁸⁷ Katie Holmes and Sarah Pinto, “Gender and Sexuality,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia* ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 308-331.

⁸⁸ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 7.

since. Frequently, the focus was on delinquency and deviancy, and this was more often than not centred around sexual attitudes and behaviour. This led to a moral panic about the highly visible and independent bodgies and widgies, which often affected a wider group of young people.⁸⁹ The emergence of the teenager as a category led to anxieties about how to control the teenage body, with its complicated sexual desires and the leisure time in which to explore them. Raymond Evans argued that the memory of the loosened restraints of the war meant that hostility to teens was not simply a case of intergenerational differences, but also a built-in fear of a return to apparent “moral deviancy” of wartime.⁹⁰ The intersection of modernity, consumerism, pop culture and teenagers has proved a fruitful area for research. Jon Stratton’s study of bodgies and widgies, *The Young Ones*, analyses the group in the context of class, consumerism, and Americanisation, teasing out the connection to older working-class culture.⁹¹ The tension between a supposedly out-of-control youth and a new market for a consumerist culture led to a complicated juggling act when attempting to regulate and define teenage behaviour.⁹² Once behaviour reached the mainstream, the associated deviance was significantly lessened, and it became another marketable good. Evans and Judith Bessant have both examined youth subcultures in this period, including the bodgies and widgies and their successors, the rockers, sharpies and mods.⁹³

Evans has explored the impact of rock’n’roll in the 1950s, so shocking when it splashed onto the scene, and so influential in the definition of the new teens as a “distinct social and economic category.”⁹⁴ Importantly, it also gave young people a space in which to begin “separating and redefining” themselves.⁹⁵ Evans argued that one of the key ways rock’n’roll generated change was in the encouragement of “permissiveness” in heterosexual dating relations among the youth.⁹⁶ It also led to a new type of dancing which allowed for

⁸⁹ Judith Bessant, “Described, Measured and Labelled: Eugenics, Youth Policy and Moral Panic in Victoria in the 1950s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, 31 (1991): 8-28; Nicholas Brown, “Sometimes the Cream Rises to the Top, Sometimes the Scum”: The Exacting Culture and Politics of Style in the 1950s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 28, 109 (1997): 49-63; Raymond Evans, “... To Try to Ruin’: Rock’n’Roll, Youth Culture and Law’n’Order in Brisbane, 1956-1957,” *Australian Historical Studies* 28, 109 (1997): 106-119; Jon Stratton, *The Young Ones* (Perth: Black Swan Press, 1992).

⁹⁰ Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 108.

⁹¹ Stratton, *The Young Ones*.

⁹² Jon Stratton, “Bodgies and Widgies – Youth Cultures in the 1950s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 8, 15 (1984): 20.

⁹³ Judith Bessant, “‘Hanging Around the Street’: Australian Rockers, Sharpies and Skinheads of the 1960s and Early 1970s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 19, 45 (1995): 15-31; Raymond Evans, “‘So Tough’? Masculinity and Rock’n’roll Culture in Post-war Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, 56 (1998): 125-137; Bessant, “Described, Measured and Labelled,” 8-28; Evans, “‘To Try to Ruin,’” 106-119.

⁹⁴ Evans, “‘So Tough,’” 126.

⁹⁵ Evans, “‘So Tough,’” 126.

⁹⁶ Evans, “‘So Tough,’” 126.

less inhibited expression and more contact with others. Sturma and Adam Trainer have also examined the importance of dancing and rock'n'roll in young people's lives in the post-war period.⁹⁷

Advances in technology helped change dating cultures, and teenagers created spaces in which they could explore their new opportunities. Graeme Davison outlined how the prevalence of car ownership in 1950s Melbourne expanded a young person's dating in a geographical sense, as well as giving teens greater independence, privacy and social status.⁹⁸ The drive-in cinema, despite being primarily marketed to families, was quickly brought into the teenage world, proving to be extremely popular with dating youths, to the extent that by the 1960s they were infamously known as "passion pits."⁹⁹ Young people took full advantage of modern technologies and revelled in pop culture, finding a space for themselves in which to explore their desires, and have fun.

Unsurprisingly, much of the work of Australian historians of the 1950s focuses on the family, seen at the time as vital to personal happiness and good citizenship.¹⁰⁰ Threats to marriages and the family were perceived as threats to the community, and even the nation, and therefore, Featherstone argued, sexual pleasure was seen to be essential to, and had to be contained within, heterosexual matrimony.¹⁰¹ Homosexuality was perceived as a clear threat to the ideal of heterosexual nuclear families, and Willett addressed the difficulties inherent in living through the 1950s as a homosexual in "The Darkest Decade."¹⁰² He disagreed with Ford and Wotherspoon's arguments that repression of homosexuality led to an increased discussion of the same, and therefore a greater visibility of gay and lesbian subcultures. He argued that the generative power of this Foucauldian incitement to discourse was simply not

⁹⁷ Michael Sturma, "The Politics of Dancing: When Rock'n'roll Came to Australia," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25, 4 (1992): 123-142; Adam Trainer, "From Snakepits to Ballrooms: Class, Race and Early Rock'n'Roll in Perth," *Continuum* 31, 2 (2017): 216-229; Adam Trainer, "'Making Do in Ways We Hadn't Done Before': The Early Popular Music Industry in Perth," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 28, 1 (2016): 248-273.

⁹⁸ Graeme Davison, *Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 69-70.

⁹⁹ Ben Goldsmith, "'The Comfort Lies in all the Things You Can Do': The Australian Drive-in – Cinema of Distraction," *Journal of Popular Culture* 33, 1 (1999): 153-164; John Richardson, "Movies Under the Stars: Drive-ins and Modernity," *Continuum* 1, 1 (1998): 111-115.

¹⁰⁰ David Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s," *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 109 (1997): 133-146; John Murphy, "Shaping the Cold War Family: Politics, Domesticity and Policy Interventions in the 1950s," *Australian Historical Studies* 26, 105 (1995): 544-567; James Walter, "Designing Families and Solid Citizens: The Dialectic of Modernity and the Matrimonial Causes Bill, 1959," *Australian Historical Studies* 32, 116 (2001): 40-56; Featherstone, "The One Single Primary Cause," 349-363.

¹⁰¹ Featherstone, "The One Single Primary Cause," 351-3.

¹⁰² Graham Willett, "The Darkest Decade: Homophobia in 1950s Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 109 (1997): 120.

powerful enough to overcome the repression homosexual people experienced.¹⁰³ This is, in a way, supported by the work of oral historians in the book exploring gay and lesbian experiences in Newcastle and the Hunter, *Out in the Valley*. While a severe police crackdown on homosexuality definitely put the topic in the papers, it also ensured the following decade was haunted by the fear and trauma suffered by camp men in the 1950s, effectively silencing discussion and crushing any attempts at the revival of a gay subculture before they began.¹⁰⁴ Rebecca Jennings argued that in this period silence acted as a “disciplinary mechanism” that policed female same-sex desire, which ensured that the production of lesbian identities through a “prohibitive discourse” was impossible.¹⁰⁵

The experiences of gay men and lesbian women were of course different to those of their heterosexual peers. However, they still socialised, dated, and fell in love, and historians have worked to uncover the details wherever possible. *Out in the Valley* used oral history to trace the history of homosexual men and women in the Hunter Valley, across a broad period of time.¹⁰⁶ Jim Wafer’s “Uncle Doreen’s Family Drag Album” includes details about the spaces and ways in which camp men could meet, for sex or relationships, the impact of the war on homosexual lives, and the private networks that sprang up after it, only to be brutally targeted by the police.¹⁰⁷ Wotherspoon also used oral histories to great effect in his history of Sydney, *City of the Plain*, examining a thriving social subculture that provided many opportunities for love and friendship.¹⁰⁸ Clive Moore’s work followed similar developments in Queensland.¹⁰⁹ Robert Reynolds’ *From Camp to Queer* examines the development of the Australian gay and lesbian movement, locating and contextualising its early days in the late 1960s before moving to the key years of the 1970s.¹¹⁰ Willett’s history of gay and lesbian

¹⁰³ Willett, “The Darkest Decade,” 121.

¹⁰⁴ Jim Wafer, “Uncle Doreen’s Family Drag Album: A Reading of Hunter Valley Social History from a Gay Man’s Perspective,” in *Out in the Valley: Hunter Gay and Lesbian Histories*, eds. Jim Wafer, Erica Southgate and Lyndall Coen (Newcastle: Newcastle Regional Library, 2000), 48, 60-61.

¹⁰⁵ Rebecca Jennings, *Unnamed Desires: A Sydney Lesbian History* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015), xvi-xviii.

¹⁰⁶ Jim Wafer, Erica Southgate and Lyndall Coen, ed. *Out in the Valley: Hunter Gay and Lesbian Histories* (Newcastle: Newcastle Regional Library, 2000.)

¹⁰⁷ Wafer, “Uncle Doreen’s Family Drag Album,” 54-60, 77.

¹⁰⁸ Garry Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain: History of a Gay Subculture* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1991.) This book was updated and republished in 2016 as: Garry Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney: A History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016.)

¹⁰⁹ Clive Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows: The Development of Gay and Lesbian Culture in Queensland* (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2001.)

¹¹⁰ Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Remaking the Australian Homosexual* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2018.)

activism in Australia identifies the importance of the communities formed in these subcultures.¹¹¹

The experiences of lesbian women are often rendered invisible in history. Lyndall Coen's contribution to *Out in the Valley*, a collection of "lesbian history excerpts" includes oral histories and "tall tales" passed down in the community. These stories help shed light on social networks lesbian women built despite many barriers.¹¹² Jennings also utilised oral histories to reveal hidden homosexual experiences through her exploration of lesbian social structures in post-war Sydney.¹¹³ Internationally, large cities began accommodating a lesbian bar scene in the 1940s and 1950s, but Australia's smaller size and "restrictive female public drinking culture" stood in the way of such a development in its major cities.¹¹⁴ Instead, Jennings' findings support those in Newcastle: lesbians primarily socialised through private networks until a slow emergence of the camp male scene in the 1960s, and the establishment of female-only spaces in the feminist movement of the 1970s.¹¹⁵ Ford's work on lesbian love and relationships in the twentieth century provides extensive detail on how these networks functioned.¹¹⁶ While the media almost completely ignored gay and lesbian romantic behaviour, historians have used oral histories to great effect to uncover the experiences of gay men and lesbian women living and loving during the 1950s and 1960s.

Other groups were also frequently ignored when it comes to histories of pleasure and romance. Non-white Australians were excluded from a narrative of white Australian history, except for a record of restriction and repression. The concepts of sex and race are complex and often intertwined, and it is important to address how 'White Australia' attempted to control, regulate, and suppress non-white sexuality. It is somewhat harder to investigate moments of romance and love. Victoria Haskins and John Maynard have, however, written of various types of relationships between Aboriginal men and white women, utilising a blended methodology that works to understand sexuality within the context of colonialism, gender

¹¹¹ Graham Willet, *Living Out Loud* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000.)

¹¹² Lyndall Coen, ed. "Filling Some Gaps: Lesbian History Excerpts From the "Hunter Pride" Exhibition" in *Out in the Valley: Hunter Gay and Lesbian Histories* (Newcastle: Newcastle Regional Library, 2000), 203-217.

¹¹³ Rebecca Jennings, "A Room Full of Women: Lesbian Bars and Social Spaces in Postwar Sydney," *Women's History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 813-829; Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*.

¹¹⁴ Jennings, "A Room Full of Women," 816-7.

¹¹⁵ Jennings, "A Room Full of Women," 813.

¹¹⁶ See for example Ruth Ford "Speculating on Scrapbooks, Sex and Desire: Issues in Lesbian History," *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 106 (1996):11-26; Ruth Ford, "They 'Were Wed, and Merrily Rang the Bells': Gender-crossing and Same-sex Marriage in Australia, 1900-1940," in *Australian Gay and Lesbian Perspectives* 5, eds. Graham Willett and David Phillips (Sydney: Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research, 2000), 41-66; Ruth Ford, "Contested Desires: Narratives of Passionate Friends, Married Masqueraders and Lesbian Love in Australia, 1918-1945" (PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 2000).

and racial anxieties, as well as to recover “hidden or submerged narratives” of relationships across the racial divide.¹¹⁷ Their stated aim, to “begin to articulate a space in which the individual’s voices from the past might be heard in the present” is one that is extremely valuable to the research of romance and pleasure, especially among marginalised groups.¹¹⁸ Katherine Ellinghaus and Ann McGrath have both authored studies analysing marriages and relationships across race lines in America and Australia.¹¹⁹ Relationships between Aboriginal and white Australians existed in the context of assimilation policies which combined rhetoric about equality through cultural assimilation and material policies of segregation, child removal and discrimination, aimed at “producing disciplined servants, who would comply with the requirements of being in service, by alienating [Aboriginal people] from Indigenous culture and their country.”¹²⁰ State intervention in marriage and segregation both informed the experiences of romance and dating for Aboriginal people.

The assimilation policy forms the backdrop for the time period addressed in this work. Aboriginal people were the main target of these policies, which were explicitly working toward the elimination of the racial ‘other’ and the pursuit of a white Australia. Anna Haebich’s work on assimilation in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s examines the experience of Aboriginal people in Australia, as well as immigrants and refugees entering Australia in the wake of the Second World War.¹²¹

White Australia’s anxieties about sexuality and race were also stoked by fears of the disrupting power of European migrants after the war.¹²² In an analysis of “migrant others” in the widely read *Women’s Weekly*, Susan Sheridan argued that the magazine constructed this other primarily as migrant men, marketed to the assumed reader: an interested, white, heterosexual young woman.¹²³ Migrants were frequently constructed in this medium as exotic, possibly dangerous “objects of a feminised Anglo gaze.”¹²⁴ Francesco Ricatti

¹¹⁷ Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History,” *Australian Historical Studies* 126 (2005): 193.

¹¹⁸ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power,” 216.

¹¹⁹ Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887-1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015.)

¹²⁰ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman*, 14, 21.

¹²¹ Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970* (North Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Press, 2008).

¹²² Holmes and Pinto, “Gender and Sexuality,” 323.

¹²³ Susan Sheridan, “The ‘Australian Woman’ and her Migrant Others in the Postwar Australian Women’s Weekly,” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 14, 2 (2000): 125-6.

¹²⁴ Sheridan, “The Australian Woman,” 126.

analysed letters sent to an Italian language Australian newspaper in order to probe further into the views of migrants themselves.¹²⁵ His analysis of the relations between gender, sex and identity led to a conclusion that the “migrant’s material and discursive practices of love, marriage and sex were often devoted to the elaboration of a sense of belonging and to the construction of ethnic micro-communities,” often at the expense of Australian women, who were constructed as themselves a morally inferior other.¹²⁶ It was a complex relationship as Australian brides could be the path to modernity and higher socioeconomic status.¹²⁷ Zora Simic’s work on migrant bachelors illuminated the way marriage could be both a marker of assimilation, and a sign of its inadequacy, due to an imbalance of the sexes in the post-war migration program.¹²⁸

A Sexual Revolution?

The 1960s is popularly remembered as a time of sexual permissiveness and freedom, after the conservatism of the 1950s. Contextualising the decade can help us see the links to the sexual revolution in the years before, and the way the 1960s built into the more revolutionary 1970s. Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett have argued that many ignore the important links between the Second World War and the 1960s.¹²⁹ This is perhaps due in part to the understanding of the 1950s as a conservative period existing between two times of change, ignoring the instabilities of the decade. Instead, the years after the war can be seen as a time of ferment and questioning, gradually building momentum through to the small, slow beginnings of revolution in the 1960s.¹³⁰ Smaal’s investigation into “Sex in the Sixties” noted that historians have begun to address the insufficient simple narrative of the sexual, revolutionary 60s, and in particular the supposedly dramatic and immediate impact of the pill on Australian society.¹³¹ As Bongiorno and Featherstone have both argued, the arrival of the

¹²⁵ Francesco Ricatti “‘Was I Cursed?’ ‘Was I Hypnotized?’ Ethnic Morality, Sexual Dilemmas and Spectral Fantasies of Italians in Australia (1956-1964),” *Women’s History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 753-771.

¹²⁶ Ricatti, “‘Was I Cursed?’” 755-6.

¹²⁷ Ricatti, “‘Was I Cursed?’” 758.

¹²⁸ Simic, Zora, “Bachelors of Misery and Proxy Brides: Marriage, Migration and Assimilation, 1947-1973,” *History Australia* 11, 1 (2014): 149-174.

¹²⁹ Robin Gerster and Jan Basset, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia* (South Yarra: Victoria Hyland House Publishing, 1991), 7-8.

¹³⁰ Gerster and Basset, *Seizures of Youth*, 40-41.

¹³¹ Yorick Smaal, “Sex in the Sixties,” in *The 1960s in Australia: People, Power and Politics* eds. Shirleene Robinson and Julie Ustinoff (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 70; Holmes and Pinto, “Gender and Sexuality,” 324; Frank Bongiorno, “January 1961: The Release of the Pill: Contraceptive Technology and the ‘Sexual Revolution,’” in *Turning Points in Australian History* eds. Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009): 157-170.

pill at the beginning of the 60s was more a symbolic change, a promise, for many Australians.¹³² Part of the problem, again, was the separation of the decade from what came before and after.

As many historians have argued, the impulse to neatly separate decades is too simplistic to be useful here. Smaal's conclusions, based on oral histories of both heterosexual and homosexual men and women, tend to support the view that the 1960s were not nearly as sexually unrestrained as imagined.¹³³ Importantly, homosexual acts were still illegal, pathologised, and driven underground, and lesbian women often lived in isolation from a community.¹³⁴ However, as in the preceding decades, "many camp women and men simply got on with their lives", establishing networks and mechanisms to survive in a world that rejected them as "outlaws and deviants."¹³⁵ As with early histories of women, a concentration on repression may sideline the important issue of agency. As the decade progressed, so did the visibility of homosexuality, and the cause gained support leading into the 1970s.¹³⁶

Pleasure and Dating

This study of romance and dating includes an investigation of the concept of pleasure, and its place in the construction of sexuality and gender in a society. Featherstone's work on purity and desire in early twentieth-century Australia argues the case for continued work on the historicisation of pleasure, bringing to light a concept often absent from written historical record.¹³⁷ The pursuit of such an aim requires the historian to attempt to uncover the voices of men and women not normally heard, speaking of their everyday lives. The need in particular for female self-representation in a field that is often preoccupied with the oppression and regulation of women is evident. As Lake has shown, the foregrounding of pleasure and desire often goes hand in hand with the understanding of women as active and desiring agents in their own lives.¹³⁸ Histories of repression and control are, of course, necessary, yet it is important to try to understand aspects of everyday lives beyond this. Internationally, a Nordic generational project into youth and sexuality foregrounded the importance of finding the "fun in gender," as this pursuit of pleasure and recreation, in a world of increased individual

¹³² Bongiorno, "January 1961," 157-158, 167; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 288.

¹³³ Smaal, "Sex in the Sixties," 88.

¹³⁴ Smaal, "Sex in the Sixties," 86.

¹³⁵ Smaal, "Sex in the Sixties," 85-6.

¹³⁶ Smaal, "Sex in the Sixties," 87.

¹³⁷ Featherstone, "Rethinking Female Pleasure," 716.

¹³⁸ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 632; Lake, "Female Desires," 69.

freedoms, mass culture and consumption, was essential to youth cultures of the twentieth century worldwide.¹³⁹ In Australia, Michelle Arrow's work on popular culture since 1945 similarly provides access to many aspects of youth culture, pleasure, recreation, and mass consumerism.¹⁴⁰

Bailey's American study of dating illustrates how changing courtship conventions may often parallel wider societal and cultural changes.¹⁴¹ The rise of recreational dating came alongside emerging youth cultures, an embrace of consumerism and the pursuit of pleasure through heterosexual socialisation and relationships.¹⁴² Eva Illouz has examined the relationship between dating and consumption in her work on love and capitalism in America.¹⁴³ In England, Claire Langhamer has analysed courtship rituals in the middle of the twentieth century, highlighting "youthful heterosexual relationships prior to, but not necessarily resulting in, marriage."¹⁴⁴ These works place dating and courtship rituals within broader concepts of recreation, leisure and consumerism, and acknowledge their complex relationship to the institution of marriage. This research will also situate dating rituals in this space, examining competing understandings of the purpose and role of dating in the lives of young Australians.

Studies of dating in England and America share many commonalities with those in Australia. Teo, introducing her edited collection on the popular culture of romantic love in Australia, observed that the included works "tend to highlight connections and engagements with the wider Anglophone world."¹⁴⁵ These transnational links are an important feature of Australian cultural and social life in the twentieth century, even as Australia remained resistant to immigration. Jill Julius Matthews has outlined the importance of "the great international movement of things, people and ideas" to the emergence of modernity in Australia in the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg, "Fun in Gender – Youth and Sexuality, Class and Generation," *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 15, 2-3 (2007): 101.

¹⁴⁰ Michelle Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia Since 1945* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 54-60, 62-68.

¹⁴¹ Bailey, *Front Porch*, 7.

¹⁴² Bailey, *Front Porch*, 10, 13.

¹⁴³ Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.)

¹⁴⁴ Claire Langhamer, "Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 50, 1 (2007): 176; Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁴⁵ Hsu-Ming Teo, "Introduction," in *The Popular Culture of Romantic Love in Australia* ed. Hsu-Ming Teo (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2017), 31.

¹⁴⁶ Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace*, 2.

In Australia, some historians have incorporated dating rituals into their work, including Russell in her examination of colonial gentility, Lake, especially in her work on the Second World War and Featherstone, as part of her study of discourses surrounding sex and sexuality.¹⁴⁷ Gail Reekie incorporated analysis of courtship changes at the turn of the twentieth century into her study of department stores.¹⁴⁸ Lyn Finch developed this work, examining the specifically consumerist nature of dating during the Second World War.¹⁴⁹ Teo has analysed American courtship practices and their influence on Australians even before the war.¹⁵⁰ Teo has also produced an edited collection on romantic love as expressed and constructed through popular culture throughout Australian history.¹⁵¹ She argued that an interdisciplinary approach, utilised effectively in America and Britain as well as Australia, “provides a way to look at how love is produced culturally,” rather than trying to pin down exact definitions of terms like love or romance.¹⁵² Similarly, this work examines the social production of ideas of love, romance, friendship, gender and sexuality through dating rituals and behaviours, as well as the production of dating conventions themselves.

Methodology

Many of the studies discussed above have incorporated oral history into their methodologies. Further studies have relied completely on the technique to uncover otherwise hidden aspects of everyday life. In particular, Robyn Arrowsmith and Catherine Dyson have both authored works based on extensive interviews with Australian war-brides married to American and English soldiers respectively.¹⁵³ The predominance of the interview in this field is not surprising. Oral histories have often been useful, as Josephine May articulated in her work on sex education, in the investigation of “forbidden knowledge” and behaviour.¹⁵⁴ She responded to the familiar critique of oral history as ‘unreliable’ by pointing out the problematic nature of all historical sources, and proposing a “blended methodology,” using

¹⁴⁷ Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, 133-135; Lake, “The Desire for a Yank,” 631; Lake, “Female Desires,” 70; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 266-270.

¹⁴⁸ Reekie, *Temptations*, xv-xviii.

¹⁴⁹ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105-116.

¹⁵⁰ Teo, “Americanisation,” 183.

¹⁵¹ Hsu-Ming Teo, ed. *The Popular Culture of Romantic Love in Australia* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2017.)

¹⁵² Teo, “Introduction,” 20.

¹⁵³ Robyn Arrowsmith, *All the Way to the USA: Australian WWII War Brides* (Mittagong NSW: Robyn Arrowsmith, 2013); Catherine Dyson, *Swing By Sailor: True Stories from the War Brides of HMS Victorious* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2007).

¹⁵⁴ Josephine May, “Secrets and Lies: Sex Education and Gendered Memories of Childhood’s End in an Australian Provincial City, 1930s-1950s,” *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning* 6, 1 (2006): 4.

oral and written sources together, and treating both with the analytic rigour they require.¹⁵⁵ Alistair Thomson's "Biography" of the Australia 1938 oral history project traces the controversial inclusion of oral history into mainstream historical methodology in the 1970s.¹⁵⁶ The project's leaders responded to criticism in a similar way to May, arguing that oral history sources are no more problematic than written, and can be incorporated into a useful methodology in much the same way.¹⁵⁷ The seeming limitations of oral history – its supposed unreliability, the reliance on memory – can be seen as an opportunity, a "resource rather than a problem."¹⁵⁸ Darian-Smith's work on memory, romance and the Second World War illustrated the way analysis of individual and collective memory can aid our understanding of historical experiences.¹⁵⁹

I had hoped to add to the collection of oral histories by interviewing people who dated during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶⁰ However, I have been able to include information from two interviews only in this work, as the process of finding and interviewing older Australians was disrupted in part by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully, many other historians and interviewers have made their collections accessible in libraries, archives and online. In particular, the interviews collected as part of the *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, the *Bringing Them Home* oral history project, and those conducted by Garry Wotherspoon as research for his book *City of the Plain* proved rich sources of information.¹⁶¹ Throughout this research, I work to bring the voices of individuals to the fore. I use interviews, letters and other writings to weave the experiences of these people into a history of dating and romance, representing the importance of private experiences, desires and understandings in social history.

Alongside these self-representations, this work also examines prescriptive literature in relation to dating, romance, and pleasure. Featherstone's work with prescriptive literature provides a framework, as she argued that this type of scholarship provides an opportunity to

¹⁵⁵ May, "Secrets and Lies", 4.

¹⁵⁶ Alistair Thomson, "Biography of an Archive: 'Australia 1938' and the Vexed Development of Australian Oral History," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, 3 (2014): 425-449.

¹⁵⁷ Thomson, "Biography," 433-4.

¹⁵⁸ Thomson, "Biography," 434.

¹⁵⁹ Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance," 127.

¹⁶⁰ Ethics Approval for this project was granted by the University of Newcastle, protocol no. H-2016-0018.

¹⁶¹ *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, 1998-2002, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081>; *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, 2011-2014, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn5973925>; Katie Holmes, Alistair Thomson, Kate Darian-Smith and Penelope Edmonds, "Oral History and Australian Generations," *Australian Historical Studies* 47, 1 (2016): 1-7; Garry Wotherspoon, 1980-1990, MLOH 448 *Garry Wotherspoon Oral History Interviews with Gay Men, 1980-1990*, State Library New South Wales, Sydney, <https://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110320963>.

explore “the complex and interwoven relationships between discourse and embodiment.”¹⁶² In *Let’s Talk About Sex*, she utilised prescriptive literature and social conventions alongside, wherever possible, individual voices, in order to better understand both the dominant discursive constructions of sexuality, and those that lie on the edge of so-called “normality.”¹⁶³ This can, as she acknowledged, be a fraught activity, yet it is one that works to uncover a wider variety of experiences than an analysis of prescriptive literature alone. Bailey’s history of dating in America also makes use of this approach, acknowledging that while prescriptive literature does not always determine individual experience or behaviours, it does provide a broader context within which those private actions can be understood.¹⁶⁴ Working within this tension between prescription and individual experience yields a greater understanding of the way dominant discourses about sexuality were constructed, and how people created their own identities alongside, in response to, and against these discourses. Pamela S. Haag’s work utilised a Foucauldian methodology to analyse the construction of female subjectivity through discourses and examined in particular the interactions between dominant ideologies and self-representation.¹⁶⁵

The prescriptive literature used to instruct Australians on how to conduct their relationships include newspaper and magazine articles, as well as sex education materials. Featherstone acknowledged that such sources can be problematic, as “we cannot be sure how these were constructed read, understood, or utilised.”¹⁶⁶ However, they are useful in this study for portraying ideas important in the wider culture, and “for their replication of certain ideologies within mainstream media.”¹⁶⁷ Sex education material, through its focus on ‘normal’ development, indicates sexual and romantic behaviours that were pathologised or considered immoral as well as those that were encouraged. These texts were explicitly gendered, and Sharyn Pearce has investigated sex education texts targeting boys in the 1950s, analysing “their underlying messages about the edification and shaping of the future man.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Featherstone, “Rethinking Female Pleasure,” 727.

¹⁶³ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Bailey, *Front Porch*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁵ Pamela S. Haag, “In Search of ‘The Real Thing’: Ideologies of Love, Modern Romance, and Women’s Sexual Subjectivity in the United States, 1920-40,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, 4 (1992): 548.

¹⁶⁶ Featherstone, “The One Single Primary Cause,” 358.

¹⁶⁷ Featherstone, “The One Single Primary Cause,” 358.

¹⁶⁸ Sharyn Pearce, “Molding the Man: Sex-Education Manuals for Australian Boys in the 1950s,” in C. Nelson, M. H. Martin (eds) *Sexual Pedagogies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 73.

Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange have interrogated sex education in the mid-twentieth-century, analysing the medium as well as the content itself.¹⁶⁹ They chose to “adjust the historiographical lens and focus attention not upon sex-education books and marital manuals but upon popular journalism and the pedagogical radio broadcast,” studying the public output of popular doctor and sexologist Dr Norman Haire.¹⁷⁰ Dr Haire published advice columns in the Australian magazine *Woman* from 1941 to 1952.

Popular magazines, particularly those targeted towards women and teenagers, are valuable sources for representations of dating and romance. Bailey argued that magazines were “especially important in the role of cultural evangelist,” as they put forward middle-class morality as the ideal.¹⁷¹ These texts helped to “both shape and reflect the values, habits, and aspirations” of their readers.¹⁷² While they did not necessarily dictate behaviour, Teo argued that they had an important impact on individual emotional experiences. Teo also maintained that such discourses can have an important effect on emotional experiences.¹⁷³ *The Australian Women’s Weekly* is important in an Australian context, promoting a middle-class ideal of chaste, appropriate dating, while gently warning against other pathways of immorality and danger. The *Weekly*’s self-appointed status as “a national cultural institution” gave the magazine the ability to construct important and influential models of femininity.¹⁷⁴ Kirra Minton has examined the way that the *Weekly* instructed teenage girls through a lens of consumerism in the 1950s.¹⁷⁵

It is necessary also to examine how target audience responded to such prescriptions through their own writings and self-representations. Letters pages in magazines, diaries, interviews, and memoirs provide a glimpse into individual responses. Joanne Scott has discussed the difficulty of determining the authenticity of such letters, or the motivation of either the writer or publisher.¹⁷⁶ However, problematic sources are still useful in analysing discursive constructions, and, as Scott has written, they are valuable in the absence of

¹⁶⁹ Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange, “Public Pedagogy: Sex Education and Mass Communication in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, 1 (2004): 73.

¹⁷⁰ Bashford and Strange, “Public Pedagogy,” 74.

¹⁷¹ Bailey, *Front Porch*, 14.

¹⁷² Nancy A. Walker, ed. *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St Martins, 1998), 1.

¹⁷³ Teo, “Americanisation,” 171.

¹⁷⁴ Susan Sheridan with Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett and Lyndall Ryan, *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women’s Weekly in the Postwar Years* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), 1, 4.

¹⁷⁵ Kirra Minton, “How to Be a Girl: Consumerism Meets Guidance in the *Australian Women’s Weekly*’s Teen Segments, 1952-1959,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 41, 1 (2017): 3-17.

¹⁷⁶ Joanne Scott, “Dear Editor: Women and Their Magazines in Interwar Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, 58 (1998): 75.

documentary records about “everyday life” activities.¹⁷⁷ Although they may provide only “tantalising glimpses” of personal experiences, they can give us an insight into cultural norms.¹⁷⁸ Advice columns in particular are useful in gauging aspects of sexuality and relationships that were seen as problematic or up for debate.¹⁷⁹ Paul Ryan, in his study of an advice column in Ireland, asserts that such pages constitute a space where individuals are able to understand, deconstruct and redefine their own lives within a wider context of society’s conventions.¹⁸⁰ Ideas, opinions and solutions flowed from a variety of ‘experts’ and laypeople, back and forth, into the discourses that helped shape society’s norms.¹⁸¹ Such columns provide substantial information about the anxieties and desires of the reading public, and once again allow the letter-writers to speak up for themselves.

Thesis Structure

Chapter One investigates the conventions associated with dating from the 1940s to the 1960s. It articulates the way these rituals were assumed by many to be leading to marriage, and how this informed their construction. These rules and regulations were not set but shifting and in conflict. New behaviours were emerging that were not explicitly linked to a preparation for marriage. Dating covered a longer time period than courtship and was often conducted more casually. Many of the rituals were formed around the idea of dating as a precursor to marriage, but the idea of dating for pleasure and self-discovery was more present than before. The chapter traces the main features of the new form of dating, as defined by young men and women engaging with and creating new forms of romantic rituals and behaviours. This chapter charts mainstream understandings of dating and romance, and as such is limited in scope in terms of sexuality, class, and race. However, it provides an outline of these features, as experienced by middle-class white men and women, that the following chapters then problematise and break down.

Chapter Two discusses the Second World War and the impact of American servicemen on the romantic and sexual world in Australia. While there was a concerted effort to link dating to marriage, the disruption of war and transience of servicemen began to loosen

¹⁷⁷ Scott, “Dear Editor,” 75-6, 80.

¹⁷⁸ Scott, “Dear Editor,” 82.

¹⁷⁹ Shurlee Swain, “Dear Problem Page, I’m Single, Pregnant and...” *Lilith* 1, 12 (2003), 100-112; Bashford and Strange, “Public Pedagogy,” 84.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Ryan, “Asking Angela: Discourses about Sexuality in an Irish Problem Page, 1963-1980,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, 2 (2010): 321.

¹⁸¹ Ryan, “Asking Angela,” 339.

these ties. People certainly dated to fall in love and get married, but they also sought distraction, recreation and socialisation, and pleasure for its own sake. Young Australian women were also encouraged to date as a matter of patriotic duty, as an act of service to Australian and American servicemen who needed a morale boost before being sent off to war. The backlash to women embracing the opportunities offered to them in wartime resulted in a concerted effort by the state to control and regulate female sexuality.

In the 1950s, moral authorities sought to contain the seemingly irrepressible sexuality that was a feature of the home front in the Second World War. Chapter Three examines the rise of sex education materials. These texts emerged partially in response to fears of sexually transmitted infections, and partially as a way to direct sexual activity in the post-war period towards rebuilding the nation through productive white middle-class marriages. Sex education texts, although sometimes borrowing the language of the medical establishment, were written and distributed largely by Christian organisations. The media, too, sought to instruct young people and guide them through their dating lives, so as to reach marriageable age in a state conducive to being good wives, husbands and parents. Prescriptive literature printed in popular newspapers and magazines frequently took the form of advice columns, and the chapter examines the way young people spoke back through letters to magazines, working to form their own understanding of the dating world.

Chapter Four examines youth culture and the integral role dating played in 1950s and 1960s' conceptions of youth, leisure, and culture. Teenagers created a new market for mass culture and consumerism in the boom of the post-war period, and dating was explicitly part of the leisure world of working- and middle-class youths alike. The chapter explores the links between consumerism, music, dancing, fashion and romance, and the way that all of these pursuits could be linked to youthful rebellion against regulation and conformity. In this way, it extends the ideas of teenage rebellion from Chapter Three and follows adolescent responses to prescriptive literature and the social control of moral authorities.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven address the limitations of the previous chapters in their focus on white, heterosexual relationships. Chapter Five outlines the way dating as a precursor to marriage is interrupted when marriage is tightly regulated by the state. The false premise of assimilation promised an equal life when participating in white middle-class culture, but this was clearly not accessible for Aboriginal people, regardless of their choices, actions or desires. The involvement of the state in marriages illustrates the eugenic underpinning of dating regulations. Chapter Six addresses the very different way migrants to

Australia in the post-war period experienced assimilation. While they were largely left to fend for themselves, many did find a new commitment to Australia through dating and romantic practices, and saw it as a way to find love, marriage and a new life in Australia. However, there were limitations to this vision of assimilation, and a significant gender imbalance also led to anxieties among white Australians and migrant communities.

Chapter Seven looks at alternative forms of dating, romance, sex, pleasure and friendship explored by gay men and lesbian women in the 1950s and 1960s, as they constructed social networks that could facilitate all of the above. Gay men and lesbian women were not able to marry their partners, or even date them publicly, and so their social and romantic lives were constructed differently. The blurred boundaries of dating here are intentional, as men and women who were discriminated against legally and socially found spaces in which they could make friends, fall in love, and have casual sexual relationships.

Conclusion

Dating rituals and behaviours, and the way they were constructed, challenged, and rebuilt illuminate society's understanding of gender, sexuality, relationships and pleasure. Gender roles were clearly laid out in dating conventions, and any attempt to challenge them, through same-sex desire, female independence, or even male interest in grooming, could be seen as a threat to normative heterosexuality. Heterosexuality was constructed as essential not only to the development and happiness of those participating in it, but also to the future of the nation. During the middle of the twentieth century, eugenic ideas about population meant that white, middle-class Australians were encouraged to embrace marriage and parenthood as the ultimate sources of meaning and happiness in life, and in doing so bolster the future of white Australia. Conflicting ideas about the purpose of dating often coexisted, and the practice could represent pleasure and duty simultaneously. Young people experiencing the Second World War and the post-war economic boom and anxiety challenged and rebuilt these ideas. At the same time, they were experiencing desire, pleasure, happiness and, at times, love. It is important to give these young people the chance to speak on their own experiences, and thus uncover voices and lives often ignored.

Chapter One: Changing Romantic Conventions, 1940-1970

The middle of the twentieth century was a time of remarkable change for Australia. After two world wars and the Great Depression, the post-war period was characterised by an uneasy combination of heightened anxiety and a culture of consumerism and leisure. As the path to marriage was entwined so closely with many other aspects of social and economic life, it too began undergoing noticeable shifts. This chapter charts the main features of a modern courtship ritual often called ‘dating’ which was beginning to compete with older forms of courtship in the early twentieth century, and became established during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Dating was centered on the ritual of a couple going out in public together and was often considered more casual and temporary than previous courtship practices. The conventions guiding this ritual and behaviours associated with it were closely intertwined with contemporary understandings of sexuality, gender, consumerism, leisure, and romance.

To explicate the nature of mid-twentieth century dating, it is important to understand courting rituals of the preceding period. The romantic ritual of choice in the early decades of the twentieth century had been known as calling. This involved formal introductions and supervision by family chaperones and was an immediate precursor to marriage. This activity took place primarily within family homes, or the private sphere, and was closely supervised, directed, and mediated by older, often female relatives. Slowly, however, courtship rituals were changing throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Understandings of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality were being influenced by consumerism and modernity, and new media from the United States.¹ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, calling had begun to be slowly abandoned in favour of a new method of courting: a practice the Americans called dating.²

This chapter analyses the role of social processes of dating in the lives of young Australians in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and what this can tell us about contemporary understandings of gender, sexuality, and romance. It outlines the broad patterns and definitions of dating throughout the mid-twentieth century, and the material changes in the ritual throughout this time. This spans from the beginning of the Second World War – a period of disruption to social order more generally – to the so-called ‘Sexual Revolution’ of

¹ Lake, “Female Desires,”; Finch, “Consuming Passions,”; Featherstone, “Sexy Mamas?”

² Finch “Consuming Passions,” 105; Reekie, *Temptations*, xv-xviii; Bongiorno, *Sex Lives of Australians*, 161.

the 1960s and 1970s, where these conventions were once again reformed. The 1950s of popular memory is a time of conservative calm after the instability of the Second World War. However, historians have pointed out that the decade's conservatism was a response to both external and domestic threats: the Cold War and an apparently changing morality.³ The importance of the heterosexual nuclear family unit as the future of Australia's population and a bulwark against immorality was brought to the fore in both political and personal spheres.⁴ The 1960s, however, were not as separate from the conservative 1950s as may be imagined, as much of the movement toward revolution came at the end of the decade, or well into the 1970s. However, the changes that occurred throughout these decades were still significant, and the seeds of the 1970s can be seen in the dating activities of young Australians in the decades before.

The Changing Role of Dating

The new ritual of dating, brought into the light during the 1940s, was initially seen as a disruption to the path towards successful marriage. Calling was an established courtship ritual linked closely to marriage, and the circumstances of the Second World War interrupted this already weakening association. While dating rituals were slowly gaining prominence in the 1930s, the war provided the ideal atmosphere for the practice to emerge as the preeminent form of courtship. Wartime dating was more casual, often more short-term, and less clearly tied to marriage than previous forms of courtship (Chapter Two traces the impact of the war and the stationing of American troops in Australia on dating conventions in the 1940s and the following decades). During the war, a time of much tragedy and upheaval, dating existed in a sphere of pleasure and fun, providing a brief respite from the realities of the world. There was a clear sense at this time that the path to marriage would not run smoothly for many. Dating became understood as something pleasurable in its own right, with young men and women focusing on romance, consumption and the joy of the moment.

In the 1950s, this idea of pleasure-seeking behaviour sat uncomfortably beside the conservative project of nation building, based as it was on the foundation of the nuclear family. Young Australians were urged to see dating as a pathway to marriage, but a longer

³ Alomes, Dober and Hellier, "Social Context of Postwar Conservatism,"; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 6; Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality."

⁴ Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality," 136-141; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 6-7; James Walter, "Designing Families."

and more removed one than calling. One reason for this distance was that the participating Australians were newly being understood as teenagers, as ideas of adolescence emerged and were consolidated. Dating youngsters were not encouraged to marry those they went out with, but they were directed to view dating as a preparation for marriage, a form of finding out what worked for each person in a relationship, of learning to be part of a couple. Many young people still fell in love and desired marriage, but others dated casually for the fun of it, or the social status of it, or because it was what everybody else was doing.⁵ In the 1960s, young Australians continued to be instructed using the same moral codes as the 1950s, but resistance also grew, and teenagers began working to define the ideas of dating, pleasure and romance for themselves.

Dating was quickly considered an essential part of young life in Australia. It was inextricably linked with popular leisure activities like dancing, and it was considered to help social development. A teenager from Nambour, Queensland, writing in 1960 in sympathy with a teenager not permitted to date, declared: “dates are essential for teenagers.” They argued that “by having dates in our teens we lose that awkwardness with the opposite sex and – without becoming Casanovas – are socially, morally, and mentally educated.”⁶ Nineteen-year-old Jenny and twenty-year-old Diane reflected to the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1952 about periods of their adolescence when they did not have boyfriends. “It’s absolutely terrible not having any boyfriends at all,” recalled Jenny, “You start thinking your life is draining away with nothing happening and nothing to show for it.”⁷ Diane said that after a dating drought she “made sure [she] was never manless again,” because “after you’ve been without a boyfriend for a while you get the attitude that it doesn’t matter whom you go out with as long as it’s someone.”⁸ For Diane in particular, dating was important in terms of social standings within her female peer group.

No Such Thing as a Date?

Across these decades of gradual change, key features of the ritual of dating were created and consolidated. While dating is a useful term to describe a range of romantic

⁵ Norma: “It was probably to get married, because that was the expectation, without you realizing it – you were sort of brainwashed in the era to think that was the expectation... Your peer group is doing the same thing, you know, and then once you’re married, everyone you know is having babies, so then you know, your whole peer group then is doing the same thing.” Norma, interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 7, 1960, 2.

⁷ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

⁸ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

behaviours built on consumption and leisure and taking place in the public sphere, it was not used often by young Australians themselves. Norma, a teenager in the 1950s, was very clear on this, explaining, “There was no such thing as a date!” Instead, Norma remembered: “we just went out with somebody, or you met somebody somewhere. You know, it wasn’t that formal. It didn’t have a definition.”⁹ It is difficult to provide clear outlines for what did or did not constitute a so-called date, as these understandings were often mediated by age and class. This lack of formality and clarity was a feature of the new ritual. However, rules about dating did become more defined as the practice became more established. Generally, a date was an outing undertaken by a male and a female, with an expectation or hope of romantic attachment. The seriousness of this romance was a matter of some debate and depended on the circumstances of the people involved. Dates could range from a quiet walk, a dance, or the movies followed by a milk-bar. Often, dates included a group of young couples. The lines between a ‘group date’ and a friendly outing were very blurred. In mixed-gender groups, it was generally considered important to ensure an equal number of boys and girls, especially if dancing were involved. The relationship between consumerism and dating was very important and became starker during the 1950s and 1960s, when most dates involved the male partner spending at least some money. These common features of dating culture grew and changed throughout the middle of the twentieth century and allowed a cultural understanding of dating as a romantic and recreational practice to become established.

Going Out

A key part of the new ritual was physically going *out*, to the point that many young Australians referred to this practice as going out rather than dating. For romancing couples, then, the private sphere was replaced by the public. Young people found that this entry into the public, visible world, actually brought about opportunities to seek moments of privacy and intimacy. The new rituals were less controlled by relatives and chaperones and more by young couples themselves. This public sphere was indisputably seen, however, as the world of men. Men grasped a new kind of control over romantic rituals; rather than being selected and vetted by young women and their mothers, males became independent pursuers. When one had to be ‘asked out’, it was men who did the asking. Women and girls retained, of

⁹ Norma, interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

course, the power to refuse, but exacting rules and expectations sprang up around these new conventions.

The places these young people went depended on where they lived, how old they were, how much money they had, what their parents were comfortable with, and, of course, personal preference. They primarily went out on the weekends, as weekdays were reserved for school, work or both.¹⁰ Saturday nights were a popular time to go out for a date or see a film.¹¹ Young people often took part in more traditional leisure activities on Saturday and Sunday afternoons – casual games of tennis, picnics and walks, often in a group of couples.¹² During the war, many of these activities retained their popularity, and dances were an essential part of the social calendar. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s more consumer-driven leisure activities were introduced, specifically for young people who had more money, and more time, to spend on entertainment.¹³ Of these excursions, not all were dates. However, the social life of young people was structured quite clearly around mixed-gender groups, with equal numbers of boys and girls, and many of the leisure activities they took part in were explicitly linked to dating and romance, especially dances and films.

Alison Hodgson, a teenager who had recently moved to Hobart from the United Kingdom in 1965, summed up the many activities available in her new hometown: “In winter we can go to the skating rink, footie, or pictures. At all these places we are able to meet people and really enjoy ourselves. One can also go bowling or ‘milkshaking’ at a milk-bar. In summer most of us go to the beach or sailing.”¹⁴ Lorraine Bull, who spent her teen years in Gippsland, Victoria in the early 1960s, remembered weekends of friends and fun as well as work: “There was [church] youth club on Friday nights” followed by a Saturday morning job for some pocket money, and Saturday afternoon

could have been off watching the football or playing a game of tennis or doing something like that. Saturday evening, I used to dance at the RSL... or a local club... There was also Karma Club, which was another dance, there was a local jazz, so I would have gone out to a dance most Saturday nights, or movies.¹⁵

¹⁰ Norma, interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹¹ Gerard van Didden interviewed by John Bannister, March 2014, Sawyers Valley WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220137312>; Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>

¹² Marie Cousen interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 24-25, 2011, Manifold Heights VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219812088>.

¹³ This is analysed in Chapter Four.

¹⁴ “Letters,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, May 19, 1965, 68.

¹⁵ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>

She also remembered a briefly opened bowling alley, and described the key to youth leisure at the time: “[We would] not really go to friends’ houses, more tended to go out to something.”¹⁶ After she met her future husband, they continued to see each other on weekends: “I’d do my washing Saturday morning and we’d go out Saturday afternoon or night, I’d probably see him again Sunday afternoon.”¹⁷ While much of the focus here is on going out, it is important to recognise that this took up a relatively small portion of young Australians’ time. Norma pointed out: “You didn’t go out that much, really, you were either working or at school and you sort of didn’t very often go out at night.”¹⁸

Movie theatres were a popular place for people of all ages to spend their leisure time, and thus a natural meeting spot or date venue for young Australians. Cinema-going was popular during the 1940s across all age groups. During the 1950s, movie theatres began marketing themselves more specifically to teenage audiences, who were looking for entertainment outside the family home, where by the later years of the decade their parents or younger siblings might be watching television.¹⁹ Young people would also frequent milk-bars and other casual cafes, often serving American-style food and drinks, where they would meet and chat in groups, and enjoy soft drinks and spiders. Norma remembered going on dates to the movies, but also outings that did not cost money: “We went to the pictures, or went to a park to sit around, or went on walks, went to football.”²⁰

Marie Cousen remembered going to church dances in the 1950s every Saturday night, visiting neighbouring church communities and socialising together.²¹ While both dancing and the movies remained popular throughout this period, there were significant changes to this routine throughout the decades. Dances were considered an essential form of entertainment during the Second World War, catering to soldiers on leave and especially to the Americans.²² After the war, dances specifically for teenagers became more common, offering

¹⁶ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>

¹⁷ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹⁸ Norma, interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 54.

²⁰ Norma, interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

²¹ Marie Cousen interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 24-25, 2011, Manifold Heights VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219812088>.

²² Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 153-154; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 206, 209; Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 64; “It Kept the Whole District Together,” (sound recording), Dandenong, VIC: Heritage Hill, 1998, http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_VOYAGER820967.

“good, clean fun in good surroundings.”²³ During the 1960s dances proliferated and became more specialised, as a growing youth music scene necessitated different venues for different groups of teenage fans.²⁴

Young people saw dancing as an essential part of their social and dating lives. Dance etiquette was considered extremely important, and was largely focused on who one danced with, and how often. Girls reminded boys to ask them to dance politely, and to refrain from appraising them like “prime heifers” or standing on their toes.²⁵ Boys reminded girls that it could be very intimidating to approach a girl to ask her to dance, and crushing if she refused. Some boys complained that asking girls to dance was too risky, as many chose instead to dance with each other at parties and informal rock’n’roll venues.²⁶ Both boys and girls agreed that a hostess of a dance or a party should introduce the young people to one another, and do her best to put them at ease.²⁷ Teenagers discussing a Melbourne private school’s dance guidelines agreed that it was both more polite and more enjoyable if dancers changed partners throughout the evening, although they conceded that this was not always done at public dances if a couple arrived together.²⁸ One boy believed that while female hostesses at private parties were responsible for inviting the right number of guests and introducing them, once at the party “it’s up to the boy to see that his partner meets other people and that he meets and mixes with other girls.”²⁹ A seventeen-year-old girl giving advice to young partygoers echoed the call to engage with a variety of people at a party: “You have more fun at a party if you mix. You find that one boy is brainy, and another is fun, and you enjoy the variety.”³⁰

This idea of mixing was debated by teenagers. While many argued that it was best to dance with a variety of partners, even if you had arrived with a date, it is clear that in practice some teenagers found themselves tied down to one partner. Annelida, writing from Cremorne, NSW in 1963, asked: “Why is it that if you go to a party with a boy you are expected to be ‘exclusively his’ for the evening? At a party, everyone should mix and get to know the other guests, but how is this possible when you feel obliged to remain with your

²³ “Teenage Nightclub,” *Guinea Gold*, August 8, 1945, 3; “Teenage Dance Club,” *Yass Tribune-Courier*, March 20, 1949, 2; “A Teenage Dance,” *Daily Advertiser*, October 26, 1945, 6.

²⁴ Adam Trainer, “‘Making Do in Ways We Hadn’t Done Before’: The Early Popular Music Industry in Perth,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 28, 1 (2016): 259.

²⁵ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2.

²⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2; “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 16, 1960, 2.

²⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2.

²⁸ “Musts and Must Nots of a School Dance,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 30, 1952, 15.

²⁹ “Musts and Must Nots of a School Dance,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 30, 1952, 15.

³⁰ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 9, 1952, 37.

partner all the evening?”³¹ “Homer,” from Killara NSW, agreed, and commended Annelida for saying “what many girls have been afraid to say for fear of being left dateless.”³² Others responding to the original letter supported the idea that parties were primarily for mixing and meeting new people, and that getting stuck with one dance partner all evening was not desirable.³³ Annabell Briesly of Epping, NSW, sympathised with Annelida but reasoned:

Usually when you accept an invitation with a boy you like him enough to WANT to stay with him all the evening, and if you don’t you should not accept the invitation. If a boy is willing to be in your company for a whole evening you should have enough courtesy not to just use him to get to the party and then run off with someone else.³⁴

The way boys and girls behaved toward each other at dances and parties directly impacted on their social lives, and the ways they were seen by their peers.

Each type of outing carried various associations. In the late 1940s, sixteen-year-old Barbara, a “good girl” interviewed by the *Women’s Weekly*’s Patricia Giffney, attended church dances most weeks, where “of course there is always a chaperon present.”³⁵ In the same column, Giffney disparaged teenage Betty for being shallow and fickle, derailed by ‘filmslang’ and giggling. Betty’s description of her social life, however, is one that the *Weekly* would later be encouraging for young people:

We go to dances a couple of nights a week, and generally spend another night or so at one of the arcades. I’m a wow with some of the gadgets there. At weekends we go hiking, or in the summer to the beaches. One of the kids has a portable gramophone, so we always take that and pool our records. I mostly go out in a crowd, but sometimes see a film or have a night alone with my own boyfriend. He’s 19 and learning a good trade. We might marry someday, but now we just have a bit of fun and don’t do any harm. I think life’s pretty good for teenagers today.³⁶

This conception of dating as “a bit of fun” was a common one in the 1950s, and into the 1960s. It is specifically set up here in opposition to the idea of dating in order to marry, which was considered to be a serious matter by young Australians at the time. Betty’s combination of dances, arcades, and group outdoor activities, along with private movie dates with a

³¹ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 21, 1963, 2.

³² “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 18, 1963, 2.

³³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 18, 1963, 2.

³⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 18, 1963, 2.

³⁵ Patricia Giffney, “Teenagers: Young Lives Have Many Problems,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, November 5, 1949, 30.

³⁶ Giffney, “Teenagers,” 31

boyfriend, would become the standard for teenagers who had the time and money to spend in this way.

Date Etiquette

The mechanics of getting to a date were mired in convention and issues of accessibility. The initiation of a formal date involved an invitation, and it was generally understood that it was men and boys who needed to do the asking. To this end, telephones were important technology, and magazines carried advice on etiquette for such calls.³⁷ Telephones were restricted due to military and logistics use during the Second World War but jumped from 9 to 11 units per 100 persons during the war years to 20.4 telephones to every 100 persons in 1959, and 31.2 units to every 100 persons in 1970.³⁸ While boys were supposed to ask girls out, girls had an important role to play as well. One writer to *Teenagers' Weekly* from Albany, W.A., reminded female readers that “many boys find it hard to make conversation... the girl should try to make him feel at ease and help him along with the conversation.”³⁹

However, women and girls could also ask for a date, under certain circumstances. The Brisbane *Truth's* “Teenage Forum” column asked teenagers on the street about the subject in 1954. While fifteen-year-old Gwen Marchant thought “a girl really should wait for a boy to ask her out on a date” she conceded that “if he’s very shy, that’s different.” Sixteen-year-old Owen Powys thought it could be appropriate for a girl to ask, as “some boys are shy and need a little encouragement.”⁴⁰ A 1959 *Teenagers' Weekly* feature entitled “Dates YOU Can Ask For” encouraged its young readers anxious about asking a boy out to make “a sincere gesture of friendship – exactly as you would to a girl you wanted to spend time with.” In this case, the label ‘date’ was to be removed in order to overcome teenage shyness and avoid “aggressive or forward” behaviour from girls.⁴¹ Suggested dates included group picnics or beach parties, or activities structured around the particular boy’s interests, like listening to music or going to a museum.

³⁷ “A Point of Etiquette,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, July 1, 1959, 4; “Telephone Manners,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 20, 1961, 8.

³⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Yearbook Australia 1946 and 1947*, no. 37 (Canberra: ABS, 1949), 213-214; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1960*, no. 46 (Canberra: ABS, 1960), 567; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1971*, no. 57 (Canberra: ABS, 1971), 368.

³⁹ “Letters,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, October 26, 1960, 2.

⁴⁰ “Forum for Teenagers,” *Truth* (Brisbane), November 14, 1954, 25.

⁴¹ “Dates YOU Can Ask For,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, August 19, 1959, 47.

Louise Hunter wrote an advice column for teenage readers of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, taking over from Kay Melaun in 1955.⁴² The segment was brought into the *Teenagers' Weekly* supplement after it launched in 1959.⁴³ Almost exactly a year apart, first in October 1959 and then in November 1960, Hunter was asked by two different teenage girls about inviting boys they did not know, or did not know very well, to a party. In 1959, a fifteen-year-old girl sought advice about asking a sixteen-year-old boy with whom she had not talked (but who had smiled at her) to a party, and was advised not to: "At least not unless you want to appear very forward... Unless you can ask someone you've at least spoken to a few times, don't ask anyone at all."⁴⁴ The following year, however, another teenager was assured that "[t]here's nothing forward about inviting anyone to a party," and that in her case "you may not have been formally introduced, but working in the same shop really is an introduction."⁴⁵ This could represent a stark change in social understandings of forwardness and invitations, or the level of formality of parties, but equally it could be due to Hunter's opinion of the writer. Her advice could vary significantly based on her perception of the advice seeker's maturity, or perhaps here, class status. The issue of introductions, however, was something that clearly became less important throughout the years. A vestige of more formal courtship rituals, young men and women in the 1940s were expected to be formally introduced before speaking, let alone going out together. However, the war itself and the social structure of wartime dances disrupted this, allowing for more casual meeting in public spaces. Throughout the 1940s, going out with somebody without a proper introduction was still considered inappropriate by middle-class moral authorities, and many parents.

Teenagers generally accepted that it was best to introduce their date to their parents. This can be read as an attempt to bridge the gap between calling and dating, and a way of maintaining some semblance of parental surveillance and authority. Kay Melaun interviewed teenagers for her regular "Youth Sums Up" feature for the *Women's Weekly* in 1952, quizzing them on this topic. She claimed that when asked about bringing boyfriends and girlfriends home, her teenage correspondents mostly agreed that it should be done, "however rebelliously they might grizzle at home about their rights, their story to me was that parents were entitled to know whom they were going out with."⁴⁶ Teenagers differed on how early in

⁴² Kay Melaun wrote the column from its introduction on May 19, 1954 to November 30, 1955.

⁴³ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Teenagers' Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 12.

⁴⁴ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Teenagers' Weekly*, October 14, 1959, 10.

⁴⁵ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Teenagers' Weekly*, November 16, 1960, 9.

⁴⁶ Kay Melaun, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, September 10, 1952, 16.

a relationship one needed to invite a boy in before a date, but most agreed that it was necessary before becoming too serious. Some young people also felt their parents could offer helpful advice, with twenty-year-old Deidre commenting: “if your parents like a boy it confirms your own judgement.”⁴⁷ When looking back, Veronica Schwarz associated a boy coming to pick her up with a youthful innocence:

It started with high school, you know, and the boy would come and pick you up from your house. And as much as you see the shows set in the 50s now, the boy would arrive with the corsage and take you off to the dance. And it was all, very pure and sweet I suppose.⁴⁸

Many couples did not participate in the ritual of being picked up from home. It implied a certain level of acceptance from the girl’s parents, even if the boy did not come inside. It was also only accessible to boys who either had access to a car or sufficient money to escort his date both ways on public transport, or young men who lived locally and could walk to their destination. For many young people, the cost of picking a girl up for a date was prohibitive. Norma remembered that instead of going out together, “people used to meet somewhere, because you didn’t have cars, and often you’d come in on different public transport and things like that, so you would generally meet somebody.”⁴⁹ These assumptions and behaviours changed over the 1950s and 1960s, as second-hand cars became more accessible even to working-class young men, however class remained an important point of division. Motor vehicle registration per 1000 people grew from 117 in 1940 to 155 in 1950, 266 in 1960, and 381 in 1969.⁵⁰ The growth in popularity of cars after the Second World War had a clear and immediate impact on the world of romance. The geographical area in which one could find potential dates expanded dramatically and the dates themselves also changed.⁵¹ Groups and couples could travel further, and the drive itself was often seen as a date on its own.

Cars became an important signifier of a boy’s wealth and social status, and the convenience and privacy they offered were highly sought after.⁵² Many young men could not

⁴⁷ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 10, 1952, 16.

⁴⁸ Veronica Schwarz interviewed by Katie Holmes. March 22, 25, 2013, Brookfield VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220011117>.

⁴⁹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg, VIC.

⁵⁰ ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1942 and 1943*, no. 35 (Canberra: ABS, 1944), 130; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1955*, no. 41 (Canberra: ABS, 1955), 169; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1961*, no. 47 (Canberra: ABS, 1961), 557; ABS, *Yearbook Australia, 1970*, no. 56 (Canberra: ABS, 1970), 367.

⁵¹ Davison, *Car Wars*, 69.

⁵² Davison, *Car Wars*, 70-71.

afford a car and did not have access to any family vehicle either. Flashy fashionable cars were even further out of reach. One “Penniless Poet” wrote into *Teenagers’ Weekly* in 1959, complaining that “Girls these days judge a fellow by the car he drives.” He claimed that when a young man asked to escort a girl home from a dance or a party, “her first question is ‘Do you have a car?’ If you haven’t, nine times out of ten you go home alone.” The writer, signing himself off “Anti Hot Rod,” positioned this as an issue of both economics – he did not want to “get into debt and worry myself over buying a car to win popularity” – and superficiality of girls interested in the car over the boy. He finished his letter with a poem that outlined the money issues on many young dating men’s minds:

*I can manage the movies
A theatre or two
Dinner in town
For a girl who is true;
I can run to a malted,
Maybe a coke,
But as for a car—
It would just leave me broke.*⁵³

This letter provoked a variety of responses. Most teenagers agreed that it was superficial to worry about what type of car, if any, their dates drove, but argued that most girls did not base their dating choices on such things. One writer also accused the poet of being too “quick to blame the lack of a car for not winning popularity,” and advised him to “brush up on your ‘technique.’” This teenager also countered with a poem of their own:

*Just manage the movies
Don’t worry ‘bout a car
If she thinks you’re ‘keen’
You’ll win her by far!*⁵⁴

Money

As the issues around access to motor vehicles suggested, consumerism was a vital part of modern dating, with many claiming it removed the romance from the equation.⁵⁵ Younger people tended to have a different view, often equating consumption and romance. It was accepted that boys and men were supposed to pay for most dates, but sometimes they worried

⁵³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2 (italics in original).

⁵⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 9, 1959, 2 (italics in original).

⁵⁵ Anne Edwards and Drusilla Beyfus, “Modern Courtship,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, March 6, 1957, 16.

about having enough money to do so.⁵⁶ Michael J., responding in 1959 to an accusation that boys never asked out blond-haired girls, complained about the amount of money it took to keep up an active social life, and how difficult it was to balance study with dates:

The girls fail to realise that boys cannot afford to be forward about the age of 15 or 16. I still go to school and have to work Saturday morning... Taking a girl out, blond or otherwise, would be an economic disaster, so I am going to *try* and stay in my shell until the Leaving is over and I start work. In the meantime, how about T.W. digging for a guinea so that I can take Blondie out on Saturday night?⁵⁷

Those dating around, without a steady partner, were expected to spend more, as each date was the opportunity to make a big impression on a new girl.⁵⁸

Expenses included movie tickets, chocolates, milkshakes, ice creams, coffee, dinner, drive-in movies and transport. Teenagers also, however, pointed out that they mixed more expensive dates with cheap or free activities, including meals at homes, beach days and picnics.⁵⁹ Many teenagers simply did not have the money for the lavish dates the magazines promoted.

While boys mostly paid, girls were also expected to consider finances. Young people going steady in serious relationships were more likely to share expenses, as well as budget together and ensure they did not spend too much money on dates. Seventeen-year-old John was grateful that a steady girlfriend “thinks about your pocket and doesn’t expect taxis and cars every time you take her out.”⁶⁰ Norma remembered largely sharing the cost of dates with her boyfriend, but also noted that they really did not spend very much money: “You went to the pictures, and you paid for the entry and you might have bought a drink or something, and that was it.”⁶¹ The *Truth*’s “Forum for Teenagers,” asked young people about the upcoming Brisbane Show, and who was expected to pay. Both the young man and woman interviewed agreed that while the boy should pay, as “after all, if he asked her to go, then it’s up to him to pay,” the girl should realise “he’s not made of money, and not insist on going to very many things that cost money to see.” This idea of relying on “the girl’s discretion” about expensive items was common.⁶²

⁵⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 7, 1960, 2; “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 16, 1959, 2.

⁵⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly* 16 September 1959, 2.

⁵⁸ Carol Tattersfield, “The High Cost of Courting,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 5, 1959, 39.

⁵⁹ Carol Tattersfield, “The High Cost of Courting,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 5, 1959, 39; Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁶⁰ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

⁶¹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁶² “Forum for Teenagers,” *Truth*, August 8, 1954, 38.

However, girls choosing to pay their own way entirely often found resistance. Eighteen-year-old Carol, a kindergarten trainee, outlined her conflict with Tim, who was frustrated with her habit of paying for her own tickets and fares when out with a group. He told her that “he didn’t think it was feminine to haul out my purse every time we got on a bus.”⁶³ Dating and the complex rules and conventions surrounding it were interwoven with contemporary understandings of gender roles, and the position of the man as provider and breadwinner was sacrosanct. Carol ended up calling Tim to apologise, “because I could see I’d been in the wrong.”⁶⁴

Gift-giving became an increasingly important part of romantic rituals throughout the middle of the twentieth century. Influence from the Americans during the Second World War helped consolidate this practice, previously considered inappropriate. For teenagers, lavish gifts were of course too expensive, and much of the discussion surrounded flowers before a dance, or other luxuries for a special occasion. A seventeen-year-old girl’s party advice claimed: “Girls don’t expect a lot, but when a boy is taking you to a long-frock party a car or taxi is a must... Some boys bring flowers, and some don’t. It’s lovely to get them, but it doesn’t matter a great deal.”⁶⁵ Teenagers interviewed by the *Women’s Weekly* about upcoming school dance etiquette agreed that taxis were only necessary in poor weather, and even then, only if transport could not be arranged with a friend who had a car. “Flowers are rather nice,” one girl added, “but tough on the boys because it’s hard to get cheap ones.” In the same article a boy thought flowers were “a bit too much.”⁶⁶ These teenagers were being urged not to spend too much money on the dance, and were largely happy to oblige, but it is also clear that they had access to luxuries out of reach for many young Australians.

Sometimes, the objection to gifts was not caused by money issues. One teenage boy from Coburg, Victoria, wrote to the *Weekly* after arguing with his girlfriend about gifting flowers:

My girlfriend complains bitterly because I refuse to greet her with a bunch of flowers as a token of my esteem. I maintain that a fella feels and looks a goof walking along the street with a bunch of flowers in his hand. Some chocolates, yes, but flowers – no sir. I pride myself on being a he-man, not a sissy.⁶⁷

⁶³ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 21, 1953, 22.

⁶⁴ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 21, 1953, 22.

⁶⁵ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 9, 1952, 36.

⁶⁶ “Musts and Must Nots of a School Dance,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 30, 1952, 15.

⁶⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 24, 1960, 2.

Gifts were indeed explicitly gendered. While girls bought gifts for their boyfriends as well, the presents were of a different type. When the Melbourne *Herald's* 'Betty Anne' "criticised girls for knitting sweaters for their boyfriends" in her "Teenage Topics" column, she received several disgruntled responses. One writer pointed out that teenage girls welcomed presents from their boyfriends, and that boys too appreciated thoughtful gifts from their girlfriends. They countered that if boys "stopped buying flowers and stockings for girls, we could afford to buy our woollens as [Betty Anne] suggested." This writer argued that girlfriends' knitted gifts showed effort on the part of the giver, and a dedication to homecrafts that was "a good sign" in "a potential wife."⁶⁸ Even in the context of gift-giving, a decidedly modern and consumerist aspect of dating culture, as with the boy taking the lead in funding dates, the tension between pleasure and preparation for marriage remained.

Meeting Out and Picking-Up

Sometimes, being asked out was too formal, and dates instead consisted of casually meeting up with somebody in public. Norma remembered people going with friends to the movies or a milk-bar to meet other people from school in order to get together in a mixed group.⁶⁹ However, meeting somebody out could take several forms, and parental anxiety often blurred the practices together. Norma described meeting out as less formal than going out, but it still tended to consist of prearranged meetings with people one knew or meeting up with friends of friends. The other form of meeting, where one met a stranger when out and about, was often referred to as a *pick-up*. This involved approaching an unknown person for a date. At times, this was at a dance, which tended to sidestep the issue of introduction and invitation, as a boy could ask a girl to dance, and, if he liked her, escort her home, and ask her to go out again. Leslie Robinson remembered the dances he went to in the 1950s as enjoyable in themselves, but also "a way of meeting girls."⁷⁰ While Norma did not go to dances, she remembered them as key meeting-places for other young people.⁷¹

However, meeting out was considered dangerous to some. In 1960 a teenage letter-writer asked their peers: "What do teenagers think of a girl going to a dance unescorted and coming home with a boy she has met and got to know at the dance but has never seen before?"

⁶⁸ "Betty Anne's Teen-age Topics," *The Herald*, January 5, 1954, 10.

⁶⁹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁷⁰ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

⁷¹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

Most ‘grown-ups’ are against this, but how is a girl to get to know boys if this doesn’t happen sometimes?”⁷² Teenage readers mostly agreed that this was necessary if they were supposed to meet new people and advised girls to trust their instincts when it came to the boy in question, carefully assessing his dress, manners, and friends. “Unruffled,” writing from Raymond Terrace, NSW, argued: “Surely a girl can judge by a boy’s manners and clothes what type of boy he is. Grown-ups who are against it are just old-fashioned.” Some supported the practice, but with the caveats that it “should not be repeated too often,” and that it was important to “go straight home, with no detour to a milk-bar or similar place.” Others advised against it, recommending waiting “until such a time as he could meet your parents,” or, more bluntly, scolding the original writer: “Definitely NO! Surely you can get to know boys without coming home with them on the first night.”⁷³ Teenagers were commonly not allowed to go out if their parents did not know who they were going with. “K. Matchett,” from Forestville NSW wrote to *Teenagers’ Weekly* in 1959 urging parents to “put more trust in teenage girls.” The writer argued that “when a girl wants to go out with a girlfriend the parents think they are going to meet boys, so they are refused permission to go anywhere.”⁷⁴

Initially considered a taboo amongst the middle-class, the idea of the pick-up entered the mainstream throughout the 1950s, and magazines like the *Australian Women’s Weekly* reluctantly included it in their advice columns, albeit with certain restrictions.⁷⁵ Young people were evidently comfortable with the idea of the pick-up much earlier. When asked in these same magazines, they expressed a more nuanced understanding, generally settling on the idea that pick-ups were acceptable at parties, when with a friend, or in other safe environments. Nineteen-year-old Marian cautioned against pick-ups in public, but had no problem with them at parties, noting that “it’s rather pleasant if a young man comes up and introduces himself or asks you for a dance. That way I’ve met people that I’d have missed otherwise.” Midshipman Mark echoed the experience of many servicemen during the Second World War, arguing that pick-ups were a “great temptation” when one was far from home: “I have done it, and once or twice I’ve met nice lasses who have taken me home to meet the family.”⁷⁶

⁷² “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 7, 1960, 2.

⁷³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 30, 1960, 2.

⁷⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 34.

⁷⁵ See for example Lester A. Kirkendall and Ruth Farnham-Osborne, “Dating: These Are the Rules,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 25, 1959, 3; Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 14, 1959, 90; “Blind Date,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, June 2, 1951, 45; “40 Ways to Get a Date,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 3-4.

⁷⁶ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 14, 1953, 30.

In 1952 a “Youth Sums Up” feature addressing the “ways and means of getting a boyfriend” interviewed twenty-year-old Diane, who spoke frankly about her “pretty obvious” methods when she was a teenager:

Now when I see the little girls standing about outside the movies, I always smile to myself, because I know what they’re up to. It’s like this: four or five girls go to the movies together and sit in a row. When the first half of the programme is finishing you whip out your mirror and make sure your lipstick is on right and then you go outside and parade up and down... We girls used to sit over our milkshakes eyeing the boys who were jostling each other across the way.⁷⁷

She also outlined techniques for the amusement park: go along with a group of girlfriends, get talking to some boys and then “of course, we were much too scared to walk home along the waterfront ourselves. So that was the start of some friendships.”⁷⁸ When watching a scary movie, she remembered she and her friends would “clutch the youths sitting next to us and scream madly.”⁷⁹ When Diane was questioned about the risk of meeting strange boys, she dismissed such fears, arguing in response that she always brought them home to meet her mother. Importantly, Diane also kept these dates separate from the idea of long-term relationships and marriage: “You never had any notion of being serious with any of these boys, of marrying them, or even going steady with them. All you wanted was to have a night out, to be able to say [that] ‘I’m going out with so-and-so.’”⁸⁰ For Diane in the late 1940s, and no doubt for many other young Australians, dating was itself a form of leisure, and something that could be participated in safely without worries of an unsuitable match, and alongside one’s girlfriends. No doubt there were many young people who found pick-ups perfectly acceptable or even desirable in a wider range of situations.

Double Dates and Blind Dates

Double dates were a common feature of dating rituals. During the Second World War, double dates and blind dates were often bound together, with young men and women supplying a friend in order to even out the gender balance and introduce single friends to each other. In the 1950s and 1960s, double dates were often encouraged as a barrier to physical intimacy. This can be read as an attempt to reinstate a version of chaperoning, with young people instead encouraged to place each other under surveillance. Teenagers themselves

⁷⁷ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

⁷⁸ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

⁷⁹ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

⁸⁰ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 17, 1952, 16.

found double dates a useful safeguard against a potentially boring date, as at least they had a friend along. Norma remembered going out with a girlfriend to “meet a fella and his mates,” and that this “company, and security” gave one “personal support” and “it always gave you a way out” in case of a bad date.⁸¹ If possible, young couples engineered a double date with a friend who had access to their own transport, bringing a date along for the driver. At times, this resulted in a friendly date with no apparent romantic investment. However, this too could prove a fruitful way of meeting, as Leo Cripps found in the late 1940s when he met his wife because his brother and his brother’s girlfriend wanted to go out in Leo’s car and brought another girl along to turn it into a double date.⁸²

While Leo’s experience ended in a happy marriage, blind dates were frequently arranged with no apparent expectation of romantic interest. A date was an activity in itself, and many young people were pleased to accept an invitation to a dance or a movie without expecting to fall in love. In 1951 the *Women’s Weekly* published a guide to blind dates based on the premise “single men and girls with married friends are sooner or later bound to find themselves asked to “even the number” by accepting a blind date.”⁸³ Sometimes, as described above, these invitations could be strategic. Patricia Barrkman was invited to a ball by a co-worker and responded: “Oh I’d love to go but I don’t know anybody that I could take.” She was soon partnered up with David, who “arrived to take me out with a lovely spray of flowers for me to wear and off we went to the ball.” Patricia realised on the night that her date was not particularly good at dancing and understood that her friend had paired Patricia and David rather than go with him herself, “because she loved dancing.” The story had a happy ending, though, with Patricia and David ending up married less than a year later.⁸⁴

Dating Pathway

As dating conventions began to coalesce in the post-war years, an understood pattern of acceptable behaviour became clear. Young Australians were encouraged to progress through dating in different stages, becoming more serious as they grew older, and therefore closer to marriage. Young teenagers were expected to slowly graduate from mixed group

⁸¹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁸² Leo Cripps interviewed by Ben Ross, October 20-21, 2012, Hobart TAS, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219947057>.

⁸³ “Blind Date,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, June 2, 1951, 45.

⁸⁴ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

activities, to double dates, to dating alone.⁸⁵ The implication was that they would therefore not outstrip their emotional maturity too quickly, and that they would learn some important lessons about the opposite sex along the way. In a 1959 article on the “rules” of dating, Lester A. Kirkendall and Ruth Farnham-Osborne described this “dating career”:

Some people start their first boy-girl friendships by going on group dates... After you’ve made friends in the group, double dates may be the next step in your dating career... You’ll find yourself more at ease with your date because others are present. Maybe you’ll find one person with whom you’d rather be than anyone else. Perhaps you’ll even “go steady” for a while, dating only one person. That’s all right, too. It is this kind of process of testing the qualities you like in persons which you’ll be using later when you think of marriage.⁸⁶

While this specific linking with marriage did not necessarily resonate with teenage readers, these date categories were well-formed and discussed often throughout the 1940s to the 1960s. The purpose and function, however, of this dating pattern tended to depend on who was being asked.

Teens were advised to go out with a mixed crowd and limit their alone time with partners.⁸⁷ While magazines and newspapers frequently discussed these as ‘group dates,’ young people tended to see such outings through the lens of friendship rather than romance. Sixteen-year-old Barbara, commended by the *Women’s Weekly’s* Patricia Giffney for her propriety, told the magazine: “My friends and I like boys, but just as companions. We go out in groups with them, mostly brothers of other girls and their friends. The only time I am ever alone with a boy is if one I know well walks home with me after a dance.”⁸⁸ However, it is interesting to note that such groups were usually made up of an equal number of young men and women, and that when an imbalance occurred, young people would invite somebody to balance the numbers.⁸⁹ This is also the case with parties and especially, of course, with

⁸⁵ Kirkendall and Farnham-Osborne, “Dating,” 3.

⁸⁶ Kirkendall and Farnham-Osborne, “Dating,” 3.

⁸⁷ Queensland Health Education Council, *A Parent’s Guide to the Social Conduct of Young People* (Brisbane: Polding Press, 1960), 7-8; Father and Son Welfare Movement of Australia, *Just Friends?* 6th edition, (Sydney: Father and Son Welfare Movement of Australia, 1960), 6-9; Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer: A Practical Guide on Understanding the Adolescent* (Sydney: Family Life Movement of Australia, 1970), 32; Patrick F. Dorian, *The Years Between: A Guide for Catholic Boys* (Brisbane: Polding Press, 1962), 49; Father and Son Welfare Movement of Australia, *A Guide to Manhood: A Reliable Sex Education Book for Young Men* (Sydney: Father & Son Welfare Movement of Australia, 1959), 24.

⁸⁸ Giffney, “Teenagers,” 30.

⁸⁹ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

dances, where gender balance was particularly important. Group dates were also recommended as a way of getting close to a boy who might be too shy to ask a girl out.⁹⁰

Going Steady

When a couple decided to date each other exclusively, rather than dating around, they were said to be going steady. Partners in these circumstances could be referred to as “a steady,” or “a steady boy/girlfriend,” as the terms boyfriend and girlfriend covered more casual relationships and friendships as well. These relationships were often assumed to be more serious and long-term, although that was not always the case. There were differences between the original American usage of the term going steady and its Australian variant. Bailey described the American phenomenon as a “sort of play marriage, a mimicry of the actual marriage of their older peers.”⁹¹ In Australia, it tended to occupy a space between casual dating and engagement, sometimes understood as being engaged to be engaged. However, this implies a certain level of forward-planning that many teenagers denied. Going steady or going with one particular partner was often described as something that young people fell into once they reached a certain age, when their peers started pairing off, or when they met someone with whom they clicked. However, their focus often remained on the present, and many young people seriously dated others who they did not expect they would end up marrying.⁹²

In a 1952 “Youth Sums Up” column, Betty Best eschewed the “engaged to be engaged” association and instead defined going steady as simply “refusing to go out with any boy or girl but the one you’re going steady with; that, as far as other girls and boys are concerned, you’re booked.”⁹³ Teenagers found conflicting attitudes and advice around going steady confusing, and often sought clarification in the letters pages of popular magazines. Fifteen-year-old Marion, from Waverton NSW, pointed out the contradictions prevalent in advice on going steady:

It is a very good idea for a girl to go out with different boys, but I have found that parents usually call this kind of girl a flirt. But when a girl (about 15) does go steady

⁹⁰ “Dates YOU Can Ask For,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 19, 1959, 47.

⁹¹ Beth Bailey, “From Front Porch to Back Seat: A History of the Date,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, 4 (2004): 24.

⁹² Kaye Ambrose interviewed by Siobhán McHugh, October 2, 2007, Melbourne VIC, *Sectarianism and Mixed Marriage Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-222098980>; Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁹³ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

they usually worry in case she will get too serious. Therefore, what do parents think we should do?⁹⁴

Many teens felt that going steady was overly serious and unnecessary when so many dates were available.⁹⁵ Some, like eighteen-year-old telephonist Betty, argued that dating around was a far superior way of meeting people: “If you go steady too young you have very little chance of meeting anyone else and you really have to meet a lot of people to make a choice – and you’re missing quite a lot of parties and places.”⁹⁶ Seventeen-year-old Sheila, a solicitor’s secretary, thought “it’s better to play the field until you get to your 20s, then you get a chance to meet all types of people.”⁹⁷ Sixteen-year-old Jane was less specific, simply warning: “I think [going steady] makes for trouble at my age.”⁹⁸ Nineteen-year-old Bob conceded that for a younger, less confident man, going steady could have its benefits in the form of a guaranteed date, however, at his age, “A man likes to feel that he’s popular and can take out any girl he wants to.”⁹⁹ He was an exception. Most young people tended to see going steady as the option for people older than themselves and maintained that their priority was playing the field and having fun.

While couples who were going steady still went out, the nature of their dates changed. While Norma loved dancing, her future husband did not, and she remembered: “because I had a boyfriend, you didn’t go out looking for others at dances and things like that... I led a really boring life.”¹⁰⁰ This is an interesting shift in the post-war period. During the Second World War, women whose boyfriends were away fighting were still expected to go to dances, meet and entertain other soldiers, and socialise freely. Often, friends and family members would escort lonely girlfriends to dances for a fun night out, without any expectation of romance. Although this caused great anxiety among men when they returned, many young people during the war accepted that women were able to date casually without love or romance.¹⁰¹ In the 1950s, these sorts of friendly dates were still encouraged, and many young women were advised to keep seeing lots of different men even if they liked one in particular, but evidence from young people like Norma suggests that the advent of a serious steady was indeed the

⁹⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 19, 1959, 2.

⁹⁵ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

⁹⁶ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10; “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 12, 1960, 2.

⁹⁷ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

⁹⁸ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 21, 1953, 22.

⁹⁹ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁰¹ Dating could also be a very intense romantic experience, but still understood in this context – this is discussed in Chapter Two.

end of casual, fun dating around. Nineteen-year-old Joan found that even more casual partners were often jealous and possessive, leading to quarrels when she accepted invitations from others, and prompting her to “drop” them: “I might not have so many boys now, but the ones who are available aren’t troublemakers, so I have a much happier time.”¹⁰² A high-schooler from Tenterfield, NSW felt frustrated with how willing her peers were to apply the ‘going steady’ label, and wrote to the *Teenagers’ Weekly* in 1959 to ask: “Why is it that when a girl is about 16 and anxious to have a few dates with different boys, as soon as she accepts a second or third date from one boy she is considered to be going steady (by the other boys)? This very immature attitude is prevalent among high-school boys.”¹⁰³ Here, even the assumption of going steady was a barrier to casual dating for teenagers.

Some teenagers saw dating around as not only fun, but also good preparation for marriage. Even so, the line between dating and marriage remained quite clear. In 1954 the Brisbane *Truth*’s “Forum for Teenagers” spoke to fourteen-year-old Joan Thomas and nineteen-year-old Andy Manettas who both thought dating around was necessary before marriage. Joan thought the ideal marriageable age for women was 23 and for men 25, as “It’s a good idea, I think, for girls and boys to go out with different ones from the opposite sex so that they’re sure when the right person comes along.” Andy, meanwhile, proposed a larger age gap with a similar justification for men: “I think the man should be 30 and the girl 20 when they decide to get married. Marriage is for life, or should be, and a man particularly needs to go around a fair bit before settling down.”¹⁰⁴ A boy writing to “Youth Sums Up,” told Kay Melaun that he and his friends “like a ‘steady,’ but not too steady. At our present age, 19-20, we like to just forget about marriage for a while. We’d like to have our fun first, mix with the other kinds of girls before marriage, then we won’t want to after. Get around and enjoy ourselves now, sow our wild oats – for sow them we must – while we are young. It gets a bit involved later on.”¹⁰⁵ However, some teenagers saw preparation for marriage as a reason to avoid casual dating. J. Abela, writing to *Teenagers’ Weekly* in 1959, warned that dating around, rather than preparing teenagers for marriage, could hurt their future chances: “Believe me, changing a lot of boys is not a good idea if you want to get married one day.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 21, 1953, 22.

¹⁰³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 19, 1959, 2.

¹⁰⁴ “Forum for Teenagers,” *Truth*, September 19, 1954, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 27, 1952, 18.

¹⁰⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 5, 1959, 2.

Going steady also had its supporters, and most of them declared themselves to be in love. As Bailey argued, teenagers often chose to emulate the romantic patterns of their older peers. Romance had been considered central to female lives for quite some time, but in the 1950s in particular a loving, companionate marriage was understood to be the ultimate goal of all young lives.¹⁰⁷ Teenage girls and boys were not immune to the constant assurance that a loving partnership gave life meaning, and many enthusiastically entered into loving and monogamous relationships. One girl wrote to *Teenagers' Weekly* in 1959: "I am under 17 and deeply in love and going steady with a boy of 17... We are both wonderfully happy and wouldn't dream of going out with anyone else." The teenager seemed keen to assure readers that she had not made this decision lightly or missed out on an essential experience: "I have had lots of other boy-friends and think I know my own mind."¹⁰⁸

Many teenagers found going steady preferable in a society where dating was considered essential to a well-balanced social life. Seventeen-year-old John and his girlfriend "decided to spend all our spare time together as soon as we met," and he appreciated the convenience of the arrangement: "the way I see it, it makes you more comfortable. I can ring my girl at the last minute and ask her to go out and she doesn't feel a bit hurt. And she can ask me to take her to a dance or something without either of us feeling embarrassed."¹⁰⁹

Marriage and Maturity

While young Australians did see dating as a step on the pathway to marriage, they also understood it as a pleasurable activity in and of itself. Bailey has articulated that in an earlier stage in American history, marriage was seen as the end, rather than the culmination of dating.¹¹⁰ To many young Australians, marriage did seem to signify a shift into a very different phase of life.¹¹¹ Discourse around marriage was changing, as has been articulated by Lake and Featherstone, but as Featherstone argued, motherhood was still the primary role for married women.¹¹² This could lead to an uncomfortable disconnect between expectation and reality. A disappointed wife and mother wrote to Margaret Howard in the *Women's*

¹⁰⁷ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 12; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, August 19, 1959, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Betty Best, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

¹¹⁰ Bailey, "History of the Date," 24

¹¹¹ Betty Best, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, January 7, 1953, 18; Gwendolyn Adams interviewed by Margaret Carroll, November 2-3, 2019, Perth TAS, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2124834540>; Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, North Coburg, VIC.

¹¹² Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas," 234; Lake, "Female Desires," 60-80.

Weekly for advice in 1947, worrying that her husband no longer loved her, asking: “was I foolish in expecting more?” Howard replied: “No woman is foolish in expecting love and companionship in her marriage. But what you must realise is that you are now a wife and a mother, not a young girl who must be continually paid attention.”¹¹³ Norma found married life quite boring, noting that she could no longer ‘go out’ because “then you’re looking for a house, and then you’ve got no money... that’s sort of the first priority, either looking for a house, or saving for a house, or things like this, and life becomes even more dreary at that stage.”¹¹⁴ For Norma, and other teenagers, the boredom actually set in before marriage, when ‘going steady’ got serious. A seventeen-year-old woman wrote to *Go-Set*’s advice columnist Leslie Pixie in 1966 to describe her relationship with her eighteen-year-old boyfriend:

We have known each other for seven years and have been going together for three years. We intend to marry. The trouble is that my boyfriend is not exciting, and I know that I am not exciting to him. We don’t go out much as we are saving our money and so we sit around waiting until we are of age. It is all so secure and ordinary that I am becoming bored. I long to get out of the rut we are in and have fun, but I can’t see any way to do it. I love my boyfriend and want to marry him, but I also want to live it up and have fun. Can you offer any help?¹¹⁵

Pixie responded by advising the couple to stay together but make an effort to go out more often: to films, the theatre, the discotheque, free concerts and the zoo. “Don’t sit at home every night,” she cautioned, “Don’t save so hard for an early wedding that it makes you unhappy and bored.”¹¹⁶ Marriage was still considered essential for most young men and women, but expectations of married life were impacted by teenage experiences of dating.

Teenagers who were actively dating at times justified their choices by referring to ideas of preparation for marriage. However, many young people were clearly looking for something different. Eighteen-year-old Betty, who was very sure she did not want to get married early or “just wait around” for a fiancé, claimed: “all the boys I meet who would make wonderful husbands are all so terribly dull.”¹¹⁷ For this teenager at least, the criteria for choosing a date and a husband were not the same. Others assumed their tastes would change in the future, picturing their adult lives as very different from their teenage world. When some teenage boys were asked if they preferred a “home girl” or a “glamour girl,” most opted for the latter, but conceded that their preferences might change with time. Eighteen-year-old

¹¹³ Margaret Howard, “If I Were You,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 20, 1947, 30.

¹¹⁴ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹¹⁵ Leslie Pixie, *Go-Set*, March 7, 1966, 15.

¹¹⁶ Leslie Pixie, *Go-Set*, March 7, 1966, 15.

¹¹⁷ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 17, 1952, 10.

Max explained that while he currently dated both “domestic types” and “beautiful blondes,” in the future “I’d certainly pick a home girl for [marriage] because she wouldn’t try to stand over you all the time and want so much money for dresses and things.”¹¹⁸ Alan agreed that while he currently considered them to be “pretty dull,” “perhaps the home girl wouldn’t seem so bad when you get older – say about 40 – and don’t want to lead such a vigorous life.”¹¹⁹

Girls, too, took age into account when thinking of a match. Given the choice of a sportsman or an intellectual, Joan told Kay Melaun: “A lot of girls think a big, rugged footballer is glamorous, but now I’m at the ripe old age of 22 I’m a bit past such thoughts.”¹²⁰ Joy assumed the same would happen to her as she got older and was not as interested in playing sport herself: “but you’ll find most young girls prefer boys who play some sport. Older women like men with a few more brains.”¹²¹ Nineteen-year-old Jan said: “I’d much rather have an intellectual type because after you’ve had a family and all the mad romance there would be something left.”¹²² There is a clear assumption here for teenagers that they would prefer romance, glamour and desire in their youth, but look for something steadier, comfortable and serious in marriage.

In these discussions about going steady, and similar debates about the right age to marry, teenagers revealed the roles that dating, going steady and marriage played in their lives. Dating was explicitly for fun and going steady sometimes blurred the lines between this and serious, adult romance. Melaun wrote about the youth of 1953, drawing on her experiences writing her regular column for the *Women’s Weekly*. She argued that young people saw love as something experienced only by the youth: “Although they believe love inevitably leads to marriage, they fail to relate the one to the other.”¹²³ Betty, a nineteen-year-old who had spoken to Melaun the year before, had perhaps inspired this thought: “I like being young. I suppose when you’re old you can get fun out of life, but when you’re doing things for the first time – going to parties and shows and meeting new boyfriends – you enjoy them more.”¹²⁴ Teenage girls who were asked about the purpose of school dances, and appropriate behaviour at them, echoed this youthful focus on fun: “There’s plenty of time for

¹¹⁸ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, February 4, 1953, 16.

¹¹⁹ Betty Best, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, February 4, 1953, 16.

¹²⁰ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 10, 1952, 38.

¹²¹ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 10, 1952, 38.

¹²² Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 10, 1952, 38.

¹²³ Kay Melaun, “Today’s Youth – They’re Nicer Than Their Parents,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, February 11, 1953, 15.

¹²⁴ Kay Melaun, “What It’s Like to Be Young Today,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 16, 1952, 15.

night-clubs when you get to 18 or over and begin to think seriously about a boy. When you're at school the main thing is to have fun. But when you get older you become more serious and think about night-clubs."¹²⁵ Sixteen-year-old Paul, when asked about meeting the parents of a date, warned: "When girls take you home it's getting serious, and I'm too young to be getting mixed up."¹²⁶ This dichotomy between serious relationships and casual dating was prominent in teenage discussions of romance. As one young, divorced career woman warned: "Courting is fun, but, believe me, marriage is dead serious."¹²⁷

Teenagers held strong opinions about marriage, opining on the most suitable age, and what constituted proper preparation. While most teenagers saw love as the basis of marriage, and considered it a very important part of their lives, they thought it ought to come after a period of teenage pleasure and fun.¹²⁸ One writer to *Teenagers' Weekly* insisted that girls who married before 25 were immature and childlike, without "a developed personality and the experience to understand that marriage is more than just kisses over the marmalade and toast."¹²⁹ Many teenagers felt that young marriage was foolish, and suggested their peers slow down and enjoy their youth. H. C., from Waverton, NSW, asked: "why get tied down at the starting post with the problems of life? You are only young once."¹³⁰ C.C., from North Sydney, agreed that teenagers were not prepared for marriage, as they were "far too young to know very much about the opposite sex and have only fallen in love with the outside charm and good looks."¹³¹ A class of high school students in Charters Towers, North Queensland, had held a class discussion and come down against teenage marriage:

We date quite often and have many parties, barbecues, dances, and record evenings – always on Saturday nights because of our homework. Although we are 16 or 17 we have at least three more years of study ahead of us, so what time have we for marriage? Youth comes only once in a lifetime, so we say, 'Let ambition and fun go hand in hand.'¹³²

One sixteen-year-old from Warwick, Qld wrote that "people who get married in their teens miss out on a lot of fun. Being in love with different boys and going out with the local gang

¹²⁵ "Musts and Musts Not of a School Dance," *Australian Women's Weekly*, July 30, 1952, 15.

¹²⁶ Kay Melaun, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, September 10, 1952, 16.

¹²⁷ "How to Get and Keep a Man," *Australian Women's Weekly*, March 21, 1956, 12.

¹²⁸ Kay Melaun, "Girls' Hopes of Marriage," *Australian Women's Weekly*, August 6, 1952, 16; Kay Melaun, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, October 15, 1952, 13; "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, December 28, 1960, 2; "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, May 10, 1961, 2.

¹²⁹ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, May 10, 1961, 2.

¹³⁰ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, December 28, 1960, 2.

¹³¹ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, December 28, 1960, 2.

¹³² "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, December 28, 1960, 2.

are part of the pleasures of teenage life.”¹³³ Dating was positioned as not only pleasurable recreation, but essential to proper enjoyment of teenage life, as well as preparation for a happy marriage. Blurring the lines between this pleasure-seeking behaviour and sexual activity, supposed to be present only in marriage, caused great anxiety among the broader population about teenage sexuality.

Intimacy

While the 1960s are often remembered as a time of sexual permissiveness and revolution, as argued above, the change from the 1950s to 1960s was gradual rather than dramatic. However, this certainly does not mean that young people were not engaging in sex, just that they were being taught about it and were talking about it differently. When Patricia Barrkman was asked if it was common for teenagers to be having premarital sex in the 1960s, she answered: “Yes, I don’t know that it was any more common than in the past, I’m sure that it happened in previous generations as well, but there may have been some social influence and the influences that were coming from overseas by way of movies, and the lyrics in songs, often had a sexual bias.” At the least, she recalled, it was becoming more accepted amongst teenagers, if not among their parents.¹³⁴ Throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, premarital sexual intimacy was a fraught topic, even constituting a moral panic about teenage sexuality and juvenile delinquency.¹³⁵

Teenagers and young Australians were instructed that sex and sexual intimacy was only permissible for married couples. Some forms of intimacy, however, were accepted to be a part of teenage relationships, most importantly kissing. Many teenage readers argued that a kiss was a beautiful symbol of love, and one that was not to be engaged in lightly.¹³⁶ One boy wrote to Kay Melaun’s “Youth Sums Up,” indignant at an earlier teenage boy’s description of a good night kiss: “the girl expects it – it’s only polite.” This young man said he and his peers “kiss a girl only when we mean it. There’s nothing more pleasant than kissing a girl, nothing so liable to lose its significance if kisses are thrown around like that.”¹³⁷

¹³³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, December 28, 1960, 2.

¹³⁴ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹³⁵ Bessant, “Described, Measured and Labelled,” 8-28, Brown, “Sometimes the Cream,” 49-63; Evans, ““To Try to Ruin,”” 106-119; Stratton, *Young Ones*, Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 263. For more on post-war moral panics, see Chapter Four.

¹³⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

¹³⁷ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 27, 1952, 18.

Other teenagers found kissing less pleasurable, or at least something that should be kept much more private. One teenager writing to the *Weekly* from Mt. Lawley, W.A., bemoaned the prevalence of “kissing games” at parties, arguing that “many teenagers do not enjoy them but go along with the rest to avoid being labelled a square” and that “a kiss should be something to be shared between two people, not a party.”¹³⁸ Some girls felt pressured by boys to kiss and cuddle at the end of dates. “Fed Up,” writing from Forbes, NSW, asked: “Why is it that when a boy takes a girl out for the first time he wants to have a petting session when they come home? Don’t you realise a girl who has any respect for herself will also respect and admire a boy who takes her straight to the front door instead of “canoodling” in the car!” This writer acknowledged that other girls did expect a kiss on the first date, but dismissed them as “silly, tittering nincompoops.”¹³⁹

Others saw kissing as having a worrying ability to awaken sexual desire; a dangerous first step on the way to sexual intercourse.¹⁴⁰ One teenager wrote in from Ocean Grove, Victoria to share that they had seen “a couple of about 42 years of age kissing in public,” and were “very surprised at this, as I dislike even holding hands with my boyfriend in public.”¹⁴¹ Generally, it was thought that it was good behaviour not to kiss on the first date, although even the *Teenagers’ Weekly* acknowledged that this rule was not strict.¹⁴² When Christian rocker Pat Boone told *Teenagers’ Weekly* readers that he took nine months to kiss his future wife, at least one reader was horrified. “Who does Pat Boone think he’s kidding?” asked Ann Capsey, from Sydney, “I hope no Australian boys follow his example!”¹⁴³

Kissing was a topic of interest for boys and girls, but the latter had more to lose in respect to their reputation. A young woman writing to Kay Melaun in 1952 confessed: “We like to be kissed, too. It’s pleasant. But girls are torn two ways. Will he think I’m a prude if I don’t? Will he think I’m easy if I do?”¹⁴⁴ Girls who enjoyed kissing and other intimacies could be labelled very quickly. Many young women claimed that it was boys in particular

¹³⁸ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 28, 1960, 2.

¹³⁹ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 9, 1959, 2.

¹⁴⁰ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2; “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2; Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, May 20, 1959, 32; Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 15-16, 33; Dorian, *The Years Between*, 28, 44, 62; Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 25.

¹⁴¹ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 16, 1960, 2.

¹⁴² Kirkendall and Farnham-Osborne, “Dating,” 3; “40 Ways to Get a Date,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 4; Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 9, 1952, 36-37.

¹⁴³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2. See Chapter Three for more on Pat Boone’s advice in *Teenagers’ Weekly*.

¹⁴⁴ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 27, 1952, 18.

who talked about whether or not girls were “easy.” Norma remembered that “boys, being more predatory... if they knew there was a girl like that available, she was very popular.”¹⁴⁵ Patricia similarly remembered “I think that with a lot of men, they knew the girls that were willing to have sex and they knew the girls that weren’t willing to have sex.”¹⁴⁶ Girls and women were neatly sorted into these groups. In contrast to the ‘easy’ girls, ‘nice’ or ‘good’ girls supposedly did not participate in heavy petting and did not have sex until marriage. “Some of the girls I know do go in for ‘necking,’” “good girl” Barbara told the *Weekly* in 1949, “but the rest of us don’t think much of them.”¹⁴⁷ Necking and petting were the most common slang for physical intimacy, colloquial terms for what the *Father and Son Guide to Boy-Girl Friendships* called “handling each other’s bodies intimately.”¹⁴⁸ Necking meant passionate kissing, and petting covered a broad range of intimate sexual touching.

Realistically, young unmarried people were having sex. Patricia Barrkman remembered the late 1950s as a time when “there were people having sex in the back of cars.”¹⁴⁹ When asked if the courtship between Patricia and her husband was “passionate,” she remembered “not passionate in the sense that you went to bed with one another, because God forgive me, we just – you know, nice girls didn’t go to bed. Even in whatever year it was, ’56.”¹⁵⁰ Of course, in truth the lines were far blurrier. Patricia immediately added: “well, I guess some people did go to bed, because there were many unmarried women” who became pregnant. Similarly, when asked about what ‘nice girls’ did, Norma responded “Well, abstain until they got married... But I haven’t found many ‘nice girls!’”¹⁵¹ Patricia remarked that she would have been cast as a good girl, “until the couch episode,” when she lost her virginity with a serious boyfriend. However, this did not mean she had a casual relationship with her sexuality: “but, you know, as I grew up and even when I lost my virginity... it wasn’t as if, well the next week or the next month, I was going to go out and have sex.”¹⁵² For all the anxiety about teenage sexuality, many adolescents seemed to take it very seriously.

¹⁴⁵ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁴⁶ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield, QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

¹⁴⁷ Giffney, “Teenagers,” 30.

¹⁴⁸ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield, QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

¹⁵⁰ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

¹⁵¹ Norma interviewed by author, Nth Coburg, 2018.

¹⁵² Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

Young people appear to have had complicated feelings about physical intimacy. Many complained that they were poorly educated, and that more appropriate sex education would have helped them navigate this period in a safer as well as more pleasurable way.¹⁵³ There were varied reasons for not having sex until marriage, or at least until a serious relationship where marriage was a possibility. For some, it was simply a matter of a lack of privacy, something that was ameliorated somewhat with more widespread car ownership.¹⁵⁴ Many young people abstained due to their religion, or fear of the consequences of going against their church. Norma described the discourse around nice girls as a form of “religious indoctrination, brainwashing, literally.”¹⁵⁵ Patricia thought it was possibly her “religious upbringing” that led her to know when to “pull back, cool down and get over it” when temperatures and feelings were soaring with serious boyfriends.¹⁵⁶ Like many other young people, she was afraid that it was a sin that would be harshly punished.

Veronica remembered specifically the pressure from women’s magazines:

I’d had several boyfriends before this, and some of them had wanted to have sex, and I suppose I thought it was what you did when you got married, although my mother never said that, but by God, there was a lot of stuff in women’s magazines telling you how you ought to behave and how you ought to make a man feel good, and how you were to downplay your intelligence, and blah blah blah.¹⁵⁷

This advice was explicitly gendered. Young men and women often felt drawn to sex, but women in particular felt it was their duty to say no, whether because of social pressures, religious influence, or fears of other consequences. In 1959, eighteen-year-old university student Elaine told the *Weekly* that she preferred dating around to going steady, although eventually she would marry because “you can’t go on changing escorts forever.” The reason she avoided steady dating was the expectation of sex that came with it, which Elaine was not interested in until the men were ready to get married. The interviewer asked her if there were moral reasons for avoiding sex, but Elaine demurred, “I wouldn’t be hurting anyone but myself and my parents. It’s just common sense. Of course, if I were really in love, it might be

¹⁵³ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC; Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 25-26, 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>; See Chapter Three for analysis of sex education materials.

¹⁵⁴ Ginette Matalon interviewed by Frank Heimans, January 13-14, 2013, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219968733>; Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 181.

¹⁵⁵ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁵⁶ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

¹⁵⁷ Veronica Schwarz interviewed by Katie Holmes, March, 22, 25, 2013, Brookfield VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220011117>. Chapter Three analyses teenage interactions with such advice literature.

different, but by then I hope we will be able to consider marriage.”¹⁵⁸ In particular, Elaine was worried about the impact on her parents if she were to “get into trouble” with a man not ready to settle down.

The fear of pregnancy loomed large for many young women. When Norma was asked about whether people were supposed to wait until marriage or engagement to have sex, she responded “well, then there was no contraception, was there.”¹⁵⁹ This eminently practical reason was at the forefront of mind for many. Contraception was difficult to obtain, especially for unmarried people, and often unreliable. The pill arrived in Australia in 1961, but it was only available to married women with a prescription.¹⁶⁰ Birth rates are one way to examine patterns of premarital sexuality at this time. From 1941 the birth rate among all female fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds (per 1000 in this age group) grew steadily, from 24.27 to 38.62 in 1951, 47.35 in 1961, and 48.88 in 1968.¹⁶¹ This included, however, the small number of teenagers who had married young.

Many of these pregnancies led to births to single mothers but others resulted in rushed marriages. As prominent marriage counsellor In 1953, 57% of births to married teenage mothers occurred less than eight months after marriage, and this number had grown to 74% by 1968.¹⁶² Prominent marriage counsellor Dr David Mace spoke rather dismally of these situations, describing “forced marriages” which, even if the couple meant to marry eventually anyway, ruined “what should be a beautiful experience” with “secret guilt and shame.”¹⁶³ Norma argued it led to unhappy marriages, where divorce was not an option.¹⁶⁴ It was, however, a common story. Alison remembered finding herself pregnant at seventeen in 1970,

¹⁵⁸ Giffney, “Teenagers,” 30.

¹⁵⁹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁶⁰ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 288.

¹⁶¹ ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1970*, no. 56 (Canberra: ABS, 1970), 164. Throughout these decades, the 25–29-year-old cohort maintained the highest birth-rate overall, with 20–24-year-olds just behind (their positions were switched in 1956 and again in 1961.)

¹⁶² ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1955*, no. 41 (Canberra: ABS, 1955), 369; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1960*, no. 46 (Canberra: ABS, 1960), 348; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1965*, no. 51 (Canberra: ABS, 1965), 322; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1970*, no. 56 (Canberra: ABS, 1970), 174. In 1953, births less than eight months after marriage made up 57% of cases where the mother was under twenty years of age, compared to 16% of all nuptial births. Teenage mothers made up 41% of these births overall, while only contributing to 12% of overall nuptial births. These numbers grew, alongside the teenage birth rate more generally. In 1968 74% of married teenage mothers gave birth less than eight months after marriage, compared to the overall rate of 26%, and teenage mothers made up 51% of such births, while overall only contributing to 18% of total nuptial births. For a statistical breakdown of ex- and premarital conceptions by age over time, see Gordon Carmichael, “Non-Marital Pregnancy and the Second Demographic Transition in Australia in Historical Perspective.” *Demographic Research* 30, 21 (2014): 609-640.

¹⁶³ David Mace, “Australia’s Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17

¹⁶⁴ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

shocked and horrified. Her boyfriend proposed, and they were married before she had turned eighteen.¹⁶⁵ Alison had not previously been thinking of marriage:

I don't think we had been actually having sex for very long when I fell pregnant. Because I didn't know what the heck was going on. I trusted him to know... Then I found myself pregnant...I was scared witless. Scared to tell anybody. Scared about what that meant for me because marriage wasn't in my framework. Like, I hadn't even thought about marriage. I don't know whether Brian did, but I certainly didn't.¹⁶⁶

Lorraine Bull had been with her boyfriend for three years before she got pregnant “so that sort of rushed the decision to get married, and sort of forced the issue there.” He had proposed much earlier, only six weeks after they met, but she thought that was going too fast and wanted to wait. When asked if the eventual decision to get married was due to practicality or love, she answered “Partial practicality, but we had been going out together for a long time, so of course there was some love as well. But probably we wouldn't have decided to get married for a while.”¹⁶⁷ Georgina Hammersley had a similar story, where she married her boyfriend Rick at twenty after falling pregnant: “to be quite frank with you, I think if I had not gotten pregnant, he was not the marrying kind. But I did, and he did, we got married... We'd been going together, and I don't think if he'd hated me he'd have married me.”¹⁶⁸

Nonmarital birth rates were also rising through these decades. From 4.03% of births in 1948, the ex-nuptial birth rate rose to 7.96% in 1968.¹⁶⁹ This was just a proportion of conceptions outside of marriage. Many pregnancies ended in abortion or adoption. Norma's sister fell pregnant at seventeen, and her parents took her to a doctor, and “you know, she wasn't pregnant anymore.”¹⁷⁰ It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of abortions as they were often kept secret even from family members.¹⁷¹ Other girls and women gave birth to

¹⁶⁵ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 25-26, 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>.

¹⁶⁶ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 25-26, 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>.

¹⁶⁷ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹⁶⁸ Georgina Hammersley interviewed by John Bannister, January 3, 5, 2012, Mosman Park WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219841931>.

¹⁶⁹ ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1951*, no. 38 (Canberra: ABS, 1951), 605; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1955*, no. 41 (Canberra: ABS, 1955), 364; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1960*, no.46 (Canberra: ABS, 1960), 344; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1965*, no. 51 (Canberra: ABS, 1965), 318; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1970*, no. 56 (Canberra: ABS, 1970), 170.

¹⁷⁰ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁷¹ Barbara Baird, *“I Had One Too –”: An Oral History of Abortion in South Australia before 1970* (Bedford Park, SA: Women's Studies Unit, Flinders University of South Australia, 1990): 17, 23.

babies who were then adopted. These numbers are also opaque, as adoptions were processed through government bodies, but also private agencies and unofficial arrangements.¹⁷² In 1970-1971 9798 children were adopted, marking a peak in the numbers across Australia.¹⁷³ In 1951 Fred Henskens' girlfriend became pregnant. She was Catholic and was sent to Melbourne for the pregnancy and birth, and the baby was adopted out to a Catholic family.¹⁷⁴ Unmarried pregnant women were often sent away to another city or interstate to "unmarried mothers' homes" which facilitated the adoption of their babies, even against the mother's wishes.¹⁷⁵ These homes were largely run by church organisations. Single women also found themselves forced to give up their babies in hospitals, where the assumption was that all babies of unmarried women were up for adoption.¹⁷⁶ One woman who told her story to the 2012 Senate Inquiry into forced adoption spoke of her treatment in hospital: "A nurse even told me the pain I was experiencing was punishment for getting pregnant before marriage."¹⁷⁷

For those who chose not to have sex before marriage, physical pleasure was still an option. While sex education texts warned against the supposed slippery slope of physical intimacy, young people often participated enthusiastically in other forms of sexual activity. When discussing the idea that "nice girls" abstained until marriage, Norma clarified that there was certainly "a bit of fooling around... Nothing that resulted in pregnancy, we'll put it that way."¹⁷⁸ Alison remembered before falling pregnant, she and her boyfriend had "the normal sexual relationship without full-blown sexual intercourse for quite some time."¹⁷⁹ While Alison and no doubt many others felt considerable pressure from their partners, this kind of intimacy could also be very pleasurable. Even Dr Mace's stern warnings admitted that counterbalanced against the fear of pregnancy was "the fleeting happiness of a furtively snatched pleasure."¹⁸⁰ However, in many relationships physical attraction led naturally to

¹⁷² Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain and Denise Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 17, 65.

¹⁷³ Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert, *Market in Babies*, 18.

¹⁷⁴ Fred Henskens interviewed by Matthew Higgins, June 18-19, 2012, Canberra ACT, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219905240>.

¹⁷⁵ Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert, *Market in Babies*, 37-38, 40-41.

¹⁷⁶ Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert, *Market in Babies*, 45-46.

¹⁷⁷ Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert, *Market in Babies*, 43.

¹⁷⁸ Norma interviewed by author, Nth Coburg, 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 25-26, 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>.

¹⁸⁰ David Mace, "Australia's Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17.

physical intimacy, largely “because it felt nice.”¹⁸¹ This was the logical next step on the dating pathway, as romances became more serious.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, various courtship patterns and conventions were established, challenged and consolidated. Dating or going out became the most common form of romantic ritual, especially among young people. It was centred around leisure and consumption, but young Australians were also urged to view it as a progressive pathway of development and growth toward marriage. This chapter has brought forward the voices of young daters themselves and shown the way that they largely viewed dating as about pleasure more than marriage. Teenagers and young adults faced the minefield of rules and conventions surrounding dating and worked to challenge or consolidate them through their words and behaviour. Important new features of dating culture in the middle of the twentieth century included an understanding of courtship as increasingly casual and temporary. Teenagers and young Australians went on dates with friends and acquaintances, with people they found themselves madly in love with, and with friends of friends they had never met before the date. In all of these forms, dating became an established and important part of a young person’s social life and impacted on a teenager’s status and reputation amongst their peers. Rules around money were hotly debated, and clearly linked to traditional gender roles that were also, very gradually, being challenged. The malleability of dating, and its lack of a clear definition, gave room for young people to begin forming their own relationship with romance, sexuality, and gender roles. This chapter has sketched out a generalised picture of mainstream dating. The following chapters challenge the resulting narrow understanding of dating as exclusively white, heterosexual, and largely middle-class, by focusing on particular groups in Australian society who experienced romance very differently.

While aspects of Australian dating at this time had a distinctly local flavour, the broad strokes of the convention were born of dating behaviour in the United States of America. Culturally, Australia was most closely linked to Britain, however, influences from America were beginning to contest this affinity from the early twentieth century. The stationing of thousands of American troops in Australia during the Second World War solidified the link between the two nations. The next chapter analyses the way that social disruption caused by

¹⁸¹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

war and American influence came together to create the perfect stage for the creation and consolidation of the Australian dating rituals.

Chapter Two: The Second World War and the Americans in Australia, 1940-1945

In 1944, Australian newspapers were flooded with retrospective pieces on the 'Friendly Invasion' of American troops during the Second World War.¹ In a few short years, the social landscape of Australia seemed to have irrevocably changed. Comparisons of Americans and Australians were rife, although often without the tension and animosity common only a year or two earlier. Most of these analyses centred on the relationship between men and women, specifically those from opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean. A journalist for the *Queensland Times* waxed poetic, emphasising the different romantic practices of the Yanks, and summed up a number of important distinctions between the courtship rituals of the two nations:

The citizen who has not lost interest in the ceaseless drama of life will have noticed slight differences in the social customs and habits of two great peoples. The visitor may conduct a streamline[d] courtship with the aid of flowers; he may woo his way to the hearts of Australian girls with a 'heaven-is-where-Juliet-lives' kind of technique ... He and his female Australian companion may walk the pavement fused like chocolates on a summer's day, compared with the detached "aloofness" of the Australian but these are only differences in detail. By and large the US servicemen and women as they moved about our city have been a splendid advertisement for their country.²

This chapter examines the impact of the war, and specifically the presence of American soldiers, on Australia's dating culture and behaviour. The war created an atmosphere of urgency, with men and women falling in love quickly and being separated by circumstances. Social mores were disrupted as servicemen swept through Australian cities and young people sought a distraction from wartime realities. Marriage was still seen as the natural endpoint for a romance, but it was not easily in reach for many young Australians whose partners or

¹ The 'Friendly Invasion' was a term used to describe the presence of American soldiers in the United Kingdom, but was also used liberally in Australian media, and since, in historical texts. See for example, "England Submits to a Friendly Invasion," *The Courier-Mail*, November 15, 1948, 2; "Friendly Invasion," *Australian Women's Weekly*, June 7, 1947, 34; "A 'Friendly Invasion' Ends," *News*, October 25, 1944, 2; "Americans 'Evacuate' Australia After Big 'Friendly Invasion,'" *Army News*, October 27, 1944, 3; Frank Kluckhorn, "Yanks Quit Australia After 2 ½ Years of 'Friendly Invasion,'" *The Herald*, October 21, 1944, 3; Max Praed, "Book Reviews: 'Friendly Invasion,'" *Sunday Times*, May 13, 1945, 8; Libby Connors, Lynette Finch, Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War* (St Lucia, Qld; University of Queensland Press, 1992), 141, 152.

² "When the Yanks Go Home," *Queensland Times*, April 12, 1944, 3.

potential partners were sent away by the war, in many cases permanently. Dating conventions that had already begun to form in the early twentieth century were consolidated as American servicemen romanced Australian women and men, and introduced or normalised new practices rooted in consumerism, riding a wave of glamorous popular culture and their status as heroes during the war.

Increasingly, dating was practised by young people looking for love, but also by those who were not planning to wed, or who had already promised themselves to another but enjoyed the rituals of gift-giving, compliments, and public romance. Accordingly, dating became a practice associated with pleasure in the face of the horrors of war, and for many young women, a way of demonstrating patriotic support for men about to be sent away again.

Works by Marilyn Lake, Hsu Ming Teo and Lisa Featherstone have outlined the way that Australian dating practices were already turning towards ideas of sexual pleasure, consumerism, and glamour in the interwar years.³ This chapter, then, examines the way in which the specific environment of the Second World War allowed these changes to become far more visible and develop into intrinsic parts of Australian dating conventions. As Teo has argued, many of the changes to romantic culture in the early twentieth century were already due to the American influence, through advertising, film, and a reliance on American romantic expertise.⁴ As such, the presence of the foreign soldiers in Australia served to accelerate and consolidate this Americanisation. Many of the changing conventions were brought forward in public imagination and discussion, and this consolidated their existence as part of mainstream romantic conventions.

The social impacts of war also played a significant role in changes to romantic behaviour. Dating was constructed as a pathway to marriage. However, marriage was not always an option during the Second World War. Servicemen and women were frequently moved and did not know what their futures would hold. Americans and Australians who fell in love were subject to waiting periods before official permission to marry would be granted.⁵ The dangers of war clouded future plans. Many young people chose to act quickly, with

³ Lake, "Female Desires,"; Lake, "The Desire for a Yank,"; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*; Featherstone, "Rethinking Female Pleasure,"; Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas?"; Teo, "Americanisation," 171-191.

⁴ Teo, "Americanisation," 172-3.

⁵ Karen Hughes, "Mobilising Across Colour Lines: Intimate Encounters Between Aboriginal Women and African American and Other Allied Servicemen on the World War II Australian Home Front," *Aboriginal History Journal*, 41 (2017): 60; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 54; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 224.

whirlwind courtships resulting in marriages across Australia.⁶ Others were not able to marry or had to spend much of the war apart from their loved ones. Of course, there were those for whom marriage was not possible in the first place. Gay men and lesbian women also experienced changes in romantic rituals during the Second World War. Aboriginal men and women, especially those who fell in love or formed relationships with African American servicemen, faced additional legislative barriers to marriage due to state regulation of marriage and non-white immigration.⁷ However, dating continued as a cultural practice, whether or not it included love and romance, and even when marriage was not the goal. This chapter explores the ways that transience led to intense romantic relationships, but also to a casualisation of dating. This resulted in a greater understanding of dating as a leisure practice, not only as the first step on the path to marriage.

Americans in Australia

The attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent fall of Singapore caused a major shift in the relationship between the United States (US) and Australia, which soon became the Allied base for the Pacific Campaign of the Second World War. Australia found itself newly vulnerable and felt unprotected by Britain.⁸ With America's entry into the Pacific theatre, many Australians felt they had found their new saviours. Tens of thousands of American servicemen passed through Australia during the war, impacting hugely on the communities surrounding their bases in Melbourne, Brisbane, and Townsville in particular.⁹ The movement of these vast numbers of US troops and equipment in the following years was, at least at first, a parade of heroes.¹⁰ The relationship was a complicated one, however, and it was not a clean shift from an attachment to one great power to the next. Australia's relationship with Britain remained very strong, and American forays into Australia's cultural and social life had throughout the interwar years been viewed with great suspicion.¹¹

Previously, Australian ideas of the US were based almost entirely on Hollywood. When the well-dressed US servicemen appeared, to many it would have seemed as though

⁶ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 198-199; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 47-54.

⁷ Hughes, "Mobilising," 50, 59-60.

⁸ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 44.

⁹ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 207; Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 621; Sturma, "Loving the Alien," 4; Dux, "Discharging the Truth," 76; Hennessey, "The Cheapest Thing," 61; Carol Fallows, *Love and War: Stories of War Brides from the Great War to Vietnam* (Sydney: Bantam Books, 2002): 19.

¹⁰ Pace, "All the Nice Girls," 2-3.

¹¹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 7; Evans, "To Try to Ruin," 109.

they had stepped right off the silver screen. This association with glamour and desirability was strengthened by the Americans' immaculately tailored uniforms, their superior pay and their easy generosity with charm, flowers, and compliments. One American soldier, Paul M Kinder, wrote home to his friends that the Australians and Americans were getting along well, and that the hosts "treat us more like kings than soldiers."¹² The 'friendly invasion' of American servicemen shook up gender relations throughout Australia. These men, glamorous and interested in socialising with women, were a shock to traditional Australian ideas of mateship and brotherhood above all, and they were to have a lasting impact.

Historians have written about how Australia's use as a leave centre and training ground affected a society already in flux.¹³ The relationship between the American servicemen and Australian civilians was explicitly gendered. As Marilyn Lake argued, the existence of a large group of foreign troops in Australia served to "sexualise the local female population."¹⁴ Moral panics during the war focused on the morality of women and sought to regulate their behaviour. This sexualisation was not limited, however, to women.¹⁵ A greater exposure to homosexuality was part of the abandoning of "old-time sexual mores" that came along with wartime conditions.¹⁶ As Yorick Smaal argued: "interactions between the soldiers who took their pleasures where they could find them, and those men happy to meet their comrade's requirements, must have exposed an uninitiated, although unquantifiable group of men to new sexual pleasures and cultural experiences."¹⁷ The presence of the Americans impacted local gay subcultures and the experiences of individual gay civilians.¹⁸ The bars and beats that were already spaces in which some homosexual men discreetly gathered and met saw increased traffic during the war, thanks to the Americans and greater numbers of transient servicemen more generally.

¹² Paul M. Kinder to Mr and Mrs S. S. Ball, June 9, 1942, C0068, Folder 1632, *World War II, Letters, 1940-1946*, The State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/10656/rec/1>.

¹³ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 621-633; Sturma, "Loving the Alien," 3-27; Dux, "Discharging the Truth," 75-91; Hennessey, "The Cheapest Thing," 61-70; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 203-228; Pace, "All the Nice Girls," 38-59; E Daniel Potts & Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under 1941-45* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 57-82.

¹⁴ Lake, "Female Desires," 67.

¹⁵ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 82; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 219-220; Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 172; Lake, "Female Desires," 67.

¹⁶ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 82.

¹⁷ Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 173

¹⁸ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 92; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 221; Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 173.

Public Pick-ups: Meeting Casually in Wartime

The war had a marked impact on the way young people met and decided to go out together. As outlined in Chapter One, chaperones had already become out of date, and women were largely choosing instead to step out with a group of friends. As many historians have discussed, Australian women were entering the workforce in a new way, with women of different classes now independently working in various industries in the cities, and therefore in contact with potential partners, including Americans.¹⁹ City streets themselves became a meeting space for young people. This was a significant break from previous courtship conventions, and for many older Australians, a hard one to swallow. Picking-up was often associated with the American servicemen, who did not have access to friendship networks in strange cities.²⁰ A young woman from Newcastle remembered that the Americans were always “walking down the street and chatting up girls.”²¹ “They were so eager to talk to you,” remembered Betty Greer, “It was really an amazing time.”²² Elaine, a young woman who later married a British serviceman described such meetings as “just part of life,” recalling that when walking down the street “you’d have half a dozen Americans trying to chat you up.”²³ Adelie Hurley remembered for Sydneysiders: “you always met at Proud’s Corner – that was the place – [it] was good; it was out in the open.”²⁴ It seems that for these young women, themselves embracing a new visibility, meeting Americans could occur “everywhere, in cafes, on tramcars and street corners, and it wasn’t much use people being shocked because you just couldn’t help it, and that’s all there was to it.”²⁵ While Australians often assumed the pick-up was a common American practice, the servicemen themselves sometimes commented that they were surprised that Australian women were so friendly and amenable to being picked up on the street: “If you walk up to one and ask for a date, you won’t get slapped. Pick-up dates are regarded as natural not scandalous.”²⁶ The circumstances of war, and the

¹⁹ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 57-60; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 209-211, 219; Dyson, *Swing By Sailor*, 6; Sturma, “Loving the Alien,” 15-16; Bongiorno, *Sex Lives of Australians*, 189; Margaret Bevege, “Some Reflections on Women’s Experiences in North Queensland During World War II,” in *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* ed. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982), 99.

²⁰ Hennessey, “The Cheapest Thing,” 63.

²¹ Trixee, interviewed by author, 2018, phone interview.

²² Betty Greer quoted in Potts & Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 31.

²³ Elaine Barstow, quoted in Dyson, *Swing By Sailor*, 55.

²⁴ Adelie Hurley quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 48. She preferred it to the Australia Hotel: “what they called the snake pit,”

²⁵ Maureen Meadows, *I Loved Those Yanks* (Sydney: George M Dash, 1948), 40.

²⁶ Letter quoted in Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 64.

lack of social networks for American soldiers allowed for the breaching of earlier social taboos.

Americans found many of the towns and cities functioning as leave centres had inadequate entertainment options. This led to fears about lonely, bored men wandering the streets looking for a good time. American correspondent Jack Turcott complained that Australian entertainment was insufficient, especially on Sundays, and even in larger cities.²⁷ A *Truth* article assessing the claim clearly points to the underlying fear of vice, in noting that “there were not enough movies, restaurants and meeting places, and that soldiers were forced to meet their girlfriend on street corners or in blacked-out parks.”²⁸ Men seeking same-sex partners had to be even more discreet. Cinemas often met this demand, providing some privacy in a public space for civilians and servicemen alike.²⁹ In particular, theatres that showed continuous newsreels were popular as they remained dark.³⁰ A newly built air raid shelter could also function as a dark, private space when not being used for its official purpose.³¹

Organisations including the Australian Comforts Fund and the American Red Cross began setting up concerts, big bands, dances, and sporting tournaments to keep the troops busy and entertained and worked to facilitate socialisation between Americans and Australians.³² Local families, and particularly young women, were encouraged to include Americans in their wholesome weekend activities, including beach picnics, surfing lessons and horse riding. Canteens and hostels were set up for food, accommodation and entertainment, and Australian women were enlisted as volunteers and dance partners. Parties were thrown by associations like the Commonwealth Club and the YMCA.³³ Joe Haddock wrote home that “The Red Cross operate a building here like a USO so there is always something doing.”³⁴ Many of the centres served as social hubs for servicemen and civilians alike. For the Australians left at home during the war, this entertainment was clearly a much-

²⁷ Melbourne Blue Nose, “Does Yanks’ Necking Irk our Males,” *Truth*, September 13, 1942, 15.

²⁸ Melbourne Blue Nose, “Does Yanks’ Necking Irk our Males,” *Truth*, September 13, 1942, 15.

²⁹ Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 55; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 113.

³⁰ Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 55.

³¹ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 94.

³² Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 209; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 179, 221; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 21.

³³ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 36, 37, 41; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 179.

³⁴ Joe Haddock to Reverend Albert J. Prokes, February 28, 1945, C3466, Folder 28, *Albert J. Prokes World War II Letters*, State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/24266>. USO refers to the United Service Organisations, that provided entertainment and social facilities for American servicemen overseas and at home.

needed distraction from their fears about loved ones at the front, and locals took to the increased number of activities and attractions with vigour. For the Americans, the idea of entertainment went hand-in-hand with meeting girls.³⁵ Fred Blair remembered that men on leave often had a shared goal: “We were looking “for girls to go dancing and companionship.”³⁶ Paul Kinder, an American serviceman writing to friends from a convalescent camp, outlined the sort of activities one could partake in when on leave, by discussing Australian girls: “They go in for tennis, riding and cycling much more than does a Yank, but they like to dance, see American pictures, swim and converse.”³⁷

While such socialisation was largely categorised as dating, it was not always romantic or sexual. Often, meeting girls was a way for these young men, far from home, to be welcomed into a family.³⁸ Joe Haddock wrote that at Christmas in particular, “many of our boys spent Xmas day with Australian families and all reported they were well received and had a good time.”³⁹ Adelie Hurley remembered her mother holding open houses for the forces, and the family meeting “a lot of Americans and other soldiers, sailors and air force from all over the world,” for sing-alongs, swimming and garden parties.⁴⁰ “Some of them were very nice,” she recalled, “some were very shy—a lot of them very chatty and wanted to know all about Australia... Others just wanted to have the peace and the quiet of a private home.”⁴¹ American Joe Richard remembered that “people would often invite you out for the weekend or for an evening meal in Melbourne.”⁴² These family gatherings, alongside dates and dances, gave much comfort to servicemen in a new country.⁴³ Young people were thus able to position their dates as a way of assisting Australia’s allies in the war, and so, as long as the companionship was chaste and appropriate, dating essentially became mobilised as a form of patriotic duty. Australian women were encouraged to welcome, work for, and entertain the allied troops.⁴⁴ This was made official in the case of “Victory Belles,” who, Helen Pace argued, typified “the hospitality and patriotism expected from the wartime ‘nice

³⁵ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 178.

³⁶ Fred Blair, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 31.

³⁷ Paul M. Kinder to friends Mr and Mrs S. S. Ball, April 21, 1942, C0068, Folder 1632, *World War II, Letters, 1940-1946*, The State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/10655>.

³⁸ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 41-43; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 22.

³⁹ Joe Haddock to Reverend Albert J. Prokes, February 28, 1945, C3466, Folder 28, *Albert J. Prokes World War II Letters*, State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/24266>.

⁴⁰ Adelie Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 22.

⁴¹ Adelie Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 22.

⁴² Joe Richard, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 22.

⁴³ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 41-43.

⁴⁴ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 181, 220-221.

girl.”⁴⁵ These were young women who were carefully vetted and closely chaperoned in order to ensure their dancing dates with American servicemen remained friendly and chaste. Respectable women could also entertain servicemen through programs organised by the Red Cross.⁴⁶

In addition to these new initiatives, Australians and Americans used existing hotels and dance halls to meet and socialise during the war. There were many popular meeting spots for pick-up dates, including Sydney’s Trocadero dance hall and Hotel Australia.⁴⁷ Jean Sullivan remembered “the 41st Division Band... made up of all the fellows from the Glen Miller... and all the big orchestras” would play at Brisbane’s City Hall, “you’d walk in and the whole place would be vibrating with this beautiful music, and it was wonderful.”⁴⁸ These venues offered romantic opportunities not only for patrons, but for staff. Linda Schwartz worked at Sydney’s Liberty Theatre, and although her long work hours meant that usually “there wasn’t too much time for [her] to get into trouble,” she did meet her husband while eating dinner with co-workers in the same building where American officers were billeted. She remembered:

I would walk in and my husband [to-be] tried to pick me up. He’d give me a little eye. One night a merchant marine tried to pick me up, and I told him off. This soured my husband a little bit. Eventually he asked the hostess of the dining room to introduce us. He sent a note over and he said “I would like to meet you,” and I wrote a note back to him and I put on it, ‘My phone number is such and such, and you can call me at such and such a time’, and that was it. That’s how we met...⁴⁹

African American servicemen, who made up about eight per cent of the visiting US troops, were largely segregated from their white counterparts in Australia, and so too were many of their entertainment options.⁵⁰ The Australian government had explicitly opposed the stationing of African American troops in Australia. However, the “exigencies of total war and the realities of Australia’s subordinate status in the Pacific Allies’ alliance” meant that entry restrictions to Australia, a crucial part of the White Australia policy, were suspended for American servicemen during the war.⁵¹ Once faced with an influx of African American

⁴⁵ Pace, “All the Nice Girls” 3.

⁴⁶ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 36.

⁴⁷ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 36, 48; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 50.

⁴⁸ Jean Sullivan, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 33.

⁴⁹ Linda Schwarz, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 51.

⁵⁰ Samuel Furphy, “The Second World War Home Front,” in *Serving Our Country*, ed. Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018): 123; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 211.

⁵¹ Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, The Reception of Black American Servicemen in Australia During World War II: The Resilience of ‘White Australia,’” *Journal of Black Studies* 25, 3 (1995): 332; Clare Corbould,

servicemen, Australian and American authorities worked together to keep Black men away from white Australians, and in particular, from white Australian women. Army, Commonwealth, and state authorities implemented “interlocking systems of segregation in the workplace, in residential locations, and in recreation [that] ensured that Black American servicemen were confined by the joint forces of American and Queensland racism.”⁵² Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor have argued that this challenge to the White Australia policy only reaffirmed Australian commitment to segregation and discrimination.⁵³

Under these regulations, African American servicemen were excluded from many established dances and recreation centres.⁵⁴ Clubs and dances were set up by the American Red Cross specifically to serve African American servicemen, including Sydney’s Booker T Washington Club, Brisbane’s Doctor Carver Club and an American Red Cross Club in Townsville.⁵⁵ White women who attended dances at the Doctor Carver Club in segregated South Brisbane were questioned by the vice squad, as were staff who worked in the canteen.⁵⁶ “The presumption,” Saunders argued, “was that the only interaction that could occur between an Anglo-Australian woman and an African American involved lurid sexual practices that had the potential to destroy the fabric of Australian life.”⁵⁷ White women in many communities refused to dance with African American servicemen, and conflict between white and Black servicemen over access to women often erupted into violence.⁵⁸

Anxieties about who could perform the role of escort for African American men led to a complicated system of segregation based on both Australian and American systems, born from fears of Black sexuality and miscegenation. Hughes noted that some of these clubs catering to African American troops “encouraged Aboriginal women to apply for membership as card-carrying dance partners.”⁵⁹ Aboriginal women who were sought after to attend these dances were, however, stepping somewhat outside of the jurisdiction of Native

“Black Internationalism’s Shifting Alliances: African American Newspapers, the White Australia Policy, and Indigenous Australians, 1919-1948,” *History Compass* 15, 5 (2017): 2.

⁵² Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 332, 346-7.

⁵³ Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 333.

⁵⁴ Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 343-344. African American servicemen were banned from attending dances at the Trocadero in Sydney after interracial violence, banned from the US Army Club in Cairns with the justification that white girls would not dance with them, and banned from attending dances in Ingham from 1942 despite its designation as “an exclusively ‘coloured’ leave center.”

⁵⁵ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 52; Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 343, 344-5.

⁵⁶ Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 344

⁵⁷ Kay Saunders, “In a Cloud of Lust: Black GIs and Sex in World War II,” in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1995): 185.

⁵⁸ Saunders, “Cloud of Lust,” 185.

⁵⁹ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 52; Furphy, “Second World War,” 123.

Affairs, which worried state authorities. As Saunders and Taylor have argued, “because racial ideology decreed that white women were unsuitable escorts and sexual partners for Black men (although social practice did not mirror these prescriptions), the Queensland authorities were thus forced to permit some Aboriginal women to be free of some of the more repressive constraints of the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act of 1939.”⁶⁰ A club in Red Hill, Brisbane, allowed only Black American and Aboriginal patrons, and a small, approved number of white women, and was patrolled by American military police and Australian civilian police, to ensure the exclusion of white Australian men.⁶¹ The perceived need to regulate intimacy between African American men and white women put pressure on systems of state control over Aboriginal people.

For most Aboriginal people and African American servicemen, however, socialisation was confined to private homes.⁶² Both American and Australian authorities explicitly discouraged or disallowed relationships between African American servicemen and Australian women, especially Aboriginal women.⁶³ Even when Aboriginal women were solicited as dance partners, they were discouraged from continuing to socialise with African American troops. The extent and nature of segregation differed from state to state. Francis Bray, the Western Australian Commissioner of Native Affairs, was extremely concerned about potential socialisation between Aboriginal women and African American men. In 1944, due to fears of “female misbehaviour during the presence of Allied coloured servicemen,” Aboriginal girls and women were removed from Perth and Fremantle and placed in settlements outside the city, from which “girls regularly absconded.”⁶⁴ If the permitted socialising led to a long-term relationship, immigration laws of both Australia and America meant that even if a couple were to be married, neither could move to their spouse’s country.⁶⁵

As for heterosexual couples, the Second World War brought a flurry of change and opportunity for gay men and lesbian women, as well as increased surveillance.⁶⁶ Although the military could be a very dangerous place for gay men, its sex-segregated spaces allowed

⁶⁰ Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 345.

⁶¹ Saunders and Taylor, “Reception,” 344-5.

⁶² Hughes, “Mobilising,” 52; Furphy, “Second World War,” 123.

⁶³ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 53; Furphy, “Second World War,” 123.

⁶⁴ Furphy, “Second World War,” 123.

⁶⁵ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 59-60. During the war anti-miscegenation laws operated in twenty-nine American states and Aboriginal men and women had to seek official permission from white officials to marry. For more information on regulation of Aboriginal marriages, see Chapter Five.

⁶⁶ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 219; Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 81.

for sexual and romantic exploration.⁶⁷ Men reported a wide array of experiences, from those finding love and pleasure, even in the most oppressive of spaces (including POW camps and warzones), to those experiencing homosexual sex for the first time, to those discriminated against for their sexuality.⁶⁸ John O'Donohoe recalled his experience in the army as "a smorgasbord."⁶⁹ One soldier remembers meeting an air-force sergeant at a train station when both were on leave and soon embarking on a passionate affair. The couple would line up their leave to go away to the Jenolan Caves, fooling around in the back of the bus on the way to the hotel.⁷⁰

Some young men in Newcastle initially found the war an unwanted interruption to their exploration of camp life at home, but soon discovered that the services offered homosexual activity as well.⁷¹ Many young men were introduced to new, larger cities, packed with American soldiers who were often just as interested in and interesting to the local male population as young women. Civilians could go to the usual haunts and have a greater chance of picking up a serviceman "on leave looking for a good time."⁷² Specific 'beats' would spring up wherever the forces were located, and the common practice in the services of nude swimming when near the sea, provided a chance for gay men to signal availability and interest.⁷³ Brisbane, host to MacArthur's headquarters and nearly 80 000 American servicemen, provided many such opportunities.⁷⁴ Smaal has outlined the activities of one network of Australian men who would solicit both Australian and American servicemen by the Eternal Flame of Remembrance next to Brisbane's Central station.⁷⁵

Lesbian women also found spaces in the services for meeting other women like themselves. Ruth Ford has outlined the anxieties around women in uniform. Many people believed lesbian women would be drawn to the services as it gave them a chance to take on a more traditionally masculine role and dress, as well as access to other women.⁷⁶ Therefore, these spaces were placed under heavy surveillance. Although female homosexual activity was

⁶⁷ Wotherspoon, "Comrades-in-Arms," 217; Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows*, 105; Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Pride in Defence*, 74-75.

⁶⁸ Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 4-5.

⁶⁹ John O'Donohoe interview with Garry Wotherspoon, May 1985, MLOH448 Tape 10 Side A, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

⁷⁰ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 88.

⁷¹ 'Camp' was the most common term gay men used to describe themselves and their community in Australia at this time. For more on terminology, see Chapter Seven.

⁷² Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 93; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 185.

⁷³ Wafer, "Uncle Doreen," 59.

⁷⁴ Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 7, 17.

⁷⁵ Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 172.

⁷⁶ Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women," 82-83.

not illegal, lesbian women were subject to harassment, discrimination, and violence.⁷⁷ They were also pathologised as unnatural and unwell, and subjected to invasive medical and psychological treatment without their consent. Same-sex institutions were carefully monitored to avoid women forming these kinds of attachments. Women regarded as being ‘too close’ were frequently separated, and women sharing rooms were closely watched.⁷⁸ However, women did find each other, even under this surveillance. Discretion was necessary. Margaret remembered when she met Glennys in the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) they “had to be very careful, because we’d heard of other women being thrown out or moved on for being too close.” She would call her partner ‘Glen’ in conversations and letters, noting this kind of behaviour was both commonplace and, in some ways, exciting: “We had lots of ways of sending letters past the censors and getting messages to each other. It was a game, everyone did it.”⁷⁹ Margaret had grown up in Maitland and joined the AWAS as a way of getting away. She found the experience of meeting city women and being invited to parties “eye-opening” and remembered the time fondly, despite the fear of discovery: “We loved our work and didn’t want to ever be separated, so we kept pretty quiet. Still, it was fun, we had each other.”⁸⁰

For heterosexual couples, discretion was not as essential. When discussing moral panics during Second World War, Featherstone agreed that fears of sinfulness were made worse by the “visual nature of new romances, with nowhere else to go, couples would kiss and canoodle in streets, doorways and parks.”⁸¹ The Americans were seen to be particularly likely to engage in public romance.⁸² Pauline Bunting remembered kissing her husband goodnight before going back to the YWCA and the Red Cross, respectively, and being interrupted by a policeman who did not believe that they were married. The incident had a prolonged impact, as Pauline declared she had “never kissed in public since.”⁸³ In Sydney, restrictions were put in place by the United States Army, requiring their servicemen to “Act with more decorum.” This included forbiddance of walking down the streets with arms around girls, holding hands, sitting on the grass in parks with girls at night or taking civilian

⁷⁷ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Pride in Defence*, 146-151.

⁷⁸ Ford, “Lesbians and Loose Women,” 96.

⁷⁹ Coan, “Filling Some Gaps,” 205.

⁸⁰ Margaret, quoted in Coan, “Filling Some Gaps,” 205.

⁸¹ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 208.

⁸² Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 179; Pace, “All the Nice Girls,” 2-3; Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 91; “Strict Rules for Yanks,” *News*, October 10, 1944, 5; “‘Purity Patrols’ Rile Yanks,” *The Worker*, November 19, 1945, 12; “Code for Yanks on Leave: Doorway ‘Necking’ An Offence,” *The Worker*, January 7, 1946, 8.

⁸³ Pauline Bunting, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 42.

women “driving for pleasure” in official cars. A U.S. Sergeant in Adelaide told the paper that these restrictions were “silly and extremely narrow minded,” and a Private asserted that “he was planning to marry a Sydney girl and if anyone tried to stop him holding her hand wherever he pleased he would knock him down.”⁸⁴ Turcott bemoaned the “disgust” over “promiscuous and prolonged petting in public by yearning Yank soldiers and Australian young women,” and found Australian attitudes to be prudish: “Yanks are, after all, human beings and thus subject to human nature.”⁸⁵ The Australian services escaped such regulation, however women in the WAAF were not allowed to hold hands with anybody, including other girls.⁸⁶

The new structure of dating often began, then, with meeting casually in new ways, and often in public. This, alongside the key custom of ‘going out’ once you had met someone, brought romantic relationships into the public sphere. While many found increased privacy in darkened cinemas or night-time walks in the park, overall dating couples became far more visible. For cities that served as leave centres for Americans, this visibility was increased dramatically. The sight of American soldiers on street corners became a familiar one, and they were often accompanied by Australian women.

Glamorous and Romantic Masculinity

The seeming overwhelming visibility of American servicemen was aided by the fact that they were so clearly recognisable. Many accounts of the time referenced the well-cut uniforms as a distinguishing feature of the Americans’ appeal. Maureen Meadows, in her semi-fictionalised memoir of the time, described the Americans as “the neatest and most glamorous soldiers we had ever laid eyes on.”⁸⁷ Nance Kingston remembered not only that their uniforms were “well-tailored and laundered,” but that the Americans also sported “colourful ribbons aplenty” and that although “some of their gold bars were only for marksmanship, the girls weren’t asking questions.”⁸⁸ This was in contrast to the Australian men who wore “rough dried jungle greens and heavy boots” and were “only modestly honoured by the government.”⁸⁹ Lake argued that their uniform, with its symbolism of a

⁸⁴ “Strict Rules for Yanks,” *News* (Adelaide), October 10, 1944, 5.

⁸⁵ Melbourne Bluenose, “Does Yanks Necking Irk our Males,” *Truth* CITY September 13, 1942, 15.

⁸⁶ “Strict Rules for Yanks,” *News* (Adelaide), October 10, 1944, 5.

⁸⁷ Meadows, *I Loved Those Yanks*, 13.

⁸⁸ Nance Kingston, “My Experiences in the AWAS During World War II”, in *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* ed. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1982), 120

⁸⁹ Kingston, “My Experiences,” 120.

glamorous hero and its ability to anonymise its wearers, was a key factor in the sexual objectification of American men by Australians.⁹⁰ She also discussed the Hollywood factor; namely that Australian women were primed by glamorous film stars on screen and their devoted coverage in women's magazines to see these young men as highly desirable sexual objects. The Americans participated enthusiastically in this understanding of their image and desirability, managing their "visual effects in a distinctly modern way."⁹¹ This helped the servicemen present themselves as potential lovers, but also led to their objectification and feminisation.⁹² A young Australian woman who worked for the US forces called their hands "effeminate" and spoke of them showing off their jewellery.⁹³

Ideals of masculinity and femininity coexisted, then, in the image of the idealised American soldier. This was certainly not the case when it came to Australian masculinity. Darian-Smith argued that ideas of Australian masculinity and femininity were created and confirmed through the militarisation of society during the Second World War.⁹⁴ Femininity had been increasingly associated with glamour and youthful sexual attractiveness for some decades already. Lake wrote that femininity was being restructured in the first half of the twentieth century in Australia, and that the impact of the war was to secure these changes as a key part of the discourse surrounding women and sexuality.⁹⁵ She posited that the shift took women from being mothers of the race to existing in a world of glamorous, "permissive consumerism."⁹⁶ Featherstone argued that while this turn to glamour certainly existed, it did not overwrite women's experience as mothers, which remained central to understandings of femininity.⁹⁷ During wartime, women were expected to maintain their beauty and allure as a matter of national importance and "patriotic duty," at the same time as stepping into new responsibilities at home and in public life, as their support of Australia's men was of paramount importance.⁹⁸

Australian men argued that their glamorous American competitors were not real men. Australian masculinity at this time was idealised as stoic and laconic, unconcerned with

⁹⁰ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 627.

⁹¹ Teo, "Americanisation," 190.

⁹² Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 629-630; Lake "Female Desires," 67.

⁹³ "I Worked for the Yanks," *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), November 21, 1942, 4.

⁹⁴ Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance," 120.

⁹⁵ Lake, "Female Desires," 60.

⁹⁶ Lake, "Female Desires," 61, 63; Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, 89-90.

⁹⁷ Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas," 234, 246-247, 252.

⁹⁸ Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance," 120-121.

appearance and more interested in homosocial bonding than socialising with women.⁹⁹ The image of the immaculately dressed, polite Americans romancing women in cinemas and lounges while Australian men fought overseas created a neat binary in understandings of masculinity. The Australian media argued that the actions of Australian men at war proved a reassertion of the dominance of ‘traditional’ masculinity, and that consumerist dating only served to feminise the men involved.¹⁰⁰ (This rivalry was of course complicated by the military alliance between the Americans and Australians, and the fact that many men, once they fought alongside each other, chose to incorporate Americans into their brotherhood as kindred spirits and good fighters.) However, for women, the form of masculinity expressed by these young Americans was often very appealing. Not only did it allow women to take on the status of sexual subjects, and of observers, but it also gave Australian girls a new kind of experience with men.¹⁰¹ Nineteen-year-old Gwendolyn Fargo reportedly told a Philadelphia newspaper she was glad she had married an American as “they are superior to Australian men, more cultured, neater and better dressed, have more money and are less wild. I believe it is because they have been more under women’s influence.”¹⁰² Women saw the Americans as men who knew how to treat women well.

Australian girls appreciated spending time with men who enjoyed their company, unlike the Australians who tended to prioritise their relationships with other men.¹⁰³ As Molly Mann and Bethia Foott, women who worked for the US services during the war, stated: “The Americans are different... they seemed delighted with our company.”¹⁰⁴ They were more inclined to choose entertainment options that pleased both men and women and seemed to gain enjoyment from conversation as much as kissing. Adelle Hurley, who later married an American, agreed that they “knew how to treat women and they liked women’s company, they loved talking to them, and that was quite a switch from the Australians.”¹⁰⁵ She remembered the servicemen as “a very special breed” with “a lot more finesse” than Australians, noting in particular their “impeccable” manners and “sort of gentle things that

⁹⁹ Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 172-174, 179; Chelsea Barnett, “Masculinity and Cultural Contestation in the Australian 1950s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 49, 2 (2018): 188, 190-191, 194; Evans, “So Tough?” 128, 134; Stephen Garton, “War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, 56 (1998): 93-94.

¹⁰⁰ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 109.

¹⁰¹ Lake, “Desire for a Yank,” 632-33.

¹⁰² “Sydney Girl Prefers Yanks to Aussies,” *The Daily News*, February 28, 1945, 2.

¹⁰³ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 67-68, 82.

¹⁰⁴ Molly Mann and Bethia Foott, *We Drove the Americans* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944), 4.

¹⁰⁵ Adelle Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

the Australian men didn't [do]" like opening car doors and bringing flowers.¹⁰⁶ Lake argued that "their courtship rituals—even, it seemed at times, their very heterosexuality, their response—differentiated them from Australian men."¹⁰⁷ As the next section of this chapter examines, much of this was explicitly based in a shared experience of coding romance and sexuality through consumerism. Teo argued that Australian women and American men shared this vital experience in common: "some women, through their consumption of magazines and familiarity with commodified images of romantic love, might have been more in tune with American men's conception of gendered self-display, dating and romantic love than with Australian men's."¹⁰⁸ This further cemented ideas of the feminised American, but it also affected dating culture in terms of women's expectations as well as material changes. More than gifts, women began to look for men who could shower them with compliments and conversation. Betty Bloom, at sixteen, decided she "was not prepared any longer to wait around for local boys who usually gave higher priority to drinking with their mates at the pub than to dating."¹⁰⁹

The belief in American superiority when it came to romance was one seemingly held by Australian and American women alike. A loyal American woman writing home from Newcastle answered a much-asked question—why she didn't have a 'special friend' in Australia:

Australian men are positively hopeless. They have absolutely no finesse, very little education, and they haven't the faintest idea what makes women tick... The Australian girls are so far ahead of their men, that I really feel sorry for the girls after this war, and what they will have to put up with, after having known our boys, and enjoyed all the niceties that American men show their girls.¹¹⁰

Other sources were more tactful. First Lady of the United States, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt spoke on the issue during an interview in San Francisco, stating that "Australian lads have much of the British attitude of aloof formality towards women and they find that the American boys are 'walking away with their girls.'"¹¹¹ Indeed, many Australian women did marry Americans, despite bureaucratic resistance from both nations.¹¹² American men

¹⁰⁶ Adeline Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ Lake, "Desire for a Yank," 631.

¹⁰⁸ Teo, "Americanisation," 187-8.

¹⁰⁹ Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Charlotte Allen to her mother, Mrs R. L. Allen, December 25, 1943, C0086, Folder 31, *World War II, Letters, 1940-1946*, The State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/1276>.

¹¹¹ "Topics of the Day," *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), September 28, 1943, 6.

¹¹² For more on Australian-American war-brides, see Arrowsmith, *All the Way to the USA*.

agreed with Roosevelt, noting the Aussies' 'aloofness' and 'indifference' to their female companions.¹¹³

There were differing opinions about whether this contrast was due to inherent cultural attitudes and understandings of courtship, or simply circumstance. A young woman from Detroit urged Australian girls not to take the Yanks "too literally," warning that "those manners and figures of speech are not put on for your benefit... They are merely a part of the American way of life."¹¹⁴ And an Australian writer, responding to Mrs Roosevelt's comments, made the valid point that this behaviour may well have had as much to do with their position as overseas heroes as an inherent attitude difference: "swift work in the realm of romance may be largely a matter of environment. If you can believe their own accounts... the second AIF do not appear to have shown too much 'aloof formality' towards the British girls. Their advance would certainly have surprised everyone in their hometown, as doubtless would that of some of the American lads who have 'walked off' with our girls."¹¹⁵ Many Australian girls seemed to concede that the truth lay somewhere in the middle. The Americans were different, but their novelty helped make that difference more apparent, and more attractive. Trixee, looking back on her youth during the war in Newcastle, remembered "a very likable people [who] weren't here for very long... so I suppose they showed their best side.... The Australians were here all the time, [the Americans] were in a new country, and put in their best turn."¹¹⁶

Of course, the Americans may have also had more opportunity to meet and romance Australian women. One Australian soldier complained that the Americans were getting too much credit regarding romance, and that simple accessibility was a big part of their success. "It is not because he is more handsome, more attractive than our own lads in his well-cut uniform," he argued, "It is because his camps – unlike those of the Australians, are near the big cities, and the leave he gets to visit them."¹¹⁷ Some young Australian women agreed, noting that in these cities "if you wanted to go out, you went out with the Americans."¹¹⁸ Annette Potts and Lucinda Strauss argued that "the GIs' main attraction was that they were in Australia in large numbers," and that these men were largely single and young.¹¹⁹ While

¹¹³ "Yanks Give Hints on Romance," *Daily News* (Perth), February 18, 1948, 3.

¹¹⁴ "American Girl's Advice," *The Herald* (Melbourne), December 17, 1943, 5.

¹¹⁵ "Topics of the Day," *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), September 28, 1943, 6.

¹¹⁶ Trixee, interviewed by author, 2018, phone interview.

¹¹⁷ "Why the Yanks Get the Girls," *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), September 4, 1943, 12.

¹¹⁸ Dyson, *Swing by Sailor*, 49, 51.

¹¹⁹ Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 14, 15.

many young women were disparaged for dating Americans while their countrymen were away, some argued that it was simply not possible to only date Australians. Ola Calderala stated: “there weren’t too many Australian boys around,” and Adelie Hurley agreed that detractors did not realise “that all our Australian men friends were at the war.”¹²⁰

This idea of availability went both ways. A popular snippet reprinted in several Australian newspapers quoted American columnist, Walter Winchell, reporting a supposed exchange between an American soldier and his sweetheart back home:

He says that an American soldier stationed in Australia wrote to his sweetheart about the lovely Australian girls. She sizzled jealously and cabled him: “What have Australian girls got that American girls haven’t?” He replied, “Nothing, but they’re over here.”¹²¹

Competition between American and Australian men was often at its most heated when it came to money, and the American practice of pairing dating with material consumerism.

Consumerism and Gifts

This idea of a glamorous masculinity, one that was defined through its positive relationships with women, was novel in Australia. It implied a new kind of understanding of sexuality where both women *and* men could enhance their sexual attractiveness through their appearance. Lake, Teo and Finch have all argued that these forms of masculinity and femininity were created through a lens of consumption and sexuality.¹²² Finch maintained that this messaging was explicitly gendered, with advertising linking consumerism and sexuality directed exclusively to women. However, in America, consumption was inextricably linked with both masculinity and femininity. Finch also argued that the movement from courtship to dating as a practice was an explicit shift to consumerism in its “commodification of a social practice.”¹²³ While this shift from courtship to dating was already occurring in Australia along a similar timeline to America, the relationship with the US servicemen as well as the circumstances of society in war led to a clear debate in the mainstream media about the values of dating as consumer practice.¹²⁴ As Lake argued in

¹²⁰ Ola Calderala and Adelie Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 34.

¹²¹ “Heard This One?” *Advocate* June 4, 1942, 2; “Why Yanks Like Our Girls,” *The Courier Mail*, May 28, 1942, 1.

¹²² Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105-116; Teo, “Americanisation,” 171-192; Lake, “Female Desires,” 66.

¹²³ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105.

¹²⁴ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105; Reekie, *Temptations*, xv-xvi; Bailey, *Front Porch*; Teo, “Americanisation,” 173.

regards to shifts in femininity, Finch posited that the “publicising [of] American dating rituals” during the war “can be seen to have accelerated the commodification of romance and sexual relations.”¹²⁵

As dating became more visible the media began critiquing the shift in behaviours as demeaning.¹²⁶ Relationships and even marriages between Australians and Americans were viewed with great scepticism. American and Australian officials alike discouraged such permanent arrangements through various bureaucratic means.¹²⁷ Temporary relationships were popularly seen as transactional no matter how serious they were.¹²⁸ Explicitly, these women were seen to be bought not with money, but with gifts and expensive experiences. Meadows’ memoir recalled such associations, but also portrayed gifts as romantic tokens desired by many women.¹²⁹

Gift giving was already an essential part of American dating. Although this once held the connotation of ‘buying’ a woman or her services, popular media in the States had largely left these ideas in the past as gift-giving and consumerist dating overwhelmingly became a mainstream practice.¹³⁰ Fred Blair recounted stories of his friends on leave in Sydney, where “the American male treated the girls royally: [he’d] take them out to dinner and the expense meant nothing. He’d buy them flowers and rings or clothes.”¹³¹ However, Australians were not prepared for the onslaught of chocolate, candy and flowers, and the implications people would draw about the women receiving them. This was a marked difference between dating rituals in America and Australia. Teo noted that while Australian men undoubtedly practised “consumerist dating, i.e., taking women out to the movies, they were not in the same position as the Americans when it came to gifts, whether by financial necessity or lack of experience.”¹³² The difference drew considerable attention from the media. A young woman engaged to an American told the newspaper: “An American courtship isn’t very different

¹²⁵ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 114.

¹²⁶ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 105; See for example “Existed on Money Given Her by Yanks,” *Worker* (Brisbane), October 9, 1944, 5; “Wife Who Got Tired of Yanks,” *Sun* (Sydney), July 6, 1944, 3; “‘Rolling’ Yanks in Darling Pt.,” *Truth*, October 24, 1943, 25; “Girl Lived on Soldiers’ Money,” *News*, December 9, 1943, 3; “Money Flush Americans Invite Attack,” *Lithgow Mercury*, March 13, 1944, 1.

¹²⁷ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 224; Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 112; Hughes, “Mobilising,” 60; Strauss and Potts, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 54.

¹²⁸ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 112; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 209.

¹²⁹ Meadows, *I Loved Those Yanks*, 44, 99, 224, 309.

¹³⁰ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 112; Teo, “Americanisation,” 189; Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 67; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 222-223.

¹³¹ Fred Blair, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 20.

¹³² Teo, “Americanisation,” 190.

from an Australian, except you get more flowers and more dinners at nightclubs.”¹³³ Gladys Stander remembered the Americans “bought us flowers, bought us candy, and always took us home in a cab,” a stark contrast to the way “Australians used to put you on a tram and send you home by yourself.”¹³⁴

It was not only the flamboyance of the gifts, but the thoughtfulness of the gesture that impressed women. Not all gifts signified romantic interest, with men often buying presents for families who hosted or fed them, as a sign of gratitude. Adelle remembered her family’s guests bringing “ham and useful things: they’d bring jars of coffee, things that were rationed and that they knew we had a very difficult job trying to get.”¹³⁵ Of course, this behaviour was influenced by the superior access the Americans had to rationed goods. The Pacific War brought Americans to Australia, and also a “rapid introduction of rationing and labour control,” by the Australian government.¹³⁶ Goods such as clothing, tea, sugar, butter and meat were rationed, while shortages of fruit and vegetables as well as tobacco and alcohol “indirectly imposed a ration.”¹³⁷ The Americans’ superior pay meant that they could access goods on the black market, as well as through military supply avenues.¹³⁸ At times, American extravagance made young women uncomfortable. Betty Greer remembered an American date arriving at her house in a taxi full of flowers, looking “like a hearse.” She was embarrassed, and immediately distributed the flowers among her neighbours. When she went out to dinner for the date, her escort was surprised: “You didn’t even wear a flower!”¹³⁹

Australians were interested in whether this was due to the specific context of the war, or instead a common American practice. According to Roland Hill, the American Travel Headquarters Manager, “Australian girls want to know if Americans spend as much money on their womenfolk at home as US servicemen do in Australia.”¹⁴⁰ He responded that they did not, as these were “unusual times, and the men are on leave, but US men are thoughtful and generous to their womenfolk. That seems to satisfy the girls.”¹⁴¹ Of course, the seemingly flamboyant actions of the Americans were informed by their unique circumstances as well as cultural norms. Pat Rehrig remembered that “because they weren’t paid on the ships and a lot

¹³³ “The Yanks Are Going – We’ll Miss Their Chivalry,” *Sunday Times*, November 12, 1944, 12.

¹³⁴ Gladys Stander, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

¹³⁵ Adelle Hurley, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a soldier*, 22.

¹³⁶ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 36.

¹³⁷ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 36-42.

¹³⁸ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 42.

¹³⁹ Betty Greer, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32-3.

¹⁴⁰ “Yanks Spend More on Australian Girls,” *The Daily Telegraph*, August 1, 1943, 24.

¹⁴¹ “Yanks Spend More on Australian Girls,” *The Daily Telegraph*, August 1, 1943, 24.

of their money was deferred, they spent lots of money – going out to a restaurant was no problem at all.”¹⁴² Nance Kingston, looking back on her time in the AWAS, also felt that while “the Yanks were streets ahead of Australian men in their generosity to Aussie girls,” this was partly due to the fact that “their lavish amenities made it easy for them.”¹⁴³

Women, too, were participating in the consumerist culture of entertainment. Fallows stated: “goods were scarce and women on a wage had money to spend and nothing to buy – the future was uncertain so many of them spent their wages on having a good time – dancing, going to the cinema, and eating out.”¹⁴⁴ They were accused of “immoral conduct,” but McKernan agreed that much of this behaviour was simply “the consequence of high wages and scarcity of goods... people spent more money than usual on leisure.”¹⁴⁵ This is a practice that continued after the war, and the links between pleasure, entertainment and mass consumerism in post-war Australia is explored further in Chapter Four.

Women were frequently belittled for being interested in the Americans due to their money and generous gifts, and it led to tension between Australian and American men. Betty Greer dated American serviceman Ben from the age of seventeen, and they became engaged when she was nineteen. She found herself treated differently at a new job after her engagement, because her colleagues believed that Americans, through the gifts of flowers and candy, “sort of bought you.”¹⁴⁶ On this theme, Private McMahon, an Australian serviceman, composed a poem that his parents then sent into the newspapers, joking about how Australian women had “gone completely mad” over the Yanks:

*From the streets of Melbourne City
To St Kilda by the sea
Our Aussie girls are showing us
How silly they can be
Oh, the good old days before the war
Our Aussie girls were gay:
Now they have gone completely mad
On the troops from the USA
With their dashing Yankee accent
And their money flowing free
They have captured all but those who have
Used their eyes to see
Now when the war is over*

¹⁴² Pat Rehrig, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 32.

¹⁴³ Kingston, “My Experiences,” 111-112.

¹⁴⁴ Fallows, *Love and War*, 19.

¹⁴⁵ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 240.

¹⁴⁶ Betty Greer, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 34.

*And the Yanks are no more seen
They'd prefer an Aussie dustman
To a Gentleman Marine.*¹⁴⁷

Trixee remembers that “The men were a bit jealous I suppose, they didn’t have the uniforms like the Yanks, and they didn’t have the money.”¹⁴⁸ At times, this negative reaction to gifts was taken to the extreme. A fourteen-year-old girl took her father to court after he beat her, and *Truth* reported it as a salacious story about the insatiable Americans. The father’s justification was that he had thought she was out with the Yanks, explaining that his other daughters had met with misfortune as a result of dating US servicemen. A subheading of the piece reads: “Fountain pen present.” The gift of a pen to the young girl from the Americans she worked for was only briefly discussed in court, but the paper evidently considered it warranted attention drawn to it as an important part of the case.¹⁴⁹

Women who accepted these gifts and enjoyed these expensive experiences were condemned by many as “little more than prostitutes” and assumed to be exchanging sexual favours in return.¹⁵⁰ Temporary relationships were popularly seen as “a fleeting promiscuous encounter disturbingly close to the cash nexus of prostitution,” and even when ending in marriage, the women involved found it difficult to escape the label of being ‘bought.’¹⁵¹ Monica Dux has explored the way the media constructed an image of the ‘amateur prostitute,’ a figure resurrected from the First World War who “engaged in promiscuous sex with men outside marriage” and was soon positioned as a threat to the nation through her supposed spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).¹⁵² Fears of STIs were mobilised in order to introduce surveillance over young women and social control of their sexuality.¹⁵³ Newspaper articles declared sexually active young women of all classes to be unpatriotic enemies of the state, selfishly pursuing their own desires at the expense of servicemen’s health and fitness.¹⁵⁴ While STIs were certainly a threat that could debilitate a nation’s war

¹⁴⁷ “Aussie Girls and Yanks,” *The Corowa Free Press*, August 20, 1943, 1 (italics in original).

¹⁴⁸ Trixee, interviewed by author, 2018, phone interview.

¹⁴⁹ “Thrashing for Girl of 14 ½” *Truth* (Brisbane), March 26, 1944, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 31; Teo, *Americanisation*, 189; “VD More Destructive Than Enemy Bombs,” *The Worker*, July 5, 1943, 2; “2000 Yanks?” *The Sunday Times* (Perth), September 29, 1946, 12.

¹⁵¹ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 112; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 209.

¹⁵² Dux, “Discharging the Truth,” 75. At the time, STIs were referred to as Venereal Disease, or VD.

¹⁵³ Darian-Smith, “Remembering Romance,” 121.

¹⁵⁴ See among many: “Newcastle Must Face V.D. Problem,” *The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner’s Advocate*, May 6, 1943, 2; “Good Time Girls: How Young “Amateurs” Are Spreading Venereal Disease,” *The Worker* (CITY), June 14, 1943, 8; “VD Dangers: Doctor’s Warning,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 10, 1943, 11; “VD More Destructive than Enemy Bombs,” *The Worker* (CITY), July 5, 1943, 2; “Danger of ‘Amateur,’” *Dungog Chronicle*, June 11, 1943, 4; “Khaki Mad Dabbler is Our Public Enemy No. 1: An Amateur Saboteur,” *Mirror* (CITY), June 5, 1943, 13; “Shocking VD Disclosures,” *The Daily News* (CITY),

effort, the rates were not as alarming as made out, and much of the response was, as Lake argued, more a reaction to “sexual assertiveness” and “immorality” than infectious diseases.¹⁵⁵

While this backlash created a strong association between gifts and prostitution that has been examined by many historians, it is also important to discuss the ways in which the publicisation of American practices led to lasting change in Australian dating conventions after the war.¹⁵⁶ As Langhamer demonstrated in a study of Britain, these changes were able to be consolidated in the 1950s due to the post-war affluence of the nation.¹⁵⁷ Teo argued that as the century progressed in Australia, consumerism and sexual activity both did become a larger part of dating behaviour, but not in a transactional sense. Instead, increased consumerism “reinforce[d] the message that dating was about sensual pleasure and the goal of romance was feelings of happiness.”¹⁵⁸ This pursuit of pleasure led to fears that premarital and extramarital sex, normally regulated in part by the spectres of STIs and unwanted pregnancy, would increase. In particular, many worried that the intensity of wartime romantic feeling and increasingly casualised dating practices would lead to a loosening of the association of sex, love and marriage.

Transience and Casualisation

Dating in Australia was still closely linked to marriage, but these ties were being loosened and changed. Casual relationships were encouraged by the transience of men and women as they moved through the country with very little certainty about their future plans. Officially, only temporary relationships were encouraged by American officials.¹⁵⁹ While Australian-American marriages did occur, they were often intentionally delayed or denied by bureaucratic processes. Many men and women engaged in relationships and romances that did not end in marriage and thereby helped publicise and cement changing ideas about courtship and dating in Australian society. Whirlwind romances when a boyfriend was in town on leave were the norm, only to be replaced by another once those men had moved on or gone to the front. Emotions were heightened and relationships progressed quickly in the

August 14, 1943, 4; “VD Alarm in in Sydney,” *The Daily News* (CITY), July 7, 1943, 1; “VD Control is Problem,” *The Daily News* (CITY), April 13, 1944, 7.

¹⁵⁵ Lake, “Female Desires,” 68; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 255; Dux, “Discharging the Truth,” 76.

¹⁵⁶ Teo, “Americanisation, 186-187.

¹⁵⁷ Langhamer, “Love and Courtship,” 173-196.

¹⁵⁸ Teo, “Americanisation,” 175.

¹⁵⁹ Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 112

limited time couples had. Trixee summed up the heady romantic feeling of the war for many young Australian women: “We’d fall in love, cry when they left and then a new lot would arrive.”¹⁶⁰ As American Red Cross worker, Charlotte Jonkers, wrote home to her family: “The great trouble with liking anyone in the Navy is—they never came back! They’re always on the move, and seldom see the same port twice, and it takes letters forever to reach them.”¹⁶¹ Military men were often sent away with very little notice, and without knowing when or if they would be able to return.¹⁶²

American servicemen engaged in relationships that were transient by necessity. However, this did not mean they did not take the relationships seriously. One Australian who had worked with the Americans wrote:

I asked a boy who had been going out with the one girl for several months and raving about her incessantly, what he was going to do when he was moved, as he would be in a short while. “Why,” he said, “I’ve got a girl over that way. I’ll just drop her a line I’m coming.”¹⁶³

Others made a point of pursuing variety. Fred Blair remembered being on leave in Sydney for one week at a time, and friends “who claim[ed] they had a different date every night.”¹⁶⁴

However, not all servicemen moved around with this regularity. African American servicemen were not combat troops, and as such were stationed on a base rather than sent to battlefields. However, due to policies of segregation and fears of a threat to the future of ‘White Australia,’ this lack of transience caused alarm among Australian and American authorities, who grappled with a “serious prolonged threat to the internal racial and sexual status quo.”¹⁶⁵ Australian authorities feared miscegenation and non-white children, and the Americans worried both about the Australian reaction and possible resentment from African American soldiers about a disparity of treatment by women at home and abroad.¹⁶⁶

Australian dating culture at the time revolved around the idea of having multiple, casual partners, and Australian women, often staying in one place for the duration, had many

¹⁶⁰ Trixee phone interview with author, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Charlotte Allen to her mother, Mrs R. L. Allen, December 25, 1943, C0086, Folder 31, *World War II, Letters, 1940-1946*, The State Historical Society of Missouri, <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/1276>

¹⁶² Hughes, “Mobilising,” 52.

¹⁶³ “I Worked for the Yanks,” *Smith’s Weekly* (Sydney), November 21, 1942, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Fred Blair, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 20.

¹⁶⁵ Saunders, “Cloud of Lust,” 180-181.

¹⁶⁶ Saunders, “Cloud of Lust,” 181-182.

boyfriends and dance partners that would filter in and out of their lives.¹⁶⁷ These relationships were not taken lightly or seen as fickle. Young Australian women wrote letters to men in Australian and American services and were actively encouraged to continue dating after their friends and boyfriends had been sent away, so as to not leave any soldiers feeling lonely on their leave. Meadows wrote of her American partner “nobly” urging her to “go out and have fun” while he was gone.¹⁶⁸ Young women often chose to go out with a group of friends to find Australian and American dance partners for a casual evening, seeking friendship and fun rather than romance or sex.¹⁶⁹ Servicemen themselves often had “prior commitments” but still dated enthusiastically, sharing stories of their loved ones back home with their Australian partners.¹⁷⁰ Ralph Hancock wrote home to his sister in Florida about an Australian girl he had spent a night jitterbugging with, noting wistfully: “It was the first time I had seen a girl since we left Long Beach, and the first time I had done any dancing since I left my angel in San Francisco. It really feels good to hear a female voice once in a while.”¹⁷¹

This transience led to a tension between such casualisation of dating and an intensity of romantic or sexual feeling. One young serviceman found the war to be a revelatory experience in terms of his homosexuality and experience of intimacy: “One aspect of this wartime thing... which could only come in the war – you knew you’d be parted, not by your own decision, you didn’t know when... It was so involved, so intense.”¹⁷² This mirrors the experience of other young men and women during the war. Fred Blair remembered when discussing leave in Sydney and the pursuit of pleasure, good food and company: “We were flying missions every night. Some of my friends weren’t coming back. That was part of it”.¹⁷³ The necessary transience created by constantly moving servicemen, along with the uncertainty and fear inherent to wartime, brought an intensity to romances for those at home and abroad. Betty Greer remembered that the servicemen she met “wanted to have fun” and not talk about the war, instead “they wanted to go out to Romano’s or Prince’s and dance.” She remembered an atmosphere of seeking pleasure and distraction from the war: “You never knew what was going to happen the next day, and you never knew who was going to get it.”

¹⁶⁷ “Girl is Fond of Soldiers,” *The Newcastle Sun*, July 22, 1942, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Meadows, *I Loved Those Yanks*, 93, 191, 144, 147-148, 191.

¹⁶⁹ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 183.

¹⁷⁰ “Composite Aussie-American Girl Yanks’ Ideal Companion,” *News* (CITY), August 18, 1945, 4.

¹⁷¹ Ralph Hancock to his sister, Eloise H. Taylor, Aug 22, 1945, C0068, Folder 1190, *World War II Letters, 1940-1946*, State Historical Society of Missouri <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/8073>.

¹⁷² Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

¹⁷³ Fred Blair, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 20.

¹⁷⁴ Ola Calderala argued that women, too, “were looking for whatever they could get at a particular time... taking whatever happiness they could.”¹⁷⁵ Once marriage was on the table, young people began making plans, but while dating, many, like Ola “never consciously thought about the future.”¹⁷⁶ As Darian-Smith argued, an atmosphere of urgency pervaded such relationships, as men and women alike were all too aware of the way they could be cut short.¹⁷⁷ When the young gay serviceman returned from the war he met up with a former acquaintance, who introduced him to camp spaces in Sydney, and after that “all inhibitions went.”¹⁷⁸ This young man had been transformed by the opportunities afforded him by the very particular wartime circumstances.

Love and Marriage

The casualisation of dating in Australia followed patterns in the previous decades in the United States. In 1937 American sociologist Willard Waller drew out a distinction between dating and “true courtship,” the latter of which he described as progressive, irreversible, and explicitly heading toward marriage.¹⁷⁹ Dating was seen instead to be a “dalliance”: an amusement that was more relevant to a young person’s social status than their marriage plans. As Teo argued, it was firmly based in the world of consumerism and pleasure, and it was “immediate, focused on the present.”¹⁸⁰ It did not contain the commitment of courtship, nor the inevitability of the progression. However, it too was subject to strict conventions. Historian Beth Bailey also argued that in 1930s America, dating was not about marriage, but instead, competition and popularity.¹⁸¹ An ideal dating life was varied and promiscuous, with the participants gaining popularity through what Willard called “the rating and dating complex.”¹⁸² Michael Gordon has argued that American culture at this stage was already shifting to a dating style centred on “going steady,” a form of romantic behaviour that, in the United States, had much more to do with eventual mate selection than Willard’s

¹⁷⁴ Betty Greer, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 43.

¹⁷⁵ Ola Calderala, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 43.

¹⁷⁶ Ola Calderala, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 43; Darian-Smith, “Remembering Romance,” 126.

¹⁷⁷ Darian-Smith, “Remembering Romance,” 125.

¹⁷⁸ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

¹⁷⁹ Waller, “Rating and Dating,” 733-734.

¹⁸⁰ Teo, “Americanisation,” 175.

¹⁸¹ Bailey, *Front Porch*, 25-26.

¹⁸² Waller, “Rating and Dating,” 727; Bailey *Front Porch*, 26.

model of casual dating.¹⁸³ Gordon wrote that “this distinction between courtship behaviour (i.e. Behaviour oriented toward the selection of a mate) and dating (recreational cross-sex socialising) is a very important one.”¹⁸⁴

During the Second World War in Australia, dating held simultaneous roles as a pathway to marriage and a form of recreation. This constituted a significant shift in understandings of courtship. While marriage was still viewed as the endpoint for most dating behaviour, this chapter has explored other purposes that existed alongside it, including recreation, distraction, patriotism, and the pursuit of pleasure.

Many people did, however, fall in love and get married. Marriage rates increased during the war, after the years of the Great Depression.¹⁸⁵ In 1940, *The Chronicle* published an article expressing concern about hasty marriages made in the face of war. Young people marrying quickly were accused of “feeling...generally too much” instead of thinking about the future.¹⁸⁶ While young people were still certainly encouraged to get married, older Australians also worried about increasing divorce rates, and young readers were warned: “In wartime you are apt to want him more than ever, because you suddenly realise that time may be limited. But it does not mean that you will go on wanting him, or even be willing to put up with him when passion has disappeared.”¹⁸⁷ However, ideas of waiting were associated by many young people with the First World War, when, Featherstone noted, many women waited for their men to return and often ended up without a husband and family.¹⁸⁸ The psychological legacy was significant, and “young men and women facing yet another World War were not so restrained.”¹⁸⁹ In 1942, the year Australia’s focus shifted to the Pacific War and national defence, and thousands of American servicemen began flooding through the country, the number of marriages reached a peak of 86 060.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Michael Gordon, “Was Waller Ever Right? The Rating and Dating Complex Reconsidered,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 43, 1 (1981): 70.

¹⁸⁴ Gordon, “Waller,” 70.

¹⁸⁵ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 65; ABS, *Yearbook Australia 1942-1943*, no. 35 (Canberra: ABS, 1944): 327; ABS, *Yearbook Australia, 1946 and 1947*, no. 37 (Canberra: ABS, 1949), 743; Darian-Smith, “Remembering Romance,” 125.

¹⁸⁶ Rosita Forbes, “These War Marriages: Girls Should Look Before They Leap,” *The Chronicle*, July 11, 1940, 35.

¹⁸⁷ Rosita Forbes, “These War Marriages: Girls Should Look Before They Leap,” *The Chronicle*, July 11, 1940, 35.

¹⁸⁸ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 209.

¹⁸⁹ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 209; Finch, “Consuming Passions,” 111.

¹⁹⁰ Ann Howard, *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Dangar Island, NSW: Tarka Publishing, 1994), 105, 6; Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 47; ABS, *Yearbook Australia, 1946 and 1947*, no. 37 (Canberra: ABS, 1949), 743. The marriage rate climbed throughout the war until reaching 11.99 per 1000 of mean population in

Australian women and American servicemen who wished to marry were faced with many obstacles, but Potts and Strauss have calculated at least 1200 women travelled to America as war brides and two or three thousand more as fiancées.¹⁹¹ Those writing about the experience of war brides have shown the difficulties faced by these couples, including compulsory cooling-off periods, vetting of Australian women, and securing permission from American commanding officers.¹⁹² Many such officers disapproved of marriage in the field, as they were concerned it would take men away from the war effort. Australians, too, worried about sending their young women, future wives and mothers, away to help build another nation. Again, while marriage in principle was encouraged, young people were often cautioned not to make hasty decisions.

Marriages for non-white Australians and Americans was especially fraught. Aboriginal women and American servicemen were frequently denied permission to marry. In 1943, the US consulate in Brisbane “stressed the need to ensure proposed Australian brides had ‘no coloured blood in her veins.’” Similarly, Australian authorities “directed that unions of GIs with Aboriginal women should be avoided except in ‘particularly extenuating circumstances.’”¹⁹³ Australia’s immigration policy meant that African American servicemen would not be allowed to settle in the country after the war, and America’s anti-miscegenation laws, although not in effect in all states, were used as justification for such refusals. Potts and Strauss have calculated that around fifty African American servicemen did marry white Australian women who later travelled to the United States, despite significant hurdles in the way of their unions.¹⁹⁴

Many young men and women alike admitted that they had not been planning on getting married during the war. American, Louis Rycyk, recalled: “I never thought that I’d marry an Australian girl, I had a girlfriend back in the States at the time. It just happened. It was a natural thing... Once you met your girlfriend, fell in love, you got married.”¹⁹⁵ Fred Blair felt similarly, changing his mind about getting married after he met his future wife:

1942, it decreased slightly in the following years (although remained higher than 1930s rates) before rising again after the end of the war, to 10.64 per 1000 in 1946.

¹⁹¹ Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 47.

¹⁹² Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 54, 55; Robyn Arrowsmith, *All the Way to the USA*, 45.

¹⁹³ Furphy, “Home Front,” 123.

¹⁹⁴ Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 63.

¹⁹⁵ Louis Rycick, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 47.

“She just melted into my arms. We had a few kisses and it just seemed like this was it. This was it. So I really felt that she’s the one I wanted.”¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

In 1944, an article in the *Perth Sunday Times* outlined the reaction of Sydney girls to the departure of the American servicemen, titled “We’ll Miss Their Chivalry.” The women listed other things they would miss, including flowers and nightly invitations, but also the compliments to which they had grown accustomed. One woman predicted that Australian girls would have new expectations for their dating partners after their experience with the Americans. The newspaper asserted that the “Americans have taught our girls a new independence of spirit.”¹⁹⁷ Throughout the war, similar claims were echoed by Australian and American women alike. While dating behaviour and conventions had been shifting throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century in Australia, the unique circumstances of the war and the presence of the Americans accelerated and consolidated these changes. Meeting casually and without chaperones became the norm. Transience and uncertainty led to more casual forms of dating as recreation, as well as the reinforcement of the importance of pleasure and living in the moment. Australia’s growing consumerism, encouraged by the flashy and generous Americans, would continue to play a key role in leisure and dating after the war. While Australians still largely envisaged marriage as the natural endpoint of dating, they came to expect a different style of courtship that made room for pleasure and fun in romance.

This focus on pleasure was not welcomed by all. Older generations and the media grew anxious that young Australians were entering the post-war years, important as they were for rebuilding the nation, with a penchant for hedonism. New dating conventions were hastily assembled in order to contain teenage sexuality and consumerism within manageable margins. The rest of this work traces the changes in dating through the post-war decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter Three examines how an array of authorities attempted to retain control over dating through prescriptive literature, and the way bold young Australians began to push back.

¹⁹⁶ Fred Blair, quoted in Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 47.

¹⁹⁷ “The Yanks Are Going — We’ll Miss Their Chivalry (Say Sydney Girls)” *Sunday Times* (CITY), November 12, 1944, 12.

Chapter Three: Prescriptive Literature and Teenage Participation, 1940-1970.

As dating rituals changed and were consolidated during the Second World War and into the 1950s and 1960s, anxieties about sexual behaviour and mores outside of marriage led to an increase in materials instructing and guiding Australians on appropriate premarital romantic behaviour. Conservative, middle-class authorities worked to contain young people's behaviour by codifying a set of conventions and rules that would, ideally, help curb burgeoning sexuality. Their advice was directed toward young people who were participating in dating culture, as they were seen as likely to succumb to temptation. This chapter focuses on two forms of prescriptive advice literature that targeted a teenage audience after the Second World War, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s: sex education manuals and advice columns and letters pages. These disparate texts cannot be treated together as a monolith, as they clearly had different goals, contexts, and authorship. However, it is illuminating to examine the themes, apparent aims, and content of this wealth of prescriptive literature for their influences on and reactions to dating practices in mid-century Australia.

These two main forms of sexual and social education were literary, either booklets produced by churches that parents could pass on to their children at the right age, or answers to anxious letters that teenagers themselves pored over in the privacy of their own rooms. This reliance on texts written by experts was one solution to the debate among campaigners for sex education about who would be doing the educating. While many argued that sex education was necessary, it was an uncomfortable lesson that many parents did not feel confident delivering. Schools were still not considered an appropriate place for discussion of sexuality, except for a few outlying examples where children and teenagers were considered to already be lost causes.¹ Over the decades this slowly began to change, with schools introducing programs amid sanctions and controversy, albeit often in response to a clear call from the community.² As Josephine May has discussed, there was a particular lag in teaching sex education to girls in school, because of the importance placed on the relationship between innocence and femininity.³ Print materials could be distributed to children and teenagers with

¹ May, "Secrets and Lies," 1-15; Lisa Featherstone, "Sex Educating the Modern Girl: The Formation of New Knowledge in Interwar Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 34, 4 (2010): 465.

² May, "Secrets and Lies", 3.

³ May, "Secrets and Lies," 2

less discomfort than parental conversation, and ideally would create a clearer, more unified approach. They could also be specifically formulated for targeted gender and age groups. The publishers of these texts of course dictated the content as well as the form of their advice.

This chapter will examine the way this broader range of advice literature discussed dating behaviour and attempted to instruct their audiences. Young people dated for many reasons, and their behaviour took many forms. Not all included or were even seen as a precursor to it. However, sexuality loomed as a spectre over dating from the point of view of authorities, as the element that most worried them, and therefore that upon which they were moved to intervene with this advice. In both sex education manuals and advice columns, teenagers were spoken to as young people, and as students, from a position of authority. In the case of the sex education manuals, this authority was mostly religious, although at times texts were also produced by government health departments, hence their fundamentally normative nature. In advice columns, writers could refer to religious authority, but also frequently appealed to the field of medicine. Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange have discussed the way the lines between medicine and the mass media were often blurred at this time, including prominent doctor and sexologist Dr Norman Haire's popular advice columns in *Woman*.⁴ Using these higher authorities, prescriptive literature sought to shape dating behaviour as well as sex behaviour. These texts all worked toward containing teenage sexuality and desire within the rigid conventions of respectable dating as a pathway to marriage.

Sex Education Texts

First, this chapter examines the discussion of dating and its attendant sexuality within sex education manuals of the period. These were largely printed pamphlets and books, mostly produced by mainstream Australian Christian churches and religious groups, but also by state-run bodies and medical professionals.⁵ They were given to young people and their parents in order to fulfil the apparent growing need for sexual education. While many of these texts were written explicitly for young people to read, there are also examples of guides aimed instead at parents.⁶ Parenting was considered an important part of a teen's healthy

⁴ Bashford and Strange, "Public Pedagogy," 71-99.

⁵ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 268.

⁶ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*; Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1; M. A. Horn, ed. *The Digest of Hygiene for 'Mother and Daughter': A Digest for Women and Growing Girls* (Sydney: Hallmark Productions, 1947).

progression into adulthood, and parents were advised to begin ensuring such a path when their children were still young. Teenagers who did not know how to control themselves were traced back to parents who did not know how to discipline them as children.⁷ Parents were instructed to guide their children firmly but subtly through the pitfalls of adolescence, as the “good standards of behaviour” expected were not instilled at birth but had to be taught.⁸

Updated editions were frequently printed and disseminated by Christian movements formed for this purpose, such as the Father and Son Welfare Movement, a branch of the Young Men’s Christian Association, “specialising in the fields of sex education, marriage, and family life,” and its sister organisation the Mother and Daughter Movement.⁹ Catholic guides were also printed, including booklets for boys written by Patrick F. Dorian and for girls written by Sister Mary Winefride of the Good Samaritans.¹⁰ While the Pope opposed sex education, these educators found it necessary. Featherstone noted that Sister Winefride “suggested that sex education was essential, not simply to sate curiosity or provide knowledge, but to develop a positive mental attitude towards sex,” so one could live a “balanced, normal and morally good” life.¹¹ As Pearce has discussed, these manuals were not particularly forthcoming on the topic of sex and focused primarily on moral and ethical guidance within strict religious frameworks.¹² Featherstone argued that while sex education texts were intended to provide knowledge, it was “more important to help shape a moral agenda, which had extramarital purity at its core.”¹³ However, it is valuable to examine the representation of dating rituals in these texts, and the conventions and beliefs they attempted to instil in their audience at this time. While these Catholic texts may appear as outliers, considering social and religious divisions in Australia and Catholic ideas on sexuality and contraception, much of the instruction contained within is representative of other texts in the post-war period. There are important differences in terms of framing which are examined

⁷ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 80; Horn, “Digest of Hygiene,” 6, 13.

⁸ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1.

⁹ Pearce, “Molding the Man,” 81, 85, 89. The Father and Son Welfare Movement “promotes the notion of muscular manhood, with special emphasis on chastity and self-restraint”; Kate Elizabeth Rogers, “Healthy Aspirations? Crypto-Eugenics and the Aim to Create Healthy Families in Australia, 1946-1970s,” *The History of the Family* 23, 1 (2018): 65, 66. The Father and Son Movement was founded in 1926 by eugenicist Harvey Sutton “with the aim of providing authoritative sex education for young people as well as marriage and family guidance,” and a clear “crypto-eugenic emphasis on the nuclear family structure.”

¹⁰ Pearce, “Molding the Man,” 83; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 267.

¹¹ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 267; Sister Mary Winefride, *Youth Looks Ahead: A Guide for Catholic Girls* (Brisbane: Polding Press, 1962), 5.

¹² Pearce, “Molding the Man,” 78-9.

¹³ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 267.

below, but these texts were already breaking convention by providing sex education in the first place.

While the study of these educational texts as prescriptive literature is valuable in examining dating conventions and social feeling about young romance, they are of course limited in that, as Pearce argued, these texts are intentionally conservative and working to contain a burgeoning teen sexuality.¹⁴ However, not only does this give us an insight into the aims and goals of conservative moral authorities – the government, schools, but most notably Christian churches – and the ways in which they expressed these ideas to young readers, it also allows for reading against the grain. Those actions that are frequently railed against in these texts can be understood in two ways, as either the exaggerations of a moral panic, or behaviours evident in teen circles that these authorities were intent on stamping out. It is not always possible to clearly delineate between these two, but both are valuable in a larger study of dating practices and the reactions to them in Australia at the time.

Advice Columns and Letter Pages

The chapter will then examine the prescriptive and participatory nature of advice columns and letters pages in Australian media. Advice literature in magazines and newspapers was popular in twentieth-century Australia, and this form allowed for interaction between authors and their audience. Letters to the editor were an important feature of all magazines and newspapers at the time and covered a range of topics. Those specifically on pages aimed at teenage audiences often centred romantic behaviour and interest in the opposite sex. The teen letters page frequently relayed interesting discussion between young people across the country, as a controversial or eye-catching letter would receive a flurry of responses, printed in the next issue. Interaction was also called for on advice pages. Popular throughout Australian and international media, these featured an ‘agony aunt’ dispensing instruction to their eager readers. Sometimes the writer was a named expert, but more often they were journalists operating under a relevant pseudonym, for example the popular “Dorothy Dix” pages. Two significant examples were Margaret Howard’s “If I Were You” in the late 1940s and Louise Hunter’s “Here’s Your Answer” a decade later.¹⁵ These features

¹⁴ Pearce, “Molding the Man,” 76.

¹⁵ Kay Melaun wrote the column “Here’s Your Answer,” from its introduction on May 19, 1954, to November 30, 1955. Louise Hunter took over in December 1955 and moved the segment to the *Teenagers’ Weekly* when it launched in June 1959.

were published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* or its teen supplement, *Teenagers' Weekly*. The *Weekly* was “intended to represent the Australian Everywoman,” and was read widely across Australian society, but in reality its “intended and assumed audience was almost exclusively those women who could afford to live as housewives in the affluent new suburban communities.”¹⁶

Advice columns allowed teen audiences to seek guidance on topics that were awkward to discuss publicly: frequently, sex and love. The *Weekly* also published a segment called “Youth Sums Up” from 1952 to 1953, wherein an adult writer interviewed teenagers on their thoughts on a particular topic.¹⁷ The introduction of this segment, appearing in the “party supplement” in 1952, declared it would “present youth’s point of view on many things in general, and in particular on the important subject of how to make your way with and win the opposite sex.”¹⁸ This chapter argues that these writings are a kind of prescriptive literature, guiding social conventions around romantic and sexual behaviour, as well as allowing for responses and discussion from those intimately involved in the creation of and participation in these conventions, the teenagers themselves. As Kirra Minton argued, the teenage segments in the *Women's Weekly* “acted as a training manual, reinforcing the idea that a girl could achieve... perfection by conforming to social and gender norms and buying the right products,” but still also provided space for teenage questions and challenges.¹⁹ This writing existed in relationship with the more formal sex education texts to which this chapter now turns.

Sex Education: The Healthy Development of Teenagers

The Queensland Health Education Council released a guide for young people and their parents in the 1960s. This provides an interesting example to study as an official governmental release, not explicitly produced by a Christian organisation. However, much of the same advice appears across an array of books and pamphlets. The *Parent's Guide to the Social Conduct of Young People* provided explicit instructions on how to guide one's

¹⁶ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 6; Sheridan et al, *Who Was That Woman?* 3, 20, 143.

¹⁷ Kay Melaun wrote the column “Youth Sums Up,” from its introduction on July 9, 1952, to December 10, 1952. Betty Best took over on December 17, 1952, “in the absence of Kay Melaun, who is on holidays,” until February 1953.

¹⁸ “This Week,” *Australian Women's Weekly*, July 9, 1952, 12, 36-37.

¹⁹ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 16.

teenaged child through the social minefield of dating, that touches on many of the major themes in these texts:

There is a distinct advantage in young people meeting in groups rather than in pairs for these outings. For the fullest development of personality, young people need the experience of getting to know a wide circle of people. Parents should therefore advise their children against a close emotional involvement with one person. Such unbalanced relationships during the teen years may have undesirable or even tragic consequences. Parents should point out to their children the short-sightedness of such limiting commitments.²⁰

These themes will be further developed throughout this chapter. First, the emphasis on social and personal development fostered through healthy dating and romantic relationships was evident in all texts studied here. The manuals also urged young people to date casually instead of seriously, and to ensure they did not commit to one person too early. Adolescence was seen as a dangerous period, when physical urges outstripped emotional maturity, and therefore an emphasis on the risks of sexual behaviour was at the forefront of all these texts. These risks were presented as dire, and teenagers were warned their whole lives could be ruined if they engaged in sexual activity before marriage.

These guides often stated their own purpose as ensuring the healthy development of young Australians. The end state of this development was a happy marriage, resulting in new children for the nation.²¹ While the texts emphasised the healthy development of social skills and sexual knowledge, the underlying understanding was that these were essential to being productive members of society more generally. As marriage and the family were the building blocks of the nation, and dating was a path to marriage, children who did not learn the proper way to have relationships were at risk of becoming unfit citizens. When taken with a belief in the sacred nature of marriage and procreation, this meant the stakes for proper dating habits were extremely high. In one such guide published in Brisbane in 1962, *The Years Between*, Patrick Dorian argued that despite the assumptions of the young, the purpose of marriage was not happiness but procreation, with loving companionship a secondary feature. Family, he argued, was “the unit on which society was built.”²²

²⁰ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 8.

²¹ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 266.

²² Dorian, *The Years Between*, 24, 109.

The eugenic background of much of Australia's sex education movement has been examined elsewhere.²³ After the Second World War, many organisations moved away from explicitly eugenic language, but continued to promote "the eugenic goal of more babies within white, middle-class nuclear families and fewer babies amongst those not belonging to this ideal," through language focusing on "improving the health and wellbeing of a family, rather than the nation or race," and "the psychological benefits of growing up in a nuclear family environment."²⁴ With the implicit understanding that the nation's future rested on white families having white babies, such evasions did not belie the clearly eugenic goals of many of these texts.²⁵ Teenagers were encouraged to prepare correctly for marriage, so that they could both live as happy a life as possible, and also create successful and productive nuclear families. In a 1947 *Digest of Hygiene for 'Mother and Daughter'* readers were reminded that "almost every normal couple desires to have children."²⁶

The structure of an adolescent's "healthy development" was laid out quite explicitly in most sex education texts. Often, their understanding of sexual development followed a Freudian model where children were first expected to fixate on same-sex relationships, and then in early adolescence turn toward heterosexual friendships and crushes.²⁷ It is at this stage that intervention was necessary, due to these interests being seen as both risky and essential. The careful socialisation of boys and girls in the teenage years was recommended heartily, but very much framed as a form of progressing towards adulthood. "Social gatherings between girls and boys," argued Dorian, "should be a source not only of pleasure and relaxation, but also of social development."²⁸ Friendships in general were encouraged, but "healthy friendships" with the opposite sex were seen as necessary for the development of "lives and personality," as well as the health of Australian society.²⁹ The goal was that adolescents would "form mature attitudes towards the opposite sex and society as a whole."³⁰

"Healthy" friendships tended to mean those not predicated entirely on sex, although clearly motivated at least in part by sex interest. The interest itself was discussed as natural

²³ See Rogers, "Healthy Aspirations?" 54-74; Featherstone, "Sex Educating," 462-463; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 154-157, 248-249; Bongiorno, *Sex Lives*, 181.

²⁴ Rogers, "Healthy Aspirations," 65, 66, 71.

²⁵ For further analysis of eugenics, sex, and marriage, see Chapter Five.

²⁶ Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 34.

²⁷ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 30; Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 6. See Chapter Seven for analysis of same-sex desire and romance.

²⁸ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 49.

²⁹ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 24.

³⁰ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1-2.

and healthy, and even sacred, but indulgence in it was forbidden during this stage.³¹ One text, produced by the British Social Hygiene Council and then distributed by the Queensland Health Education Council, reminded its young male readership: “It is possible and desirable to be very good friends with girls, and to admire and respect them, without indulging in intimate relations, which alter everything and often break up friendship.”³² This meant that the eventual loving relationships between men and women would be based more on an understanding of each other and not solely on sexual attraction, and therefore this heterosexual socialisation as youths was “the best preparation for falling in love.”³³ A successful navigation of this stage would lead teenagers further on the path to a good marriage, via “serious courtship” which could begin in late adolescence to early adulthood.³⁴

The focus, then, remained clearly on adolescents. As the ‘teenager’ was a relatively new concept, the rules around this period were at times unclear. Organisations seeking to teach children and adolescents about a healthy Christian sex life saw this as an opportunity to educate young people along the desired path. The risks of adolescence were spelt out clearly within the texts they distributed. Teenagers were “mature physically” but “emotionally less mature than adults.”³⁵ Specifically, they were experiencing an explosion of emotions and instinctual desires but did not yet possess the tools of self-control required to appropriately manage them.³⁶ Parents were urged to explain premarital sex as something that “some people like to do... just because their bodies want it – but their bodies don’t know what is good for them.”³⁷ It was the parent’s role to ensure their adolescent children remained cognisant of the link between bodily temptations and real-world consequences. Adolescence was also a dangerous period as this was an age when young people began separating from parental control and basing their social behaviour more on that of their peers, rendering them “suggestible.”³⁸ This was, therefore, a time where parents and educators were required to step in and provide the information necessary to ensure that teenagers would develop correctly. Mothers in 1947 were warned: “whether your children become healthy, normal individuals or

³¹ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 26; Horn, “Digest of Hygiene,” 12, 15.

³² Drummond Shields, *From Boyhood to Manhood: An Explanation of Sex for Older Boys* (Brisbane: Read Press with the Queensland Health Education Council, n.d.), 15.

³³ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 32.

³⁴ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 32.

³⁵ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1; Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 12.

³⁶ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 265.

³⁷ Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 12.

³⁸ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 2.

sickly, neurotic social problems can depend upon the sort of instruction and treatment they receive at this critical time.”³⁹

Social and Self-control

These texts attempted to extend the period of parental involvement. Parents were explicitly told to meet their teenager’s companions, and the young readers themselves were encouraged to take a date home to meet the parents as well.⁴⁰ This, alongside the provision of a clear outline of the date in question – what films the teens would be watching, what time they would be home, who else would be there – was to give the adults a stronger sense of security and control.⁴¹ Importantly and perhaps more effectively, it would also ensure lines of communication around dates remained open. Children and parents were encouraged to discuss their social lives and keep up to date on their friends and partners. This ideally led to a closer bond and level of trust, but it also gave the parents the opportunity to interfere “without appearing to interfere” and “encourage the development of reliable group friendships.”⁴² Adolescence was a time of tension “between freedom and restraint,” and sex education texts saw control as the ideal solution. This would initially stem from parental supervision and guidance, and as teenagers grew, they were instructed to practice and master self-control.⁴³

While these urgings toward self-control were clear and explicit throughout the texts, teens were also guided into a position where they would be both subject to and participating in a form of peer social control. Across the texts, a clear social convention was constructed: it was better to casually date around than form long-term attachments.⁴⁴ Parents were instructed to warn against going steady or opening the door to intimacy too early.⁴⁵ Instead, they were to encourage multiple ‘friendships,’ none of which was allowed to get too serious. When aimed at the teenagers themselves, this advice sometimes came in the form of explicit instruction, and sometimes via helpful hints such as: “at dances every encouragement should

³⁹ Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 13.

⁴⁰ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1; Evelyn Ruth Millis Duvall, *Boy Meets Girl: Further Facts of Life for Teenagers* (London: Arco Publications, 1958), 50.

⁴¹ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 8.

⁴² Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 32.

⁴³ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 1.

⁴⁴ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 30-31.

⁴⁵ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 8.

be given for each boy and girl to meet as many partners as possible.”⁴⁶ This was positioned as a way to ensure young men and women were familiar with the opposite sex as a group, not just individuals. Keeping dates casual also ideally prevented the intimacy that serious and exclusive relationships often contained. Young people were encouraged to get to know many members of the opposite sex, and to enjoy doing so, but they were also subtly pushed to see those who chose to instead go steady as unwise.

As adolescents were thought to be so receptive to peer pressure this positioning made sense. If young people adopted these conventions, those who had serious relationships would be seen as altogether the wrong type of person, and effectively shame each other into more casual dating. Teenagers were also encouraged to use large social groups as a replacement for the passé (but deeply lamented by the Christian texts) chaperone. Dating casually and in groups made up the bulk of the structured ‘development’ of courtship, as a way to decrease premarital sexual activity.⁴⁷ Being alone was, of course, too much temptation for anyone. Dorian called it the “golden rule for dates and company keeping” that couples must avoid “pairing off in lonely places.”⁴⁸ He argued that while everyone could resist temptation to different levels, “there are some things... that are dangerous to all and sundry – a boy and girl parking in the dark in a lonely spot.”⁴⁹ Other danger spots included the drive-in movie, and the vague “darkened room,” both places where “modern pagans practice petting.”⁵⁰ Parents were also warned about this new, dangerous geography of romance: “parents should appreciate the dangers of young people attending theatres, and especially Drive-ins, alone or with irresponsible companions.”⁵¹ The specific dangers of physical intimacy were explored in these texts at length.

Acknowledging Desire: A Slippery Slope

Petting itself was subject to much attention across the sex education texts. The considerable space dedicated to discussing this form of intimate touching betrayed its prevalence among young people, and the worries it created in Christian circles. The term petting covered a variety of different behaviours and was often used to describe innocent

⁴⁶ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 7.

⁴⁷ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 32; Duvall, *Boy Meets Girl*, 49.

⁴⁸ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 63.

⁴⁹ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 39.

⁵⁰ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 62.

⁵¹ Queensland Health Education Council, *Social Conduct*, 8.

cuddling as well as genital stimulation, the latter sometimes labelled ‘heavy petting.’ This broad definition aided in the judgement of petting as a slippery slope by religious instructors.⁵² Necking, or passionate kissing, was also a dangerous activity, for while it may have appeared “seemingly harmless” it too could “lead to sexual experiences which both partners inevitably soon regret.”⁵³ These guides saw themselves as fighting against the tide of popular culture, arguing that “part of the ‘lie’ in films is that a couple may embrace passionately, and then break off quite simply and carry on as before. This, of course, does not happen in real life.”⁵⁴

The texts that took a more understanding and confiding tone acknowledged a teenager’s natural urges to indulge in such activity but warned against giving in to even small temptations. The Christian Father and Son Movement published a booklet called *Just Friends* that aimed to guide its readers through appropriate opposite-sex friendships and dating behaviour. This text recognised that physical intimacy could provide a “deep measure of satisfaction” and “great thrill” but warned that this was the danger, as each meeting would require going “a little further to retain the thrill.”⁵⁵ Teenagers were often seen to be stepping foot on this path without realising how hard it would be to stop once started: “young people who are in the habit of ‘necking’ or ‘petting’ should realise that they are awakening inner feelings which may prove too strong to be controlled.”⁵⁶ Most of these texts acknowledged that attraction between boys and girls was perfectly natural. However, any activity that deliberately aroused sexual pleasure was condemned not only as dangerous, but as a mortal sin.⁵⁷ “Once the passions have been stirred,” Dorian argued, “it becomes increasingly difficult to interrupt them.”⁵⁸ Physical intimacy was positioned as a slippery slope, where any activity would lead inexorably to premarital sex.

The anxiety about such passions was justified by the argument that too great an emphasis on sex would disrupt the healthy social and moral development so essential for young people. Teenage boys were reminded: “fun and amusement are necessary too, but the best fun is that which does not hurt others, and which does not leave behind it a bad

⁵² Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 269.

⁵³ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 25.

⁵⁴ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 61.

⁵⁵ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 14-15.

⁵⁶ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 14-15.

⁵⁷ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 28, 39, 61.

⁵⁸ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 61.

conscience.”⁵⁹ An emphasis on the physical could lead to friendships in which the partners did not learn to treat each other as individual people, only representatives of their sex.⁶⁰ This put future marriages in danger, as premarital sex was an obstacle for a stable relationship where one “must give and share.”⁶¹ True love, it was argued, was harder to achieve for those who had chosen to be “free and casual” when it came to sex.⁶² Boys who had “exercised self-control” in their youth would “be far happier and make a better husband and father” than those who “gratified their impulse” and thereby risked “dissatisfaction and unhappiness” in their relationships, as well as potential exposure to disease.⁶³

This was due to an understanding that young people treating sex as purely physical were ignoring the place God held in a marriage.⁶⁴ The construction of sex as sacred was at the forefront of these texts’ arguments about premarital sexual activity. Sex was only one part of marriage, but it represented both “the physical reality of wedlock” and was a “symbol of its spiritual reality.”⁶⁵ Sexual desire itself was a gift from God, intended to ensure that men and women had children, and thus was not appropriate outside of marriage.⁶⁶ Young people were advised the impulse was a “wonderful divine gift to be used wisely.”⁶⁷ The correct use of it was for procreation within marriage, as well as the strengthening of that sacred partnership. Sexual intercourse between a married couple gave “perfect physical expression” to their love, satisfied their sexual urges, and “assist[ed] God in bringing forth into this world children destined to live forever with Him in heaven.”⁶⁸ Sex before marriage endangered the future happiness of young people. Teenagers were warned of the dangers of premarital pregnancy, which often led to unhappy marriages founded on duty rather than love, and, at worst, divorce. Other anxieties of the era were also present in these texts, including sexually transmitted diseases and fears of future frigidity.⁶⁹

However, for many young people themselves it was clear that once a commitment was made, sex was not seen as so dangerous. For sex educators, this was not the case.

⁵⁹ Shields, *Boyhood to Manhood*, 15.

⁶⁰ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 25

⁶¹ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 26

⁶² Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 26.

⁶³ Shields, *Boyhood to Manhood*, 16, 13.

⁶⁴ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 26

⁶⁵ Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 58.

⁶⁶ E. Josephine Bamford, *What Should I Know and How Shall I Tell? A Handbook on Sex Education* (Melbourne: S. John Bacon, 1950), 26; Dorian, *The Years Between*, 6, 13, 17.

⁶⁷ Bamford, *What Should I Know*, 26.

⁶⁸ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 6.

⁶⁹ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 270; Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 14-15, 54.

Premarital sexual activity was positioned as a clear marker of a person's morality. Teenage girls were warned that boys may "apply their own simple tests of how much familiarity a girl will allow" on a date, and that she should resist any advances in order to make it clear that she was "a respectable girl."⁷⁰ While it was clear that sexual intimacy within an engagement was common, Dorian argued that it was due to a weakness of character and warned that "couples who keep chaste before marriage can trust each other after marriage."⁷¹ Premarital sex was linked clearly with extramarital affairs and a lack of moral character more broadly.

These fears of unhappy or unproductive marriages illustrate changing ideas about marriage throughout the twentieth century. Secular and even spiritual understandings were moving away from a model where procreation was the sole or most important purpose of sex and marriage.⁷² Featherstone has traced the way views about marriage shifted during this time, and how they can be tracked through anxieties about divorce.⁷³ In the post-war period, "marriage was expected to be sexually companionate, with the wife fulfilling her husband's 'reasonable' sexual needs."⁷⁴ Procreation was still essential, but men and women were taught that marriage should include love, sexual desire and fulfilment, and children.

In these texts, however, the most important reason to refrain from premarital sex remained that sex and marriage were both entwined in one's relationship with God, and the connection between bodies and souls.⁷⁵ Young readers were warned that "salvation of our immortal souls is going to depend largely on the use we make of our bodies."⁷⁶ The Catholic Dorian invoked St Thomas in declaring that sex can be an act of religion, as it is an act of loving God in bringing forth children to worship Him.⁷⁷ While he repeatedly reinforced the message that sex outside of marriage was strictly forbidden by the highest authority, he did attempt to explain why married couples were able to have sex when conception was not possible.⁷⁸ Although procreation was the primary purpose of the marriage, sex throughout the

⁷⁰ Duvall, *Boy Meets Girl*, 65.

⁷¹ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 63.

⁷² Dorian, *The Years Between*, 24, 109.

⁷³ Featherstone, "The One Single Primary Cause"; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 2, 11, 21-23, 37, 131-135, 177, 231-232, 242-252.

⁷⁴ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 250.

⁷⁵ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 267, 271.

⁷⁶ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 6.

⁷⁷ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 17.

⁷⁸ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 6-7, 13, 17.

relationship was important as it fulfilled two secondary goals: to help a couple foster their love and intimacy, and to satisfy sexual appetites.⁷⁹

Gendered Advice

Males and females were understood to experience these sexual urges and appetites differently, although when it came to adult desire these assumptions were slowly being eroded. Boys, however, continued to be treated as far more sexual than girls. This was by design. Boys were “intended to take the initiative in these things” and this made them “aware of sexual sensations and desires to a far greater extent than is the case with a normal girl.”⁸⁰ This linked the male teenager’s role in sex with his role in dating, as the pursuer would be motivated by a greater sexual desire. Young men were warned not to misunderstand girls’ reactions to intimacy. Girls were supposedly slower to react than boys, and therefore may permit touches “without even thinking of sexual pleasure.”⁸¹ Young men, then, were urged to exercise self-control. This, such texts argued, was what separated humans from animals, and was the ultimate aim for teenage boys.⁸² One text distributed by the Queensland Health Education Council acknowledged that for young men it “is often difficult to resist temptation,” and suggested that “many boys appreciate the help which religion can give in the working out of a plan of life, and in the exercise of self-control.”⁸³

Girls were also encouraged toward control, but of boys’ behaviour as much as their own.⁸⁴ While many Christian texts explicitly told young men and women that they were equally responsible for maintaining abstinence, further teachings about sexual desire left no doubt about who was the one able to exert this kind of control. As young men were seen to possess greater sexual feeling, it was only young women who would be able to put a stop to premature sexual exploration. Young women were constructed as largely emotional, while young men were rooted in the physical.⁸⁵ While boys desired sex, girls sought love. Both had to sublimate their desires until the appropriate time.

⁷⁹ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 17-18.

⁸⁰ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 16.

⁸¹ Dorian, *The Years Between*, 28-9.

⁸² Shields, *Boyhood to Manhood*, 13-14.

⁸³ Shields, *Boyhood to Manhood*, 15.

⁸⁴ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 26; Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*, 15; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 269-270.

⁸⁵ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer*, 27-28; Shields, *Boyhood to Manhood*, 11.

However, as young women were less likely to fall prey to sexual urges, they were enlisted to help prevent the arousal of their partners, so as not to lead them into temptation. Girls were warned against conflating sex and love, or giving one so as to receive the other. Girls were at risk of succumbing to a boy's sexual desires in order to gain his "interest and companionship," in other words to fulfil his sexual needs so as to fulfil her emotional ones.⁸⁶ Instead, girls were advised to gently redirect sexual energy, while ensuring the boy understood that one day, perhaps, they could be satisfied, but only in marriage.⁸⁷ It was apparently only within the safety of marriage that young women were able to enjoy sex.⁸⁸ Two reasons were given for this. The first was practical: a girl would not be able to enjoy sex while it was clouded with fears of venereal disease or premarital pregnancy. The second kept the girl firmly within her emotional, spiritual role: she would enjoy sex as the ultimate expression of love first, not as a physical satisfaction.

While not as explicitly as in the media, discussed below, sex education texts also linked physical intimacy with money in the framework of dating behaviour. Instructing teenagers that boys paid for dates, girls were reminded they "have many other ways of returning kindnesses besides actually sharing the cash costs." This text suggested examples such as entertaining their friends and dates at home, and in particular "the group parties that girls give for boys."⁸⁹ However, when discussing the many possible meanings of the good night kiss, the list included: "it may be the way a girl says 'Thank you' to the boy for giving her a good time."⁹⁰ This idea of a kiss as payment is explored in detail in the second part of this chapter.

The growth of these texts for teenagers out of marriage manuals is evident in their focus on guiding children through adolescence to a state of happy and productive matrimony. They took on a patronising tone of authority, even when trying to speak to teenagers on their level, and emphasised ideas of control and restraint. Teenagers were directed to look toward their future rather than succumbing to immediate pleasures, and to delay full sexual or even romantic fulfilment until marriage. It is of course unclear how many teenagers read these

⁸⁶ James Hollidge, *Sex and the Australian Teenager* (Melbourne: Horwitz, 1964), 10.

⁸⁷ John Russell Prince, *Boy Meets Girl* (Sydney: Family Life Movement of Australia, 1970), 48.

⁸⁸ Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 267.

⁸⁹ Duvall, *Boy Meets Girl*, 54.

⁹⁰ Duvall, *Boy Meets Girl*, 62-3.

manuals at all, much less took the advice on board in the way it was intended.⁹¹ It can be speculated that the dearth of information on sex and desire would have led some teens to scour these manuals for any kind of insight, and while some young people surely found comfort in clear guidance, others may have been disappointed to find moral tracts and vague biological terms. There was no capacity for response from the teenage audience. This chapter will now turn to another form of advice literature, that while often espousing similar ideas of moral development and restraint, did give teenagers the ability to participate in the conversation.

Participatory Prescriptive Literature

The second part of this chapter will examine participatory prescriptive literature. Letters pages have been and continue to be popular in Australian media, and advice pages provide a similar format with the addition of an authoritative voice giving answers. Both allow for the interaction between author and audience, as almost all of the pages discussed here actively encourage continued engagement via further letters. There is a slight blurring of the edges around what we can define as advice literature. The classic form consists of letters from readers, reprinted either in full or an edited form, followed by an answer from an ‘agony aunt.’ However, teen magazines during this time also included essays and opinion pieces acting as a form of advice column. These tended to rely on a mysterious and unseen group of peers who had either asked the writer for advice or been interviewed by the author for their thoughts on a certain matter. This includes popular columns like ‘Youth Sums up’ by Kay Melaun, where she mused on issues that she first discussed with a number of young people, providing both their answers and her commentary.⁹² Letters to the editor were also sometimes provided with commentary, and other times left to stand alone, usually in conversation with previous letters as well as pieces published by the paper’s journalists. Bridget Griffen-Foley has examined the phenomenon of audience participation in Australian media, and argues that media has long “treated readers not only as consumers but as collaborators” and that this aided specific publications’ “attempts to consolidate an audience, give readers a sense of

⁹¹ Horn, *Digest of Hygiene*; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 268. Many of these books advertised themselves as bestsellers and produced many editions, although of course this does not tell us how they were received by their audience.

⁹² Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 7.

agency and project a feeling of communality.”⁹³ In the letters studied for this chapter, teenagers certainly appeared to feel able to take an active role in the information shared by magazines and newspapers. In particular, they often wrote letters in defence of their peers, arguing that adult writers did not understand the teenage experience, and they also wrote in asking for the publications to cover particular kinds of information.⁹⁴ Teenagers often challenged conventional wisdom in these pages, and while advice columnists or other letter writers might object, the newspapers and magazines did provide a space for this kind of questioning.⁹⁵ In a 1959, a “Wise Teen” wrote to the letters page pleading for “tuition on sex” so that teenagers “would be able to discuss sex as a clean and natural subject” and a “a healthy attitude towards sex [could be] developed.”⁹⁶ The focus of this section of the chapter, therefore, is on the way that teenagers helped shape the discourse around dating by interacting with the prescriptive literature intended to guide them.

Gendered Advice

Much of the advice given to teenagers in these pages mirrored that of the sex education manuals, although it was often framed differently. Sex education centred male physicality while acknowledging women’s emotions, but these magazines tended to write more about the romantic dreams of young girls, whether in celebration or derision. This is presumably due to the audience of these magazines. While *Teenagers’ Weekly*, for example, was ostensibly for all young people, it was part of the larger *Australian Women’s Weekly*. Girls were expected to spend more time poring over these magazines, and therefore the writing was more often addressed to them and revolved around their perceived desires. For the most part, girls were represented as desiring romance above all else. While teen boys were overcome with physical urges, teen girls were “bitten by the ‘Romance’ bug” and “awakened too early to the romantic possibilities of life and love.” As one 1959 column put it:

⁹³ Bridget Griffen-Foley, “From Tit-Bits to Big Brother: A Century of Audience Participation in the Media,” *Media, Culture and Society* 26, 4 (2004): 540.

⁹⁴ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 5, 7, 12, 16.

⁹⁵ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 16.

⁹⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

You think of love romantically. It's moonlight and roses, and someone to tell you how lovely you are. You are passive-a fancy word for being feminine. And you are seldom at the mercy of your own strong physical urges.⁹⁷

The idea of girls as dreamy and romantic fit neatly into contemporary constructions of femininity. Marilyn Lake and Lisa Featherstone have both mapped the turn towards a youthful and desiring femininity that was far more closely tied to sexuality than previous iterations. The instability and fear of the Second World War enabled an acceleration of this association, and a new importance placed on pleasure. With fears of young life being cut short, men and women stepped outside the bounds of tradition and focused far more clearly on pleasure, romance, and fun. In the 1950s, authorities and parents attempted to corral these young people back into the safely ordered regime of dating respectably, but these young women and girls, too, desired romance and pleasure. However, growing acceptance of female sexuality was still strictly confined to marriages. Young girls and teenagers were understood as being readied for these emotions and expressions, but as not yet emotionally mature enough to embrace them. Therefore, the glamour of femininity was to safely express itself in teenagers through film, fashion, and romantic literature. Girls were actively encouraged to indulge in romantic fantasies, but also chided for taking them too seriously.

Female engagement in romantic behaviour also must be read in the context of contemporary understandings of adolescence and leisure. Dating included dressing up, styling one's hair and going to dances, films, funfairs and other sites of teenage leisure, and it makes sense that the fun of dating itself was incorporated into this. In many ways, the positioning of dating as leisure was an attempt to sanitise the behaviour and remove it from the unrestrained pleasure and sexuality of the war years. It became an activity, an aspect of social life. In the pages of newspapers and magazines, the ins and outs were discussed intensively, as teenagers and adults alike worked to figure out the rules of this new behaviour.⁹⁸

The assumption that teenage girls did not understand sexuality is evident throughout these advice columns. Male sexuality and physicality were frequently explained to female readers, and as in the sex education texts, they were instructed to fulfil their roles as moral

⁹⁷ "Understand the Boy in Your Life," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 3.

⁹⁸ See for example Lester A Kirkendall and Ruth Farnham-Osborne "Dating: These Are the Rules," *Teenagers' Weekly*, November 25, 1959, 3; Minton, "How to be a Girl," 7, 9-10.

guardians, as the conscience of the boy who wants to do well but may fall prey to baser urges.⁹⁹ Specifically, the girls were to ensure the boy was not in a place to be tempted.

He can be aroused by a voice, a fragrance, a daydream, a thought, a poem, the touch of a hand, a glimpse of bare skin. This being the case, you must help him. You don't think him a monster for being a boy, but you do stay out of lovers' lane, keep away from liquor, avoid the casual teasing caress. You recognise that he is as idealistic as you... but that there are more aggressive forces at work in him and those forces are often stronger than his reason and restraint.¹⁰⁰

Girls were told they had a power they did not know very much about, and that it was vital they learn to control it for their own sake, and for that of their partners. In particular, girls were warned that by allowing sexual behaviour to take place, they were risking their futures as wife and mother: "Could any girl who has dreamed lofty dreams about motherhood be willing to subject any child of hers to a bad begetting?"¹⁰¹ These dreams were tied up inextricably with romance, and girls were expected to weigh this against a moment of pleasure and reject the latter. Boys, it was assumed, would experience greater pleasure but also less fear of the consequences of premarital sexuality.¹⁰² The biggest danger was that a young woman might assume sex was necessary for love, and relent. Of course, this was based on an assumption that the girl had to be persuaded, and persuaded on the basis of love:

What usually happens, of course, is that the girl yields to the boy's insistent pressure. In her confused emotional state, she gets the idea that it is noble to surrender herself in an act of love. This touches a woman's nature at a deeply responsive point. If she withholds what she has to give, how can she truly say she loves him? So argues the ardent young man.¹⁰³

Dr Mace, in a public lecture tour of Australia for the National Marriage Guidance Council, encouraged young people to reject this idea and focus on love as a consideration of one's partner and their future, and acknowledge that pressuring a partner into sex could never be

⁹⁹ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Australian Women's Weekly*, May 20, 1959, 32; David Mace, "Australia's Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17; Alan Marshall, "Perils in Foolish 'Petting,'" *The Argus*, March 13, 1953, 16; Sheila Sheldon "'Petting Parties' Are a Danger," *The News*, November 18, 1954, 21; Alan Marshall, "Watch These Holiday Dangers," *The Argus*, December 6, 1950, 8; Louise Hunter "Here's Your Answer," *Australian Women's Weekly*, June 13, 1956, 33; "U.S. Educationist Says Love's Young Dream is on the Way Out," *Australian Women's Weekly*, July 8, 1950, 20; Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Guide to Manhood*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ "Understand the Boy in Your Life," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 3.

¹⁰¹ David Mace, "Australia's Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17.

¹⁰² David Mace, "Australia's Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17.

¹⁰³ David Mace, "Australia's Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date," *Australian Women's Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17.

seen as considerate.¹⁰⁴ Most of this advice was written for girls and young women, at least in part because they were seen to have the most to lose.¹⁰⁵ As Kirra Minton argued, “it was girls who were blamed and who paid the social price if activities strayed into the territory of perceived sexual deviance.”¹⁰⁶

Kissing

The main form of physical affection acknowledged in these texts, however, was kissing. Seen as somewhere between the emotional and the sexual, and available to a greater range of readers – most writers seemed to consider a ‘friendly kiss’ perfectly acceptable for younger teenagers – kissing was the subject of endless discussion. It was constructed in a number of ways in the pages of magazines and newspapers, by both teen writers and adult journalists. As the natural and more innocent precursor to sexual activity, it was the main expression of physical love or affection in young dating.¹⁰⁷ It was very clearly seen as both an act of love and sexuality, as well as hopefully fun in itself. Many young women also saw it as deeply spiritual.

For the most part, adult writers encouraged an attitude towards kissing as a perfectly acceptable part of dating, if executed correctly. Specifically, the kisses were to be casual and friendly. In a 1959 *Teenagers’ Weekly* article “40 Ways to Get a Date”, girls were instructed to take part in the show of affection that dating required. It argues against an over-correction from girls scared of aggressive sexual behaviour from boys: “It’s natural to express affection... A good-night kiss from friend to friend is fine if it says, ‘I like you,’ not ‘I want you.’ There’s a world of difference between affection and sex.”¹⁰⁸ In this way kisses were removed from a sexual context and kept safely within a teenage realm. They were to be conducted quickly, and at the front gate at the end of the date, not in cars or movie theatres.

However, it is also clear that kissing was filling an important role in the development of teen sexuality and desire. Society faced a complicated challenge, in that women were, by the 1950s, expected to engage sexually in marriage, with a healthy desire and experience of pleasure. However, unmarried girls and women were not supposed to experience this kind of

¹⁰⁴ David Mace, “Australia’s Grave Sex Problem: Youthful Questioners at Public Lectures Claim Chastity is Out of Date,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 12, 1956, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 272.

¹⁰⁶ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 11.

¹⁰⁷ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 271.

¹⁰⁸ “40 Ways to Get a Date,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 75.

desire, as it was only something to be experienced in marriage. In the Christian texts, this delineation was justified by the spirituality of marriage, and more widely, it was discussed in terms of safety. Married women did not have to fear pregnancy or STIs, or the gossip of their peers, and therefore were able to fully give themselves to nascent sexual desires. It also seems, however, that kissing played its own part. Mostly devoid of passionate desire, it was an acknowledgement of the pleasure of physical affection and can be seen as a step in the sexual development of young women. This graduation could allow women to enjoy sexual pleasure within marriage, without ever seeming to truly desire it as a teenage girl.

Kissing itself was also a topic that sparked fiery debate among teenage readers. A pair of letters in *Teenagers' Weekly* in 1959 argued about kissing technique, and whether boys or girls were better at it. "Properly Please" angrily responded to "Tenderly Please" that "I always make a fairly proper job of it. Every girl I took out last week kissed terribly – either too sloppy or horribly weak. And talk about copying the film stars! One girl put on such an act during the first kiss that I couldn't bring myself to kiss her a second time. I think it's you girls who should brush up on your kissing."¹⁰⁹ One letter in particular generated quite the response. "Lonely Boy" wrote to the *Teenagers' Weekly* to bemoan the generally accepted rule that you shouldn't kiss on a first date. He argued that, having gone on several first dates that did not end in a kiss, nor a promise of any future dates, he was owed something more: "Surely if a girl decides... she does not want to go out again, the decent thing to do would be to kiss him goodnight to show her appreciation for the time and money a boy has spent on her."¹¹⁰ The following issue stated that this writer had only one supporter "among a host of correspondents," and printed a selection of the responses.¹¹¹ The lone voice of agreement called herself an "Obliging Gal" and argued that she expected to kiss goodnight on every date, as "after all, girls, they think enough of us to spend their money on us. It's only a kiss they want. Why not oblige?"

Clearly, the other respondents did not agree that a kiss was not important, and an examination of their reasons is revealing. Margaret Johnson of Strathmore argued that a kiss was "not to be given lightly" as it was "a sign, a semi-sacred sign at that, of affection."¹¹² "Interested girl" from Fairfield agreed, arguing even more strongly that "A kiss is a sacred thing and should only be given to show affection to the one you love. If you go out with a

¹⁰⁹ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹¹⁰ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹¹¹ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

¹¹² "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

boy once, how could you know whether you love him or not?”¹¹³ This idea of a kiss as sacred lines up with the Christian teachings in sex education texts of the time. Other girls agreed that it was something special, while not always using religious language. Nyngan’s Katrina Wykes encouraged teenagers to heed rocker Pat Boone, whose writings will be discussed later in this chapter, and make sure not to spoil the magic of “first love’s kisses” through “kissing for the sake of kissing.” “Thoughtful” from Lane Cove called it “an act of tenderness, understanding, and love.”¹¹⁴ They too argued that it would take more than one date for those feelings to develop.

This writer also reacted to another clear issue in the original letter: the feeling of being entitled to a kiss because he had spent money on a date. “A kiss is not a token of thanks for an evening’s entertainment,” they argued. This is a clear push against prevailing beliefs by the older generation, and by some young men, that the equation of dating is lopsided, and indicates that women must make up the shortfall with some kind of physical reward.¹¹⁵ “First Date” from Newcastle argued that if a boy likes a girl’s company enough to ask her out “that should be all he expects – her company. Perhaps the reason his girl-friends have declined a second date is because he expects too much “reward” from them for the first one.” “Too much” from Rozelle agreed that boys often expected a level of physicality that could be uncomfortable: “I have been out with a few boys, and they not only expect to kiss me goodnight but constantly during the evening as well. I get tired of making excuses.” Phyllida Fitzgerald from Hunters Hill declared the original letter writer to have a “frightfully warped psychology,” arguing that “if a girl doesn’t want to kiss a boy, then she jolly well needn’t. The idea of a kiss as payment for a night’s entertainment is utterly revolting.”¹¹⁶

Finally, a clear understanding of social behaviours and conventions showed that girls knew how they could be perceived by their peers. Susan McDonald from East Melbourne claimed that “Boys often talk about their conquests. If a girl allowed every Tom, Dick and Harry to kiss her on their first date she would get a bad reputation,” and Katrina Wykes added: “A girl who kisses a boy on their first date will lose his respect.”¹¹⁷

Of course, the attitudes of teenage boys cannot be deduced from a single letter from an upset young man, but the responses are quite revealing in the range of feelings about

¹¹³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

¹¹⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

¹¹⁵ Bailey, *Front Porch*, 23-24.

¹¹⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

¹¹⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 28, 1959, 2.

kissing amongst teenage readers. While of course these letters were selected by an editor, and presumably many teenagers happy to kiss on the first date did not write at all, the responses fall into the accepted categories in which kissing could be considered. From a sacred gift to something enjoyable for both parties, to something demanded by male partners, teenagers understood kissing as a key part of their dating behaviour and had strong feelings about the way they took part in it. In fact, not enjoying kissing was considered by some teenagers to be a real problem. An anxious thirteen-year-old wrote to Louise Hunter of the *Teenagers' Weekly*, worried that she did not enjoy kissing at parties with her boyfriend.¹¹⁸ Hunter's response assured her that "kissing was made for older boys and girls, and when you're grown up enough to really fall in love with someone you won't find it boring." She also reprimanded her young reader, noting that she was sure her mother didn't approve of her attendance at "kissing parties" and that she deserved a "smack...across the tail."¹¹⁹

Many questions were written to advice columns about kissing, and most of these were attempting to find a clear answer on the question of appropriate age. Many texts sidestepped specific rulings, instead discussing accepted 'stages' of dating, from group parties to double dates and eventually going steady when one was 'older.'¹²⁰ Teenagers wrote to the papers for clarification. Frequently they were colliding with parents who believed they were too young to be dating, kissing, or going out on their own. The *Women's Weekly's* Margaret Howard wrote in 1947 that she frequently received letters despairing about strict parents, with some of them seeming to be overly harsh but most "quite reasonable." Her ruling in response to a seventeen-year-old was that she was old enough to go out with a group of parent-approved friends but should be wary of coupling off too early. This would be an option in a year or so, and then would be followed in a few years by marriage.¹²¹ It was clear that at this time, many young women in their mid- to late teens felt they were ready to date more seriously, and were chafing against adults, both their own parents and those they wrote to for advice, who thought that dating was not appropriate until at least eighteen, as part of a preparation for marriage.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 10.

¹¹⁹ Louise Hunter, "Here's Your Answer," *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 10.

¹²⁰ Minton, "How to be a Girl," 11.

¹²¹ Margaret Howard, "If I Were You," *Australian Women's Weekly*, May 24, 1947, 29.

¹²² Margaret Howard, "If I Were You," *Australian Women's Weekly*, August 23, 1947, 37.

Age

In the late 1950s, Louise Hunter responded to teenagers in the *Women's Weekly*, and continued to field many letters on the topic of age. During the post-war decades, people were gradually marrying younger, although the marriageable age was not legislated uniformly across Australia until the 1961 *Marriage Act* enshrined it as sixteen for women and eighteen for men.¹²³ However, young people still required parental consent to marry before the age of twenty-one. The age of consent was sixteen for girls across most of Australia, while in most cases sexual assault of boys was treated under homosexuality laws and there was no specific male age of consent.¹²⁴ Featherstone and Andy Kaladelfos have shown, however, how defence lawyers in 1950s NSW often relied on physical and social markers to bring “the age of girls into question, and age of consent legislation was not enforced even in some instances where the girl was under 14.”¹²⁵

As the decade progressed, Hunter's rulings on appropriate ages to be dating grew younger. So too did the teenagers writing to her. Thirteen-year-old girls wrote in about their boyfriends and asked for advice about dating. They were mostly rebuffed by Hunter, who continued to largely side with parents, arguing that they had good reason to restrict their child's activities, and suggesting that it may be due to a lack of maturity on the letter writer's part. A thirteen-year-old was told to avoid going steady and advised that she was “destined to have many young friends before you fall in love. I can't accept seriously that any girl can be “very much in love” at your age.”¹²⁶ A fourteen-year-old girl was advised to wait until sixteen before “going to dances and kissing boys in the dark.”¹²⁷ Sixteen and a half, though, was still too young for a “full-scale ball” and the writer was cautioned that her parents had good reason for their decisions, and had their daughter's development in mind.¹²⁸ However, the specific ages involved often seemed to be irrelevant, and the judgements made instead

¹²³ Peter F. McDonald, “Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying in Australia 1860-1971,” (Phd Thesis, ANU, 1972), 18; Garfield Barwick, “The Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961,” *Melbourne University Law Review* 3, 3 (1962): 284-285, 287. Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia had already legislated the marriageable age as 16 for women and 18 for men in 1942, 1956 and 1957 respectively.

¹²⁴ Boxall, Tomison and Hulme, “Historical Review of Sexual Offence and Child Sexual Abuse Legislation in Australia: 1788-2013,” (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014), 14-16, 22-24, 33-35, 41-43, 52-57, 61-64, 72-75, 84-86; Lisa Featherstone and Andy Kaladelfos, *Sex Crimes in the Fifties* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Publishing, 2016), 13.

¹²⁵), Featherstone and Kaladelfos, *Sex Crimes of the 1950s*, 32.

¹²⁶ Louise Hunter, “Here's Your Answer,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 10.

¹²⁷ Louise Hunter, “Here's Your Answer,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, November 16, 1960, 9.

¹²⁸ Louise Hunter, “Here's Your Answer,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, November 16, 1960, 9.

based on the perceived maturity of the letter writer. One teenager wrote in bemoaning the “really nuts” thirteen-year-olds who thought they were in love and outlined her own progress through dating with age:

Although I admit I’ve been going out with boys since I was not quite 14, it was in groups for quite a while. Now at nearly 18 I’m sure of my feelings, and am, as you say, going steady. But I do intend to look at things sensibly and stay single for another three years yet. I think 21 is just a nice age of marriage... I’m glad to say I never thought I was madly in love at 13 or so. Genuinely keen on a boy or boys yes, but I don’t think I was nuts altogether.¹²⁹

This was exactly what Hunter appeared to want to hear, and the writer was congratulated warmly on her “sensible outlook” and judged “sensible enough to marry when you finally meet the right man. And not just because you think you’ve reached the right age.”¹³⁰

This mapping out of appropriate ages can appear to have been an instruction to young readers, but it was also made clear that maturity was far more important than age. If a teenager was able to understand the limitations of their youth, then in many ways it meant they could relax these rules a little. A fifteen-year-old cautiously trying to figure out if she was falling in love, or “too young for that” was reassured that, “it sounds as if you may be falling in love with him; you aren’t too young for it, not a bit.”¹³¹ Hunter argued that “girls start to fall in and out of love from the time they are about 12.” She added, however, that this was not a real or lasting love, and that the reader would likely continue to fall in and out of love during her teenage years. This, she argued, was part of the process: “Every time you fall in love you come closer to realising what falling in love is, and what particular qualities add up to the sort of love that lasts.” This comforting letter was, however, contrasted with an answer to a different fifteen-year-old in the very same column. Seemingly frustrated by her immature anxieties about her boyfriend and another girl, Hunter replied dismissively “You’re too young to be getting yourself in a state of emotional upset about a boy. Why not just read about love for a while?”¹³² Of course, different writers had different opinions, but it is interesting to examine the way teenagers continued to seek answers about this issue, often worried they were falling behind their peers. The stages of dating were gradually set by the

¹²⁹ Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 14, 1959, 10.

¹³⁰ Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, October 14, 1959, 10.

¹³¹ Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, May 20, 1959, 32.

¹³² Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, May 20, 1959, 32.

end of the 1950s, but the question of age continued to be debated by adults and teenagers alike.

Age was a subject on which teenagers continued to hotly contest received wisdom. Letters calling for a restriction on dating for younger teens were balanced by missives from young people, often responding to a perceived hypocrisy.¹³³ A twenty-four-year-old in 1956 worried that late teenage couples were too young to get married, lacking the requisite “experience of life... love, tact and money.”¹³⁴ A self-proclaimed “Teenager in Love” argued that adults telling younger teenage girls to stop thinking about boys surely “thought of boys when they were our age” and that it was in fact “quite normal.”¹³⁵ Some teenagers were of the opinion that parents should trust them more, while others admitted that teens ought to trust that parents had their best interests at heart.¹³⁶

Parental Responsibility

The argument about age was intertwined with the argument about parental involvement. While most teenagers, and indeed many adults clearly felt it was acceptable to socialise with large mixed groups, many writers urged teenagers to ensure their parents had met their friends. They argued that this would lead to a greater level of trust, and therefore freedom. Kay Melaun argued in her feature “Youth Sums Up” that “however rebelliously they might grizzle at home about their rights, their story to me was that parents were entitled to know whom they were going out with.”¹³⁷ Kirkendall and Farnham-Osborne’s “Dating: these are the rules” argued that most parents objected to their children’s dating for a good reason, and that often it was because they did not really know their friends and dating companions: “Ask your friends over more often.”¹³⁸ This was usually presented as having a positive result. A father worried that his daughter was “too young to have boy-friends” was pleasantly surprised when “a quiet, well-mannered young lad of about 19” was brought home to meet the parents.¹³⁹ At times, it was even acknowledged that some parents were struggling

¹³³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 11, 1959, 2; “Letters from Our Readers,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 8, 1956, 10; “Letters,” *Teenager’s Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2.

¹³⁴ “Letters,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 8, 1956, 10.

¹³⁵ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2.

¹³⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2; “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 1, 1959, 2.

¹³⁷ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 10, 1952, 16.

¹³⁸ Lester A Kirkendall and Ruth Farnham-Osborne “Dating: These Are the Rules,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 25, 1959, 3.

¹³⁹ “Live Letters,” *Argus*, December 4, 1956, 8.

to catch up to accepted norms. A young woman scolded in front of her boyfriend for arriving home at 12.30am was portrayed sympathetically and encouraged to attempt to explain to her father that this did not need to be an unsurmountable problem. However, “if he doesn’t see reason—well, when you are seventeen there really is plenty ahead of you even if your parents aren’t cooperative about boyfriends.”¹⁴⁰

The presence of parents in these debates indicates a larger discussion about who held responsibility for this kind of guidance. The sex education texts discussed earlier in this chapter tended to make clear who oversaw it: governmental agencies, the church, parents. However, this was more contested on the pages of newspapers and magazines. While many Christian arguments for sex education were printed, the pages also included entreaties to teach sex education in school, and efforts by publications to engage teenagers by involving figures from popular culture. Magazines and newspapers also frequently deferred to the authority of parents.¹⁴¹ Often, teenagers themselves would write in to argue about the authority of those picked. One example that illustrates this tension is the publication of Pat Boone’s *Twixt Twelve and Twenty* in 1959 issues of the *Teenagers’ Weekly*. The magazine referred to the text as “a folksy book in which the singer-film star discusses teenagers’ problems.”¹⁴² The twenty-four-year-old religious rocker, married with kids, was explicitly positioned as someone who could relate to teenagers on their level.¹⁴³ In the first issue, “Jam Today,” Boone began “What is a teenager? I’ll say one thing: I know what we are not.” Throughout, he alternated in tense, at times including himself in the discussion of teenagers, and at others instead beginning with “I remember when...”¹⁴⁴ In the excerpts he dealt with hot button issues including car dates, going steady, and kissing.¹⁴⁵ His tone was conversational and relied on his own experience as a teenager. Generally, the advice was in line with the fairly conservative viewpoints outlined above, advising double dating, warning against kissing too early, and noting ominously “A girl and boy can be TOO alone.”¹⁴⁶ When discussing kissing, he admits that he had had his fair share of experience in that area, but when he met his future wife he experienced something different:

¹⁴⁰ Janet Boyd, “20 and Under,” *The Argus*, May 21, 1953, 10.

¹⁴¹ Minton, “How to be a Girl,” 7.

¹⁴² “Twixt Twelve and Twenty: Pat Boone Talks to Teenagers,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 1, 1959, 4.

¹⁴³ Pat Boone was a teen idol and pop/rock star in the 1950s, and a conservative member of the Church of Christ, part of the Restoration Movement in America.

¹⁴⁴ Pat Boone, “Jam Today,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 8, 1959, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Pat Boone, “Jam Today,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 8, 1959, 3; Pat Boone, “April Love,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 22, 1959, 12-13; Pat Boone, “Danger Ahead – Car Dates,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 2, 1959, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Pat Boone, “Danger Ahead – Car Dates,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 2, 1959, 3.

I believe a kiss means a lot more than just a pleasant pastime or a test of popularity. It's an expression of love – real love – and it's a powerful stimulus of emotion. Kissing for fun is like playing with a beautiful candle in a roomful of dynamite. And it's like any other beautiful thing when it ceases to be rare it loses its value and much of its beauty. So there! I hope I don't sound stuffy, but I mean every word of it.¹⁴⁷

This illustrates a construction of the kiss as spiritual, something that some teenagers clearly connected with. However, there was a mixed response to his advice. One teenager wrote to the *Weekly* complaining he was “sick of reading Pat's ideas on love, death, and marriage,” sparking a spirited response in the following issue.¹⁴⁸ Some teenagers defended the star, arguing that “he is a wonderful person, just trying to show us right from wrong,” and “a decent fellow” and that “at least Pat cares and is interested in teenagers.”¹⁴⁹ R. Gibbs from Castle Hill put it plainly, as Boone argued he did himself: “Pat Boone is no dill; he is an extremely sensible person who should know the pitfalls of teen life, as he himself was a teenager not so long ago.”¹⁵⁰ However, other writers agreed with the original letter, arguing that “nothing makes teenagers more rebellious than the way adults are forever criticising and lecturing on the do's and don'ts of life.”¹⁵¹ Here, Boone is clearly not seen as a fellow teen, but as yet another adult attempting to dictate the actions of the younger generation. An “Ex-Pat Fan” from Glen Innes wrote that the book left them “faintly nauseated” and teenagers who already chafed at parental advice were not going to listen to “this pious square.” “Disgusted” from Tamworth thought that it was parents who needed to guide their teenage children, and that Boone had overstepped, complaining “Pat Boone's writings are supposed to act as a guide for teenagers. But what are parents for?”¹⁵²

Conclusion

This question of responsibility for sex education lingers throughout all of these texts. Parents, schools, governments, the media and mainstream Christian churches were all held partially responsible for the development of teenagers, and therefore their education on sexual and romantic matters. This led to a growing discourse around dating rules and acceptable behaviours that were intended to keep teenagers from physical intimacy and

¹⁴⁷ Pat Boone, “Danger Ahead – Car Dates,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 2, 1959, 3.

¹⁴⁸ “Letters,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 2, 1959, 2; “Pat Boone: Pal or Preacher?” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹⁴⁹ “Pat Boone: Pal or Preacher” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹⁵⁰ “Pat Boone: Pal or Preacher,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹⁵¹ “Pat Boone: Pal or Preacher,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

¹⁵² “Pat Boone: Pal or Preacher,” *Teenagers' Weekly*, September 23, 1959, 2.

premarital sex. These sex education and advice texts worked to contain teen sexuality within strict dating conventions, arguing that following the outlined path to marriage was the only way young people could develop properly and reach their ultimate goal of a happy and productive marriage. The advice given to young Australians was extremely gendered, and young men and women were expected to each play a role in romantic rituals based on contemporary understandings of their own sexual and emotional needs. Dating guidance, then, not only attempted to teach teenagers how to romance each other, but also how to fit themselves into images of normative femininity and masculinity.

However, when given the opportunity to participate in this debate, teenagers worked to shape these conventions themselves, foregrounding their own desires for romance and pleasure. While there were undoubtedly teenagers who outright rejected such advice, others debated adult authorities and other teens about acceptable parameters of sexuality and romance. Through their engagement they rejected assumptions that they were ignorant or shallow, forming cogent arguments positioning themselves as a new generation, living in a new social world. Through their participation, competing understandings of dating behaviour and its moral acceptability at the time become evident. The next chapter follows these young people through the growth of mass culture in the 1950s and 1960s, as they continued to shape their social and romantic lives on their own terms, and in negotiation with their parents and their peers.

Chapter Four: Rewriting Romantic Scripts: Youth Culture, Class and Leisure in Post-war Australia, 1950 - 1970

Post-war Australia was defined by economic prosperity, Cold War anxieties, and a sense of cultural unease. The conservative ideal was to reclaim a nostalgic idea of ‘normalcy,’ to sketch out the ideal suburban, affluent, middle-class society and label it as the true nature of Australia. In campaigning for this idea of stability, a clear sense of what it was to be a good, and normative, Australian citizen emerged.¹ As explored in the previous chapter, this included a middle-class attempt to enforce an idealised social and sexual morality within the working-class, and in doing so, both uphold the image of classless Australian society and produce a conforming idea of what it was to be Australian.² Young people were a particular target of this project, for a variety of reasons. This was a time of consolidation of the definition of ‘teenager’: a term borrowed from Americans and applied, after some delay, to young Australians in the post-war period. The teenager was constructed as troublesome, with young people’s bodies outpacing their brains, and this construction was explicitly gendered and focused on the sexual potential of the maturing physical bodies. As such, they were viewed as ripe for this kind of middle-class direction and moralising, delivered through parenting, religious institutions, schools and the media.

The Second World War had disrupted social scripts surrounding romance and sexuality, and Chapter Three outlined the ways in which moral authorities attempted to define and manage romantic conventions in order to restrain and control teen sexuality and desires. This chapter focuses on the way young people wrote and re-wrote these scripts within their own communities and social worlds. This act of teenage self-definition occurred in the novel context of mass market consumerism. Teenage leisure was directed and mediated by advertising and pop culture, but also created a space where teenagers found a higher degree of agency and self-expression.

First, I address the changes in the post-war period that led to a boom in youth culture, and outline discourses surrounding the subcultures specific to the period, with a focus on how they related to ideas of sex and romance. This is followed by an examination of the primary

¹ Arrow, *Friday On Our Minds*, 14-16; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 6-7.

² This idea of conformity within national identity has its own political history, see; Stratton, *The Young Ones*.

forms of entertainment young people took part in during the 1950s and the 1960s, and the role dating played in the structuring of their leisure time. Cultural preoccupations of teenagers at this time, including fashion, music, and dancing all intersected with dating rituals and culture. Romantic rituals formed an integral part of teenage leisure in the 1950s and 1960s. Dates involved going out, spending money, and having fun, and these key features were also more broadly embraced as central tenets of teenage lives and entertainment. At the centre of this chapter is the way popular culture, mass market consumerism and teenage style intersected with dating behaviours, simultaneously reinforcing and breaking down assumptions about gender and romance that were inherent to such practices.

Youth Culture and Class

The post-war period was characterised by distinctive patterns in the way that youth culture was created, commodified, and in some ways, domesticated. Peter Cochrane has argued that the youth culture of this time was intentionally alienating, “sharply separate[ing] the tastes of youth from their elders.”³ Jon Stratton argued that new ideas of youth culture were mapped onto existing working-class culture and generated a moral panic through their increased visibility, including haircuts and fashion, rather than radical new behaviours.⁴ Evans agreed in part, but stressed the importance of youth culture’s, and in particular rock’n’roll’s, “shock of the new” in the post-war period.⁵ He argued that these expressions of adolescence represented a cultural shift beyond the material and economic changes present in the 1950s and 1960s.⁶ In any case, the post-war period was marked by fears of juvenile delinquency, amidst anxieties about the Cold War, Americanisation, and barriers to building a stronger Australia through productive middle-class marriages.

An outline of youth culture in the post-war period is necessary to contextualise the use and form of dating rituals in the 1950s and 1960s. Historians and other scholars have discussed the moral panic surrounding juvenile delinquency in the 1950s and 1960s at length.⁷ In particular, Stratton has examined the emergence of bodgies and widgies in the

³ Cochrane, “At War at Home,” 170.

⁴ Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 12-13, 157-159, 162.

⁵ Evans, “So Tough,” 127.

⁶ Evans, “So Tough,” 127.

⁷ See Bessant, “Described, Measured and Labelled,” 8-28; Terence Irving, “Youth Policy as Politics: The Dewar Committee and Juvenile Delinquency in Queensland in the 1950s,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, 31 (1991): 41-50; Steven Angelides, “The ‘Second Sexual Revolution,’ Moral Panic, and the Evasion of Teenage Sexual Subjectivity,” *Women’s History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 831-847; Stratton, “Bodgies and Widgies,” 10-24; David Hilliard, “Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s,” *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 109

post-war period in regard to existing working-class practices and behaviours.⁸ Bodgies and widgies were young Australians who rejected the middle-class moralising of suburban Australia, and signalled their identity through their clothing, hairstyles, music, and social activity. In the media, they were often portrayed as violent and sex-crazed deviants.⁹ The focus on their sexual behaviour illustrates the way youth subcultures were feared and discredited. The real risk was seen to be a sexual corruption of other young people. Bodgies and widgies, and later other teenage groups such as sharpies and mods, were criticised by the media and accused of vandalism and violence. Their presence in public spaces, in what Evans called “sites of potential nonrestraint – the street, the milk bar, or hamburger shop, the railway carriage, the darkened cinema, the dance hall, party or concert” was “rigorously policed.”¹⁰ The media stoked parental fears of premarital sex and sexual assault. Evans, Stratton and Lesley Johnson have all outlined the way “much of the alarm over adolescent girls becoming widgies was associated first with so-called ‘sexual initiation ceremonies,’ which allegedly incorporated them into delinquent gangs, and then with promiscuous, extramarital sexual behaviour.”¹¹ Other aspects of youth culture, including new clothing styles and rock’n’roll were closely associated with this perceived over-sexualisation, and were often used as an indicator that participating teenagers were engaging in inappropriate premarital sex.¹²

While many teenagers self-identified as bodgies, widgies, sharpies and mods, including those profiled by psychologist A. E. Manning in his 1958 “study in psychological abnormality,” and those featured by Stratton, Evans and Bessant, this chapter focuses on teenagers finding their place in mainstream youth culture.¹³ Often, these teenagers sought to

(1997): 133-146; Evans, “‘To Try to Ruin,’” 106-119; Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture Since 1788* (South Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1995); Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997).

⁸ Stratton, *The Young Ones*; Stratton, “Bodgies and Widgies.”

⁹ See: “Minister Warns Parents on ‘Bodgies,’” *Illawarra Daily Mercury*, December 7, 1951, 3; “Are ‘Bodgies’ A Social Menace?” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 8, 1951, 2; “Bodgies Brawl in Milk Bar,” *The Chronicle*, November 20, 1952, 2; “‘Bodgies’ Alarm in Launceston,” *The Mercury*, November 4, 1954, 2; “Battered by Bodgies, Girl,” *The Mail*, May 19, 1951, 3; “Bodgies and Widgies: Clownish Cult Comes to Perth,” *The Mirror*, March 10, 1951, 4; “What Neck-st? Petting Parties Perturb Public,” *The Mirror*, December 16, 1950, 4; “Bodgies, Widgies: Probe into Report of Sex Orgies,” *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, May 22, 1951, 2; “Are ‘Bodgies’ A Social Menace?” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 8, 1951, 2; “Sex Orgies by Bodgies and Widgies,” *Barrier Miner*, May 22, 1951, 1; “Just Fun or Gross Depravity? The Truth About Bodgie, Widgie,” *The Mirror*, December 22, 1951, 11.

¹⁰ Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 109.

¹¹ Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 111; Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 170; Johnson, *The Modern Girl*, 98-101; A.E. Manning, *The Bodgie: A Study in Psychological Abnormality* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1958), 14-16; Evans, “So Tough,” 128-9.

¹² Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 112.

¹³ Manning, *The Bodgie*; Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 14; Bessant, “Hanging Around”; Evans, “So Tough.”

articulate a difference between *being* a juvenile delinquent and simply wearing the same clothes as one. These protestations made it clear that many teenagers accepted the categorisation of bodgies and widgies as delinquent and feared being mistaken for them. Many of the adolescents in this chapter are working to differentiate themselves as harmless teenagers enthusiastically participating in youth culture, rather than dangerous and depraved members of subcultural groups.

As was the case during the Second World War, much of the anxiety around wayward youths and immorality was caused by increasing visibility of young people in public. The post-war economic boom led to a rise in consumerism, and the creation of the mass market, partially thanks to increasing popular culture imports from overseas, particularly America, provided ample opportunities for young people to go out and spend money.¹⁴ Australian adolescents entered a period where they had increased money, due to higher wages (at least for boys) but no families of their own. Most teenagers still lived with their parents, and those who did not were generally working-class teenagers with full-time jobs. Many teenagers living at home still had responsibilities, and often contributed to the family budget. However, this period overall saw an increase in teenagers with both leisure time and cash. Alongside the proliferation of entertainment options, Australia's suburbanisation meant that young families tended to remain in the sanctuary of their homes, leaving the world of public leisure to young people.¹⁵ Both working-class and middle-class teenagers looking for a space of their own found their way into an entertainment zone in public. Most young people structured their social life around going out. Activities included going to the theatre, bowling alley, youth clubs, dances, picnics and casual games of sport.¹⁶ Many of these were ideal for dates. Teenagers also met up with friends and potential romantic partners in public to hang out casually.

Teenagers indignantly defended their use of public spaces. The need to socialise without adult supervision, and in particular to meet and romance others, was, they argued, essential to teenage life. "Elvis Forever" wrote to *Teenagers' Weekly* in 1959 to complain about the immediate association of hamburger shops and delinquency: "I think that teenagers have every right to go into hamburger shops without being called "widgies and bodgies."¹⁷

¹⁴ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 3, 8, 19; Bessant, "Hanging Around," 19; Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 49.

¹⁵ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 18-19, 43.

¹⁶ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹⁷ "Letters," *Teenagers' Weekly*, July 1, 1959, 2.

Shortly after, Maureen Slatel wrote in with measured support, although she did posit the original letter writer “must have been unusually dressed or acting to be labelled a ‘widgie.’” Maureen agreed that “there’s nothing wrong with teenagers gathering in hamburger ‘haunts’ and milk bars... All my friends and almost every local teenager – more than 100 – meet at one of the milk bars down at our beach... We all behave ourselves.”¹⁸ This attempt to loosen the associations between juvenile delinquency, subcultures and teenage activity is discussed again in the context of style and fashion later in this chapter. Teenagers knew their actions were being viewed through this lens and some fought against it by stressing their respectable behaviour. “Rock’n’Roll” from Braybrook, Victoria, responded to a letter asking: “Why don’t boys who roam the streets join the Scouts?” with an impassioned defence of young people on the streets, as well as an argument that public socialising was essential for romance:

The main reason is you can’t meet girls at the Scouts, but you can meet them at weekend rock’n’roll parties. To organise these parties, the boys go to the milk bar down the street, and this is often called ‘roaming the streets.’ We also have to ‘roam the streets’ to different girls’ places, we have to walk to our mates’ place to borrow records. But we’re never just roaming the streets for no reason at all.¹⁹

As this letter illustrates, publicly socialising and publicly dating were inextricably linked. Going out in the context of dating formed the basis of typical teenage social life in the 1950s and 1960s. Social scripts for dating and general socialising were intertwined, and romantic rituals were an integral part of the emerging forms of youth culture.

The entertainment industry tried to formalise public leisure activities as much as possible by encouraging paid patronage of movie theatres, bowling alleys and cafes over lingering outside a corner milk bar. However, the full spectrum of entertainment and visibility existed, as outlined in this chapter. Middle-class teens entered a partially independent, partially supervised space, adapting working-class practices aligned with American influences. Teenagers of working- and middle-class backgrounds negotiated this space in an experimental manner. In particular, they took their romantic lives into the public sphere with them. Dating, as it was defined in the 1950s and 1960s, was inextricably linked with mass consumerism, Americanisation, and teenage leisure culture in Australia.

¹⁸ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 29, 1959, 2.

¹⁹ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 12, 1959, 2.

Rebellion and Pleasure

Many of the leisure activities of teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s can be read as a form of rebellion, often through pleasure, against the conservative politics and moralising of the middle-class. Teenagers also saw, however, their emotional, excessive displays of identity and feeling packaged and marketed back to them, in the form of fashions and music of the period, which was simultaneously rebellious and domesticated once it entered the mainstream.²⁰ It is worth looking at dating practices in this context. The disruption to social understandings of romantic rituals was initially a slow movement of change, accelerated suddenly by the Second World War. During this time, young people focused on the pleasure and immediacy of casual and intense romantic relationships. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, attempts were made by middle-class authorities to contain such pleasure in new versions of old courtship rituals, as outlined in Chapter Three. In the post-war period, some teenagers enthusiastically participated in dating culture condoned by their parents and approved by moral authorities including mainstream churches and educators. Others, however, pushed against the ever-moving boundaries in an attempt to reshape conventions and rebel against them. When, as Arrow stated that “youth culture became mainstream and middle class in the 1960s, fuelled by affluence and consumerism,” new subcultures of resistance and radicalism were born.²¹ This can be seen in patterns of teenage dating and pursuit of pleasure throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, bodgies and widgies gave way to mods, sharpies, rockers, surfies, and more. Still often divided on class lines, and frequently in strict rivalry with each other, each group had specific practices and styles that allowed them to identify each other and themselves.²² Most group members were working-class, Anglo-Saxon male teenagers.²³ Rockers were largely “the continuation into the 1960s of the bodgie and widgie style,” and were already being seen as out of date by many adolescents in the 1960s.²⁴ Sharpies also inherited many aspects of bodgie/widgie culture and style, appearing in the first half of the 1960s in city suburbs. Their name stemmed from “their sharp, neat hair cuts, short on top and long at the back, and smart looking dress.”²⁵ They took their visual presentation

²⁰ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 53; Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 119.

²¹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 75.

²² Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 15-31; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 92.

²³ Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 20.

²⁴ Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 20.

²⁵ Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 21.

very seriously, aping respectability to make a satirical point and express their own rebellious identities. Mods were “heavily influenced by English fashion” and also “saw themselves as ‘smart’ dressers.”²⁶ The rivalries between these groups were serious and regimented.

Music played a vital role in the social lives of each group, and conflict often erupted at concerts. Groups would self-segregate at dances, hang out at separate milk bars, and avoid each other on the streets unless there was to be a fight.²⁷ However, most of those participating in these subcultures did not see themselves as formal gangs, rather looser groupings with fluid boundaries that could adapt and change.²⁸ Teenagers identified as part of these groups to different extents: the label could refer to a taste in fashion, or to a strong bond with likeminded adolescents. Media portrayals of violence and sexual behaviour were often decontextualized, as they had been with bodgies and widgies, but real violence did occur.²⁹ Simultaneously, however, young people wrote into the very middle-class *Teenagers’ Weekly* to bemoan each other’s fashion, or to admit dating across group lines.³⁰ Arrow argued that youth cultures, despite this diversity within the term, “still articulated and accentuated a generation gap that would take on more radical meanings as the decade advanced.”³¹ The late 1960s brought with it a new radicalism based in youth movements of the preceding decades.

The young people participating in the social and protest movements of the 1960s were often derided for their “appetite for popular culture” as much as ideology.³² These critiques are based in the same understanding of youth culture as superficial due to its focus on style and aesthetics. The young radicals of the 1960s were raised in a society that positioned adolescents as powerless, but where young people had found power and agency through the generation of cultural practices and self-expression and the harnessing of the consumerist youth market.³³ This power was limited, but its very existence was a form of rebellion against the status quo. The issue of conscription into the Vietnam War radicalised many young people during this period, and an opposition to established power structures involved a challenge of social conventions and understandings, including those relating to sex and

²⁶ Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 22.

²⁷ Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 29.

²⁸ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 92; Bessant, “Hanging Around,” 27-28.

²⁹ Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 170.

³⁰ See for example: “I am a 17-year-old girl, and I am strictly a beatnik and all that jazz, but recently fell in love with a rocker. All my friends say I’m going for a square dad and tease me like crazy. What should I do?” “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 3, 1963, 6.

³¹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 85.

³² Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 47.

³³ Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 52.

sexuality.³⁴ As Arrow wrote, many young people were not part of this counter-culture or protest movement, but its existence did “influence popular culture, especially youth culture, and even if people were not necessarily part of the radical student movement, they often took part in a popular culture that emerged from it or aimed to capitalise on it.”³⁵ More broadly, young people entered into a culture that began to embrace the pursuit of pleasure.³⁶ John Palmer remembered:

The 60s liberalism sort of made sense. It came from elsewhere and it flooded the place, and everyone loved it, such good fun. Before that it was tight, then the 60s. And Australians I think have taken it over. Because that mixed with the Australian ‘easygoing’ outlook... I think it mixed rather well.”³⁷

This focus on pleasure and fun influenced understandings of dating, romance, and sex. It also meant that adults tended to not take teenage culture very seriously.

Teenagers were often stereotyped as manipulated by advertising, gullibly falling in love with untouchable pop icons and obsessing over superficial things like their hair, but young Australians saw themselves as seizing agency and power in a world where money and self-expression spoke loudly. The way they expressed themselves and spent their money allowed for self-identification as well as wider group identification and was also explicitly gendered.³⁸ Male teenagers began to participate in traditionally feminine spaces, including a keen interest in fashion, personal grooming and style.³⁹ Evans proposed the idea that the 1950s, through an embrace of rock’n’roll and youth culture, allowed for “a loosening of the strict bonds of masculine conformity” which may be seen “as precursor to the freer and more diverse forms of permitted expression and behaviour among succeeding generations of young Australian males in the sixties and seventies.”⁴⁰ In particular, he pointed to the

newly conceived interest in – or even a powerful commitment to – the more traditionally ‘feminised’ preoccupations of popular music listening, elaborate dancing skills, record collecting, the emulation of film and pop stars, fashion awareness, hair style experimentation, coiffure, courtship and the like.⁴¹

³⁴ Dennis Altman, “The Creation of Sexual Politics in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 11, 20 (1987): 76-82; Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 54, 61; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 99.

³⁵ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 101.

³⁶ Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 28.

³⁷ John Palmer interviewed by Frank Heimans, February 2014, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220127755>.

³⁸ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 6, 8.

³⁹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 8; Evans, “So Tough,” 128.

⁴⁰ Evans, “So Tough,” 128.

⁴¹ Evans, “So Tough,” 128.

Courtship is important here, both in the way it was entangled in an interest in fashion and grooming, and in the way it constructed and upheld ideas of masculinity, femininity and sexuality.

Young men and women both structured their social life around leisure, and explicitly around mixing with other teenagers. Romance was a key part of this, whether taking the form of dates or more casual mixed-gender socialising. For most young people, education or work took up their weekdays, and for those at school or university, weeknights were often expected to be set aside for study. The weekend, therefore, was time for fun. During the 1950s and 1960s, leisure options for young Australians proliferated. This chapter now turns to the way leisure activities and dating rituals of young people were interwoven in post-war Australian society.

Cars and Cinemas

By the mid-1950s, cinemas were actively courting teen patrons by programming “teen-pics.”⁴² Cinemas were important date venues in the post-war period.⁴³ Dark and semi-private, they provided a popular place for young people to enjoy the thrills of physical closeness, from handholding to heavy petting in the back row. Those who did not have a partner to go with, went with a group of friends. Groups could consist of mixed-gender couples, either double dates or more loosely structured ‘gangs,’ usually with even numbers of boys and girls, but they could also be made up of only one gender. Norma remembered going to the cinema with a group of girlfriends as a matter of course, and part of the social understanding of the movies was that you could, and ideally would, meet up with a group of boys.⁴⁴ For some, this converging of groups occurred in milk bars after the movie, and for others simply on the street, or at a party at someone’s house afterwards. Film-going was a social activity that involved consumption, pop culture, and very often, the glamour of American stars and settings, and excitement of rock’n’roll music.

⁴² Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 54.

⁴³ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 22; Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg, VIC.; Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>; Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>; Charlotte Greenhalgh, “Bush Cinderellas: Young New Zealanders and Romance at the Movies, 1919-1939,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 44, 1 (2010): 1; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 22; Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 176.

⁴⁴ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

Drive-in cinemas combined the Australian ongoing love of the cinema with the new, heady love affair with the car. The first drive-in opened in Melbourne in February 1954, where it was an “overnight sensation... prompting a flood of applications for operating licences across the country.”⁴⁵ Perth’s first drive-in opened in 1955, and by 1957 the city boasted five, providing “a combined capacity of 6000 cars, more than doubling the city’s cinema accommodation.”⁴⁶ Over the next few years, drive-in theatres opened in South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales.⁴⁷ By 1964, there were 140 drive-in theatres in Australia.⁴⁸ Originally aimed at young families, where parents could enjoy a halfway space between the formality of the theatre and casual television watching at home, drive-in theatres soon realised their prime audience was made up of teenagers, piling into cars and escaping the supervised home TV room.⁴⁹ Televisions were introduced to Australia in 1956 and Arrow commented on the “rapid uptake” despite the cost, finding “television was normalised as part of home and family life with considerable speed.”⁵⁰ Televisions were marketed to mothers as a way to “keep families together,” as the children would stay home and watch as part of the family.⁵¹ However, while certainly popular with teenagers, especially with the introduction of rock’n’roll shows, televisions were not enough to keep them from the drive-in in the late 1950s and 1960s, where they were considered a key market, “newly mobile in cars and seeking private places for courtship free from the parental gaze.”⁵² Cars were essential for this particular experience. The car, like the cinema, was able to traverse the public/private divide, and both were key markers of modernity.⁵³

Car ownership increased in the post-war period, and although it is not clear how many teenagers themselves had cars, they had increasing access to either a second hand car or a family car throughout the 1950s and especially the 1960s.⁵⁴ The drive-in brought the sexual promise of a car and that of a cinema together, and by the 1960s many spoke disparagingly, or, perhaps, excitedly, of the ‘passion pits’ drive ins could become.⁵⁵ Teenagers saw the

⁴⁵ Goldsmith, “Comfort,” 153.

⁴⁶ Richardson, “Movies Under the Stars,” 112.

⁴⁷ Goldsmith, “Comfort,” 153.

⁴⁸ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 36.

⁴⁹ Goldsmith, “Comfort,” 159; Richardson, “Movies Under the Stars,” 112; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 36-7; Adam Trainer, “‘Making Do in Ways We Hadn’t Done Before’: The Early Popular Music Industry in Perth,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 28, 1 (2016): 267.

⁵⁰ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 29.

⁵¹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 33.

⁵² Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 37.

⁵³ Richardson, “Movies Under the Stars,” 114.

⁵⁴ Davison, *Car Wars*, 69-71; Goldsmith, “Comfort,” 156.

⁵⁵ Goldsmith, “Comfort,” 160.

drive-in as an excellent date-night spot.⁵⁶ Alison Fettell remembered in late-1960s Western Sydney that “the drive in – that was the place to be. Everybody went to the drive in if you had a car.”⁵⁷

Cars and motorbikes themselves were important signifiers of youth identity and were also implicitly linked to romance. Leo Cripps found that having a car changed his life, when he met his future wife because his brother Tommy and Tommy’s girlfriend “wanted somebody to drive them around in a motor car,” and, since Leo was the one who owned the car, brought a friend as a date for him: “So this is why the introduction took place, you see, but it was the greatest thing in my life. No doubt about that.”⁵⁸ For dating in general, having a car was considered desirable and functional.⁵⁹ “It made life so much easier,” remembered Patricia, “to be picked up by your boyfriend in a car and taken to a ball rather than having to rely on somebody picking you up and all this.”⁶⁰ The car gave rise to new kinds of dates, as well. Alison and her boyfriend would “go for a drive on the weekend, down at the beach. He and his mates, you’d go on a bit of a convoy – whoever had a car.”⁶¹ Cars were places for sexual intimacy.⁶² Patricia Barrkman reflected on the impact of the rise of car ownership on opportunities for privacy:

And so slowly, you know, with the advent of cars, it changed life dramatically for people. And for young people in the country... we were all living at home or we were living in shared accommodation and there was very little room to have close encounters, I’ll call them. And so when the motorcar came along, well life did change for many people and I think there were many, many young couples would have had their first sexual experiences in the back of a car. I think that’s probably a known, a known fact.⁶³

⁵⁶ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>; Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>

⁵⁷ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>

⁵⁸ Leo Cripps interviewed by Ben Ross, October 2012, Hobart TAS, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219947057>

⁵⁹ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>

⁶⁰ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project* <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>

⁶¹ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>

⁶² Davison, *Car Wars*, 72-77.

⁶³ Patricia Barrkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 2011 Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

Alison also remembered coming home and parking in front of her house with her boyfriend, “kissing and carrying on,” before her Dad would turn on the light at the front of the house as a signal to “get your act together and come inside.”⁶⁴

The spectrum of activities provided by cars ranged from the simple functionality of date transport, ventures further afield for different dances and beautiful beaches, to the array of sexual intimacies available in both the front and back seats.⁶⁵ Stratton argues that for working class teenagers, cars did not introduce sexual intimacy into relationships, rather, “it simply made established practices easier.”⁶⁶ A car was an important source of independence for a young man, and gave those who had access to one, cachet in the dating market. As Barkkman recalled:

A man having a car meant you had the freedom to go wherever but also this sort of currency. If a male had a car, he usually had a girlfriend and I’m not saying that it was because of the sex. I mean she was probably attracted to him and the car because it was a means of getting around.⁶⁷

Cars were also, however, a significant expense, in initial purchasing, upkeep and fuel.

The consumerism associated with dating was built on strict gender roles. Girls spent more than boys on clothes, although boys were certainly spending more in this domain than previously, and those in style-conscious subcultures spent a considerable amount of their wages on fashion. Girls were expected to put an effort into their appearance for dates, and this meant money as well as time.⁶⁸ Seventeen-year-old Helen told the *Women’s Weekly* in 1953: “I think that all women should dress for their men. After all, it’s only fair when you think they are the ones who do the paying if you go out to the pictures or a dance.”⁶⁹ Boys were supposed to look ‘nice’ and ‘neat’ for dates, but spent most of their money, as outlined above, on transport, as well as on the entertainment that made up the bulk of the date.⁷⁰ Boys were positioned as the pursuer and also the provider. In this way they were fulfilling understood conventions of dating, as well as play acting at marriage, with the role of breadwinner. As teens paired off into more serious relationships, they tended to deal with

⁶⁴ Alison Fettell interviewed by Roslyn Burge, August 2014, Thirroul NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220185705>.

⁶⁵ Davison, *Car Wars*, 68-77.

⁶⁶ Stratton, *The Young Ones*, 181.

⁶⁷ Patricia Barkkman interviewed by Hamish Sewell, October 22, 2011, Clayfield QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219822018>.

⁶⁸ “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 7, 1953, 18.

⁶⁹ “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, January 7, 1953, 18.

⁷⁰ Carol Tattersfield, “The High Cost of Courting,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, August 5, 1959, 39.

money together, although it was usually understood that most boys had access to a wider range of employment and received higher wages.⁷¹

Teenagers saved their money for movie tickets, live concerts, tenpin bowling, dances and balls, corsages and flowers for special events, petrol or a train fare, and food and drink. Leslie Robinson of Sydney remembered his first date with his future wife, after meeting her at a dance the night before and escorting her home. He took her out to La Perouse, and they drove around the harbour to queue up at the best hamburger place, a small counter at Tom Ugly's Bridge, and then back in the car for the best thickshakes in Cronulla, before finding a place to eat, and then heading home: "I dropped her home that night, you know, we'd had a good day... I had five cents left in my pocket. Couldn't have done anything else anyway."⁷² Cars and cinemas, separately and together in the form of drive-in, were important facilitators of teenage dating. They both provided all-important privacy in public spaces and allowed young people to exercise their independence and pursue pleasure. These experiences would not have been possible for teenagers of earlier generations, but these teens were able to make more choices when it came to spending their money. Teenagers often chose to spend their money on important aspects of youth culture outlined in more detail below: fashion and music. Both had implications for a teenager's place in the dating market.

Teenage Style

In the post-war period, teenagers adapted working-class social rituals to fit their new post-war world of mass culture, leisure and consumerism. In doing so, they helped to create a teenage market, which was then able to commodify and homogenise rebellious counter-culture fashion and style into a mainstream youth culture that spanned middle- and working-class adolescents.⁷³ In the 1950s the focus on consumerism, and the creation of a teenage market, meant that young Australians were being targeted at an increased rate, and had far greater opportunity to define themselves visibly through their appearance, style and taste. The use of such visual identification was common to various subcultures throughout Australian history, including earlier "larrikins."⁷⁴ However, the new market allowed teenagers to adopt their own distinct styles more broadly, whether they belonged to subcultural groups or not.

⁷¹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

⁷² Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

⁷³ Evans, "To Try to Ruin," 119.

⁷⁴ Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Qld Press, 2012).

These new fashions only served to fuel the moral panic. Middle-class authorities and parents feared the inability to be able to tell apart a bodgie or widgie from a ‘normal’ teenager, if they all wore the same clothes and listened to the same music. Teenagers worried about being misidentified as part of a ‘delinquent’ gang, and therefore surveilled and policed, and they anxiously worked to demarcate the edges of subcultural groups and mainstream teen fashion. Young people were very conscious of the stylistic decisions they were making, and the impact these would have on how they were viewed by the adult world.

Evans has argued that much of the image of the bodgies and widgies that fuelled post-war moral panics was “being constructed for [teenagers] by moral campaigners, professional ‘experts’, surveillance authorities and, in particular, the mass media.”⁷⁵ However, as bodgie and widgie fashion spread throughout Australian society, the lure of the teenage market proved stronger than puritanical authorities’ protestations. As Evans put it, “the compulsions of money-making progressively overcame most middle-class puritanical scruples.”⁷⁶ Selling teenage fashion, even that which had been associated with delinquency, was more lucrative than policing it.

Interest in clothes was typically something assumed to be confined to women in the first half of the twentieth century in Australia, but both male and female teenagers placed increasing significance on fashion in the post-war period. While to some more traditional Australians such an emphasis on clothes made teen boys seem less manly, to other adolescents, style was an important indication of identity and group allegiance. It provided a way to make one’s taste clear visually and was specifically useful in the dating market. Teenagers obsessed over their own clothes, the outfits of celebrities they liked, and those of the boys or girls they were interested in. Fashion was a serious business, and often the new flashy styles or suggestive cuts shocked parents and onlookers.⁷⁷ Lorraine, who was a teenager in the late 50s and early 60s, remembered “a lot more sexual influences being portrayed in music and in dress,” noting that “the dresses got shorter.”⁷⁸

It was not only sexualised clothing that brought disapproval. In the 1950s, adventurous dressers were often marked as bodgies or widgies, and many young people chafed against these claims, whether they identified as part of this group or not. Teenagers

⁷⁵ Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 119.

⁷⁶ Evans, “To Try to Ruin,” 119.

⁷⁷ Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, 28.

⁷⁸ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>

had a wide variety of opinions and tastes when it came to style. In the early 1950s, teenagers were already expressing mixed reactions to the new bodgie and widgie fashions, despite more widespread condemnation from adults.

In a regular *Australian Women's Weekly* segment called 'Youth Sums Up,' Kay Melaun spoke to boys, and then girls, seeking "some honest opinions" on the fashions of the other. Nineteen-year-old Rex observed presciently: "with fashion, it's mostly a matter of time. When the widgies came out first, I thought they were pretty wicked, but after seeing a lot of them I got used to the fashion and accepted it."⁷⁹ Most of the girls Melaun spoke to were more critical when responding to an eighteen-year-old teenager's question about haircuts, expressing "strong opinions" and "definite ideas" about male fashion. Seventeen-year-old Jeanette thought that Australians should dress more like Americans, "but not madly bodgie or anything." Twenty-year-old Marie claimed to "hate a bodgie cut" and thought "ordinary" Australian boys dressed quite suitably.⁸⁰ Here, teenage girls were asked about boys and vice versa, in part to illustrate the believed differences between the sexes, and in part because of the inherent understanding that one major function of clothes and grooming was to attract a romantic partner. Teenagers were concerned about their own style and that of their partner, they were attracted to certain people due to the way they dressed, and they were very conscious of the fashion choices of the boy or girl they were to be seen out with.

The subject of fashion prompted many letters to teen magazines and newspapers, especially toward the end of the 1950s. Often, these questions and debates focused on the close link between style, gender, and sexuality. The idea that adopting certain trends of 'bodgie-ism' or other subcultures was a safe way to participate in trends and fads was an argument put forward by many teenagers. Many argued that it was quite possible to dress in bodgie style without being a bodgie, although there was also a range of opinions on the style itself. Keven Klemm from Stanthorpe, Queensland, wrote in 1957 that "one can dress in all manner of ghastly clothes without being a bodgie" and "I am not a bodgie, and detest the clothes worn by 'progressive dressers,' but after all that it is a matter of personal taste."⁸¹ R. Mazzacchelli from Nedlands, WA wrote:

Is it fair that normal youths who follow the latest American clothes fashions should be looked down upon as bodgies? There is really quite a difference between a well-dressed

⁷⁹ Kay Melaun, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, August 13, 1952, 15.

⁸⁰ Kay Melaun, "Youth Sums Up," *Australian Women's Weekly*, October 8, 1952, 12.

⁸¹ "Letters from our Readers," *Australian Women's Weekly*, June 19, 1957, 18.

young man and an over-dressed juvenile delinquent. People should consider this before they form rash opinions of innocent modernistic youths.⁸²

Mostly, the letters addressed male bodgie fashion, and often the writers were also male, but it appears that girls wrote in to defend their style as well. One writer responded to a letter claiming that teenage beatniks were “frauds,” stating: “I belong to a gang, and we all disagree about this. By this I don’t mean that we are a pack of widgies, but it seems that the modern trend is to act ‘beat,’ and I don’t see any harm in it.”⁸³

Teenagers did seem cognisant of what it was they were distancing themselves from. They knew their parents, and sometimes their peers, associated bodgie and widgie fashion with sexuality, violence and alcohol. A seventeen-year-old wrote an amusing account of her parents’ reaction to her green nail polish:

any new development is regarded as a symptom of some dreadful disease... I think they’ve been reading too many of those newspaper reports about widgies and ‘decadent youth’... Can’t they just see that it’s fun experimenting?⁸⁴

She explained that her mother seemed to believe that painting her nails green was her only ambition: “this fearful, burning ambition will turn me into a widgie, an exhibitionist, and in the end – oh dear! – I’ll get a reputation for loose morals.”⁸⁵ Again, style was seen by the older generation as a signifier of morality, while teenagers saw it as fun and a source of pleasure.

Sometimes, teenagers sought to change their own style to appeal to boyfriends and girlfriends. “Surfie Boy’s Girl,” from Queensland, wrote into teenage music magazine *Go-Set*’s advice columnist, Leslie Pixie, in 1968 for advice on how to best dress as a “surfie-gal” at the request of her surfer boyfriend. Pixie advised the reader not to change her style, but instead to “do things that suit you as an individual and who knows, you might start a trend off yourself.”⁸⁶

Often, teenagers wrote in about the fashion choices made by the boys and girls they had fallen for. M.A.K, from Victoria, wrote to a teen advice column in the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1957 to ask if her potential steady, “a very nice boy, well mannered” was “a bad type of bodgie” because “he dresses in stove-pipe trousers and hip-length jackets and

⁸² “Letters from our Readers,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 8, 1956, 10.

⁸³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 11, 1959, 2.

⁸⁴ “Parents ARE Odd...” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 6.

⁸⁵ “Parents ARE Odd...” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 10, 1959, 6.

⁸⁶ “Dear Leslie Pixie,” *Go-Set*, October 30, 1968, 23.

says he has bought a pink suit for the dance.” Her girlfriends had convinced her to be worried, but she still hoped that his style was “just different from what we are used to in the country.”⁸⁷ In the same column, a sixteen-year-old-girl asked for help convincing her concerned parents that “a very nice boy... with whom I have been going out for three weeks,” only dressed like a bodgie because “it is the craze in our district.”⁸⁸ In these cases, teenage girls were asking permission to view style as independent from adult perceptions of certain subcultural groups. They wanted to be reassured that the boys they liked could dress this way but still be suitable romantic partners. Almost a decade later, two letters sent to *Go-Set* showed that although fashions had changed, the importance of style, and particularly of haircuts, was still central to dating. In May 1966, two sixteen-year-old girls wrote in who were “crazy over long-haired boys” and were bored because in Ballarat, that style was scarce, and all the “divine long-haired boys” they did meet ended up being from Melbourne.⁸⁹ A month later two male teenagers, also sixteen but this time from Melbourne, complained that they did not have girlfriends because “girls nowadays seem to go for the long-haired louts.”⁹⁰ Both times the response was a little dismissive, encouraging the teenagers not to generalise based on hairstyle. However, hair as a signifier of style and identity was clearly important to Australian teenagers, and their dates.

As the 1960s continued, proliferation of subcultures, groups and gangs meant that the focus shifted to wider critiques of fashion. Male haircuts, however, remained a clear focus. Cochrane has pointed to the symbolic importance of long hair in the 1960s as “an assertion of individual freedom” in the context of opposition to conscription and the Vietnam War.⁹¹ Like youth fashions and dance crazes, specific hairstyles were also frequently associated with “rampant sexuality,” and a “lack of manliness.”⁹² The choices young men made about their hair were tied up in ideas of gender and sexuality. *Go-Set* fielded several letters from disgruntled youths from across Victoria frustrated with the external policing of hair length. Dances in cities began to be run by promoters, and in order to avoid violence between different gangs, they often had strict dress codes and many young people were turned away at the door. One writer from Mt Waverley complained that after travelling a long distance to a dance, and waiting in line, they were refused admittance because “one of my male friend’s

⁸⁷ “Here’s Your Answer,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 25, 1957, 28.

⁸⁸ “Here’s Your Answer,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 25, 1957, 28.

⁸⁹ “Leslie Pixie,” *Go-Set*, May 4, 1966, 8.

⁹⁰ “Leslie Pixie,” *Go-Set*, June 8, 1966, 10.

⁹¹ Cochrane, “At War At Home,” 170.

⁹² Cochrane, “At War At Home,” 172.

hair, which is naturally wavy, was too short, in a brush back style.” They suggested printing the dress requirements to avoid this kind of trouble in the future.⁹³ “Unsatisfied Brush” wrote to *Go-Set* to complain about the “fussy” promoters who turned away boys for “the length of their hair, the clothes they wear, and ‘the way they walk.’” The letter writer begged the promoters to “be a bit more reasonable – give them a go!”⁹⁴ The *Go-Set* post-box also provided a venue for opinions on fashions more generally, with one “Pointed-Toe Hater” from St Kilda claiming “Sharpies are IN! Mods OUT!” At this point in 1966, the writer believed Mods were outdated, and could be considered as old-fashioned as “rockers.” The writer again linked fashion to understandings of teen behaviour, arguing that “Sharpies show good sense of dress, clean cut good looks and will bring a much better dressed reputation to the teenagers of Australia.”⁹⁵

Lorraine remembered the 1960s as a time of change and innovation, and enjoyed experimenting with new styles, which was possible as she made her own clothes. She described the times as “modern and interesting,” a “challenging time” where “you had to try to do the new dances and the new fashions in the right way, make yourself look the best that you could, try different hairstyles.”⁹⁶ This sort of experimentation was set specifically against the former generation, and many young Australians condemned their parents’ apparent hypocrisy. A “Beatnik admirer” from Renmark, South Australia, commented: “we live in a modern world, and it *would* look queer to see a whole heap of old-fashioned teenagers getting around the place.”⁹⁷ Sandra Briggs, from Mascot, NSW, put it succinctly: “Teenagers like to wear the styles of today, not yesterday.”⁹⁸ The overwhelming argument from teenage letter writers was that fashion was a personal indicator of taste and identity, and not a corrupting influence or an ominous sign of juvenile delinquency and sexuality. It was, however, clearly gendered and linked to dating and romancing, activities teenagers also wanted to experiment with and enjoy without the assumption of deviance.

Music was a key area of experimentation and self-expression for teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s. Rock’n’roll music, bursting onto the scene in 1955, found an eager

⁹³ “Postbox,” *Go-Set*, May 18, 1966, 2.

⁹⁴ “Postbox,” *Go-Set*, June 8, 1966, 2.

⁹⁵ “Postbox,” *Go-Set*, August 5, 1966, 9.

⁹⁶ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

⁹⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, November 11, 1959, 74

⁹⁸ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 24, 1959, 74.

audience among Australia's adolescents.⁹⁹ Its impact went far beyond the music. Evans claimed that rock'n'roll "developed [around it] a new argot of language, a rack of spectacular fashions, a full repertoire of attitudes, an iconography of style."¹⁰⁰ As Arrow wrote, the advent of rock'n'roll was "disruptive" and used to identify and problematise teenagers. "From its very beginnings," she argued, "rock was always regarded as representative of a much larger cultural phenomenon, a harbinger of sex, violence, vandalism and rebellion, which was, of course, a considerable part of its appeal."¹⁰¹ Australian moral opposition toward Rock'n'roll was also rooted in racism, as it was associated with African American singers, and therefore, over-sexualised by racist white Australian ideas of the black body. Rock'n'roll was more emotional and expressive for teenagers who felt frustrated with the constraints of post-war society.¹⁰² Many teenagers became deeply involved in music as a form of self-expression, a way to connect with other people, including romantic partners, and a source of pleasure in and of itself. Historians have explored the way the music scene exploded in 1950s and 1960s Australia, and the teenagers who bought records, screamed at concerts, and copied dance steps from the television.¹⁰³ Their behaviour and that of their musical idols was often condemned as overly sexual, an inducement to violence and delinquency. Teenagers who embraced new music and fashion were supposedly more likely to act inappropriately, especially when it came to sex. For teenagers, rock'n'roll provided a space for expression of their desires, and a way to carve out their own space in the music scene.

Many teenagers swooned over their favourite singers and band members. For most, this consisted of buying posters and records and devotedly listening to their favourites on the radio. Lorraine remembers Elvis Presley as "really the heartthrob of the day," noting she was a fan of Pat Boone, and mentioning Tom Jones and a general increase in "sexual influences being portrayed in music."¹⁰⁴ For the more involved fans, clubs were started for specific groups and singers, and magazines advertised unusual auctions of personal belongings, including in 1968 the drumsticks used by Micky Dolenz and the pillow used by Davy Jones

⁹⁹ Evans, "To Try To Ruin," 107.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, "To Try to Ruin," 110.

¹⁰¹ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 56.

¹⁰² Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 43; Michael Sturma, "The Politics of Dancing: When Rock'n'Roll Came to Australia," *Journal of Popular Culture* 25, 4 (1992): 127.

¹⁰³ See Evans, "So Tough?" 125-137; Evans, "To Try to Ruin," 106-119; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 126; Trainer, "Making Do," 248-273; Adam Trainer, "From Snake Pits to Ballrooms: Class, Race, and Early Rock'n'roll in Perth," *Continuum* 31, 2 (2017): 216-229; Sturma, "Politics of Dancing," 123-142.

¹⁰⁴ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

on the Monkees' tour of Australia.¹⁰⁵ Several teenagers wrote to Leslie Pixie, desperately in love with famous singers. Alana X, from Victoria, wrote: "I am almost 16 and madly in love with Peter Tork, of the Monkees. Believe me, Leslie, I am not just another fan. I love this guy and I don't know what to do about it, do you have any suggestions?" Pixie advised writing to Peter, joining a Monkees fan club, and "in the meantime you can see him live at Festival Hall on the 18th or 19th September."¹⁰⁶ Other times she advised girls that the infatuation would pass, or appealed to readers for advice on how they had overcome something similar. One writer sympathised, telling Leslie that she had once been the same, but she had grown out of her obsession with Normie Rowe. "I've still got bits of his hair and all that," she wrote, "but I've grown out of that 'phase.'"¹⁰⁷

Fantasies about the romantic stars allowed teenagers to act out their desires and romantic passions, safely at home. Sometimes, however, *Go-Set* encouraged blurring these lines. The magazine ran regular features asking stars about their ideal girl, where the magazine's reporters asked singers and musicians their opinions on marriage, going steady, and having children.¹⁰⁸ In the first instalment, reporter Ian Meldrum introduced the segment, reminding readers: "if you think you fit the bill then write in and tell us... you never know, you could be the perfect match."¹⁰⁹

Go-Set also ran competitions for its readers to "Win a Date with" famous bands, including The Groove and The Masters Apprentices.¹¹⁰ Readers had to fill in and send back questionnaires that included questions about physical appearance and attitude towards sex:

If you are a girl, are you:

- a) Tall, red haired and sexy
- b) Blonde, long haired and modellish
- c) A girl

¹⁰⁵ "Fan Club Corner" regular feature in *Go-Set*, listed names and addresses of presidents or secretaries; "Win Davy's Pillow," *Go-Set*, November 27, 1968, 9; "Here it is! The Lucky Girl who Won Davy's Pillow!" *Go-Set*, December 18, 1968, 9; "Win Micky's Drumsticks," *Go-Set*, October 23, 1968, 11; "Competitions," *Go-Set*, November 20, 1968, 11.

¹⁰⁶ "Dear Leslie Pixie," *Go-Set*, September 18, 1968, 16.

¹⁰⁷ "Dear Leslie Pixie," *Go-Set*, November 13, 1968, 28; "Dear Leslie Pixie," *Go-Set*, December 18, 1968, 9.

¹⁰⁸ See for example: Lily Brett, "Johnny Farnham: My Ideal Girl," *Go-Set*, March 20, 1968, 3; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: Clefs," *Go-Set*, May 2, 1967, 9; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: Peter Anson and John Hossan," *Go-Set*, April 26, 1967, 8; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: Ronnie Burns and Ronnie Charles," *Go-Set*, April 19, 1967, 8; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: David Montgomery and Colin Cook," *Go-Set*, June 7, 1967, 6; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: Robby Snowdon and Eric Cairns," *Go-Set*, June 14, 1967, 6; Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice: Mike Brady and Ian Ferguson," *Go-Set*, June 21, 1967, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Ian Meldrum, "The Girl of My Choice," *Go-Set*, April 12, 1967, 9.

¹¹⁰ "Win a Date with the Masters," *Go-Set*, April 3, 1968, 10-11; "What a Groovy Night it Was!" *Go-Set*, March 27, 1968, 10-11.

- d) Young, sweet and innocent
 - e) Slim, dark haired and lots of fun.
- What is your attitude towards sex?
- a) A great hobby
 - b) Only if you're engaged or married
 - c) A part of life – just like eating
 - d) Something to be taken very seriously
 - e) A beautiful thing without which, an emotional relationship is incomplete.¹¹¹

The winners of these competitions were photographed on their nights out. The winners of the Groove competition, “four excited girls, Francine, June, Mary and Christine,” went to Berties in Melbourne with the band. “The girls were a bit shy at first,” *Go-Set* reported, “but it wasn’t long before everyone was swinging, and having a ball.”¹¹² Radio stations, magazines and television relied on the status of singers to sell records and concert tickets, and some stars leant into the role of sex god, with suggestive performances and sly jokes in the press.

Dancing

This passion could then be taken to the dance floor alongside a date, with perhaps a little preparation. Teenage audiences listened to the radio for all the latest hits and wrote to stations to request more of different artists or types of music. Cinemas introduced rock’n’roll culture to a wider group of Australians with wildly popular films like *Rock Around the Clock*, and later, when televisions began appearing in Australian homes in the second half of the 1950s, programming aimed at teenagers centred itself on rock’n’roll.¹¹³ Australia-wide programs included *Six O’Clock Rock* on the ABC hosted by Australian music legend, Johnny O’Keefe. Local stations took up the trend, Perth’s *Teen Beat*, later *Club 7teen* set itself up as a competitor to *Six O’Clock Rock* and worked with local booking agents to get popular talent on screen.¹¹⁴ Lorraine remembered when her family purchased a television, so “as well as hearing the music you used to see the latest dances, so we would all have a go at imitating whatever we saw.”¹¹⁵ These moves could then be practiced at home, and brought onto the dance floor the following Friday or Saturday night.

¹¹¹ “Win a Date with the Masters,” *Go-Set*, April 3, 1968, 10-11.

¹¹² “What A Groovy Night It Was! *Go-Set*, March 27, 1968, 10-11.

¹¹³ Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 69-71.

¹¹⁴ Trainer, “Making Do,” 265-6.

¹¹⁵ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

Music, fashion and gender-based consumption and expression came together in one of the most popular forms of teenage entertainment, the dance. Ballroom dances had been a feature of Australian social life for decades, but their form and target participants began to change.¹¹⁶ Dance halls were initially seen as a site for formal courtship and pleasure, where men and women could meet in a safe and controlled environment, and young people were chaperoned by their elders. However, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, these norms were disrupted by the war, which led to more young people participating in dances independently from their families. American servicemen and their dates enthusiastically introduced and popularised swing and jive dancing, and in the post-war period the practice of roping off part of the hall for these more modern, unconventional dances remained.¹¹⁷ In cities, teenagers usually had a choice of dance halls or ballrooms, from which they could pick depending on style of music or choice of partner. Dancing, while for many a pleasure in itself, remained explicitly linked to romance, and meeting partners. Gerard Van Didden recalled being taught barn dances at school and noted that “all the things are background leading up to meeting people in the right conditions.”¹¹⁸ Norma remembered that although she “loved dancing,” her boyfriend, later husband, did not, and so she also did not go to dances “because I had a boyfriend, you didn’t go out looking for others at dances.”¹¹⁹

Saturday night was the usual night for dances, and they took place across the country, from small rural Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (later Returned Services League of Australia) halls to dedicated venues in capital cities, like Sydney's Trocadero. Usually, dancers were accompanied by a live band with three to six members, or more in larger spaces.¹²⁰ Ballroom dancing remained an institution, although a proliferation of rock'n'roll, jazz and swing dances proved very popular with young people. To dance the ballroom classics, teenagers needed to first learn the steps at school or in classes, which were often considered a social event in themselves. Leslie Robinson used to go to a small dance class with another male friend, where they learnt to dance with the teachers

¹¹⁶ Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 16, 30; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 23-24.

¹¹⁷ “It Kept the Whole District Together,” (sound recording), Dandenong, VIC: Heritage Hill, 1998, http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_VOYAGER820967.

¹¹⁸ Gerard van Didden interviewed by John Bannister, March 2014, Sawyers Valley WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220137312>.

¹¹⁹ Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹²⁰ Gerard van Didden interviewed by John Bannister, March 2014, Sawyers Valley WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220137312>; Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>; “It Kept the Whole District Together,” (sound recording), Dandenong, VIC: Heritage Hill, 1998, http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_VOYAGER820967.

and other girls in the class, “so you’d be dancing all night, but not always with the dance teacher, which was pretty good.”¹²¹ Later, when going out with his future wife, Diane, he took her to the dance class as well. Meanwhile, rock’n’roll dancing was, as outlined above, learnt primarily by imitation. Young dancers would copy a move they had seen on television or in a film or follow those surrounding them on the dance floor.¹²² The lack of formality and styles that were viewed as more sexual led to anxiety among adults that this was not an appropriate venue for meeting or dancing with romantic partners. However, for teenagers it allowed for greater flexibility and experimentation in romance as well as in dance.

Sometimes there were clashes between different dancing styles in the same hall. Teenagers wrote to the *Teenagers’ Weekly* in 1960 to argue about the merits of jive dancing.¹²³ While there was a mixed response to a writer who argued that jive should be banned, as it was “just a lot of frantic swinging by people who could not dance complicated steps,” many teenagers defended the style by pointing out its appeal, and the fact that it was confined to its own area in most dance halls. D. Swindells, from Gympie, challenged the original letter writer:

Is ‘Teenager Too’ a real fun-loving teenager? Why should he be bumped by ‘frantic swinging’ if he danced in the part set for proper dancing? Jive may be the same thing repeated over and over, but steps in the Alberts, etc., are repeated over and over again, too. Jive is good clean fun and is popular at Police Boys’ Club dances, church camps etc.¹²⁴

This letter brings together many of the arguments about dancing and its associations at the time. “Teenager too” is accused of not being a real teenager on the basis of not being “fun loving.” Rock’n’roll dancing was seen as inherently pleasurable, and those that did not like it were often cast as old-fashioned and repressed. It also echoes earlier debates about bodgie and widgie fashion, where generational hypocrisies were challenged; jive dancing, like the ballroom dancing that preceded it, consisted of technical dance skills and the repetition of learnt steps. Finally, it challenges the presupposed associations inherent in the original letter: that jive dancing was not compatible with “good clean fun” and supposedly morally respectable organisations including the Police Boys’ Club and churches. Dance was a form of

¹²¹ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹²² Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 59.

¹²³ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, April 6, 1960, 2.

¹²⁴ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, April 6, 1960, 2.

physical pleasure, but it also carried a set of associations tightly linked with teenage identity and acceptable romantic and sexual conventions. Some teenagers enjoyed rebelling through dance, while others regarded new styles as not inherently inappropriate and provided just as legitimate a forum in which to date as the ballroom and barn dances of their parents' youth.

As different dancing styles became more popular, dance halls and venues diversified. Lorraine remembered the variety available to her as a teenager: "Some of them were rock'n'roll, a lot of them were jazz music... the Karma Hall, that was a jazz dance, the dance at the RSL was more of a rock dance with waltzes thrown in... so you'd sort of choose what sort of night you want." Lorraine, she said, was "more of a jazzer."¹²⁵ Leslie Robinson remembered that mainly he would choose ballroom dancing at the Civic in Hurstville over the rock'n'roll dance down the road. His reasoning was based on the structure of different dancing styles, and how they affected the way he could meet girls. At the Civic, teenagers would dance the cha-cha-cha, waltz, samba and other dances he had learnt in class. The standard conventions mostly applied, including rotation of partners, and Leslie found it more social: "you're going to meet these girls whether you like it, all the different girls. Whereas rock'n'roll, you've got to go physically and ask them and they've got to say yes."¹²⁶ When he did need to ask a girl to dance, he preferred to employ what he called a "system": "you pick a girl and say 'she's nice, I'll ask her. But if she says no, she's pretty good, I'll ask her. And if she says no...' The key, he said, was going straight over to your chosen girl, politely asking her to dance, and moving on quickly if they said no:

I'd be up there dancing and the mate standing on the sideline would come off and he'd say 'how come you're always dancing?' So I told him my system and he said, that's a bloody good idea.¹²⁷

This was the same kind of method recommended in teen magazines. Dating, after all, was a numbers game, and the aim was to 'make friends' with as many different types of people as possible. Leslie's system paid off when he met his future wife at one of these dances, asked her to dance first, and was accepted.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹²⁶ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹²⁷ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹²⁸ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

Leo Cripps went dancing with his future wife, “a terrific ballroom dancer,” at the Royal Ballroom in Hobart, where they had “nearly all ballroom dancing and a few country dances and things like that.”¹²⁹ Before he met her, he and his friends used to catch the bus down into the Huon Valley to go to different dances, just for the evening. Leo remembered that when they got there his mates would pile into the pub, and he would say: “‘No, I’m going to dance,’ and the difference it made for me getting dances... when you’d see them come in from the pub, I knew I made the right decision as far as that went.”¹³⁰ Gerard Van Didden recounted the options in Perth, including the Embassy Ballroom and Canterbury Court, and that he and his partner “liked the Embassy better... I think it had to do with the types of dances and different things like that, and with the Embassy you could go upstairs and look downstairs, there seemed to be more room for people to watch, whereas the Canterbury Court, I think it was a different crowd.”¹³¹ The ability to participate without having to choose a partner, for many young people a very stressful proposition, or dance by oneself were also features of rock’n’roll dancing more generally. Spectators enjoying a crowd jiving to rock’n’roll could feel part of the event with less risk of rejection or humiliation.

Many teenagers, however, really enjoyed dancing. The physical pleasure of dancing, particularly for young people of dancing jive to rock’n’roll music, was sufficient reason to go to dances. At the same time, there was a clear focus on meeting people to go out with, and maybe to dance with again. According to Leslie: “It was good because you get to meet girls there, and everything else, and dance... it was a bit of a fun place.”¹³² Traditionally, this was a step in courtship on the way to the end goal of marriage, but dancing teenagers tended to only look as far as the next Saturday. Gerard remembered enjoying the dances at RSLs in the rural towns where he was working, but when asked if marriage was at the forefront of his mind when meeting girls, he replied: “No, it was just – dancing was the thing.”¹³³ John Palmer remembered disliking school dances when he was a teenager, but looking back he conceded: “When the boys were there, and the girls were there, and the band was there... it was great dancing with them, all the business of being segregated and then being able to

¹²⁹ Leo Cripps interviewed by Ben Ross, October 20-21, 2012, Hobart TAS, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219947057>.

¹³⁰ Leo Cripps interviewed by Ben Ross, October 20-21, 2012, Hobart TAS, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219947057>.

¹³¹ Gerard van Didden interviewed by John Bannister, March 2014, Sawyers Valley WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220137312>.

¹³² Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹³³ Gerard van Didden interviewed by John Bannister, March 2014, Sawyers Valley WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220137312>.

dance with them, it was very exciting.”¹³⁴ Dancing, like dating, was a thrilling activity in itself, not only as a step on the path to something more.

In the 1960s dance venues became more commercialised and specialised. Adam Trainer’s examination of the music industry in Perth illustrates how rock’n’roll grew from a grass-roots scene in a working-class suburb to a city-wide industry.¹³⁵ In 1960 a branch of the Coca Cola Bottlers Hi-Fi Club opened in Perth, thereby tying together “globalised musical trends and a global franchise” in the relatively isolated capital city.¹³⁶ The club distributed memberships through schools and was extremely successful, running regular “hops” at the Embassy Ballroom, fondly remembered by teens such as Gerard above. Dances across Australia were being run by promoters who could book famous bands, and strict entry requirements were applied.

More unofficial dance parties would also take place. Leslie remembers organising dances with a group of friends who normally played tennis together. They would hire a hall, bring some food and “hook up the mate’s record player to the internal speakers, lock the doors and have ourselves a dance, you know, and just have a good night.”¹³⁷ Lorraine also recalled a different kind of gathering, in keeping with her memories of an exciting and adventurous 1960s:

There used to be dancing in the street sometimes, there was a café just across the road from the Karma Hall, which was a gathering place for the youngsters of the town... you’d get milkshakes and sarsaparillas. There was also dancing in the streets on occasions, when people would have rock’n’roll contests, and there were stars of the show who were better at it than others, and those who were game to dance in public, not everybody did. So, they were fairly lively Saturday nights.¹³⁸

This type of casual dance party further blurs the lines between young people who were dating and socialising in formal, measured kinds of ways, buying tickets and being picked up from home, and the working-class tradition of meeting and socialising, and dancing, in the streets.

Young people often went to dances or the movies with dates they had met on previous outings, or with groups of friends from school. For teenagers looking for a social group that

¹³⁴ John Palmer interviewed by Frank Heimans, February 19, 21, 2014, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220127755>.

¹³⁵ Trainer, “Making Do,” 259; Trainer, “Snake Pits to Ballrooms,” 216-229.

¹³⁶ Trainer, “Making Do,” 259; Trainer, “Snake Pits to Ballrooms,” 216-229.

¹³⁷ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹³⁸ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

was not necessarily built around the primary subcultures of the time, there were other ways to meet likeminded people as well. Leo Cripps met his future wife, Pat, through the Taroona Rugby Club near Hobart, Tasmania, when his brother brought along his girlfriend and another girl to the rugby ground.¹³⁹ Leslie used to go with his friends, boys and girls, to play tennis in Oyster Bay, and these were often the same friends he would dance with.¹⁴⁰ Lorraine also used to turn to sport to fill Saturday afternoons; playing tennis and watching the football were both regular social activities.¹⁴¹ Norma met her boyfriend, later husband, when she was taken along by a friend to watch football. Not only did they meet there but going to the football ended up being a common date activity for the pair and their friends.¹⁴²

For some young people, sport, dancing and socialising often all came under the one umbrella of the local church.¹⁴³ Marie Cousen remembered moving to a new place, and finding in the local Presbyterian Church a welcoming community “where everybody was very supportive and everybody knew everybody else, and you mix with people of all ages and it did not matter that you were younger or older, you had things in common.”¹⁴⁴ She attended various camps with her church group and would go to the dances held by churches in different suburbs on Saturday nights, stating: “it just widened your circle of friends.” The church was the basis of her social group and community: “if you didn’t have that you were really on your own, unless you had a huge social network... and with not the same access to travel that you have now, you would have had a small community.” While this association began as a child and young teenager, Marie continued socialising in this group throughout her teenage years: “You certainly wouldn’t let go of the youth group, it was too good.”¹⁴⁵ Lorraine also attended youth club on Friday nights, where someone would organise games and activities, and found that when living in a rural area the church “gave us connection to a wider community.”¹⁴⁶ Veronica Schwarz ended up going along to church when her friends

¹³⁹ Leo Cripps interviewed by Ben Ross, October 20-21, 2012, Hobart TAS, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219947057>.

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Robinson interviewed by Hamish Sewell, April 7-8, 2014, Woodford QLD, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220147383>.

¹⁴¹ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

¹⁴² Norma interviewed by author, February 2018, Nth Coburg VIC.

¹⁴³ “It Kept the Whole District Together,” (sound recording), Dandenong, VIC: Heritage Hill, 1998, http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1c135st/SLV_VOYAGER820967.

¹⁴⁴ Marie Cousen interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Manifold Heights VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219812088>.

¹⁴⁵ Marie Cousen interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Manifold Heights VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219812088>.

¹⁴⁶ Lorraine Bull interviewed by Catherine McLennan, September 2011, Morwell VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219815112>.

started attending “youth organised programs at the local Methodist church,” although she had not previously been religious. From then on, her social life was structured around the social events organised by the church.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

During the post-war period, leisure and consumption of entertainment became very important in the lives of Australian teenagers. Social lives and dating rituals were intertwined and built on working-class behaviours and American influences that caused anxieties in parents and moral authorities. Teenagers themselves often focused on the immediate pleasure and fun of their lifestyles, despite attempts to contain them within regulated conventions for socialising and dating. Fashion, dancing and music all brought joy into the lives of their consuming audience, who were able to use these cultural markers as a form of self-expression and identification as part of a larger group. For some teenagers, this was a time of transgression, while for others, participation in mass culture was considered appropriate, respectable, and parent-approved. Dating existed firmly within this context, with some participants pushing boundaries and blurring the lines between acceptable and disreputable behaviour, and others continuing to view it as a respectable step on the path to marriage. For many teenagers though, the pleasure in the moment was the thing, and the power they found in this moment could work toward loosening such traditional associations.

However, the post-war period looked very different for those outside the mainstream youth culture. Going out and participating in leisure activities required a freedom that was not permitted Aboriginal people, living under government control in missions and reserves across the continent. For these young people, dating and romance were often inaccessible, and marriage was strictly controlled by the state. Chapter Five analyses the role assimilation played in the lives of Aboriginal people and their experiences of romance, dating and marriage in the post-war period.

¹⁴⁷ Veronica Schwarz interviewed by Katie Holmes, March 2013, Brookfield, VIC, *Australian Generations Oral History Projects*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-220011117>.

Chapter Five: Aboriginal Experience of Assimilation, 1945-1970.

Cultural assimilation is strongly associated with the 1950s and 1960s, the period of post-war reconstruction when this policy was enacted in various forms across Australia by state governments. Underlying the different policies were a series of beliefs about racial quantification, cultural superiority, and white supremacy. Eugenic policies had been dominant in the interwar period, but after the Second World War Australia faced pressure to move away from explicit the biological absorption associated with the phrase “breeding out the colour.”¹ Cultural assimilation, however, still existed in this eugenic framework, and was often based on the assumption that biological absorption would continue. Non-white Australians were tightly regulated, and definitions of whiteness enforced in order to ensure the strength of the nation’s imagined future.

The current study is situated in the period of post-war reconstruction, when assimilation was seen by settler Australians as one way to re-build and ensure a productive and successful future.² While beset with numerous anxieties, the 1950s were in many ways optimistic. In terms of assimilation, this translated as an insistence that the policy would be effective, and lead to a better future for all involved. Of course, this was rhetoric, not reality. White Australians had to be persuaded to accept the idea of ‘allowing’ Aboriginal people to assimilate, and they remained reluctant. Aboriginal people were subject to harsh and exacting legislation that resulted in segregation, institutionalisation, child removal and lack of freedoms. Marriage, love and sex were central to assimilation and a site of tension between Aboriginal people seeking to make lives for themselves and authorities set on shaping those lives.

This chapter examines the way that state regulation and interference in the public and private lives of Aboriginal Australians affected their experiences of romance and ability to participate in dating rituals. As demonstrated in previous chapters, typical dating behaviour in

¹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 11; Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 172-173.

² This chapter and the next adopt the terminology used by Haebich in her study of assimilation in Australia, referring to “settler Australians” as “the generations of migrants of Anglo-Celtic ancestry and their descendants from colonial times to the present, [who] have been privileged over other immigrant groups and over Indigenous people.” Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 10.

this period required the freedom to go out and find privacy in public. Long-term government intervention into Aboriginal lives, and structural and individual racism, denied them the freedoms necessary for public dating in the 1950s and 1960s. Dating was therefore quite different among Aboriginal people, and documentation of it is rare. There is evidence, however, that white authorities intervened in marriage preparation by arranging matches, often against the will of the young men and women, and against important kinship and marriage rules of Aboriginal communities. Marriage was regulated by the state, and at a community level, dating behaviour was also frequently supervised and controlled. The important position young Aboriginal women held in the project of assimilation meant that their experiences were especially regulated. Light-skinned Aboriginal women were seen as prime candidates for assimilation through their marriage to light-skinned or white men, and subsequent production of children who could eventually be incorporated into white Australia.

Assimilation and the Australian Way of Life

The term ‘assimilation’ holds many meanings and associations. Richard White has investigated the emergence and popularity of the phrase ‘Australian way of life’ in the 1950s, when it “represented a quite new idea of what Australia was... It provided a common understanding of what was ‘at stake’ for Australians in an uncertain post-war world.”³ The concept was frequently relied upon to articulate an essential ‘Australianness’ to which new migrants and Aboriginal people had to adhere, without giving specific details of what it entailed. As White wrote: “the concept itself was vague, amorphous... it could readily be mobilised to give substance to the assumption that what threatened the status quo was alien.”⁴ The relationship between the ‘Australian way of life’ and assimilation is complex and important. Both terms were often vaguely defined and used in a number of different situations to bolster Australian conservatism and resistance to any perceived external (or internal) threat.⁵ “The whole policy of assimilation was founded on a concept of ‘the Australian way of life,’ White argued, which “assumed a common, homogeneous Australian way of life which all outsiders should try to imitate.”⁶ Haebich concurred, arguing that the “narrow” and “gendered” images used to inspire reconstruction were “the Australian way of

³ Richard White, “The Australian Way of Life,” *Australian Historical Studies* 18, 73 (1979): 528.

⁴ White, “Australian Way of Life,” 534.

⁵ White, “Australian Way of Life,” 540, Tim Rowse, “Introduction,” in Tim Rowse ed, *Contesting Assimilation* (Perth: API Network, 2005): 2.

⁶ White, “Australian Way of Life,” 535.

life, the Australian family and the Australian suburbs – imagined ideals of a lifestyle to strive for and codes of behaviour to emulate.”

Aboriginal people experienced assimilation very differently to European migrants to Australia, facing direct impact on the most intimate aspects of their lives through the removal of children and segregation.⁷ They were subject to a raft of discriminatory policies enacted in a haphazard fashion across the states and territories. Sex and marriage were key points of government intervention and management, as they were deeply entwined in the creation of a white Australian future. Romantic relationships played an important role in this story, both in regard to experiences of assimilation and resistance to it. To understand the importance of the rhetoric of assimilation in the 1950s and 1960s, it is necessary to briefly sketch out the development of different policies leading up to this time period. While government policy shifted over the twentieth century, in practice assimilation was a key feature of settler Australian regulation over Aboriginal and other non-white people from the beginning of colonisation.⁸

Government Intervention

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, colonial and later state governments pursued a variety of policies with regard to Aboriginal people including segregation, protectionism, dispersal and biological absorption, each with the goal of reducing their population, or at least making it invisible to white settlers. These policies often contradicted each other and were applied inconsistently.⁹ The practical result of these policies differed depending on attitudes of various authorities, and political pressures for each state or colony at the time. Under protectionism, Aboriginal people were moved onto and off reserves, missions and stations, and managers were appointed to supervise reserves where Aboriginal people had gathered to live.¹⁰ Aboriginal children were removed from their families and often

⁷ John Maynard, “The Other Fellow: Fred Maynard and the 1920s Defence of Cultural Difference,” in *Contesting Assimilation*, ed. Tim Rowse (Perth: API Network, 2005): 27.

⁸ Maynard, “The Other Fellow,” 27; Rowse, “Introduction,” 2-4; Peter Read, “‘A Rape of the Soul so Profound’: Some Reflections on the Dispersal Policy in New South Wales,” *Aboriginal History* 7, 1 (1983): 23-33; “Noah Riseman, “Aboriginal Military Service and Assimilation,” *Aboriginal History* 38 (2014): 157; Cindy Solonec “Proper Mixed-Up: Miscegenation Among Aboriginal Australians,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2 (2013): 78; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 9-10, 71.

⁹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 75.

¹⁰ Terminology and definitions differed according to state and territory. Generally, reserves were unmanaged lots of land allocated by the government for Aboriginal residence. Stations came about when state-appointed managers took over these reserves. Missions were usually run by Christian organisations, and focused on religious education and conversion, on state-allotted land. Stations and missions usually included housing, often

moved far from their country and people. On missions and stations, the children were often housed separately in dormitories while their parents were expected to travel for work.¹¹ The reserve system of allocated land for Aboriginal residence ensured that Aboriginal people were granted little control over their own lives. Instead, they were institutionalised, segregated and subject to surveillance and control of their personal lives.¹²

In the early twentieth century, governments in the south-east of Australia sought to temper the economic cost of the reserve system by reducing the number of reserves and expelling people from them under changing and inconsistent definitions of Aboriginality.¹³ According to Peter Read, “the nub of the perceived problem was the association of Aborigines with each other; the perceived remedy was the elimination of the reserves.... Aborigines were to be dispersed throughout the white community.”¹⁴ Therefore, Read argued, the supposed “protection” policy implemented at this time in New South Wales should more accurately be called dispersal.¹⁵ Heather Goodall concurred that dispersal was a more accurate term than segregation.¹⁶ Techniques of dispersal included “expulsion orders,” “revocation of thinly populated reserves,” and “removal of children.”¹⁷ This last prong of dispersal also meant that many Aboriginal families left reserves in order to protect their children.¹⁸ The Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War saw a “temporary break” in these techniques of dispersal, but they resumed in the post-war years.¹⁹

In the 1930s and 1940s, policy debates turned toward the idea of biological absorption.²⁰ Katherine Ellinghaus defined absorption as “the imagined process by which interracial relationships would cause Indigenous physical characteristics to be replaced by Anglo or white features.”²¹ According to Ellinghaus, the Northern Territory and Western Australia pursued biological absorption enthusiastically through the regulation of marriages and inter-racial intimacy, while south-eastern states focused instead on “physically dividing

in separate dormitories for children, and schools. The managers of stations and missions had full legal control over every aspect of the lives of the Aboriginal people living on this land.

¹¹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 74.

¹² McGrath, “A National Story,” 34, 37-39, 41; Goodall, “New South Wales,” 59-60.

¹³ Ellinghaus, “Indigenous Assimilation and Absorption,” 193-196.

¹⁴ Read, “Profound,” 25-26.

¹⁵ Read, “Profound,” 24-28; Read, “Breaking Up,” 54; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 73-76, 198, 205; Ellinghaus, “Absorbing,” 202-203; Goodall, “New South Wales” 76-80; Rowse, *Contesting Assimilation*, 4.

¹⁶ Goodall, “New South Wales,” 76.

¹⁷ Read, “Profound,” 26.

¹⁸ Read, “Breaking Up,” 47-48.

¹⁹ Read, “Profound,” 27 – 29; Goodall, “New South Wales,” 89, 92.

²⁰ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, 226.

²¹ Katherine Ellinghaus, “Indigenous Assimilation and Absorption in the United States and Australia,” *Pacific Historical Review* 75, 4 (2006): 572-3.

Aborigines from one another, removing families and individuals from the reserves, and removing children from their families,” in other words, continued dispersal.²²

Australian state governments regulated Aboriginal marriages through protection and welfare boards, and specific legislation targeting cohabitation and legal recognition of marriage.²³ Laws passed in the late 1800s and early 1900s largely focused on avoiding miscegenation. However, during the 1920s and 1930s, especially in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, such laws were utilised by Chief Protectors “to promote biological absorption.”²⁴ Oral histories reveal many instances of men and women being “paired off” by mission staff in these years, as part of a project of matching up “half-caste” Aboriginal people, regardless of existing Aboriginal marriages.²⁵ These interventions into marriages were clearly absorptionist and continued well into the middle of the twentieth century. They were also effective tools for surveilling and managing Aboriginal families more broadly. Regulations changed over the years in Australia, as policy shifted from absorption to assimilation, yet in practice Aboriginal men and women remained at the mercy of white authority figures when it came to getting married.

Cultural Assimilation

After the Second World War, Australian states turned from an explicitly absorptionist policy and instead foregrounded social or cultural assimilation. International condemnation of racism and “humanitarian concern at home” put pressure on Australia to abandon “biological explanations of race.”²⁶ Assimilation, however, included many facets of the previous policies. John Maynard has contested the periodisation of assimilation, and the supposed distinction between absorption and assimilation, by arguing that the goals were the same, and that “assimilation/absorption was a weapon of destruction from the earliest periods of settlement.”²⁷ The rhetoric may have changed, but for Aboriginal people the experience was

²² Ellinghaus, “Indigenous Assimilation and Absorption,” 573-574.

²³ Katherine Ellinghaus, “Absorbing the ‘Aboriginal Problem,’: Controlling Interracial Marriage in Australia in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003):183-; Katherine Ellinghaus, “Regulating Koori Marriages: The 1886 Victorian *Aborigines Protection Act*,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, 67 (2001): 22-29.

²⁴ Ellinghaus, “Absorbing,” 190.

²⁵ Ruth Wallace-Hennings interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, December 2, 1999, Cairns QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218262280>; Nancy Kemp-Howard interviewed by Sue Anderson, June 5, 2001, Brompton, SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218447139>.

²⁶ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 11.

²⁷ Maynard, “The Other Fellow,” 27.

much the same, with continued child removal (creating the notorious Stolen Generations), institutionalisation, and segregation. In New South Wales “the Welfare Board’s ‘Assimilation Policy’ retained many of the most destructive ‘Protection’ legislative powers over Aboriginal families.”²⁸ For Read, assimilation was a continuation of dispersal, by means of a “carrot and stick” approach. The carrot offered to Aboriginal people was promised housing in urban areas (from which they had previously been excluded) and exemption from some aspects of restrictions imposed by protection acts, and the stick the continual removal from and breaking up of reserves, and child removal.²⁹ According to Read: “The essential point is that assimilation was not a policy in itself, but a refinement of the continuing and much older policy of dispersal.”³⁰

Under assimilation, Aboriginal people were instructed to “raise their standards of education, employment and material wellbeing” in order to be included in white Australian society.³¹ Assimilation promised that if Aboriginal people adopted the ‘Australian way of life’ they would be accepted into the white community. However, as Ann McGrath wrote: “racial discrimination against Aboriginal people and their offspring eroded many of the possibilities for social and economic advancement enjoyed by immigrants.”³² For settler Australians, ideas of race remained firmly rooted in skin colour and pseudoscientific ideas of blood quantum.³³ Therefore, Aboriginal people faced a significant barrier when it came to any supposed uplift, and even when it was possible, it was always clear that Aboriginal people would be accepted only into the lowest rungs of society. Categorising and segregating Aboriginal communities was a key part of assimilation. Segregated reserves and stations could provide spaces where Aboriginal people would undergo the processes necessary for white acceptance and could also ensure that Aboriginal people who were deemed unable to assimilate would be kept apart.³⁴

Assumptions about race continued to dictate who among the population was determined assimilable. The key requirements were lighter skin tone and not associating with other Aboriginal people. This categorisation was undoubtedly due to anxieties about

²⁸ Goodall, “New South Wales,” 60.

²⁹ Read, “Profound,” 29; Read, “Breaking Up,” 54-55.

³⁰ Read, “Profound,” 29.

³¹ Solonec, “Proper Mixed-Up” 76; Russell McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), 59.

³² Ann McGrath, “Shamrock Aborigines: The Irish, the Aboriginal Australians and Their Children,” *Aboriginal History* 3, 4 (2010): 65-66.

³³ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 75.

³⁴ Anderson, *Cultivation of Whiteness*, 251; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 75-76.

maintaining a 'white Australia' through biological absorption. This absorption would ideally take place through marriage of lighter skinned Aboriginal people to each other, or of lighter-skinned Aboriginal women and working-class white men.³⁵ As McGrath stated: "the gender-power relations of colonialism meant that Aboriginal women were in demand by colonial men but relationships between Aboriginal men and white women were taboo."³⁶ As Victoria Haskins and John Maynard have shown, analysis of such unions that did occur "provides rich material for analysing the intersection of sexuality and power in Australian cross-cultural history."³⁷ Light skinned Aboriginal women were positioned by white authorities as the perfect candidates for assimilation, through education and eventual marriage to a light complected or white husband.

Debutantes and Beauty Queens

Young women participating in British rituals associated with youth, beauty, and eligibility for marriage were therefore celebrated as on the path to assimilation. Aboriginal debutantes were frequently photographed and celebrated in local papers and the NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board's propaganda magazine, *Dawn*.³⁸ In 1955 the inclusion of an Aboriginal girl in a Catholic debutante ball in Cobargo was explicitly noted as an example of "social uplift" and an "encouraging step towards assimilation."³⁹ In 1960, Penelope Packer, who had grown up in Cootamundra Girls Home, was congratulated in the magazine for her presentation at the Presbyterian Ball in Cootamundra.⁴⁰ Harriet Ellis, who also spent her youth at Cootamundra Girls Home as a ward of the Aboriginal Welfare Board, debuted at the Royal Commonwealth Society's Ball at the Sydney Trocadero in 1962, attending with the Superintendent of the Board, Mr H. J. Green. Ellis' "thrill of a lifetime" made the front and back covers of July's issue of *Dawn*, and photos and reporting of the event took up several

³⁵ Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, "Sex, Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, 126 (2005): 200, 214; Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*, x-xi; Victoria Haskins, "'A Better Chance'? Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls Under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board," *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004): 50; Morgan, "Empire of Illusions," 721.

³⁶ McGrath, "A National Story," 43-44.

³⁷ Haskins and Maynard, "Sex, Race and Power," 191.

³⁸ Jones, "Dancing," 105; Wallaga Lake Station Grows: Social Uplift of Residents Evident," *Dawn*, February 1, 1955, 19; "A Lovely Debutante," *Dawn*, September 1, 1960, 20; Cover Image, *Dawn*, March 1, 1962; "Belle of the Ball: Thrill of a Lifetime for Harriet Ellis at Queen's Birthday Gala," *Dawn*, July 1, 1962, 1-6; "Armidale Girl Makes Her Debut in Sydney," *Dawn*, October 1, 1962, 4; "Aboriginal Deb Presented at Guyra," *Dawn*, January 1, 1964, 7; "A.P.A Debutantes' Ball Great Success," *Dawn*, July 1, 1965, 12; *New Dawn*, April 1, 1970, 6.

³⁹ "Wallaga Lake Station Grows: Social Uplift of Residents Evident," *Dawn*, February 1, 1955, 19.

⁴⁰ "A Lovely Debutante," *Dawn*, September 1, 1960, 20.

pages of the magazine.⁴¹ While *Dawn* did not always provide details about the selection of these girls, an account of seventeen-year-old Muriel Briggs' debut at the 1962 "Ball of Progress" for the Royal New South Wales Institution for Deaf and Blind Children revealed that she was invited by members of the institute's social committee, "who were impressed by Muriel's natural charm and dignity."⁴² Muriel, formerly of Armidale, had been working as a secretary for the Water Conservation Commission in Sydney. The magazine was quick to celebrate firsts and other achievements, noting in 1964 that Jenny Irving, of Guyra, was "believed to be the first Aboriginal girl to be presented at the [Guyra Catholic] Ball."⁴³

While these achievements often were focused on rituals of beauty, youth, and marriageability, the importance of acceptance by the white community was key. In 1955, Barbara Stewart, a Narooma High School student who lived at Wallaga Lake Station, New South Wales, was praised in the magazine for being "invited to spend the weekend with a white family in Narooma and [attend] a concert." Barbara was commended for "[making] herself popular," and it was hoped "that many more of the boys and girls of Wallaga Lake will make themselves as popular as she has, and will have as many white friends."⁴⁴

Harriet Ellis made the pages of *Dawn* again in 1965, when her photo was featured on the cover, and she was celebrated as "the first Aborigine to enter the Miss Australia Quest."⁴⁵ Twenty-three year old nurse Audrey Cobby had been feted by the publication the year before for reaching the semi-finals of the Miss South Australia Quest.⁴⁶ Cobby had been entered into the competition by the social committee of the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and the magazine announced that she was "believed to be the first Aboriginal girl to reach the semi-finals in any of the State sections of the Miss Australia Quest."⁴⁷ G. R. Briggs later wrote to *Dawn* with a correction: "My daughter, the former Lois Briggs – a professional mannequin – won the title of Miss Melbourne in the 1961 Miss Australia Quest."⁴⁸ Miss Briggs' entry had been sponsored by her modelling school in Melbourne. These young women were explicitly presented as the ideal for Aboriginal women, and their beauty and charm in the context of the ritual of 'coming out' into society was clearly pointing to their

⁴¹ "Belle of the Ball: Thrill of a Lifetime for Harriet Ellis at Queen's Birthday Gala," *Dawn*, July 1962, 1-6.

⁴² "Armidale Girl Makes Her Debut in Sydney," *Dawn*, October 1, 1962, 4.

⁴³ "Aboriginal Deb Presented at Guyra," *Dawn*, January 1, 1964, 9.

⁴⁴ *Dawn*, November 1, 1955, 6.

⁴⁵ "A Miss Australia Glamour Girl," *Dawn*, March 1, 1965, 2.

⁴⁶ "Aboriginal Nurse in Quest," *Dawn*, January 1, 1964, 9. Miss Cobby's photograph also provided this issue of *Dawn* with its cover.

⁴⁷ "Aboriginal Nurse in Quest," *Dawn*, January 1, 1964, 9.

⁴⁸ "Smoke Signals," *Dawn*, June 1, 1964, 14.

eligibility for marriage. The magazine frequently featured beautiful young Aboriginal women as their cover girls, often debutantes, beauty queens and brides. They were explicitly celebrated for “[typifying] the younger generation of Aborigines,” due to their health, beauty and charm.⁴⁹

Barriers to Assimilation

However, the image presented of bright young girls who would be easily assimilated ignored the many barriers to white acceptance. Racist legislation and social discrimination meant that Aboriginal people who were viewed as assimilating were still placed low on the social ladder by settler Australians. In Brewarrina, Ruth Latukefu noted that skin colour remained a determining factor in the treatment of Aboriginal people by white settlers, and while “several Aboriginal women had married or lived with white men” they were still excluded by other residents of the town, and instead “moved in their own circles.”⁵⁰ Latukefu recounted a Brewarrina Mission resident telling her in 1954 that Aboriginal people living in the town rather than the mission “haven’t really got away from the Welfare Board at all. They can’t get away, because they have Aboriginal blood in them when they’re born and it stays in them til they die.”⁵¹ John Maynard recounted how Les Ridgeway, a Worimi man with a white wife, was stopped from sitting with her in a segregated cinema on their honeymoon in the 1960s. As Maynard wrote, “having the bravery to step across the race divide did not open doors of acceptance.”⁵²

Aboriginal people seen as candidates for assimilation were also often forced to isolate themselves from their communities. In fact, this separation was a requirement of holding a Certificate of Exemption.⁵³ Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur, living and working as a domestic servant in Adelaide in the 1950s, was not allowed to socialise with other Aboriginal people working on her employer’s property. She was allowed, however, “to mix with the young people from

⁴⁹ Cover image, *Dawn*, June 1, 1955, inside cover; Cover image, *Dawn*, November 1, 1955, inside cover; Cover image, *Dawn*, May 1, 1956, inside cover; Cover image, *Dawn*, November 1, 1958, inside cover; Cover image, *Dawn*, July 1, 1961, inside cover.

⁵⁰ Latukefu, “Recollections,” 78

⁵¹ Latukefu, “Recollections,” 79

⁵² Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power,” 214.

⁵³ For more on exemption certificates, see: Ann McGrath, “A National Story,” 6, 34; Judi Wickes, “ ‘Never Really Heard of it’: The Certificate of Exemption and Lost Identity,” in *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography* eds. Peter Read, Frances Peters-Little and Anna Haebich (Action, ACT: ANU E Press, 2008), <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p119111/mobile/ch06s02.html>; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 76; Goodall, “New South Wales,” 89-90; Read, “Profound,” 29.

Colebrook Home, my relatives.”⁵⁴ When she graduated as a missionary in 1958, hoping to work with her people at Oodnadatta Mission, she was instead told she would be sent to Western Australia. Mona recalled: “that’s because they felt that we just couldn’t be a success going back to our own people.”⁵⁵ Heather Vicenti, who moved from Roelands Mission to Perth as a teenager, felt the isolation keenly: “I felt I was alone growing up as a teenager, not seeing my people or Aboriginals [at all.]”⁵⁶ Heather ended up finding at least one outlet, with the help of English, Scottish and Italian migrant girls who boarded alongside her at the Girls Friendly Society, and, unlike the settler Australians, were willing to befriend her. These girls would “sneak [Heather] into the Embassy,” the big ballroom in Perth, where Heather could “look down from the balcony and dream.”⁵⁷ Heather loved dancing, despite the restrictions on her movements and recreation as a young Aboriginal woman in Perth. “I’ve gone where you weren’t allowed to go, supposedly,” Heather remembered, “but I’d pretend I didn’t know these things.”⁵⁸

Marriage Regulation

Sex, reproduction, and marriage were central to the projects of biological absorption and assimilation. Regulating marriage and, more broadly, sexuality and intimacy, was “at the heart of reproducing white citizenship.”⁵⁹ Creation and regulation of families was a tool that could be used by the state to pursue both biological and cultural assimilation. The aim was to work towards a vision of white citizenship in Australia, as illustrated by the popular image of the white Australian nuclear family, focused on domestic bliss, and working to produce goods, services, and children for the nation. As Haebich stated: “the family was the goal of an assimilated nation and the vehicle to achieve it.”⁶⁰ However, non-white families were seen as not fulfilling this central role and were thus endangered. Aboriginal families were torn apart through policies of child removal and institutionalisation, and Aboriginal men and women

⁵⁴ Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur interviewed by Sue Anderson, March 9, 2001, Croydon SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218404986>.

⁵⁵ Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur interviewed by Sue Anderson, March 9, 2001, Croydon SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218404986>.

⁵⁶ Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson, September 6, October 8, November 23, 2001, Coolbellup WA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218488206>.

⁵⁷ Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson, September 6, October 8, November 23, 2001, Coolbellup WA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218488206>.

⁵⁸ Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson, September 6, October 8, November 23, 2001, Coolbellup WA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218488206>.

⁵⁹ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 47, 63.

⁶⁰ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 96

were restricted from marrying freely.⁶¹ The removal of Aboriginal children, particularly girls, was an essential part of the absorption and assimilation process, as it was young women raised in residential schools who were supposed to marry white men and enter white society.⁶² Historians who have studied interracial and cross-cultural relationships have created a rich scholarship in this area, examining these restrictions and the ways in which people fought against them. McGrath identifies interracial relationships as “site[s] of creative agency.”⁶³ She noted that these relationships “disrupted and unsettled settler colonialism [and] reconfigured ideas of nation, gender, and race.”⁶⁴

Many policies targeted marriages between white men and Aboriginal women, as these were the unions that would facilitate biological absorption, but Aboriginal people marrying each other were also subject to regulation and restriction. Aboriginal men and women who wished to have their marriages recognised by Australian governments were required to obtain official permission. Jean Sibley remembered having to request permission before marrying her husband on Palm Island, and that the approval process included blood tests.⁶⁵ Brian, a white man who worked as a pilot in Western Australia in the 1950s, and Violet, a Bardi woman from Sunday Island, WA had to seek permission to get married in 1960. Brian remembered that “it took a fair bit of arranging, ‘cause being Aboriginal she was under Native Welfare, and I had to go through a lot of rigmarole to get permission to marry her. I just had to answer a lot of questions.”⁶⁶

Governments were particularly concerned with regulating, and indeed opposing, the marriages of Aboriginal women and other non-white Australian men, especially in the north of the country where populations were more diverse.⁶⁷ While in some states in the first half of the twentieth century marriages between Aboriginal women and white men were encouraged, in order to pursue biological absorption, Aboriginal women and Asian men “continued to be policed and prevented” from marrying, “using the excuse that Asian men were a morally

⁶¹ Liz Conor, “Blood Call and ‘Natural Flutters’: Xavier Herbert’s Racialised Quartet of Heteronormativity,” *Cultural Studies Review* 23, 2(2017): 75.

⁶² Cheater, *Stolen Girlhood*, 251, 253-255.

⁶³ McGrath, *Illicit Love*, 25.

⁶⁴ McGrath, *Illicit Love*, 9.

⁶⁵ Jean Sibley interviewed by Phillip Connors, November 16, 1999, Palm Island QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218305139>.

⁶⁶ Brian Carter interviewed by Elaine Rabbitt, September 11, 2012, One Arm Point WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219958079>.

⁶⁷ Julia Martinez, “Indigenous Australian-Indonesian Intermarriage: Negotiating Citizenship Rights in Twentieth-Century Australia,” *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011): 180-181.

degrading influence.”⁶⁸ While experience of these laws varied from state to state, across the continent marriage was a site of government intervention in Aboriginal lives.

Of course, there was resistance to this sort of regulation. Aboriginal people continued to fall in love and get married according to their own laws and customs, even when it was not recognised by the government. Laura Rademaker has outlined a campaign against the mission’s ideas of marriage by the Anindilyakwa Aboriginal residents of the Groote Eylandt mission in the Northern Territory in 1957-8.⁶⁹ The community began to once again practise polygamy in defiance of the mission, and both men and women pursued relationships with married people. Girls “escaped the dormitory (or were they kidnapped?) for liaisons with their boyfriends or promised husbands.”⁷⁰ The Anindilyakwa people boycotted the church at the mission and physically resisted the missionaries’ attempts to quell the protest, with spears, threats and violence.⁷¹ Missionaries dismissed the rebellion as a result of a greedy and sexualised Aboriginal masculinity. White colonisers saw “Aboriginal polygamy... [as] a means to dismiss Aboriginal men as rightful possessors of their women,” and of their land.⁷² Dismissing the actions of Aboriginal people as sinful and primitive allowed the missionaries to assert their own practices were morally superior. However, for the Anindilyakwa people, both male and female, the disturbance was part of a conscious choice to “marry ‘straight’ over conformity to the missionaries’ monogamous model.”⁷³ Carefully arranging marriages was a key part of the “complex kinship system which orders all social relationships and arises from clan relationships to the land.”⁷⁴ For the Anindilyakwa people, marriages were set up to echo previous patrilineal relationships, “in a system that maintains both clan and kin relationships.”⁷⁵ Marriages approved and arranged by the mission were frequently not “straight” for the couple involved.⁷⁶ As Rademaker argued, this case “demonstrates how questions of marriage have been central to settler-Indigenous encounters, not just for

⁶⁸ Martinez, “Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage,” 180-181; Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*, 190-197; Anderson, *Cultivation of Whiteness*, 246.

⁶⁹ Laura Rademaker, “The Importance of Marrying ‘Straight’: Aboriginal Marriage and Mission Monogamy in Twentieth-century North Australia,” *Gender and History* 29, 3 (2017): 641.

⁷⁰ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 641.

⁷¹ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 641.

⁷² Conor, “Blood Call,” 74.

⁷³ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 647, 650.

⁷⁴ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 642.

⁷⁵ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 642.

⁷⁶ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 648.

colonisers, but also for Indigenous people.”⁷⁷ The meaning of marriage in these encounters varied, but it had long played a vital role.

Surveillance and Restriction

Access to public recreation, so crucial to the experience of dating and romance in the post-war decades, was severely restricted for Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal people’s lives were governed by mission or station managers, hemmed in by strict rules and curfews.⁷⁸ Venus Wyles and her husband eventually moved to the mainland from Palm Island to escape such restrictions.⁷⁹ Cities and towns also instituted curfews. In Perth, from 1921 to 1954, a curfew ensured Aboriginal people were not able to enter the CBD after 6pm without a pass from the Native Welfare Department.⁸⁰ Brisbane’s many ‘Boundary Streets’ marked similar areas of restriction, particularly keeping Aboriginal people to the south of the Brisbane River.⁸¹ As the decades progressed, Aboriginal communities in the cities were able to escape some of the control present in the missions and stations of the regions.⁸² However, both formal and informal restrictions remained, with social understanding of “which public services or spaces were off limits to Aboriginal people.”⁸³ The act of prohibiting alcohol for Aboriginal people also meant excluding them from public spaces where drinking occurred.⁸⁴ This included pubs and lounges, but also dance halls and nightclubs, prime locations for other young people looking for dates and romance. Haebich noted that anti-alcohol legislation was also used as a tool to police cohabitation between white men and Aboriginal women.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 642.

⁷⁸ Ruth Wallace-Hennings interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, December 2, 1999, Cairns QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218262280>.

⁷⁹ Venus Wyles interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, May 1, 2000, Townsville QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218299614>.

⁸⁰ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 279.

⁸¹ Tamara Whyte et al., “Getting to Know the Story of the Boathouse Dances: Football, Freedom and Rock’n’roll,” in *Creative Communities: Regional Inclusion and the Arts*, eds. Janet McDonald and Robert Mason (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), 87. When African-American troops were stationed in Brisbane during the Second World War, they too were subject to this segregation, see Chapter Two for more.

⁸² Heidi Norman, “A Modern Day Corroboree: Towards a History of the New South Wales Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout,” *Aboriginal History* 30 (2006): 171; Heather Goodall, “New South Wales,” in *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown*, ed. Ann McGrath (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 103.

⁸³ Jennifer Jones, “Dancing with the Prime Minister,” *The Journal of the European Association of Studies on Australia* 3, 1 (2012): 104

⁸⁴ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream* 279; Sylvia Kleinert, “Aboriginality in the City: Re-Reading Koorie Photographs,” *Aboriginal History* 30 (2006): 76.

⁸⁵ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 282.

Segregation worked alongside and within assimilation policies “to render Aboriginal people invisible in the national landscape” and to prevent unsupervised mixing with white communities.⁸⁶ During this time Aboriginal people lived under supervision on missions, stations and reserves, but they also camped in fringe-camps outside towns, and increasingly moved into the cities. Populations camping on the edge of country towns were excluded from “the ‘real’ town” and local white communities ensured Aboriginal people would retain their “outsider” status.⁸⁷ This physical and social distance between groups of Aboriginal people was a barrier to many important facets of community life, including dating and romance.

Aboriginal people on missions, stations and reserves were kept apart from other Aboriginal communities, and any socialising of children living in dormitories was closely supervised.⁸⁸ Aboriginal and white patrons were kept separate at cinemas, or Aboriginal people were barred from entering at all.⁸⁹ Swimming pools and other sporting facilities were similarly exclusionary. White workers on Palm Island, Queensland, were told not to “‘get too personal’ with their Aboriginal colleagues.”⁹⁰ Young Aboriginal children were either taught at specific mission schools, or, if they went to public schools, were often kept separate from white children.⁹¹ Nancy Kemp-Howard remembers attending the “white school” with a few other Aboriginal children while most “full-blood” kids were taught back at the Oodnadatta mission.⁹² Ellinghaus and Goodall have both pointed out that ideas about education and marriage were intermingled in the early twentieth century. White authorities worried that educated Aboriginal girls would not find suitable husbands, and white parents campaigned for segregated schools to avoid “familiarity between children of different races [that] would

⁸⁶ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 10.

⁸⁷ Goodall, “New South Wales,” 95.

⁸⁸ Emma Johnston interviewed by Deborah Somersall, October 18, 1999, Malanda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218209821>; Ruth A Fink Latukefu, “Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission,” *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2014): 75-76.

⁸⁹ Goodall, “New South Wales,” 94; Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds*, 23; Alec Morgan, “Empire of Illusions: Film Censorship, Eugenics and Aboriginal Spectatorship in Australia’s Northern Territory 1928-1950,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 38, 4 (2018): 714; “Problem of Assimilation: Condobolin Faces Issue,” *Dawn*, November 1, 1958, 1-2.

⁹⁰ Venus Wyles interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, May 1, 2000, Townsville QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218299614>.

⁹¹ Lyn Hobbler and Marita Hobbler interviewed by Lloyd S. Hollingsworth, September 21, 1999, Kuranda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218229796>; Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*, 105, 114-115.

⁹² Nancy Kemp-Howard interviewed by Sue Anderson, June 5, 2001, Brompton SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218447139>.

lead to romantic attachments.”⁹³ Physical separation was used as a barrier to prevent interracial romance, despite official encouragement of biological absorption.

Sexuality and Romance

Venus Wyles remembered that punishment on Palm Island often involved further restriction and segregation from the wider community, and that transgressions connected to romance were particularly targeted. She recalled girls being punished for “waving to our boyfriends” and not being allowed to go to dances as a result.⁹⁴ Lyn and Marita Hobbler remembered cruel punishments for anybody who was caught with a boyfriend or girlfriend on the Seventh Day Adventist mission at Mona Mona in Kuranda, Queensland while they were growing up.⁹⁵ Rademaker recorded that Anindilyakwa girls living in dormitories on the Groote Eylandt mission in the Northern Territory were similarly treated: “In 1961 the missionaries’ punishment for a dormitory girl discovered ‘writing letters or giving presents’ to a young man was ‘the strap.’”⁹⁶ Girls and young women in dormitories were locked in overnight.⁹⁷ Mission managers often considered it unsafe for single girls to return to visit or live in their own communities.⁹⁸ Emma Johnston believed that girls were put in dormitories like the one she grew up in due to a belief that the white managers “would look after them better, you know, because you see lots of girls if they’re not cared for they just go and get themselves into trouble.”⁹⁹ Rademaker indeed argued that, in the case of the Groote-Eylandt mission at least, the dormitory system was a way of keeping girls away from men, in order to avoid both pregnancy and traditional promised marriages.¹⁰⁰

The control of adolescent sexuality played a large role in the institutionalisation of Aboriginal children, teenagers, and young adults. Conor pointed out that the assumption of Aboriginal female desirability was central to state policies of absorption and assimilation.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*, 117-119; Conor, “Blood Call,” 72-3; Goodall, “New South Wales,” 75.

⁹⁴ Venus Wyles interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, May 1, 2000, Townsville QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218299614>.

⁹⁵ Lyn Hobbler and Marita Hobbler interviewed by Lloyd S. Hollingsworth, September 21, 1999, Kuranda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218229796>.

⁹⁶ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 651.

⁹⁷ Ruth Wallace-Hennings interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, December 2, 1999, Cairns QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218262280>; Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 647.

⁹⁸ Agnes Galbraith, “Abos and Romance,” *The Australian Women’s Mirror*, July 20, 1949, 6.

⁹⁹ Emma Johnston interviewed by Deborah Somersall, October 18, 1999, Malanda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218209821>.

¹⁰⁰ Rademaker, “Marrying Straight,” 647.

¹⁰¹ Conor, “Blood Call,” 71-2, 74

Young women who were living in dormitories were seen as potentially assimilable, and therefore it was important to ensure they did not have any sexual contact before marriage. These young women were positioned as potential victims of both white and Aboriginal men, although it was the latter who seemed to provoke much greater alarm among white authorities. Matron Ella Hiscocks, working at the Cootamundra Girls Home from 1945 to 1965, ironically saw the institutionalisation of these girls as necessary to prevent the threat of sexual abuse in their own communities.¹⁰² Hiscocks was in charge of assigning Aboriginal girls to work as domestic servants or stations for white settler Australians. At one point in her career, she disobeyed an instruction from the Board to leave a young Aboriginal woman on a remote station, citing a fear of the girl's vulnerability to the station's Aboriginal residents. "I couldn't have left her," Hiscocks explained, "I would have felt like I was throwing her to the dogs. She was just of that age and all the boys would have been after her."¹⁰³ Hiscocks' position here was contradictory to her own beliefs about Aboriginal communities and their low incidence of "girls in trouble." It must also be read alongside the knowledge that Hiscocks was responsible for the placement of many young women who were assaulted by their white employers.¹⁰⁴ As Victoria Haskins has shown, Aboriginal girls and women in New South Wales were sent out to households as domestic servants throughout the interwar period despite clear evidence of repeated sexual abuse and assault, often resulting in pregnancy and subsequent child removal.¹⁰⁵

Hiscocks also tended to see young Aboriginal women as vulnerable to white men in cities, particularly the sailors, with whom she claimed they often "got into trouble."¹⁰⁶ Her confused views are perhaps made clearer by a statement that seems inconsistent with the Board's policy of "training Aboriginal women to 'merge' with whites," when the matron reflected "the pity is few of them marry the dark men. You know the full bloods are very upstanding."¹⁰⁷ Hiscocks' example here is illuminating, as she remembered "one girl who married a dark man, he was a Kinchela boy."¹⁰⁸ It was perhaps the fact that this boy had gone through the same system of education as the girls at Cootamundra, and thus had been trained correctly, in her view, for a morally upstanding future. Her opinion also reflected still popular

¹⁰² Anna Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers: The Working Life of Matron Hiscocks at the Cootamundra Girls Home," *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003): 155.

¹⁰³ Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers," 155.

¹⁰⁴ Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers," 156; Haskins, "A Better Chance," 33, 42-44,

¹⁰⁵ Haskins, "A Better Chance," 33-35, 42-44

¹⁰⁶ Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers," 158.

¹⁰⁷ Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers," 156

¹⁰⁸ Cole, "Unwitting Soldiers," 156

eugenic ideas that miscegenation weakened racial purity and was thus a threat to whiteness.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that any situation where young Aboriginal women were given the kind of freedom necessary for white teenage dating at the time was considered by Hiscocks and others like her to be dangerous and likely to end in unwanted pregnancy with an unsuitable partner. As Cole argued, white women were assumed to hold a “special responsibility for socialising Aboriginal women and children... and for ‘regulating’ their sexuality,” a key part of the government’s assimilation policy.¹¹⁰ Hiscocks’ predecessor at Cootamundra, Mrs Irene English, wrote to young Aboriginal women in *Dawn* in 1955: “Keep your bodies and minds clean, for by doing so you will help to form a wholesome personality.”¹¹¹

This advice echoes that given to white teenagers by religious authorities explored in Chapter Three. However, while they were encouraged to form their personality and relationship with the opposite sex through the careful use of dating rituals, Aboriginal boys and girls were expected to do without this social preparation for marriage. Aboriginal sexuality was either described in white media salaciously as unrestrained and animalistic, and tempting to white men, as above, or it was conspicuously absent. Teenagers, presented in other media as dangerously sexualised, were largely presented as children in *Dawn*. Maynard has pointed out that from the beginning of colonisation there was “an attempt to completely diffuse the sexuality of Aboriginal men and render him sexually, as well as socially, impotent.”¹¹² Aboriginal men and women recalled a distinct lack of sex education in their youth.¹¹³ They were encouraged to focus on healthy friendships, but were punished for seeking romantic attachments, as outlined above. White authorities often painted Aboriginal romantic rituals as dangerously primitive and hopelessly complicated or declared that they did not exist at all. Hiscocks claimed in 1967: “amongst [Aboriginal people] themselves there is no courtship... I do not think it worries them at all.”¹¹⁴ Missionary Agnes Galbraith, writing a colourful piece on Aboriginal romance for the *Australian Women’s Mirror* in 1949, found herself confused by Aboriginal systems of relationship and marriage eligibility, particularly when it came to cases with people of mixed descent. While she also

¹⁰⁹ McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 8; Morgan, “Empire of Illusions,” 718.

¹¹⁰ Cole, “Unwitting Soldiers,” 148.

¹¹¹ Irene English, “Message to Our People,” *Dawn*, March 1955, 2; Cole, “Unwitting Soldiers,” 152

¹¹² Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power,” 206.

¹¹³ Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur interviewed by Sue Anderson, March 9, 2001, Croydon SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218404986>.

¹¹⁴ Cole, “Unwitting Soldiers,” 158.

acknowledged that young women on the Mornington Island Mission were “very romantic lasses,” she concluded that their preoccupation with boys and marriage, considered so normal for white adolescents, was due to the fact that “they had no other future.”¹¹⁵

However, rather than instructing Aboriginal teenagers in dating the way prescriptive literature aimed to do for white adolescents, managers and matrons instead chose close supervision of their charges. While it was explicitly hoped institutionalised children would marry other light-skinned Aboriginal people, or, ideally, working-class white men, the idea of dating as it existed in the 1950s and 1960s offered far too much autonomy to the participating teenagers. The freedom necessary for learning how to date was denied Aboriginal girls and boys.

Supervised Courtship

Emma Johnston, like Venus Wyles, remembered girls waving to boys from the dormitory and sending little presents through their female relatives: “If we think we like that fella a little bit better, well we’d wave to him and, you know, say good night, and all that sort of thing, and give him little presents... That’s how love starts, first up.”¹¹⁶ However, if the young people wanted to progress to talking, they had to ask permission. Dating behaviour was carefully managed by mission and station managers and their wives. Venus remembered her boyfriend, later husband, having to ask permission from the matron before he visited, and if granted, the two were allowed to sit on the lawn and talk, under the matron’s supervision.¹¹⁷ Emma and the other girls who lived in the dormitory at Mona Mona in Queensland were given one Sunday a month where they could have visitors. Her future husband, Silas, would request permission to talk to Emma, and “the boss’d say, “Your boyfriend wants to have a talk to you on a Sunday, spend the afternoon with him.” “Sometimes you’d talk about marriage then,” Emma remembered, “but you’re not allowed to go out with him, you just can talk to him.”¹¹⁸ In the opinion of the authorities, going out, so

¹¹⁵ Galbraith, “Romance,” 6.

¹¹⁶ Emma Johnston interviewed by Deborah Somersall, October 18, 1999, Malanda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218209821>.

¹¹⁷ Venus Wyles interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, May 1, 2000, Townsville QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218299614>.

¹¹⁸ Emma Johnston interviewed by Deborah Somersall, October 18, 1999, Malanda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218209821>.

crucial to changing dating rituals in the 1950s and 1960s, seemed to offer too much autonomy to these institutionalised young men and women.

White authorities often went beyond supervision, encouraging or facilitating the courtship and marriage of Aboriginal people they deemed suitable. Graduates of institutions were encouraged to socialise with their counterparts of the opposite sex.¹¹⁹ A writer in *Dawn* reported approvingly in 1952 that:

The girls from Burnt Bridge Aboriginal Station have now commenced regular visits to the Kinchela Home and attend the Saturday evening picture screenings shown in the Home recreation hall. It is delightful to watch these youngsters and the boys from the Home enjoying each other's company and taking part in sports and play before the picture screenings. Many new friendships are being fostered in this way.¹²⁰

Dawn frequently published snippets about the successful arrangement of dances, social clubs and film screenings by different missions.¹²¹ It was important to ensure that these leisure activities were conducted within the system of assimilation and under the watchful eye of station managers and matrons.

Galbraith's article on Aboriginal romance focused on the arrangement of a few matches in particular. She spoke of actively interfering in marriage arrangements when they were deemed unsuitable and described the mission's "special way of arranging marriages."¹²² Young men were to "notify the Superintendent" of their interest in a young woman, who would then allow them to sit on the front veranda on Sunday mornings before church to "do their courting."¹²³ She also recounted the arrival of "three full-blood youths seeking wives" from a northern settlement with a "surplus of males." The other mission's Superintendent had sent the men to look for wives at Mornington Island Mission, and any young volunteers "must be willing to return and live in the dormitory til they had made up their minds as to whether they wanted the youths."¹²⁴ These young people, too, were lined up on the veranda and told to make their choices. The paternalistic tone of the article and frequent references to supposedly abusive situations betrays a clear sense that Galbraith believed Aboriginal people

¹¹⁹ Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur interviewed by Sue Anderson, March 9, 2001, Croydon SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218404986>.

¹²⁰ "Kinchela Notes," *Dawn*, September 1, 1952, 19.

¹²¹ *Dawn*, June 1, 1952, 6; "Murmurs From Moree," *Dawn*, June 1, 1952, 7; "They Say..." *Dawn*, September 1, 1952, 13; "They Say..." *Dawn*, March 1, 1953, 19; *Dawn*, June 1, 1955, 1, 6; ¹²¹ Mrs Janey Daley, "Cabbage Tree Island," *Dawn*, November 1, 1958, 8.

¹²² Galbraith, "Romance," 6, 29.

¹²³ Galbraith, "Romance," 29.

¹²⁴ Galbraith, "Romance," 31.

had to be guided carefully on the path to marriage, so as to avoid unsuitable and unhappy matches. Her description of these young women, however, clearly shows girls who were eager to marry, and perhaps then to move away from the mission for work.

Meanings of Marriage

Ruth Wallace-Hennings remembered, as a young girl, praying to be able to leave the Mapoon Mission and not raise her children there. At sixteen, she hurt her hand filleting fish, contracted a serious infection, and was sent to the hospital on Thursday Island. Ruth remembered it as an answer to her prayers. The sixteen-year-old married Pedro Wallis on Thursday Island in 1950, thereby gaining freedom through her Roman Catholic Aboriginal husband, and not having to go back to the mission.¹²⁵ While many married couples lived and worked under continued restrictions and regulations, others too spoke of marriage as a possible path to freedom from missions and missionaries.¹²⁶ Nancy Kemp-Howard, having left the mission at Oodnadatta in South Australia, saw marriage as a potential escape from a nursing course under a racist matron: “I gave it up because I met a young man, I’d fallen in love... I think it was because I wanted it that way to get away from this woman.”¹²⁷

Romance and marriage could be seen by Aboriginal people as an escape from government control, and to white Australia as an indicator of assimilation.¹²⁸ Sylvia Kleinert has demonstrated how the Australian press, when celebrating supposedly assimilatory marriages, omitted “both the level of political activism in which these Koories were engaged and the ongoing discrimination and opposition they endured.”¹²⁹ In an *Argus* article celebrating the 1940 Melbourne wedding of George Patten and Susie Evelyn Murry, the groom’s activism was ignored, and best man, Doug Nicholls, was presented as an athlete rather than “a leading figure in the Koorie community through his involvement with Aboriginal organisations, the church and social welfare.”¹³⁰ Reg Saunders, Australia’s first Aboriginal commissioned officer, faced significant discrimination throughout the 1940s and 1950s despite his service during the Second World War. Despite this, Riseman noted,

¹²⁵ Ruth Wallace-Hennings interviewed by Lloyd Hollingsworth, December 2, 1999, Cairns QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218262280>.

¹²⁶ Emma Johnston interviewed by Deborah Somersall, October 18, 1999, Malanda QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218209821>.

¹²⁷ Nancy Kemp-Howard interviewed by Sue Anderson, June 5, 2001, Brompton SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218447139>.

¹²⁸ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power,” 204-205, 209, 213.

¹²⁹ Kleinert, “Aboriginality in the City,” 78

¹³⁰ Kleinert, “Aboriginality in the City,” 78-9.

Saunders “embraced assimilation for its promise of equality,” living and working in white communities.¹³¹ His second spouse’s whiteness was described as evidence that Saunders “was at least being assimilated” in his file held by the Aborigines’ Welfare Board.¹³² When Saunders spoke about his own son in terms of assimilation, he too brought up marriage: “he’ll certainly marry a white girl.”¹³³

Recreation and Dating

Recreation and leisure for Aboriginal people began moving into the public sphere during the 1950s and 1960s. In Perth, Aboriginal teenagers were attending the Coolbaroo League dances, operating from 1945 to 1960, managed and financially supported by the Nyungar community.¹³⁴ Heather went once, but found herself shy: “It was good, but I didn’t feel [right] to be there. I think now what it was, they were all related, and I had no one.”¹³⁵ Hughes has argued that the Coolbaroo League, a “designated space in the city for Nyungar fellowship, education, advancement, and more covertly, for change” based its popular dances on those for mixed-race patrons that welcomed Aboriginal people and African American soldiers during the Second World War.¹³⁶ Chapter Two examined the nature of these dances, and the anxiety surrounding the assumption that Aboriginal people would socialise with African American soldiers. In the post-war period, the League provided a space for Aboriginal people to organise and work for change, and at the same time, through their popular weekly dances in Perth and touring dances in the countryside, “offered a safe, creative and fun environment for Aboriginal people to experiment with popular culture.”¹³⁷ The Coolbaroo League dances were often reported positively in newspapers, and the opening of regional branches welcomed.¹³⁸ These dances were family-friendly affairs for the

¹³¹ Riseman, “Aboriginal Military Service,” 166.

¹³² Riseman, “Aboriginal Military Service,” 166.

¹³³ Riseman, “Aboriginal Military Service,” 166.

¹³⁴ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 283, 286.

¹³⁵ Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson, September 6, October 8, November 23, 2001, Coolbellup WA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218488206>.

¹³⁶ Hughes, “Mobilising,” 62.

¹³⁷ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 293; Hughes, “Mobilising,” 62.

¹³⁸ See for example “Aboriginal Youths Form Own Club,” *The Daily News*, August 2, 1947, 17; “Aborigines, Half-Castes Have Weekly Dance, Social,” *The Daily News*, March 18, 1947, 3; “Aborigines Aid British Flood Victims,” *The Daily News*, May 1, 1947, 8; “Excelsior Club Notes,” *Northern Times*, November 20, 1952, 3; “Coolbaroo League Gives Soldier Warm Welcome,” *The West Australian* 15 November 1952, 1; “No Whites (Unless Invited) There,” *Sunday Times*, August 17, 1952, 22; “Natives and Whites Mix,” *The West Australian*, June 25, 1953, 8; “Won’t Have a Bar, Black or Liquid,” *The Sun*, September 27, 1953, 5; “Dance for Coloured Folk,” *The Reliance Weekly*, February 4, 1954, 2; “Coolbaroo League’s Dance,” *The Narrogin Observer*, February 5, 1954, 18; “League Holds Dance for York Natives,” *The West Australian*, May 18, 1954, 13;

Aboriginal community in Perth and its surrounds.¹³⁹ In media reports, young men and women socialising and dancing often took centre stage.¹⁴⁰ One front page photo celebrated the return of Lieutenant Corporal Des Parfitt after fifteen months' service in Korea, with two smiling women greeting a grinning Parfitt with a kiss on each cheek.¹⁴¹ The dances and youth clubs that grew from the League clearly provided a chance for Aboriginal adolescents to meet and enjoy each other's company, fashionable music and style, within a broader community setting.

The League was often presented in white media as "an organisation for the betterment of coloured people in the metropolitan area," or even a body aiming to "assist in the assimilation of the coloured people."¹⁴² However, the Coolbaroo League worked to advocate for Aboriginal rights without "the trading off of Aboriginal personal identity or community identification with family and country" demanded by assimilation.¹⁴³ Much was made in media reports of the League's invitation only policy for white Australians.¹⁴⁴ Particular attention was paid, however, when the crowds were mixed. A social evening organised jointly by the Coolbaroo League and the Association for the Welfare and Progress of Original Australians saw "girls from Alvan house and native boys from the metropolitan area" mixing with white high schoolers.¹⁴⁵ The supposed 'first time' that Aboriginal and white people would dance together was heralded a few times throughout the years in Perth, including the Black and White Ball in 1953, and again in 1956, when the Coolbaroo League lifted its 'ban' on white attendees.¹⁴⁶ This latter occasion was in response to the League losing access to its usual hall, and difficulty in finding a new one due to racial discrimination.¹⁴⁷ The dance was hailed as a success by the *Perth Mirror*, whose reporting focused particularly on the young white women who attended. Some were reluctant to be photographed with their Aboriginal dance partners, but one young woman, Terry Fogarty, smiled for the camera and proclaimed:

"Coolbaroo League's Activities," *Greenough Sun*, November 11, 1954, 11; "Natives End Ban, Dance Attended by Whites," *Mirror*, May 12, 1956, 1.

¹³⁹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 291-2.

¹⁴⁰ "Coolbaroo League Gives Soldier Warm Welcome," *The West Australian*, November 15, 1952, 1; "Natives and Whites Mix," *The West Australian*, June 25, 1953, 8.

¹⁴¹ "Coolbaroo League Gives Soldier Warm Welcome," *The West Australian*, November 15, 1952, 1.

¹⁴² "Aborigines, Half-Castes Have Weekly Dance, Social," *The Daily News*, March 18, 1947, 3; "Coolbaroo League's Activities," *Greenough Sun*, November 11, 1954, 11.

¹⁴³ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 286.

¹⁴⁴ "No Whites (Unless Invited) There," *Sunday Times*, August 17, 1952, 22.

¹⁴⁵ "Natives and Whites Mix," *The West Australian*, June 25, 1953, 8.

¹⁴⁶ "Won't Have a Bar, Black or Liquid," *The Sun*, September 27, 1953, 5; "Natives End Ban, Dance Attended by Whites," *Mirror*, May 12, 1956, 1.

¹⁴⁷ "Colour Prejudice Alleged by Native Body," *Sunday Times*, January 30, 1955, 7.

“They’re wonderful, well-behaved lads. I’m proud to be photographed with one of them.”
The young men themselves were largely described in relation to their sporting successes.¹⁴⁸

The popular Boathouse dances in Brisbane between 1957 and 1962 provided the broader Aboriginal community in Southeast Queensland with a place to meet and socialise, as well as raise money for Aboriginal sporting clubs.¹⁴⁹ They also, like the Coolbaroo League, offered a space for cultural and social renewal and political change. The dances were held on Saturday nights at the O’Connor Boathouse, notably on the restricted northern side of the Brisbane River. These dances too were multigenerational and brought families and communities together for an evening of relaxation and enjoyment.¹⁵⁰ Aunty Marlene Kerr, interviewed years later, remembered that the dances offered an ideal place to meet the opposite sex, although she herself preferred to dance with her sister: “Well, that was where you went to meet. I wasn’t, cause I was very young, and shy... and just used to watch the boys and girls getting together.”¹⁵¹

In Sydney, weekly dances were held at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA), including those fundraising for the Redfern All Blacks Rugby League Club in the 1960s.¹⁵² Anna Cole and Jennifer Jones have both written about Aboriginal debutante balls in the late-1960s held by the FAA.¹⁵³ While earlier examples of Aboriginal debutantes were treated as exciting and rare inclusions, the balls thrown by the FAA in the 1960s were celebrations of a growing Aboriginal community.¹⁵⁴ Like the Coolbaroo League, the Foundation struggled to access halls that would host Aboriginal dances.¹⁵⁵ After the 1967 referendum, there were a number of high profile events. Following the first Sydney-based National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) debutante ball, held as a fundraiser at Paddington Town Hall in 1966, in 1968 the debutante ball was held in Sydney Town Hall.¹⁵⁶ The young debutantes at this event were presented to Prime Minister John Gorton. Ruby Langford-

¹⁴⁸ “Natives End Ban, Dance Attended by Whites,” *Mirror*, May 12, 1956, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Whyte et al., “Boathouse Dances,” 85.

¹⁵⁰ Whyte et al., “Boathouse Dances,” 88.

¹⁵¹ Marlene Kerr, quoted in Whyte et al., “Boathouse Dances,” 89-90.

¹⁵² Norman, “Modern Day,” 170-1, 177-8; Sylvia Scott, *The Mac Silva Centre*, (Sydney Institute of Technology, 1994).

¹⁵³ Anna Cole, “Making a Debut: Myths, Memories and Mimesis,” in *Passionate Histories: Myth, Memory and Indigenous Australia* eds. Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys and John Docker (ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc, 2010), 205-218; Jones, “Dancing with the Prime Minister,” 101-113; Anna Cole also wrote for a documentary about the ball: Lara Cole, dir, *Dancing with the Prime Minister* (Coogee NSW: November Films, 2010).

¹⁵⁴ Jones, “Dancing,” 105.

¹⁵⁵ Cole, “Making a Debut,” 207.

¹⁵⁶ Cole, “Making a Debut,” 206.

Ginibi's daughter, Pearl "made history being the first Aboriginal ever to dance with the Prime Minister."¹⁵⁷ The event was celebrated in national newspapers, often put forward as a vision of successful assimilation. While an Aboriginal event, four of the twenty-five debutantes brought their white boyfriends, as encouraged by the FAA manager, Charles Perkins: "We told the girls to bring their boyfriends even if they weren't Aborigines... we don't have a colour bar."¹⁵⁸ However, the FAA, led by Perkins, worked to ensure Aboriginal people became part of the broader community on their own terms.¹⁵⁹ Politically, the 'coming out' of young Aboriginal women, surrounded by their own community, was a powerful symbol. As Cole noted, in the middle of child removal policies and institutionalisation of young Aboriginal people, this spoke back to British traditions of class, race and eligibility and provided "a potent ritual of renewal of community and 'right matches' among Indigenous families."¹⁶⁰ However, she also found that the memories of the women who debuted that night defied such symbolism of either assimilation or resistance, and that they saw themselves first as young women enjoying a big night out.¹⁶¹ Joyce Davidson recalled: "I felt like a princess walking down... A little Black princess."¹⁶² While dating and romance no doubt took place in these spaces, they were first and foremost an opportunity for community and family to socialise and enjoy their leisure time safely and without violence or discrimination.

As Hughes has demonstrated in her work on Aboriginal relationships with African American servicemen during the Second World War, romance and dating often took place in a larger space of cultural exchange and political engagement.¹⁶³ These dances and events, organised by Aboriginal communities to meet their own social, cultural and political needs, brought together many of the features of dating culture within a larger community framework. In Sydney, Goodall described this phenomenon: the "growing Aboriginal population formed supportive networks which offered social and then later political organisation."¹⁶⁴ Heidi Norman's work on the NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout described the way social and sporting events could provide "a different articulation of what

¹⁵⁷ Ruby Langford-Ginibi, quoted in Cole, "Making a Debut," 207.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, "Dancing," 108.

¹⁵⁹ Cole, "Making a Debut," 207; Jones, "Dancing," 105.

¹⁶⁰ Cole, "Making a Debut," 214.

¹⁶¹ Cole, "Making a Debut," 214.

¹⁶² Joyce Davison, quoted in Cole, "Making A Debut," 208.

¹⁶³ Hughes, "Mobilising," 50-52.

¹⁶⁴ Goodall, "New South Wales," 103.

might be thought of as political activism.”¹⁶⁵ At these events and in these community groups, it is clear that “kinship and family relations are central to how [Aboriginal people] organise and how cultural practice and historical association interact in a dynamic process.”¹⁶⁶

Love Stories

Against this backdrop of segregation, assimilation and state violence, Aboriginal people did meet and fall in love. As Ellinghaus noted, it is important not to “obscure the crimes of colonialism with our efforts to find Indigenous agency.”¹⁶⁷ The balance is delicate, and Aboriginal people were forcibly excluded from the public social world so central to white experiences of 1950s and 1960s romance. However, historians have also recorded stories of people who managed to find love and companionship, and through interviews and oral history recordings, still more people have shared their own experiences. Cindy Solonec drew on Indigenous Standpoint theory to sketch out a microhistory of her relatives against a backdrop of the assimilation policy.¹⁶⁸ Solonec’s relatives, a Galician Spaniard and a Nigena woman, met in Western Kimberley in the 1940s. Frank Rodriguez and Katie Fraser found common ground in their shared Catholic faith and were married in 1948.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, faith bridged barriers for Brian Carter’s family when he fell in love with Violet, a Bardi woman from Sunday Island. Before he and Violet married in 1960, Brian asked his mother if she would approve, and she responded with one question: “Is she a Christian?” “I was fortunate enough to be able to say yes,” Brian remembered.¹⁷⁰ He and Violet met when he was working as a pilot and staying in a caravan in Derby, Western Australia, where Violet and her sisters were working at the mission. “There were three of them, three young ladies... three flowers actually,” Brian remembered, “There was a Daphne, there was a Rosemary and there was a Violet. Fell in love eventually with the Violet.”¹⁷¹ The couple married in 1960 at the United Aborigines Mission in Derby.

¹⁶⁵ Norman, “Modern Day Coroboree,” 170.

¹⁶⁶ Norman, “Modern Day Coroboree,” 170.

¹⁶⁷ Katherine Ellinghaus, review of *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia*, by Ann McGrath, *Australian Historical Studies* 48, 2 (2017): 296.

¹⁶⁸ Solonec, “Proper Mixed-Up,” 77.

¹⁶⁹ Solonec, “Proper Mixed-Up,” 76-82.

¹⁷⁰ Brian Carter interviewed by Elaine Rabbitt, September 11, 2012, One Arm Point WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219958079>.

¹⁷¹ Brian Carter interviewed by Elaine Rabbitt, September 11, 2012, One Arm Point WA, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219958079>.

Heather Vicenti remembered meeting her German husband at a Christmas celebration with her young son at the esplanade in Perth. “He was really good,” she remembered, “kind, and he took notice of the boy.”¹⁷² Nancy Kemp-Howard met her first husband being brought along to round out a double date for a friend. After that marriage ended, she met her second husband through another friend, at “a football do in Alice Springs.”¹⁷³ Wilma Walker regularly met up with her future husband as a teenager at the cinema, where they kissed, walked and watched movies with friends before marrying at Daintree Mission.¹⁷⁴ These young people met through work, church, social clubs, and friendship networks, publicly and privately. They used movie theatres, festivals and sporting events as opportunities to meet friends and potential lovers. In these ways, some Aboriginal people participated in dating practices that were similar to other Australians at the time, despite the constraints.

Conclusion

The idea of the family was essential to the project of assimilation in general, and specifically in the production of a future white Australia. For Aboriginal people, this meant violence through child removal and discriminatory legislation, applied at the discretion of white authorities with wide-ranging powers. The process of assimilation was explicitly gendered, as young Aboriginal women were institutionalised and trained to live and work in white society, and potentially marry a white working-class settler man. Marriages between Aboriginal people were tightly regulated, and their romantic behaviour was restricted and supervised by white authorities. Aboriginal teenagers living on missions and reserves were not given the necessary freedom to participate in dating rituals common elsewhere in this period. Some young Aboriginal people were guided into arranged marriages by mission staff, while being kept from their own community’s systems of arranged marriage. Marriage to a light-skinned or white person could play an assimilatory role, but the promise of acceptance into white society was never fulfilled due to structural and social racism. For Aboriginal people, marriage could mark freedom from institutional control, however most families remained under the power of the state, and child removal loomed large. Aboriginal people did seek and find pleasure, love and romance through socialisation and recreation within their

¹⁷² Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson, September 6, October 8, November 23, 2001, Coolbellup WA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218488206>.

¹⁷³ Nancy Kemp-Howard interviewed by Sue Anderson, June 5, 2001, Brompton SA, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218447139>.

¹⁷⁴ Wilma Walker interviewed by Deborah Somersall, August 14, 1999, Mossman QLD, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-218201159>.

own communities, and mixed spaces in towns and cities. Often opportunities for dating were combined with social, cultural, and political organisation and activism.

In the post-war period, assimilation policy targeted two groups of people in Australia, Aboriginal people and European immigrants, although in very different ways, with separate goals and varied levels of intervention. While Aboriginal people were faced with state regulation and restriction, European migrant experiences were marked by a relative lack of government intervention. Non-British arrivals had made it through the White Australia colour bar but were often not treated as equals by the receiving community. At the same time, they were not subject to the same discrimination as Aboriginal people. The next chapter examines the way European migrants were expected to assimilate but given little support to do so, and the important role romance and dating played in their experiences of migration and assimilation.

Chapter Six: Migrant Experience of Assimilation, 1945-1970.

Ideas about race meant that assimilation policy was applied unevenly across Indigenous and post-war immigrant groups, Simic has pointed out that 1950s and 1960s were the “peak... of [non-British] European migration to Australia,” and “also the ‘high point’ of assimilationist thinking.”¹ Assimilation worked towards a future white Australia, one that could only be achieved with the continued use of immigration restrictions.² Non-white migrants were excluded from Australia from Federation onwards under the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. Definitions of whiteness changed, and as the Australian government worked to increase the nation’s population after the Second World War, European migrants began to be courted alongside the favoured British, although clear preferences for northern Europeans remained. As Haebich has argued, these immigrants faced discrimination under the White Australia policy “according to shifting hierarchies of preference shaped by changing race stereotypes and national enmities.”³ Once they arrived in Australia, migrants were met with continued exclusion and discrimination, and the expectation that they would assimilate quickly. They were provided little support in the settlement process and indeed often faced resistance from white society.

European migrants’ experience in the world of dating, romance, and marriage in 1950s and 1960s Australia was deeply enmeshed with assessments of their success. Exogamous marriage, in this case marriage of a non-British migrant to a settler Australian (whose own ancestors might have arrived only one or two generations before), was seen as a symbol of successful assimilation.⁴ Australians were anxious about migrants setting up insular communities and threatening the supremacy of the nebulous ‘Australian way of life.’⁵ British and northern European migrants were considered more likely to assimilate smoothly into the white British-Australian culture. Migrants were mostly men looking for work, and the gender imbalance and ideas of racialized sexuality meant that these men, especially those from southern European countries who were discriminated against both in terms of policy

¹ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 155.

² Hughes, “Mobilising,” 47.

³ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 10-11.

⁴ Balint and Simic, “Histories of Migrants,” 399.

⁵ Richard White, “The Australian Way of Life,” *Australian Historical Studies* 18, 73 (1979): 531-536.

and acceptance in the community, were often treated as a dangerous oversexualised invading force. Amongst them were Italian nationals. Italians, especially those from the south, had long been racialized in Australia as non-white and thus faced significant discrimination in their new home.⁶ The new arrivals from Italy were treated with suspicion and mistrust, rooted in ideas about race and class, that often presented as anxieties about sexuality. They provide a valuable case study here, due to their large numbers, hostile reception in Australia, and unique patterns of romance and marriage, including the use of proxy marriages.

For migrant men, life in Australia was often hard and lonely, and many longed for companionship and marriage. They often looked for this within migrant communities or sent back home for suitable partners. While this was seen by settler Australians as working against assimilation, for the migrants themselves a marriage or romance in Australia, no matter with whom, was often a sign of their commitment to their new country. It was therefore taken very seriously. While in the wider Australian society dating and romance were becoming more tightly linked with pleasure, for many migrants the priority was marriage itself. Settler Australians were also anxious to see migrants married, to nullify their supposed threat and to fulfill the promise of future generations of Australians upon which mass immigration was founded.

Post-war Immigration

As the Second World War drew to a close, the Australian government looked towards rebuilding a shaken nation. Even before the war's end, the Curtin Labor government had initiated the immigration program that would come to define post-war Australia. There were two aims gathered under the slogan 'Populate or Perish': to bolster a country now all too aware of its vulnerability to invasion, and to develop a mobile workforce that could shoulder the post-war reconstruction.⁷ However, there was a significant obstacle: Australia was still very committed to the White Australia policy. The nation resisted non-white immigration but there were simply not enough British migrants to fill the government's ambitious aim of nine British arrivals to each "foreigner."⁸ In 1945, the Australian Government appointed its first

⁶ Helen Andreoni, "Olive or White? The Colour of Italians in Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, 77 (2003): 81-86; Ruth Balint and Zora Simic, "Histories of Migrants and Refugees in Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 49 (2018): 392.

⁷ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 37.

⁸ Jayne Persian, *Beautiful Balts: From Displaced Persons to New Australians* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2017), 25; Sheridan, "The Australian Woman," 122.

Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell. He held a strong commitment to the ideal of White Australia, the establishment of which he believed to be both vital and irreversible.⁹ However, he also believed that Australia had to move beyond the hold of the British, and that the net for future white Australians could be widened to the rest of Europe.¹⁰ Accordingly, the idea of White Australia shifted slightly, to a nation of cultural homogeneity, rather than one with purely white British ancestry.¹¹ This homogeneity would be maintained by the assimilation of immigrants, and therefore the immigration policy of exclusion and a settlement policy of assimilation worked together.

However, discrimination based on race was still very much the backbone of the policy, and the most desired migrants were those from northern, and then eastern, Europe. These British, Baltic, and Germanic migrants looked the part, and Australians were more comfortable imagining their easy assimilation into the British Australian culture.¹² Those from Southern Europe were considered to be of a lower-class, and less likely to be able to integrate into the Australian lifestyle. This was based on contemporary understandings of ethnicity and skin colour, and race-based exclusion existed at different levels throughout the immigration process.¹³ In the end, one-third of the net immigration into Australia from 1947 to 1961 consisted of British and Irish migrants. Eastern and Northern Europeans made up a fifth of the total each, while Southern Europeans (including Italians and Greeks) contributed a quarter of all migrants in this period.¹⁴

This more diverse immigration brought with it a social, rather than political, revolution.¹⁵ Many historians have argued that the accompanying settlement policy of assimilation did not rest on a solid bureaucratic footing, and thus much of the responsibility for the acculturation of new immigrants fell on the “personal element” and “neighbourly support” of existing Australians, as typified in the Good Neighbour Movement.¹⁶ Churches and voluntary organisations formed networks designed to help the ‘assimilation’ of what

⁹ Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia Since 1901* (University of NSW Press, 2008): 177.

¹⁰ Richards, *Destination Australia*, 177-8.

¹¹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 81.

¹² Kuneck, “Brides,” 87.

¹³ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 82; Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 13.

¹⁴ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 38.

¹⁵ Richards, *Destination Australia*, 211.

¹⁶ Kristy Ann Kokegei, “Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960,” PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2012, 168.

were termed ‘new Australians’ under the umbrella of this movement.¹⁷ The resulting ‘Good Neighbour Councils’ had the rather vague goals of working to “assist the settlement and assimilation of migrants into the ‘Australian way of life,’ educate Australians to accept and welcome migrants, and encourage a greater appreciation amongst all Australians of the privileges and benefits of citizenship.”¹⁸ They were supposed to assist migrant families settling in their neighbourhoods through outreach and community groups, host cultural events, including displays of dance and art, and encourage community support and acceptance.¹⁹

However, these groups were not always very effective. As Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft made clear, very few migrants had any contact with the Good Neighbour Councils.²⁰ The barriers between these “well-meaning, untrained volunteers” and their new ‘neighbours’ included class, religion, and language.²¹ For the government, selling immigration consisted of two parts. It was necessary to sell Australia to potential immigrants and, in some cases, their home governments as a comfortable and prosperous country, full of jobs and opportunity. However, it was also vital to convince Australians that the migrants in their midst would contribute to the community, while conforming with it.

Thus, the idea of assimilation as an overarching policy was useful as a form of comfort to settler Australians. It was a complex and nebulous concept, rarely defined clearly, and used for whatever purpose seemed most pressing.²² Popular representations of it included images of migrants who would blend into the community, fully embracing the ‘Australian way of life. The Australian government produced propaganda films to sell this concept to uneasy constituents.²³ Of course, the reality was more complicated. Migrant enclaves formed, foreign newspapers and clubs helped migrant communities maintain a connection to their culture, and language remained a significant hurdle. To some in the receiving community, this was cause for concern. However, many recognised that the image of immediate assimilation was unreasonably optimistic. Calwell’s successor in the Menzies Liberal-

¹⁷ Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft, “Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation,” *Australian Historical Studies* 46, 2 (2015): 247.

¹⁸ Gwenda Tavan, “‘Good Neighbours’: Community Organisations, Migrant Assimilation and Australian Society and Culture, 1950-1961,” *Australian Historical Studies*, 27, 109 (1997): 78.

¹⁹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 179-180; Tavan, “Good Neighbours,” 82, 84.

²⁰ Markus and Taft, “Postwar Immigration,” 247.

²¹ Markus and Taft, “Postwar Immigration,” 247.

²² Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 9-14; Markus and Taft, “Postwar Immigration,” 234-251; White, “Australian Way of Life,” 540, Rowse, “Introduction,” 2.

²³ Films included *No Strangers Here* (1950), *Double Trouble* (1951) and *Mike and Stefani* (1952). Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 127-128.

Country Party coalition government, Harold Holt, held the belief that ‘full assimilation’ could only be hoped for from the second generation onwards.²⁴ This still vague idea focused attention even more on the building of families in Australia. If migrants would not immediately become Australians, their children would.

Celebrating Migrant Marriages

The media tended to grasp any sign of assimilation as an indicator of rousing success. In particular, migrant marriages were reported on with great fanfare, especially if their spouses were Anglo-Celtic Australians.²⁵ The story of how two young Ukrainian men met their Australian brides over a dictionary was reprinted in newspapers across Australia in 1950.²⁶ A report on the 1949 marriage of a young Latvian-Russian couple wrote of their painful past and their happy future “in this lovely land and among its generous people.”²⁷ Romance was often mentioned when speaking of the success of the immigration program. A short note on the naturalisation of two ‘new Australians’ in 1954 included evidence of their successful assimilation: the young men had become popular citizens, had secured good jobs, and “both had also found romance in their new country,” with one married to a local girl and the other engaged.²⁸ A cheerful 1947 missive claiming that “800 Balts find happy life at Bonegilla,” which declared the controversial migrant camp had a “friendly, cheerful atmosphere” made sure to stress the details of “the first romance in the camp” between two migrants. However, even this happy announcement was followed by the reality of marriages in the shifting populations of such camps – “They will probably be separated when she goes to Canberra as a typist.”²⁹

²⁴ Markus and Taft, “Postwar Immigration,” 240.

²⁵ See among many: Henriko Perrotto, “Esperanto – How to Make Love in it!” *The Argus*, January 4, 1950, 6; “Melbourne, Too, Loves a Lover,” *Argus*, December 15, 1954, 4; “Among 30 Nations – Love Finds a Way,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, October 7, 1959, 39; “Migrant and Pioneer Wed,” *Barrier Miner*, December 17, 1951, 5; “Love Will Find a Way,” *Barrier Miner*, August 22, 1950, 7; “Cathedral Wedding for Migrant Couple,” *Brisbane Telegraph*, September 21, 1954, 23; “Bible Led to Romance,” *Central Queensland Herald*, March 8, 1956, 3; “Regulations Waived: Romance has Happy Ending,” *Geraldton Guardian*, June 22, 1950, 5; “Romance Brings Settlers,” *Courier Mail*, March 8, 1950, 6; “Love Triumphed Over All When Red Tape Was Cut,” *Sunday Times*, January 23, 1955, 3; “New Australians in Romantic Wedding,” *Mercury*, September 19, 1949, 12; “Doctor for ‘Nurse Gregg,’” *The Good Neighbour*, June 1, 1962, 1; “In Love and War,” *The Argus*, March 27, 1956, 8.

²⁶ “Canberra Sisters Marry New Australians,” *Canberra Times*, August 17, 1950, 4; “Canberra Sisters to Reside Here with New Australian Husbands,” *Narandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser*, August 22, 1950, 1; “Talk to Them of Love... And They Need a Dictionary,” *The Argus*, August 18, 1950, 1.

²⁷ “New Australians in Romantic Wedding,” *Mercury*, September 19, 1949, 12.

²⁸ “Now They Are One of Us,” *South Western Advertiser*, March 11, 1954, 1.

²⁹ “Training Camp for ‘New Australians,’” *Advertiser*, December 16, 1947, 2

This media attention was related to the assumption that marriage was an indicator of successful assimilation.³⁰ The focus on family and building a home in post-war Australia made it even more important. While intermarriage with Anglo-Celtic settler Australians was the ideal, marriage between different groups of migrants was also cautiously celebrated as signifying a commitment to one's new land. Jean Martin's 1965 study of refugee settlers argued that even when Europeans of different nationality married, both partners disassociated from their individual cultural traditions, which was of course the aim of assimilation.³¹ As Glenda Sluga wrote about the migrant camp at Bonegilla: "marriage was sometimes the first thing on the agenda upon arriving in Australia – a symbolic expression of the new life which had begun."³²

The importance of marrying and building a family in Australia was a key part of government policy, even when intermarriage did not occur. As James Jupp noted, the minimum two years for which assisted migrants were required to stay in Australia was the estimated period "within which the great majority of migrants have become sufficiently adjusted not to want to return. It is long enough for the British to get out of the hostels, for the Southern Europeans to be able to pay the fares of their wives or fiancées."³³ Migrants marrying within their own tradition, language and culture did not align with the government's goals of assimilation, however housing one's family and educating them in Australia was seen as a sign of commitment to the new country.³⁴ As Simic has pointed out, single male migrants, despite "making good wages... remained unsettled and thus only half-assimilated" in the eyes of settler Australians.³⁵

Ginette Matalon, a French Jewish woman born in Cairo in 1936, came to Australia in the late 1950s, and found many parts of life in the new country a difficult adjustment. Her aunt prepared two important lists to help smooth her path: one of available young Jewish

³⁰ See for example W. D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1954), 42; James Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures* (Melbourne: Landsowne Press, 1996), 33-34; Jean I. Martin, *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965), 93; Sara Wills, "When Good Neighbours Become Good Friends: The Australian Embrace of its Millionth Migrant," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, 124 (2004): 332-354; Zora Simic, "Bachelors of Misery and Proxy Brides: Marriage, Migration and Assimilation, 1947-1963," *History Australia* 11, 1 (2014): 156; Susanna Iuliano, *Vite Italiane: Italian Lives in Western Australia*, 85; Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia Since 1901* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), 242-243; Stephen Castles, "Italian Migration and Settlement Since 1945," in *Australia's Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society*, eds. Stephen Castles, Caroline Alcorso, Gaetano Rando and Ellie Vasta, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992), 48, 51-52.

³¹ Martin, *Refugee Settlers*, 93.

³² Glenda Sluga, *Bonegilla, 'A Place of No Hope'* (Parkville, Vic: Uni of Melbourne, 1988): 53-4.

³³ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 24-5.

³⁴ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 32-3.

³⁵ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 160.

men, and one of potential jobs. Ginette arrived on a Wednesday “and the next Monday I had a job. And on Saturday, first, the young men started coming.”³⁶ Ginette remembered the men brought chocolates and records, and she found it “the nicest part of Australia” and a “good start socially.” These young men had also recently come to Australia and were looking for serious relationships and marriage, something that was “very important to them.” One of these suitors was Ralph, who arrived with chocolates, the words to a French song, and his Vespa, and who would soon become her husband. He had a similar background to Ginette but had come to Australia a few years earlier, and helped her settle in. Ginette recalled that Ralph helped her “get integrated into the lifestyle of Australia.” The couple went out and “discovered Sydney” together, Ginette remembering: “I discovered hugging him and sitting on the vespa.” Ralph worked two jobs, one with Australians and one at the All Nations Club in Sydney, where Ginette was happy to find “a bit of cultural activity.” When interviewed in 2013, Ginette remembered her husband very fondly, as a “fantastic husband... He was a good man, a kind man. And we had a lot in common because we had the similar background, he was also born in Egypt.”³⁷

A romance or marriage in Australia, no matter with whom, could change a migrant’s experience of, or attitude to, their new home. Tarcisio Crapella, a young Italian migrant, wrote to his family frequently about the difficulty of finding the right woman to marry, and his accompanying listlessness in Australia. However, a trip to the hospital ended in the romance he sought. He announced his happiness to his family, with his joy in engagement tied up with his joy, at last, in Australia:

I’m happy about everything, even my idea of coming to Australia, it means my true destiny must be here. On Saturday I shall bank about eighty pounds. I have never in all my life seen such abundance. And if I weren’t here, I couldn’t have done what I’ve done.³⁸

Tarcisio felt the difficulties of his time in Australia had been made worthwhile, and that he could finally look toward the future with hope. Marriage was a powerful symbol for New Australians, and an opportunity to look forward and plan for a new life in a new land.

³⁶ Ginette Matalon interviewed by Frank Heimans, January 13-14, 2013, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219968733/listen>.

³⁷ Ginette Matalon interviewed by Frank Heimans, January 13-14, 2013, Sydney NSW, *Australian Generations Oral History Project*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-219968733/listen>.

³⁸ Tarcisio Crapella quoted in Jacqueline Templeton (ed. by John Lack assisted by Gioconda Di Lorenzo), *From the Mountains to the Bush: Italian Migrants Write Home from Australia, 1950-1962* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), 352.

Single Men

Popular depictions of successful migrants often featured families or young couples, portraying them as stable and productive members of Australian society. Of course, the racial and cultural significance of this cannot be ignored. British migrants, and others benefiting from governmental assistance, were able to bring their families with them, while private migration was costly and usually undertaken first by young, single men.³⁹ These groups of young men were viewed as problematic. Any group of men without the tempering presence of women was seen to pose a threat. Simic argued that “‘migrant bachelors’ were clearly a source of anxiety in post-war Australia, with the capacity to incite sympathy, fear and also, though less often or more ambivalently, desire.”⁴⁰ As was the case during the Second World War, the presence of a large group of men from another country led to “both moral panic and sexual fascination” in Australian society.⁴¹

Simic has pointed out that this gender balance was obscured in overall numbers, but significant within particular groups. Refugees in the immediate post-war period and Italians throughout the 1950s and 1960s had markedly more men than women.⁴² In the 1954 census, 67 per cent of the 119,643 Australian residents born in Italy were male, and 33 per cent female. Similarly, Greek-born Australians were 65 per cent male and 35 per cent female (out of 25,862 recorded total), and Yugoslavian-Australians were 68 per cent male and 32 per cent female (out of 22,845 total.) These numbers are very different to immigration populations in Australia from countries like England, at 54 per cent male to 46 per cent female (with a total of 478,212 people), and Germany, at 51 per cent male to 49 per cent female (with a total of 65,421).⁴³ The gender imbalance is more pronounced for those countries that had less access to assisted migration and relied instead on private migration. In 1947, before the agreement between the Australian and Italian governments, men made up seventy per cent of all Italian migrants.⁴⁴ By the early 1960s, this had moved to sixty per cent men to forty per cent women.⁴⁵

³⁹ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 153-154.

⁴⁰ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 153.

⁴¹ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 163; For more on the presence of the Americans in Australia during the Second World War, see Chapter Two.

⁴² Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 153-154, 158, “Of the 170 000 DPs admitted into Australia, 100 222 were males and 70 678 were females.”

⁴³ ABS, *Yearbook 1956*, no. 42 (Canberra: ABS, 1956), 589.

⁴⁴ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 165.

⁴⁵ Iuliano, “Donne E Buoi Dai Paesi Tuoi,” 325-326.

The fact that many of these men were from Southern European countries only stoked the moral panic. Firstly, they were seen as an obstacle to assimilation. As Jupp noted: “the lonely man [is] unlikely to make much adjustment to Australian ways.”⁴⁶ Migrant ‘men without women’ also fuelled a moral panic about the vulnerability of young Australian women, supposedly the focus of new and unfamiliar attention.⁴⁷ Migrant groups themselves often called for more assistance in equalising migrant gender ratios, arguing “young migrants would settle more easily into the Australian community if they had opportunities to marry persons with similar backgrounds.”⁴⁸ R. Marsden, from Mt. Isa, Queensland, wrote to the Brisbane edition of *Truth* under the heading “Wanted: A Wife!” Marsden wrote: “I am an ex-British migrant, have been here for six years, and want to make Australia my second home, but there is one big question which bothers me. I cannot find a girl willing to marry me.” Marsden clearly linked his desire to settle in Australia with a desire to marry and argued that “the only solution I can see is to bring out single girls as migrants, who are willing and anxious to enter the state of matrimony.”⁴⁹ A “Baltic” writer from Rockhampton, Queensland, wrote in to support Mr Marsden, claiming “females are scarce, and this makes them proud and selfish. The Government should bring thousands of single females here, then everyone could be happy.”⁵⁰

The press, churches, and government all added voices to the chorus, calling for more migrant women to help forestall the problems of a mass of migrant men without the calming influence of wives, mothers and daughters.⁵¹ Balancing the many stories of love and marriage amongst immigrants, the media printed salacious details of romances gone wrong, always emphasising the nationality of the migrants involved.⁵² Tabloids often published stories of this type, the ethnicity of the participants serving to add further layers of scandal and intrigue.

⁴⁶ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 143.

⁴⁷ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 153.

⁴⁸ “Young Migrants Lonely for European Womenfolk,” *Mercury*, July 21, 1952, 5.

⁴⁹ “A Selection from this Week’s Mail-Bag,” *Truth* (Brisbane), September 26, 1954, 31.

⁵⁰ “A Selection from this Week’s Mail-Bag,” *Truth* (Brisbane), October 10, 1954, 43.

⁵¹ Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 347; Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 151, 153-154, 160-161.

⁵² “Girl says Slashed by Rejected Lover,” *The Courier Mail*, May 24, 1950, 9; “Teenager Tells of Romance in her German Lover’s Bed,” *Truth*, September 12, 1954, 12; “The Love Affair of Latin and a Shop Lady Led to Storm,” *Truth*, October 4, 1953, 37; “Trouble Bubbled in Double Dutch Love,” *The Mirror*, December 5, 1953, 7.

Italian Australians

Many of the anxieties about gender, sexuality and immigration played out in the interactions between Australian and Italian communities. The Australian government entered into a migration agreement with the Italian government in 1951.⁵³ Private migration continued however, with only nineteen per cent of Italian arrivals arriving as part of the assisted passage scheme between 1945 and 1972.⁵⁴ The decision to welcome mass migration from Italy was controversial as there was a history of racist prejudice against southern Europeans in Australia. This was especially entrenched in Queensland, where Italians were seen largely as a solution to labour shortages in the sugar industry created in part by the ending of the importation of another racialised group, Pacific Islanders, under the White Australia Policy. Italians were not considered able to assimilate as easily as British and northern European migrants. Sicilians in particular were blamed for labour issues and were racialised in the 1925 Ferry Report on immigration.⁵⁵ Italians at this time in Australia were considered by many not to be white, and contemporary labels such as “olive peril” indicate the racist reactions to their immigration to Australia.⁵⁶ These historical prejudices influenced responses to the post-war migrants. A 1952 protest at the Bonegilla migrant reception camp was widely reported, often sensationally, in the media, with a particular focus on the apparently wild behaviour of the Italians.⁵⁷ The press was not allowed in the camp itself, and thus stories did not always match the reality of the situation. However, a popular understanding of the cause of the riot was soon landed upon: “an insufficient amount of sex as much as the lack of jobs.”⁵⁸

The lack of sufficient financial assistance from the Australian government meant that men largely led private migration initiating the ‘migratory chains’ that were a common feature of immigration at this time. Demographer Charles Price calculated that “between mid-1947 and mid-1966 about 75 per cent of settlers arrived without government assistance,

⁵³ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 166; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 167. This agreement was paused by the Italian government between 1961 and 1967 “due to discriminatory treatment of Italian migrants.”

⁵⁴ Jupp, *White Australia to Woomera*, 18.

⁵⁵ Catherine Dewhirst, “The ‘Southern Question’ in Australia: The 1925 Royal Commission’s Racialisation of Southern Italians,” *Queensland History Journal* 22, 4 (2014): 316-317, 319-320; Ross Laurie, “Reporting on Race: White Australia, Immigration and the Popular Press in the 1920s,” *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal* 18, 10 (2004): 427; Andreoni, “Olive or White?” 85-86.

⁵⁶ Andreoni, “Olive or White?” 81-92.

⁵⁷ Sluga, *Bonegilla*, 83.

⁵⁸ Sluga, *Bonegilla*, 79.

mainly sponsored by friends and relatives.”⁵⁹ Young men formed the first wave of immigration and, when settled, they helped to bring out their family, extended family, and eventually friends from their hometown.⁶⁰ This ran counter to the assimilation policy as chain migration helped to maintain regional and cultural links in the new communities being formed in Australian suburbs and towns. This connection to family and culture was considered essential for many migrants, as they made their way in a new world.⁶¹ The practice was also useful to the Australian government, as Susanna Iuliano has noted.⁶² Although it threatened ideas of assimilation, chain migration ensured that the responsibility for new migrants was in the hands of family sponsors, not immigration authorities. In 1968, Price described the system as “admirably suited to migrants who receive no public assistance but must find their way with their own resources.”⁶³

Marriage, then, was encouraged by both Italian and settler Australian communities. In Italy, marriage was an extremely important tradition, and in fact Italian migrants ended up marrying at a higher rate than their counterparts at home, even though many were single when they arrived in Australia.⁶⁴ It was up to these men themselves to find a wife, and by extension, a reason to stay.

The difficulty lay in who these young men would marry, and how they would meet their brides. Thanks to individuals sponsoring migration, Italian migrants were often surrounded by countrymen and women from the same region, if not the same village, they had moved from. Especially earlier in the immigration process, marrying within these communities was seen as a priority for many Italians. One young man remembered an Italian adage: “choose women and oxen from your hometown.”⁶⁵ As Francesco Ricatti argued, “migrants’ material and discursive practices of love, marriage and sex were often devoted to values that were antithetical to assimilation: the elaboration of a sense of belonging and to the construction of ethnic micro-communities.”⁶⁶ Finding a spouse gave young migrants stability and purpose in their new land, and finding a spouse from their home region helped maintain a

⁵⁹ Charles Price, “Southern Europeans in Australia: Problems of Assimilation,” *The International Migration Review* 2, 3 (1968): 13.

⁶⁰ Castles, “Italian Migration,” 43-4.

⁶¹ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 92.

⁶² Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 81.

⁶³ Price, “Southern Europeans,” 7.

⁶⁴ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 84.

⁶⁵ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 90; Iuliano, “Donne E Buoi Dai Paesi Tuoi,” 319-335; Ricatti, “Was I Cursed?” 759.

⁶⁶ Francesco Ricatti, “‘Was I Cursed?’ ‘Was I Hypnotised?’ Ethnic Moralism, Sexual Dilemmas and Spectral Fantasies of Italians in Australia (1956-1964),” *Women’s History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 755.

strong sense of culture and community within it. W. D. Borrie's research showed that marriage between Italians and Australians (almost exclusively Italian men and Australian women) was in fact more common than marriage between northern Italians and Sicilians.⁶⁷ Australians, too, tended to marry northern Italians at much higher rates than southern migrants, in keeping with White Australian prejudices about the southerners.⁶⁸

The single male migrant had a number of options in seeking a wife. As family was usually closely involved in the setting up of an Italian marriage, the natural choice was to accept help from those back home in finding a young woman who could migrate to Australia. Young Italian women were discouraged from travelling without the marriage having taken place, so proxy marriages became popular. Simic has outlined the significance of proxy marriages in Australia, noting that it was "a practice that had been a feature of Italian migrant patterns since at least the 1920s."⁶⁹ She argued that "the legal recognition of proxy marriages" was the most impactful intervention of the Australian government, far more effective than "the failed attempt to recruit more single Italian women" in helping to balance the gender of Italian migrants in Australia.⁷⁰ Proxy marriages involved a religious ceremony, condoned by Italian and Australian governments, with the bride and groom still in their separate countries. A family member or friend would stand in for the partner during the ceremony, and the bride would travel to Australia already married.⁷¹ Otherwise, young women could travel to Australia and be met practically at the wharf by her future husband and a priest, and whisked off to the nearest church for an immediate marriage.⁷² Media representations of these 'wharf-side brides' and 'love boats' captured public attention.⁷³ While many settler Australians viewed these practices as bizarre, Iuliano points out it was merely "a migrant adaptation" of normal Italian marriage, where families were deeply involved every step of the way.⁷⁴ The lack of community and family connections in Australia indeed proved an obstacle to many young men looking to meet Italian women in their new

⁶⁷ Borrie, *Italians and Germans*, 84.

⁶⁸ Borrie, *Italians and Germans*, 85.

⁶⁹ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 166.

⁷⁰ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 167.

⁷¹ Vasta, "Italian Migrant Women," 144; Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 88-9.

⁷² Vasta, "Italian Migrant Women," 144; Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 88-9.

⁷³ "We'll get 60 Italian Girls in 'Bride Ship,'" *The Argus*, November 10, 1955, 11; "Migrant Ships Bring Drama," *The Argus*, December 28, 1950, 4; "Brother Proposed for Him!" *The Argus*, January 11, 1955, 1; "Italian 'Bride Ship' Arrives" *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 31 Dec 1955, p2; "His Proxy Bride" *Warwick Daily News*, 17 May 1951, p1.

⁷⁴ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 90.

land, who could be suspicious of a suitor's advances without knowledge of his family and reputation.⁷⁵

Over time the first cracks in these traditions started to show, and younger generations in particular began to cross regional lines. As Iuliano pointed out, marriages between people from different Italian regions generally had to do with the geographical pattern of settlement these groups took in Australia, and availability of suitable Italian partners. Thus, as Italian suburbs grew out of the early micro-communities, "proximity and passage of time would have helped erode regional prejudice and mistrust."⁷⁶

Young people were able to go to balls, club dances and sporting events, where they could meet other young Italians who were perhaps not as concerned with the hometown of their suitors as were their parents. Dancing was intrinsically linked with courtship for these young Italians, as it was throughout Australian society.⁷⁷ Italian community groups and organisations held regular balls (*balli Italiani*) for large celebrations, and smaller weekly dances which acted as "a supervised 'marriage market'" for young suburban Italians.⁷⁸ Such dances were often held in church halls, and had a tradition stretching back before the 1960s, with band leaders running competing balls "as a type of commercial boy-meets-girl social club."⁷⁹ Iuliano describes other places young Italians could meet, which often offered a built-in understanding of being a migrant in White Australia. Migrants meeting at English classes could be sure of a shared experience. Local shops carrying ingredients from home could be a meeting place for those with the same longing for their own culture and food. Weddings provided a pool of potential suitors with integral connections to one's family and friends.⁸⁰

Lou Soccio recounted how through time, expectations and traditions altered, even within one family.⁸¹ His first sister was married to an Italian from her hometown in the north of Italy, with a big Catholic wedding. His second sister also allowed family to engineer her match, but this time the groom was from central, not Northern Italy. The third daughter met a young Italian man independently, at a dance. Not only was the family uninvolved in the

⁷⁵ Morag Loh (ed.), *With Courage in Their Cases: The Experiences of Thirty-Five Italian Immigrant Workers and Their Families in Australia* (Melbourne: F.I.L.E.F., 1980), 91.

⁷⁶ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 92.

⁷⁷ "Newcomers Now Dance Their Way Into Our Theatre," *Sunday Mail*, November 1, 1953, 13. For more on dancing and romance, see Chapters One and Four.

⁷⁸ John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell, "Cha-Cha-Cha to *Ciuff Ciuff*: Modernity, 'Tradition' and the Italian-Australian Popular Music Scene of the 1960s," *Musicology Australia* 32, 2 (2010): 303.

⁷⁹ Whiteoak and Scott-Maxwell, "Cha-Cha-Cha," 303-4.

⁸⁰ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 91.

⁸¹ Lou Soccio, "A Family in Italy and Australia," *Critical Studies in Education* 19, 1 (1977): 19-20.

courtship, but the young man was Sicilian. For many Northern Italian families, Sicilians were considered even more foreign than Australians.⁸² Eventually, “it was only a matter of time before one of the children finally broke all tradition and married an Australian who was not a Catholic and who did not like big weddings.”⁸³ This grants an insight into views of interregional relationships. As Ricatti observed, “parents’ opposition to interregional marriages often marked a generational gap between them, and their daughters and sons who were in love with a person from a different part of Italy.”⁸⁴ It also fits with assumptions from many Australians, including Immigration Minister, Harold Holt, that assimilation, here symbolised by intermarriage, was more likely in the second generation.

There were young Italian migrants who romanced or even married settler Australians. However, there were obstacles to these matches. Language was a significant barrier, making it extremely difficult for young Italian men and women to casually approach Australian partners.⁸⁵ George Terei, writing from Cardiff, NSW in 1960, bemoaned the advice to New Australians struggling with English to “get a girlfriend who is good at English.” “Oh, yes, good idea,” George wrote sarcastically, “when you’re on a date just take out Shakespeare’s King Richard II...”⁸⁶ Language was a barrier to dating, but dating was often suggested as a way to improve one’s spoken English.

Differences in cultural practices made romantic overtures more likely to be rejected or viewed negatively. One young man claimed that in Italy, speaking to an unknown girl on the street was the norm, but in post-war Australia it was taboo, a sign of moral degeneracy.⁸⁷ As Chapter One has outlined, picking up young women in public was becoming more common, but approaching women on the street was still frowned on in post-war Australian society. It is also likely that migrant men were viewed more suspiciously than settler Australian men when approaching women this way, and young Italian men were clearly not given any leeway in this area. As in any community, complex dating conventions and rules had been formed over years in Australia, and not knowing the correct procedure put young migrants at a disadvantage. The Australian social scene was very different from that of Europe. Czech migrant and historian Dr Michael Cigler spoke to Barry York about the significant

⁸² Dewhirst, “Southern Question,” 320.

⁸³ Lou Soccio, “A Family in Italy and Australia,” in *Melbourne Studies in Education 1977*, ed. S. Murray-Smith, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 20.

⁸⁴ Ricatti, “Was I Cursed?” 761.

⁸⁵ Loh, *With Courage*, 91.

⁸⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, April 6, 1960, 2.

⁸⁷ Loh, *With Courage*, 91.

differences between European and Australian pub culture. In Australia, the genders were very segregated, with initially only men drinking in pubs, and then the eventual establishment of lounges for women. Cigler found this “regimentation” confronting, a far cry from the music, dancing, and large mixed groups of adults in European venues.⁸⁸

Many popular representations of Italian and Australian interactions asserted that it was the Australian women who had rejected the possibility of any relationship.⁸⁹ Italians were heavily sexualised by Australians, depicted as “roaming Casanovas.”⁹⁰ While this could be considered attractive, the “hot-blooded Latin lover” was more often condemned as “predatory.”⁹¹ One girl interviewed by Kay Melaun for the “Youth Sums Up” feature of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* claimed “these foreign boys are too fast for Australian girls. They won’t take no for an answer.”⁹² Not only were Italian men presented by the media as “sexually aggressive,” but Australian women who consorted with them were also seen as having significantly lowered their sexual standards.⁹³ Migrants in general were often accused of being more jealous and possessive of women, with “paranoid passions”, and Italian migrants in particular were seen as requiring tight control over female partners.⁹⁴ A young Italian man from Trieste named George was also interviewed by Kay Melaun, and described Australian girls as “quite fashionable, quite attractive, and quite patient with foreigners, but prejudiced against Italians.” George, from northern Italy, complained that the girls called Italians “wolves,” as they had done with the Americans. The moniker, George claimed, “might be true of southern Italians, but not of northern Italians like myself.”⁹⁵

There were, however, many girls and young women who were interested in migrant boys, and disdainful of other settler Australians who spurned them. One letter writer from Coffs Harbour, NSW, commended the local Italian community, specifically singling out the young men as “respectable and wonderful escorts.”⁹⁶ A “teener” from Langley Vale, NSW, argued that while girls who went out with New Australians were “criticised and had to endure

⁸⁸ Barry York, *Michael Cigler: A Czech-Australian Story: From Displacement to Diversity* (Canberra: CIMS, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1966), 83.

⁸⁹ President of WA Women’s Service Guild to Harold Holt (then Immigration Minister) 1954, Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 86.

⁹⁰ Sluga, *Bonegilla*, 53.

⁹¹ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 86.

⁹² Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 24, 1952, 22.

⁹³ Simic, “Bachelors of Misery,” 165.

⁹⁴ Martin, *Refugee Settlers*, 55; Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 347; “The Love Affair of Latin and a Shop Lady Led to Storm,” *Truth*, October 4, 1953, 37; Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, September 24, 1952, 22.

⁹⁵ Kay Melaun, “Youth Sums Up,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, October 1, 1952, 25.

⁹⁶ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, June 24, 1959, 2.

a lot of vicious gossip,” all the migrant boys she knew were “intelligent, considerate, and extremely good company.”⁹⁷ Indeed, in her experience, having dated “both old and New Australians,” including Greeks and Italians, she preferred the New to the Australian boys she knew, who could be “dull, conceited and crude, and don’t know how to treat girls.”⁹⁸ Again, there are parallels with the experience of young Australian women with American soldiers. Migrant boys and men treated women differently than they were used to, and for some, it was a welcome change.

However, Italian boys and men were not always so captivated by Australian girls and women. Iuliano documented a popular saying among Italian migrants, describing Australian women: “Flowers without scent, women without love.”⁹⁹ For Italians in Italy, the virginity of brides and the reverence for successful marriage was sacred. For Italian migrants in Australia, the different rules of their new home led to placing even greater restrictions on young women to maintain family honour. Chaperones remained an important part of the Italian dating landscape, having been mostly removed from settler Australian dating life a few decades before. Young women from Italian families remembered being taken to dances by their fathers, being introduced to potential husbands by family friends, and having cousins accompany a young couple on their dates.¹⁰⁰ One young Australian girl wrote to Louise Hunter in *Teenagers’ Weekly* for advice in 1963, about the difference between her situation and that of her Italian neighbour, “a very close friend of mine.” “My parents allow me to go out with other teenagers,” she wrote, “but our neighbours, who have a 15-year-old daughter, never let her out of their sight. They think my parents should treat me the same way.”¹⁰¹ Hunter responded that “your neighbour’s attitude toward their own daughter (and their feeling that you enjoy too much liberty) is understandable. Girls in Italy are very closely chaperoned until they marry.”¹⁰²

Australian women, meanwhile, were seen to be sexually permissive, and thus a possible corrupting influence. Italian daughters and sisters, outside of the tight village communities of Italy, were under even greater pressure to police their own behaviour. Their resulting purity was seen not only as a marker of family honour and reputation, but also a clear distinction between virtuous migrant women and the supposedly ‘loose’ women of

⁹⁷ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 9, 1959, 2.

⁹⁸ “Letters,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, September 9, 1959, 2.

⁹⁹ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 91.

¹⁰¹ Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 3, 1963, 6.

¹⁰² Louise Hunter, “Here’s Your Answer,” *Teenagers’ Weekly*, July 3, 1963, 6.

Australia. These women became their families' cultural custodians: maintaining language, traditions, and links with home.¹⁰³ The desire of many Italian mothers to have their sons marry Italian women was as much about maintaining these links to culture and community as anything else. Migrant mothers may well have feared the isolation a non-Italian speaking daughter-in-law, and possibly then grandchildren, could have brought.¹⁰⁴ All of these considerations not only bolstered pride and connection to culture, but also ensured Italian women would remain the most attractive brides for Italian men.

Marriage Patterns

Overall, migrants from the Mediterranean, including Greeks and Italians, were far more likely to marry within their own regional and national groups than were other migrants.¹⁰⁵ Similar problems, however, existed among all migrant groups. In 1965, Martin's study of 'refugee settlers' blamed the lack of romance between displaced young men and Australian women on the former's inappropriate behaviour.¹⁰⁶ The accusations levelled at these men were in part the same as those suffered by the Americans during the Second World War: "young single men would try to impress Australian girlfriends by throwing their money around, especially by giving inappropriately expensive presents."¹⁰⁷ As Chapters One and Two have shown, romantic gifts were becoming more acceptable, but the conventions around type and cost of gift were fairly strict. There are many parallels here with the treatment of the generous American soldiers, examined in Chapter Two.

In fact, refugees, or 'displaced persons,' the first wave of post-war migrants into Australia, had considerably higher rates of intermarriage than most later groups of migrants.¹⁰⁸ Even so, women in the same groups tended to marry fellow countrymen, following a wider trend "because they follow rather than lead migration."¹⁰⁹ This was also argued to be the case for the British and the Dutch – the most desired post-war migrants – who had the highest rate of intermarriage with Australians.¹¹⁰ This implies that cultural barriers, perceived to be far greater with Southern Europeans, were a significant deterrent for

¹⁰³ Vasta, "Italian Migrant Women," 152.

¹⁰⁴ Vasta, "Italian Migrant Women," 147.

¹⁰⁵ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 33; Castles, "Italian Migration," 48.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, "Refugee Settlers," 31.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, "Refugee Settlers," 31.

¹⁰⁸ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 33; Martin, *Refugee Settlers*, 93.

¹⁰⁹ Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 33.

¹¹⁰ Martin, *Refugee Settlers*, 93, Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, 33.

prospective Australian brides. Newspaper articles declared that Australian women were rejecting migrants, arguing that they did so based on the migrants' lack of knowledge of the surf and Australian Rules football.¹¹¹ Of course, it was based much more on contemporary understandings of race, which placed northern Europeans, after those of British descent, at the top of the hierarchy. Displaced people travelling far from their home countries were also often unable to find brides of their own culture, so intermarriage was their only option. They were frequently placed in regional and rural locations for work, including for public works projects like the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme, and thus were more isolated from any potential romantic partners from their homelands.¹¹² Jayne Persian noted that this was by design, as it helped "avoid the concentration of displaced persons in any one locality" in metropolitan areas. Thus, while romance was a path to assimilation, or way to belong, it also became a battleground where tensions about assimilation played out. Those migrants deemed more assimilable were given more opportunities to date and fall in love with settler Australians, while those seen as less assimilable, particularly Southern Europeans, were more likely to marry within their own communities, therefore perpetuating language and cultural barriers to assimilation.

Migrant Women

While this chapter is focusing on the nature of romance and marriage for all migrants, it is necessary to understand the multifaceted role female migrants were expected to fill. It is clear that post-war migration in Australia was explicitly gendered. As Simic demonstrated, marriage and migration "were intimately linked" for women in particular.¹¹³ Many young European women were facing a future with a dearth of marriageable men, and marrying a man bound for Australia, or, by proxy, one already there, gave them the opportunity to build their own home and family, even though it would be in a completely new world.¹¹⁴ However, it is important to note that many stories about migrant women focus entirely on their role as brides and mothers, and not as workers.¹¹⁵ Post-war immigration was sold to Australians as an opportunity to strengthen the labour force. There was a distinct class aspect to this, of course, as even educated and highly qualified migrants filled jobs for unskilled labourers.

¹¹¹ Wills, "Good Neighbours," 347.

¹¹² Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 157.

¹¹³ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 171.

¹¹⁴ Nance Donkin, *Stranger and Friend: The Greek-Australian Experience* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1983, 147; Iuliano, *Vite Italiane*, 89-90.

¹¹⁵ Sheridan, "The 'Australian Woman,'" 126.

Migrant women contributed significantly to the labour market, but they tended to be viewed by settler Australians as “illiterate, dependent and unproductive,” their usefulness apparently only in the ability to “contain their male nationals.”¹¹⁶

Paid work and motherhood existed in an uneasy tension in Australia but migrant women’s potential for both roles was an essential part of their acceptance into Australia. Women were vital in that they would shape the new generation of Australians. As Sara Wills argued, in the second half of the 1950s Australians became less focused on women as workers and more on “family formation.”¹¹⁷ Married women in Australia were “central to the projection of an Australian way of life” through their role as protectors of the domestic sphere.¹¹⁸ Migrant women, too, would have to fill this role. Wills’ work on the representation of Australia’s ‘millionth migrant,’ a young British woman, clearly outlines the link between gender and stability. Representations of migrant women in popular media emphasised the idea of ‘home,’ and how Australia would be embraced as a new home for these nation-building women.¹¹⁹ Women were a sign of permanent migration, of setting up home and birthing new generations of Australians. Migration was only one pillar of the plan to ‘Populate or Perish,’ the other being natural increase through a baby boom. Calwell envisioned a one per cent increase in population via births and one per cent via net migration.¹²⁰ Migrant women could therefore play a vital role.

As Wills argues, this narrative obscures the actual experiences of these women and their families, a story that sometimes leaked out in the press, nevertheless.¹²¹ The millionth migrant herself, Barbara Porrit, spoke to Wills of her own struggles in making a home in Australia. Australian authorities did not demand the British assimilate because of the assumption that they arrived already assimilated; it was assumed that Australia was adequately British that no adjustments were deemed necessary. However, many British migrants, including Porrit, found it difficult to recognise their own identities in “Australian ‘Britishness’.”¹²² Porrit chose to persist in Australia, despite these difficulties. She emphasised the importance of family in making a new home: “my home’s in Australia now

¹¹⁶ Vasta, “Italian Migrant Women,” 144-5.

¹¹⁷ Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 348.

¹¹⁸ Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 348.

¹¹⁹ Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 333.

¹²⁰ Persian, *Beautiful Balts*, 25.

¹²¹ Sheila Sheldon, “Problem Post,” *The News*, January 31, 1952, 17; Sheila Sheldon, “Problem Post,” *The News*, February 14, 1952, 15.

¹²² Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 341, 352.

because my kids are here. And I still maintain that home is where you make it. I still say that.”¹²³ Like Porrit, many British migrants found assimilation a difficult experience, and over time a significant number returned to Britain.¹²⁴

Australian-born women also had a distinctive role to play in assimilation. The welcoming of migrants was the job of polite society, and thus the domain of middle-class women. The *Australian Women's Weekly* extended a hand of friendship to New Australians, even to the point of, at times, promoting migrant bachelors as potential husbands for Australian women.¹²⁵ Of course, this was only for migrants who had successfully assimilated, those who had shed their troublesome image and embraced supposedly “‘Aussie’ qualities such as hard work and devotion to family.”¹²⁶ Sheridan outlined how the *Weekly* presented migrants as available men, and constructed their audience as interested women.¹²⁷ This erased migrant women twice over: as objects for friendship for Australians, and as readers of the *Weekly*.¹²⁸ It also reinforced the idea that assimilation was firmly based on the marriage of migrant men to settler Australian women.¹²⁹

In June 1951, the *Williamstown Chronicle* urged its readers to welcome New Australians with open arms, by comparing their leap of faith to that of a new bride:

Can we afford to let such an assortment of emigrants settle in our midst? Aren't we taking a terrible risk? We are certainly taking a great risk. Perhaps as great as the average young woman takes when she marries a man she has only known a brief while. And there should be as great an urge to take them as that which compels the average young woman to her marriage venture. The average 'happy ending' is remarkably high.
130

Julie Ustinoff and Kay Saunders have written about the ground-breaking Tania Verstak, who, in 1961, was the first 'New Australian' woman to win the Miss Australia competition. As they discuss, her presentation in the competition and the media held implications for apparently acceptable forms of assimilation for women.¹³¹ Verstak, a Chinese-born Russian

¹²³ Wills, "Good Neighbours," 351.

¹²⁴ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 151; Sara Wills and Kate Darian-Smith, "Beauty Contest for British Bulldogs? Negotiating (Trans)national Identities in Suburban Melbourne," *Cultural Studies Review* 9, 2 (2003): 69.

¹²⁵ "Problems of Loneliness," *Australian Women's Weekly*, March 9, 1955, 2.

¹²⁶ Sheridan, "The Australian Woman," 125.

¹²⁷ Sheridan, "The Australian Woman," 125.

¹²⁸ Sheridan, "The Australian Woman," 126.

¹²⁹ Simic, "Bachelors of Misery," 163.

¹³⁰ "New Australians," *Williamstown Chronicle*, June 15, 1951, 3.

¹³¹ Julie Ustinoff and Kay Saunders, "Celebrity, Nation, and the New Australian Woman: Tania Verstak, Miss Australia, 1961," *Journal of Australian Studies* 28, 83 (2004): 62.

refugee, “provided tangible evidence of the successful ‘Australianisation’ (or assimilation) process that immigrants were expected to undertake in order to secure their tenuous position in Australian society.”¹³² Verstak further successfully navigated her position by marrying an Australian man, and producing Australian children.¹³³ Here, as in the story of ‘the millionth’ Barbara Porritt, the link between migration and a successful romance is once again evident. The newspapers represent Barbara Porritt’s journey from England to Australia as a “honeymoon assimilation” – “it is almost as if she is marrying Australia: even though she was married well before the paper reported her journey, *Good Neighbour* presents her initially as a single, attractive and desirable young woman.”¹³⁴ The magazine even used her maiden name when first introducing her. The romance of the journey was enhanced in order to disguise the many troublesome aspects of the assimilation policy. Selling immigration to Australians ultimately involved selling them on an idealised love story.

Assimilation had a great impact on romantic rituals throughout the 1950s and 1960s. European immigrants to Australia were the subject of many anxieties about successful assimilation, which was often symbolised through marriage in their new country. Exogamous marriages were considered particularly representative of assimilation, however there were many obstacles to the marriage of white settler Australians and non-British European migrants. Shifting ideas about race and gender interacted, creating fears about sexualised European men, exacerbated by the gender imbalance of the migrants. Romance was therefore seen as assimilatory, but also a way of controlling a mostly male incoming population. For the migrants themselves, romance was a way of finding belonging in a new and often hostile country and committing to a future family in Australia.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the impact of assimilation policy and rhetoric on the private lives and loves of European migrants to Australia. Here, again, the lines between private and public life are blurred. Romance and marriage became part of a larger story of migration, assimilation, nation building, and creating a life in a new nation. They had many

¹³² Ustinoff and Saunders, “Celebrity,” 69

¹³³ Ustinoff and Saunders, “Celebrity,” 72.

¹³⁴ Wills, “Good Neighbours,” 339; “Our 1,000,000th Migrant Due in November,” *Good Neighbour*, October 1, 1955, 1; “This Is Why We Are Publishing This Journal,” *Good Neighbour*, August 1, 1950, 1. *Good Neighbour* was a monthly bulletin produced by the Immigration Department and distributed by Good Neighbour Councils from 1950-1969, which aimed to “assist the formation and successful working of Good Neighbour Committees.”

perceived roles, from stabilising a dangerous gender imbalance to assuaging individual loneliness and taking part in Australia's post-war baby boom and reconstruction project.

The purposes of marriage for the people in this chapter were often very different from those featured previously. For European migrants, marriage was an important part of committing to, and finding happiness in Australia. As such, dating and romantic rituals were often taken very seriously, and took on the form of organised, family-arranged meetings with potential partners. While young New Australians still dated for pleasure, for many who were at the forefront of migration chains it was an extremely serious business. This undoubtedly had an impact on the role dating and romantic rituals played in these young people's lives.

From a group strongly focused on marriage, the analysis now turns to the role of dating when there was no clear path to marriage, as was the case for gay men and lesbian women in post-war Australia.

Chapter Seven: Public Beats and Private Parties: Gay and Lesbian Romance 1945-1970

The movement of heterosexual romance from the private to the public sphere has been explored in Chapter Two. As going out replaced calling in, young lovers took their romances public, where, paradoxically, they were for the first time able to find moments of privacy away from familial prying eyes. For gay men and lesbian women, there were more layers to this public-private division.¹ Yorick Smaal discussed the importance of public space as a “defining feature of modern homosexual subcultures.”² However, due to wide-ranging laws against same-sex acts, heavy policing and social disapprobation, gay men and lesbians also had to ensure they were able to carve out a semblance of privacy in these public spaces. The way gay men and women negotiated this changed slowly but surely from the Second World War to the beginnings of the sexual revolution.

While same-sex attracted men and women met and fell in love, these couples were denied access to legally recognised marriage and many other social markers of partnership. This severance of courtship and marriage had an impact on dating rituals and behaviour. For

¹ Terminology: Australian homosexual men in the 1940s referred to themselves by a number of different terms, some suggesting fluidity of gender, including queens, cissies and bitches. Americans referred to the same as fairies, and belles. Queer meant something different for Australians and Americans at this time – for Americans it was growing to be a term for men who experienced homosexual desire but did not engage in the gendered behaviour related to queens, belles, and fairies. In Australia, these men tended to call themselves ‘camp’. In the 1950s, camp was the most common term gay men used for themselves. Homosexual, meanwhile, was predominantly a medical term, and one that was slowly replacing the previous legal descriptor ‘sodomist.’ This change in terminology was significant, not only because it indicated a shift from a legal to a medical understanding of sexuality, but also as it illustrated a broader social definition of the identity of the men involved, not only the sex act. There were fewer terms for women, who sometimes defined themselves as lesbians, and at times chose descriptors of their gender presentation, such as butch. Of course, these communities were varied, and identification and terms were changeable. Cultural exchange with the Americans also took place in different areas. In this chapter I will endeavour to apply the terms people used to describe themselves, or else use the terms ‘same-sex desire,’ ‘gay men’ and ‘lesbian women.’ Yorick Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939-1945: Queer Identities in Australia in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2015), xxi; Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 93-4; Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Remaking the Australian Homosexual* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 15-16; Jim Wafer, “Uncle Doreen’s Family Drag Album: A Reading of Hunter Valley Social History from a Gay Man’s Perspective,” in *Out in the Valley: Hunter Gay and Lesbian Histories* ed. Jim Wafer, Erica Southgate & Lyndall Coan (Newcastle: Newcastle Region Library, 2000), 61; Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, xxv.

² Yorick Smaal, “Friends and Lovers: Social Networks and Homosexual Life in War-time Queensland,” in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI*, ed. Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett, (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2011): 174.

many same-sex attracted people, dating could encompass a broad range of experiences from casual encounters to long-term relationships. An analysis of dating therefore covers sex, love and friendship, and works to analyse the unique ways these communities navigated dating culture and conventions within a very different framework from Australian society's seemingly compulsory heterosexuality.

Private networks were a key feature of socialising with other same-sex attracted people. Men and women gathered in friendship groups in public and private and individuals found their way into these private groups through a complex set of rituals and careful behaviours surrounding introductions. Discretion was necessary, so gay men and women had to signal interest and attraction cautiously and through subtle indicators. Successful meetings generally led to introductions to wider friendship groups. Members of these networks socialised in a number of ways, from private house parties to gatherings at pubs and bars. Venues in which gay men and lesbians felt safe to socialise grew in number and popularity throughout the post-war period. However, before the 1970s, these were largely pubs that catered to a mixed crowd, and gay-specific venues remained underground, consisting mostly of unofficial parties after closing time.³ This chapter follows the effects of the post-war reconstruction period up until the emergence of the gay liberation movement at the end of the 1960s, and examines the impact classification and categorisation of same-sex desire had on romantic rituals and behaviours. It then turns to the specifics of gay and lesbian socialising and dating in this period, tracing the experience of being introduced to a new network of friends and lovers. Same-sex attracted men and women met and dated within these friendship groups, but also in public, using beats, pubs and clubs to meet partners. This seeming dichotomy of private social networks and public spaces is essential to the experience of same-sex attracted men and women participating in dating in post-war Australia.

Incitement to Discourse?

Throughout the entire period this chapter addresses, homosexuality in Australia was treated as both a criminal and medical issue. Competing discourses and definitions meant that

³ Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side B SLNSW; John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW; Scott McKinnon (host), "PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney," PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>; Nick Matheson-Lines and 'Owen', interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, April 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 6 Side A SLNSW; Scott McKinnon (host), "PridePod Episode 2," PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

it was simultaneously pathologised, seen as an inherent perversion, and gradually, understood as a private moral choice. A number of historians have mapped these changing definitions and their impact on social understandings of homosexuality as well as individual gay lives.⁴ Many of these works focus on the medical, legal and sexological definitions of homosexuality, its possible causes, and supposed ‘treatment.’ When it comes to the 1950s, however, there is significant debate on the existence and construction of homosexual visibility and identity. As Ruth Ford discussed in her work on lesbian desire in the 1950s, marginalised people often did not allow themselves to be defined by medical assessments.⁵ However, she did generally support the idea, held by a number of Australian historians, that repression in the 1940s and 1950s led to a Foucauldian model of ‘incitement to discourse.’ In other words, the nature and form of oppression was generative in that it created a language and understanding *around* same-sex attraction that people were able to use to position themselves. Attempts to curtail homosexual acts, in this theory, only gave more discursive space to the construction of gay and lesbian identities. Graham Willett rejected this theory, arguing that repression was so complete in the 1950s that it was not possible “to generate the visibility and public awareness that the repressive/generative model requires.”⁶

Jennings, in her history of lesbian Sydney, agreed that there are significant limitations to the generative hypothesis in Australia.⁷ While homosexuality was criminalised, female same-sex desire was monitored and controlled “in subtler ways,” thereby creating a mechanism of silence in which it was impossible to construct “lesbian subcultures and identities.”⁸ Jennings proposed, therefore, the examination of “silence as a disciplinary mechanism in itself,” and an investigation of the way women who experienced same-sex desires were pushed into “acceptable patterns of femininity such as conventional marriage and motherhood.”⁹

⁴ Yorick Smaal, “‘It Is One of Those Things That Nobody Can Explain’: Medicine, Homosexuality, and the Australian Criminal Courts during World War II,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, 3 (2013): 502-5; Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer*; Graham Willett, *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Garry Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain: History of a Gay Sub-culture* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1991); Ruth Ford, “‘Filthy, Obscene and Mad’: Engendering ‘Homophobia’ in Australia, 1940s-1960s,” in *Homophobia: An Australian History* ed. Shirleene Robinson, 86-112 (Sydney: The Federation Press, 2008), 86-112.

⁵ Ruth Ford, “Speculating on Scrapbooks, Sex and Desire: Issues in Lesbian History,” *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 106 (1996): 123.

⁶ Graham Willett, “The Darkest Decade: Homophobia in 1950s Australia,” *Australian Historical Studies* 27, 109 (1997): 121.

⁷ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, xvi.

⁸ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, xvii-xviii.

⁹ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, xvi, xviii.

Garry Wotherspoon claimed, however, that in regard to male same-sex desire, the discussion of homosexuality in sexological and medico-legal contexts at least filtered through to intellectual circles, although admittedly this was a very limited discursive space. Wotherspoon referred particularly to the controversial 1948 Kinsey report on *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* in America, which was followed by the 1953 *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* and, in 1957, the Wolfenden Report to the British government.¹⁰ Wotherspoon argued that the appearance of Kinsey's report in the aftermath of the Second World War signified "an end to unknowing."¹¹ Regardless of the effect of these state and institutional interventions, it is clear that the war itself did bring about significant change for many gay men and lesbian women.

Many recollections of the war position it as a catalyst: introducing Australian soldiers and civilians alike to a new range of opportunities and experiences. One young soldier's own story mirrored this. The war broke out when he was sixteen and working in Sydney, having experienced attraction to men but unsure of himself. He had two brief encounters before the war, "very amateurish bits and pieces," but he described himself as "holding back." However, the experience of going away to the war was transformative. First, he described having a "remarkable experience on a troop ship" where the vessel was carrying a group of supposedly wounded Americans, including, he later discovered, men who had been discharged from the United States military after a witch hunt against homosexual men stationed in New Guinea.¹² Chapter Two analysed the impact of the wartime disruption of social taboos and the influx of the American troops on Australia's sexual and social conventions. This chapter now examines the experience of gay men and lesbian women in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, tracing the impact of the war through these decades.

The post-war period of the late 1940s and 1950s was focused on containing sexuality, somewhat liberated and challenged by the war, within the nuclear family. This, of course, had an impact on gay and lesbian communities. The war had been disruptive to gender roles, and a "discursive and material repositioning of the patriarchal family as the moral pillar of

¹⁰ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 81; Alfred C Kinsey, Wardell B Pomeroy and Clyde E Martin, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (Philadelphia; W. B Saunders, 1948); Alfred C Kinsey et al. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (Philadelphia; Saunders, 1953); John Frederick Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: H.M.S.O., 1957), Cmnd 247.

¹¹ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 81.

¹² Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW; Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 13; Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 99.

society” was seen as a way to return to the sexual status quo.¹³ This era was defined by its focus on reconstruction of the nation as an idealised white Australia. The emphasis on productive citizenship through marriage and the creation of suburban white nuclear families not only raised issues for the Aboriginal people and recent immigrants who were the subject of the previous chapter, but also excluded gay and lesbian Australians. Further, the medical view of homosexuality encouraged fears of contagion, particularly for younger men ‘corrupted’ by older gay men. Therefore, homosexual men and women were seen as a direct threat. This resulted in violence and oppression, but also in carefully gendered advice around heterosexual sex and dating, as examined in Chapter Three. The rigidity of presented gender roles points to this fear of homosexuality. Ideas of gender and sexuality were entwined, and in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s same-sex desire was associated with gender non-conforming behaviour. The lesbian was supposed to be a ‘mannish’ woman, the gay man effeminate and passive.

Categorisation and Classification

Gay men were usually grouped into two aberrant categories. The ‘active’ partner in sex, the penetrator, was seen as more masculine, and therefore less perverted.¹⁴ These categories can be seen clearly in both American and Australian policies and actions during the Second World War, and their influence was felt throughout the post-war period. The American response to homosexuality in the services changed throughout the war and influenced Australian policy when the Allied forces came into contact. Initially, men caught having sex with each other were subject to court-martial and conviction for sodomy. However, the increased demand for soldiers after 1942, together with sustained efforts by United States psychiatric reformers, led to the official adoption of a policy of psychiatric assessment and dishonourable discharge after 1943.¹⁵ Psychiatric classifications of homosexuality were filtered through the military and resulted in categories of offence, while violent acts continued to be punished through the criminal system..¹⁶ The armed forces in the

¹³ Kerry H. Robinson and Cristyn Davies, “Docile Bodies and Heteronormative Moral Subjects: Constructing the Child and Sexual Knowledge in Schooling,” *Sexuality and Culture* 12, 4 (2008): 226.

¹⁴ Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*, 216.

¹⁵ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 139.

¹⁶ Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 136-7, 140. This last category only existed in the Army system; the US Navy did not allow for such retention.

United States also attempted to screen out men with homosexual tendencies during selection panels looking for mental instabilities.¹⁷

American experience with homosexual behaviour in New Guinea directly influenced similar Australian policies. Australian servicemen were implicated in an American investigation in Port Moresby, and the US Army contacted their Allied counterparts to inform them of the issue in 1943.¹⁸ The Australian men involved were offered medical discharges in exchange for confessions, and the previous unofficial policy that rested on the discretion of the commanding officer was re-examined. As in the American forces, the tension between legal and medical solutions resulted in a mixed policy which ranged from disciplinary action for violent offences to attempted medical rehabilitation of men considered only situationally homosexual. If officials deemed a man would not respond to psychiatric treatment, he was to be discharged.¹⁹ In both forces, the official treatment of men who had sex with men depended on their role in both the sex act itself and socially. Men who were seen to be innately homosexual, particularly those who took on the passive role in sex and engaged in feminine behaviours, were considered unreachable by treatment and discharged. However, men who were believed to have only participated due to a strong sexual drive and the absence of women were seen as retrievable, and ideally treated and brought back into the services. In practice, this categorisation depended on the circumstances and discretion of the men involved, and the attitude of their commanding officer.

As one soldier remembered, the Australian armed forces relied on these categorisations: “as long as you pointed out strongly that you had played the active male role, and you had gotten something out of it... you were clear.”²⁰ There were some loopholes here; one Australian soldier noted that the Americans offered a middle-ground: their fondness of oral sex allowed for “a beaut sort of place where I could meet halfway.” He saw the roles as very important, and he had even passed up a relationship opportunity with one man due to them both playing the active role in sex.²¹ These definitions of passive and active existed within changing medical and psychological ideas about innate or acquired perversion. In the

¹⁷ Naoko Wake, “The Military, Psychiatry, and “Unfit” Soldiers, 1939-1942,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 62, 4 (2007): 463-4.

¹⁸ Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 13.

¹⁹ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 13.

²⁰ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW; Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 3.

²¹ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

post-war period, adolescents were seen as particularly vulnerable to getting caught in a “cycle of procurement where perverted adults preyed on susceptible youths who, once misled, repeated the pattern in later life.”²² If young men were encouraged in directing their sexual energies toward other men, they were liable to get stuck in the state of Freudian arrested development, with “repeated exposure retarding patterns of normal psychological growth.”²³ This conception of ‘normal’ sexuality and development as fragile and vulnerable to destabilisation was, according to Cryle and Stephens, “central to sexological discourse well into the twentieth century.”²⁴

The development of a ‘normal’ sexuality was a clear focus of medical and religious establishments in 1950s and 1960s Australia. As discussed in Chapter Three, homosexuality was rarely mentioned in sex education texts of the period. In the few instances where it was addressed, it tended to be within a Freudian framework where children were expected to form close same-sex attachments which would then give way to heterosexual attraction and desire.²⁵ It was therefore positioned as a normal part of pre-adolescence, although it was very carefully stressed that this was an immature form of sexuality. It was not only abnormal for it to continue into adolescence, but unhealthy and immoral. The ‘normal’ child would first make strong connections with friends of the same sex, and then take this experience of closeness into their platonic and then romantic relationships with the opposite sex. In this way homosocial partnerships were contained within a normal path towards healthy and natural heterosexual development.

Two gay men remembered the lack of clear information about sexuality in their youth. At school, the Father and Son movement instructed the boys not to masturbate, but “I already was, I felt very guilty.” This general shame was more specific for those with same-sex desires. John Craig recalled reading religious books as a young gay man and seeing himself reflected as “an evil and horrible and monstrous creature.” Brian Barry connected this feeling with literature and popular culture more broadly, stating that “everybody was down on anything that was against the accepted form” even comic books. John and Brian also read

²² Smaal, “One of Those Things,” 521.

²³ Smaal, “One of Those Things,” 521.

²⁴ Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), Chapter 7, 8 of 28.

²⁵ Family Life Movement of Australia, *Children No Longer: A Practical Guide on Understanding the Adolescent* (Sydney: Family Life Movement of Australia, 1970): 30; Father and Son Welfare Movement of Australia, *Just Friends?* 6th edition, (Sydney: Father and Son Welfare Movement of Australia, 1960), 6; Featherstone, *Let's Talk*, 180.

articles by the famous medical practitioner and sexologist, Dr Norman Haire, who wrote for both academic and popular publications, and recalled thinking he presented a more intelligent argument. Mostly, though, both men remembered that there were not many options when it came to reading matter, and most did not address homosexuality, although the *Women's Weekly* did “have lovely photos of pretty film stars, which I found very interesting.”²⁶ Two lesbian women, Erica and Shirley, also spoke of the lack of discussion of same-sex desire in such magazines, noting that they were really for a different audience – their mums.²⁷ Material catering to teenagers focused exclusively on heterosexual relationships and desire.

The threat of homosexuality was countered by a feverish encouragement of married heterosexuality, and clear gendered roles within it. Religious sex education texts, as discussed in Chapter Three, focused firmly on procreative heterosexuality within marriage, and the pathway children needed to take to get there. After the disruption of war, churches, schools and parents worked to guide young people very carefully through their sexual and emotional development. While prescriptive discussions of sexuality, romance, dating and sexual development for the most part studiously ignored homosexuality, its presence lingered as the dangerous opposite of the norms being established. Heterosexual romance, performed correctly, was healthy at least in part because it was *not* homosexual romance.²⁸

Although neither was discussed frequently or openly, male same-sex desire was warned against more frequently than female. This focus reflects both the relative invisibility of same-sex desire between women and assumptions about gender roles in young people at the time. Boys had to be guarded against homosexuality because it was possible that they would fall prey to a misdirection of their natural sexual energy. Girls were not expected to experience such desire. These gendered differences in sexuality were central to dating conventions and advice, as boys were constructed as the pursuers and providers, and girls the passive guardians of moral order. Sex education texts reminded teenagers that boys were “intended to take the initiative in these things.”²⁹ Magazines and advice columns aimed at young people agreed with this point, arguing that a girl who was too forward could be seen as

²⁶ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

²⁷ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side B, SLNSW.

²⁸ Ruth Ford, “Lady Friends and Sexual Deviationists: Lesbians and the Law in Australia, 1920s-1950s,” in *Sex, Power and Justice: Historical Perspectives on the Law in Australia, 1788-1990*, ed. Diane Kirkby (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 34.

²⁹ Father and Son Welfare Movement, *Just Friends*, 16.

aggressive or unfeminine. Without the presence of males, sexual desire was also presumed to be absent.

However, the efforts to contain female sexuality in the 1950s actually provided more space for lesbian women to understand their own sexuality and experiences of desire and pleasure. The fact that male homosexuality was illegal but female sex was not “is a crucial aspect of the gendered construction of sexuality, based on nineteenth-century ideologies about men having an active sexuality and (white middle-class) women being sexually passive.”³⁰ However female sexuality was already being reimagined at this point. Marilyn Lake has pointed to an emergence in the 1930s of a new kind of femininity, based around sexual attractiveness and desire, and this was given space to bloom during the Second World War.³¹ If female sexuality therefore was able to contain desire, albeit supposedly only within heterosexual marriages, many women could find room to acknowledge their own homosexual desires.

Lesbian women were also, however, categorised according to a strict gender binary. Women who broke gender norms as well as sexual norms faced the brunt of prejudice and violence. Like others seeking attention from potential love interests, lesbian women used clothing to signal group identity, in some cases wearing clothing associated with masculinity. When police questioned women they believed were lesbians, they would ask for identification and, “with no legal basis,” proof of three items of feminine clothing.³² A lesbian in male clothing could be a signal to other women interested in sex or romance, but the practice of wearing masculine clothes also worked as form of “open defiance and resistance to a heterosexist culture.”³³ The policing of women in public, and women who transgressed gender norms in particular, had wider effects. Policing masculine dress not only challenged lesbian resistance, it also eroded a community’s ability to begin to define itself and to make connections with other like-minded individuals. Gender nonconforming behaviour was also punished in medical settings. Erica Mann was sent to a psychiatrist when she was a student at Sydney Teachers’ College, technically for depression, but clearly also to correct her ‘aberrant’ sexuality. She remembered having to do basket weaving in group therapy in the 1960s and wishing she could be doing cementing with the men instead. This in itself was seen as a sign of her disorder: “I made so many teapot stands... and they really

³⁰ Ford, “Lady Friends,” 35.

³¹ Lake, “Female Desires,” 80.

³² Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 96.

³³ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 98.

took my wanting to cement as another sign of me being butch.”³⁴ The fact that she wanted to take part in the ‘male’ activity was another sign to the medical authorities that Erica was continuing to take a masculine role.

Jan and Doreen, working-class women who socialised in the bar scene, found butch women, or those who “adopted masculine dress codes and identities” were harassed on a greater scale by police and other men when out with their “pretty girlfriends.”³⁵ Butch women were punished for their gender nonconforming dress and appearance, but the anger of men seemed to stem specifically from the fact that they were dating feminine women. This involved “encroach[ing] on male territory” in more ways than one: dress, public space, and choice of sexual partner.³⁶ It was the fact that they were occupying the sexual attentions of feminine “pretty girlfriends” that drew the most heterosexual male ire. As Ford argues, “for lesbian women, homophobia cannot be separated from gender and power.”³⁷

It is important to note, however, that while butch lesbians performed a key role in terms of performing gender and sexuality, the divide between women dressing and presenting either masculine or feminine, i.e., butch or femme, was not as pronounced throughout the lesbian community in Australia as it was in other western countries. Jennings has outlined the way many women moved between different “lesbian-identity models”, and yet more did not participate at all.³⁸ The binary was evident in Australia’s bar scene, but many women did not identify themselves along these lines.³⁹ Katie O’Rourke remembered her experience at Chez Ivy, when she was “pretty young, and hadn’t really met any lesbians.” She was surprised to see butch and femme couples dressed up in very masculine and feminine clothing, and felt unnerved and uncomfortable, eventually leaving after realising she was not interested in these forms of self-presentation.⁴⁰

Throughout the later 1950s and early 1960s, medical views of homosexuality began to come to the forefront. There were also the beginnings of discussions about decriminalisation, although it took many more years before any change would eventuate, slowly and in a

³⁴ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

³⁵ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 96; Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, 61.

³⁶ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 96.

³⁷ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad” 89.

³⁸ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, 65-66.

³⁹ Rebecca Jennings, “A Room Full of Women: Lesbian Bars and Social Spaces in Post-war Sydney” *Women’s History Review* 21, 5 (2012): 820-821.

⁴⁰ Katie O’Rourke on Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

piecemeal fashion across Australia's various jurisdictions. The basis of these decriminalisation debates largely stemmed from a medical model of the mostly harmless (if kept away from young people) 'innate' homosexual, and from an increasing turn toward ideas of personal freedom and individual morality. In 1957, the Wolfenden committee in Britain released a report which, among other things, recommended the decriminalisation of private, consensual homosexuality between adult males, although this was not implemented there until 1967 in the form of the *Sexual Offences Act*. In Australia, it took even longer, with South Australia becoming the first state to decriminalise male homosexuality in 1975, and Tasmania the last in 1997.⁴¹

By the end of the 1960s gay and lesbian activism, socialisation and visibility all increased, coming into their own as part of the New Left movement of the 1970s. Romance and social life alike were affected by one's involvement in the activist scene, but greater visibility also allowed for gay men and lesbians who were not involved to make cautious steps toward a more public social scene.

Dating Without Marriage

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, however, socialisation for gay men and lesbian women was characterised by discreet introductions and private social networks, as well as the continued negotiation of the public/private divide. As dating was understood as a key step on the path to marriage, analysis of the role dating played in the lives of those who were not legally able to marry their partners is revealing. Dating already blurred the lines between friendship and romance, and this was certainly the case for gay men and lesbian women in mid-twentieth century Australia. Dating existed within networks of friends and lovers, and the boundaries between love, sex and friendship were not always neat. Many gay men in particular met through sex-focused activities such as cruising at beats. Sometimes, this resulted in anonymous casual sex. It could also lead to relationships, both temporary and long-term, casual and romantic. People who found partners were not able to move from dating to engagement to marriage, as was the accepted path for heterosexual couples. However, the way they viewed their relationship often changed as it became more serious.

⁴¹ Clare Parker and Paul Sendziuk, "It's Time: The Duncan Case and the Decriminalisation of Homosexual Acts in South Australia, 1972," in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* (eds) Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2011), 19.

For gay men in the 1950s and 1960s, the existence of private social networks, dinner parties and weekends away sat comfortably alongside more public forms of homosexual social life, including cruising and the bar scene. The accessibility of this scene, however, was limited by geographical location and class. Those with cars and private homes of their own were able to socialise much more freely with other same-sex attracted people, and date and have sex in greater privacy. For lesbian women, socialising was often limited to private networks, and many women did not have access even to these. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, a burgeoning public scene for lesbian women brought greater visibility and freedom. This largely consisted of underground venues, tolerant public bars and unofficial afterparties, eventually turning into public gay and lesbian venues in the 1970s. While discussing networks of gay men and lesbian women, it is important to note that these were not wholly distinct entities. Gay men and lesbians often socialised together, and this became more of a feature of gay life as the 1960s saw the creation of formal social groups like the Chameleons and the Pollies in Sydney.⁴² However, to access either the private world of house parties or the public scene in hotels and bars, young men and women had to first find a way to let themselves into these spaces.

Introductions

In many cases, young gay men were introduced to the scene by an older mentor. Some of these men had a sexual or romantic relationship, others maintained a platonic friendship. The older man would be able to answer questions, point out beats and pubs, and introduce the young man to his social network. Smaal has discussed this feature of many relationships as evident in court records in wartime Brisbane. In these cases, the relationships were often sexual, and the age gaps could be large, with boys as young as fourteen.⁴³ Information from testimony indicates various reasons for these intergenerational relationships: an increased social freedom, less suspicion from others and possible access to a car. Boys and young men were often looking for someone more experienced, with whom they could feel “comfortable and protected” as they navigated a new world.⁴⁴ One gay man met an older actor; they did not get together but “he answered all of my questions,” took him to all the bars in Sydney “and he put me in the picture about the whole thing, and that was my sex

⁴² Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, 57.

⁴³ Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 176. There were also younger boys, but those under the age of fourteen were dealt with separately.

⁴⁴ Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 176-177.

education.”⁴⁵ Another teenager met an older camp man who worked in a department store, and they caught the same tram to work “and bit by bit we built up a sort of confidence, we could talk quite openly.” After the war, the pair met on the street on a Friday night, and the younger man was introduced to the gay scene of Sydney by way of a pub called Ushers, where he was “flabbergasted” by the amount of camp people in one space.⁴⁶ In the post-war period, ‘camp’ was the most common term same-sex attracted men used for themselves, often using ‘square’ to refer to heterosexual men and women.⁴⁷

Other young men and women found their way to meeting places by listening carefully to warnings and advice to avoid certain areas, and then doing the opposite. They ventured into pubs or bars they had heard were places gay people gathered. Sometimes information could be gleaned from sensationalist tabloids including *Truth*, which published local newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Such papers would occasionally publish the details of a raid on a bar, or court reporting from an arrest at a beat, if the details were particularly salacious or included someone well known. These stories were few and far between, but “for some readers, the details of time, place and location could be garnered and followed up.”⁴⁸ Ken (Kandy) Johnson remembered learning about the Sydney drag venue, the Stork Club, due to a scandalous write-up in the Sydney *Truth* after there was food poisoning at the club. It made page three of the paper in the late 1950s: “up until then I guess it had been an ‘in thing.’”⁴⁹ Family members, schoolmates and university friends offered dire warnings or stories about people who had been spotted at beats:

There was no problem in the early 60s about finding out where the gay scene was in Sydney, because living in the university college people would talk about where you shouldn’t go, they all seemed to know all about the parks and the beats and bars and things. You didn’t have to say a thing, have to ask a thing, you just had to keep your ears open for three weeks and you got it.⁵⁰

John Craig and Brian Barry explained that young men could find a mentor, but also that “one’s own instinct took one a long way. People would go out on an inclination and would

⁴⁵ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

⁴⁶ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

⁴⁷ Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, xxi; Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 93-4; Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer*, 15-16; Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 61.

⁴⁸ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 6.

⁴⁹ Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side A SLNSW.

⁵⁰ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

meet others.”⁵¹ Young men could explore likely beats and watch the behaviour of others there, and often, find themselves on the right corner at King’s Cross, waiting for someone to catch their eye.

Much of the business of meeting someone without an introduction involved body language and frequent glances. John remembered:

In those early days in Sydney, I’d just pick people up in the street in the daytime, just walking along and you’d catch sight and you’d think, ‘oh gee, they’re gorgeous.’ You’d get past them and turn your head back, and you’d find they turn theirs back, and you’d stand on the pavement, and they’d stand on the pavement, there’d be a bit of manoeuvring, and then you’d just get together.⁵²

Similarly, meetings in theatres would rely on catching another’s eye and hovering, and then strategically finding an isolated spot to sit.⁵³ One teenager remembered a young man who worked in the same building as him, whom he found very attractive. The pair made cautious moves and countermoves, until eventually the younger man “got sick of the long glances in the corridor” and followed him up the street, finally shaking his hand and saying, “this is silly.” This marked the beginning of “a very nice friendship.”⁵⁴

The lesbian scene was smaller and more private than gay male circles. Margaret, living at a women’s college in the 1950s, had trouble locating an entrée: “there wasn’t a gay scene that I could discover and one hesitated to disclose oneself in case it was to somebody hostile.”⁵⁵ Lesbians often met in women-only environments, despite tight surveillance, including university colleges, Catholic boarding schools, police forces and the armed services.⁵⁶ Carole Popham and Christina Dennis met in the Women’s Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF), and began a relationship in 1967.⁵⁷ They both understood that homosexuality was not permitted in the WRAAF, but found real joy and pleasure in their relationship, even when they had to hide it, and eventually left the services in order to live together as partners. Women “joined sporting clubs or the army or mingled in the bohemian

⁵¹ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

⁵² John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

⁵³ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

⁵⁴ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

⁵⁵ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 102.

⁵⁶ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 103-104.

⁵⁷ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 49.

circles of artists and actors and writers.”⁵⁸ Erica remembered going to a camp party and seeing most of her softball team there: “no wonder I liked it so much!”⁵⁹

Rebecca Jennings has outlined the way some women moved to Sydney, “hoping that a large city would offer greater freedoms,” or to meet up with lesbian friends and networks there. For those travelling alone, “it was a slow process, depending on chance encounters with other lesbians at work and elsewhere, or following the occasional hint offered by a casual remark or a newspaper article.”⁶⁰ Some women simply went to the camp male venues.⁶¹ Erica and Shirley said they would find things out by word of mouth, but it was difficult, and they would hear from friends who “mixed more than we did, had a wider circle of camp friends.”⁶² They met these friends, usually, through work. One of the women worked for the gas company as a meter reader and met several other lesbians with the same job: “there’s always something – I don’t know what it is, people often talk about it – some way you can tell.” The two women themselves met in college towards the end of the 1960s. They agreed that generally, middle-class women met in the 1960s through “dinner party networks”: “you’d meet people, you’d meet other people, and they’d know a place you could go have a dance or a drink.”⁶³ However, it was more common to visit privately, in each other’s houses, rather than going out. On the nights where the women did venture out for a dance, they were not usually aiming to meet anybody. Usually, women at these venues were already coupled up or in established social groups and went to drink and dance with their existing circle or go on dancing dates with their girlfriends.

Many, like Margaret, were anxious about approaching the wrong person. There remained myriads of stories about how to spot a camp man or a lesbian: a red tie, yellow socks, or an earring in a particular ear.⁶⁴ However, most people said the only visual sign was

⁵⁸ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 6. Many interviewees used the term ‘friendship’ and other euphemisms to refer to sexual and romantic partnerships. While this could easily be related to issues of discretion and language use at the time, it was also a common term used by those remembering their heterosexual relationships at the same time.

⁵⁹ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side B, SLNSW.

⁶⁰ Rebecca Jennings, “Lesbian Spaces: Sydney, 1945-1978,” *Sydney Journal* 4, 1 (2013): 170.

⁶¹ Karen Brown on Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

⁶² Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

⁶³ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

⁶⁴ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

often a certain daring when it came to clothing.⁶⁵ For men this may have included feminine styles, but it also could be wearing brighter colours or more casual clothes than other men. For women, the butch lesbian played a key role, as a visible indicator of “a new space of female desire.”⁶⁶ While many lesbians and gay men dressed ‘square,’ experimentation with gender presentation did indicate the existence of a camp lifestyle.⁶⁷ Usually, meeting one gay person opened the door to meeting their friends and finding one’s way into a social group.⁶⁸

Social Networks

These social networks were, as Willett noted, “the backbone of camp life,” and gave people access to the “friends and parties that provided a social life for most homosexuals who had one.”⁶⁹ Smaal’s investigation of homosexual networks in wartime Brisbane provides a model for the set of social connections and groups formed for friendship, relationships, and sexual encounters. These men would meet at work, out at a pub or at a beat, and then introduce each other to the rest of their respective networks. His research uncovered “a group of individuals who developed coping strategies to operate successfully within the confines which cast them as outlaws and deviants.”⁷⁰

Social networks could be formed through shared interests or hobbies. Sporting clubs, churches and artistic scenes all gave camp men and lesbians a chance to meet other people like themselves, and sometimes, to socialise in mixed gatherings. The coffee shops frequented by gay men and lesbians in Kings Cross in the 1940s were home to an “arty” crowd, and independent theatre groups had large numbers of members who were part of the camp scene.⁷¹ Smaller cities had their own networks. In Newcastle, men returned from the war to form social groups with other camp men. One group held dinner parties and went away together, and by the late 1940s were attending regular private dances and parties.⁷²

⁶⁵ Unnamed individual interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, December 1980, MLOH448, Tape 7 Side A, SLNSW.

⁶⁶ Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 241.

⁶⁷ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 6.

⁶⁸ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 6-7.

⁶⁹ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 8.

⁷⁰ Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 172.

⁷¹ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW.

⁷² Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 59; Kevin Coleman Interviewed by John Witte, 15 May 2017, Hunter Rainbow History Group, Newcastle NSW <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/66939>.

Private parties and balls were the key features of camp scenes in larger cities as well. Groups would hire halls and drag artists for dances, and individuals would host parties in their own homes. When groups socialised at pubs and hotels in Sydney, the focus was on the location of the party afterwards. Ken (Kandy) Johnson remembered the rush just before closing at the Rex in the 1950s, when the address of the party would spread, and people would pile into cars and taxis. “You never have [a party] yourself,” Ken recalled, “because it always got crashed. You never organised a party in your own place because you just knew it would be up at the Rex in ten minutes.”⁷³ John and Brian, however, navigated the scene a few years earlier, when “nobody had a car.” They would find out the location of the party by listening in, or asking the right people, and then would have to figure out how to get there: “parties would be all over the place.”⁷⁴ Nick Matheson-Lines and his partner remembered meeting with their friends at Pfahler’s Hotel in Wynyard before “whizzing off” to a party once it closed.⁷⁵ In 1955, Sydney hotels’ closing time moved to 10 o’clock. While the timing of the evening changed, pubs and hotels were still often seen as a jumping off point for a party afterwards, usually upstairs, in an unofficial capacity, at popular camp bars like Chez Ivy’s and the Trolley Car.⁷⁶

Large groups would hire houses at popular tourist locations for holidays and long weekends. Like the teenagers in Chapter Four, this gave friends and couples a chance to socialise freely. However, these groups of middle-class adults could afford a more lavish affair. According to Ken (Kandy) Johnson, the Blue Mountains Queen’s Birthday long weekend drag nights began in the 1950s. He also remembered big parties in a cottage rented for the weekend in Newport.⁷⁷ Nick Matheson-Lines also went to the Blue Mountains in the late 1950s. These trips often served as a way to introduce new people to a social circle: “that would probably be a feature, I think, of the mountains, that so many of the older people took up younger people who had a chance to meet people up there, so it was a splendid way of

⁷³ Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side B SLNSW.

⁷⁴ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW; Peter Tribilco on Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

⁷⁵ Nick Matheson-Lines and ‘Owen’, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, April 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 6 Side A SLNSW.

⁷⁶ Ivy Richter on Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>; Dennis/Flo Fuller on Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 2,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

⁷⁷ Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side B SLNSW.

making friends.”⁷⁸ A core group of friends would rent seven or eight houses, with ten to twelve people in each, bringing new guests and throwing parties. The parties were for a closed circuit of gay people who would dress extravagantly for the occasions. “The mountains used to be a marathon,” according to Matheson-Lines:

You’d go up there Friday night – there’d be a ‘welcome to the mountains’ party. Saturday lunch time someone would have a party, then in the afternoon they used to have a cocktail party before the dinner party before the ball... You used to have to take so many trunks! We still have cases up in the attic full of all the furs and all the drag.⁷⁹

The private houses in the mountains gave these camp crowds a space to socialise in comfort and safety. The ability to buy privacy through renting houses and halls was a luxury not available to all same-sex attracted people. Lesbian women also participated in these holiday parties and organised their own. Jennings described the way Beverley and Georgina, after “building a network of about eight or nine lesbian friends” who they socialised with frequently in the 1940s and 1950s, would go on holidays as a group to the New South Wales’ Central Coast, a popular destination for lesbian women at the time.⁸⁰

For those without a social network, it could be very lonely. This was often the case for men and women living in regional and rural areas, away from the established scenes in capital cities. L., a lesbian from Newcastle, had heard of gay women, “but never met one before Mary.” When they met in 1955, L. was married with two children, and “didn’t know of any other [lesbian] women in Newcastle at the time.” They had brief windows in which to meet very discreetly, and a year later Mary left, and L. was once again “terribly lonely.” L. stayed married until the children were older, and moved to Sydney in 1965, eventually finding a network of women through her tennis club. She described her experience of her first gay party as “such a hoot, I’d never seen such a spectacle... it was wonderful.”⁸¹ Fellow Novocastrian Joan, seventeen years younger, learnt at school that “loving women was a deadly sin” and concluded “Oscar Wilde and I were the only homosexuals in the world.” She

⁷⁸ Nick Matheson-Lines and ‘Owen’, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon April 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 6 Side A SLNSW.

⁷⁹ Nick Matheson-Lines and ‘Owen’, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon April 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 6 Side A SLNSW.

⁸⁰ Jennings, “Lesbian Spaces,” 175.

⁸¹ L., quoted in Lyndall Coan (compiler) “Filling Some Gaps: Lesbian History Excerpts From the “Hunter Pride” Exhibition,” in *Out In the Valley: Hunter Gay and Lesbian Histories*, ed. Jim Wafer, Erica Southgate and Lyndall Coan (Newcastle: Newcastle Region Library, 2000), 205.

did not find an escape from the loneliness of the 1950s until the later years of the decade, with the emergence of gay groups and more avenues for meeting other women.⁸²

Beats

Although private networks provided gay men and lesbians with a safe social scene, public life was still an essential part of the camp experience. Beats provided men with spaces to meet other men for sex before the 1940s, and they continued to be an important feature of camp life throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Beats are known places, in parks, at beaches, in public toilets and other discreet areas, where men looking for homosexual sex can meet each other, “linger[ing] inconspicuously, waiting until another came along to linger with them.”⁸³ Not all men using beats identified as gay or camp, but many camp men found them an essential place for satisfying sexual desires, as well as a place to meet casual partners, lovers and new friends.⁸⁴ In Newcastle, an ideal beat was somewhere “people could ‘legitimately stroll... and men who were looking for other men would simply blend in with the crowd.’”⁸⁵ This is why parks and beaches were often popular beats.⁸⁶

Location was very important when cruising or picking up, as each spot would offer a different type of partner. In Sydney, John Craig and Brian Barry named a corner in King’s Cross as the place to pick up “rough trade,” i.e. men who were not part of the camp scene, often bisexual or heterosexual men who were willing to have sex with camp men.⁸⁷ The corner itself was just outside the “Hasty Tasty,” a twenty-four hour snack bar, and one could “literally see queens standing on the corner, just waiting around.”⁸⁸ In the wartime in

⁸² Joan Webster, quoted in Coan, “Filling Some Gaps,” 206.

⁸³ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 7.

⁸⁴ Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 58.

⁸⁵ Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 56.

⁸⁶ In Brisbane: Wickham Park, Albert Park, Botanical Gardens, The Eternal Flame shrine in Brisbane. Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 174; In Sydney: Turkish baths, Giles baths, Bondi Pavilion, movie theatres, toilets at railway stations, Hyde Park, the Domain. Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 93-4; Boomerang St, Balmoral dressing sheds. John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW; In Newcastle: Beach pavilions, Pacific Park bus terminus, ‘Buckingham Palace’ – toilets outside Scott’s Department Store, Denison Street toilets, Susan Gilmore Beach, Century Theatre, Birdwood Park, Braye Park, Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 55-56; Kevin Coleman, interviewed by John Witte, 15 May 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Group*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/66939>; Danny Dodd, interviewed by John Witte, 21 January 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Group*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/59992>.

⁸⁷ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW

⁸⁸ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW

particular, cruising was not confined to beats, but spread into surrounding streets.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, other camp men could be picked up in bars, where groups socialised within their networks. There were specific spots one could go to pick up a sailor: pubs in Bridge St, the Naval House, and coffee shops that would open late.⁹⁰ In Woolloomooloo, the Rock'n'Roll Hotel was by one report “the roughest toughest pub in Sydney” and was popular with sailors and camp men alike.⁹¹ Carole located the lesbian scene in Darlinghurst and the inner-city, with King’s Cross “mostly notorious for prostitution and male homosexuality.”⁹² She also remembered brief glimpses of drag clubs and cabarets in Sydney: “the early days of the Purple Onion, and Les Girls, and that sort of stuff”. These two venues, the Purple Onion on Anzac Parade and Les Girls in Kings Cross, were renowned for their drag shows from the 1960s onwards, as pubs, clubs and bars run for and by same-sex attracted people began to emerge.

Pubs and Clubs

There were certain bars available in most major cities that accepted a mixed clientele of gay and straight patrons. Their businesses had boomed during the war with the influx of servicemen, and after the war more venues opened or became available for camp crowds.⁹³ These bars were well known amongst camp circles and patronised mostly by men. Sometimes the camp crowd would be in the back bar, but more often camp and square groups shared the same space but socialised separately.⁹⁴ Gay men and lesbian women also frequented various cafes and restaurants.⁹⁵ Late night coffee shops became popular during the Second World War, especially in Sydney’s King’s Cross.

⁸⁹ Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 94.

⁹⁰ John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW

⁹¹ Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

⁹² Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 46.

⁹³ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 5-6.

⁹⁴ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 5-6; Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 175.

⁹⁵ In Brisbane: Pink Elephant Café, Little Boys Café, Colony Club, Christies, Casa Mara, Dingle Dell Tea Rooms, Marie Theresa café, Grand Central Hotel, Lennon’s, The Long Bar at the Criterion, The Circular Bar at her Majesty’s, the Grisham. Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows*, 130; Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 174-5); In Sydney: The Long Bar in the Australia Hotel, The Rex, Ushers, Pfahlert’s, Shalimar, Latin Café, the Californian and the Arabian. Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 93-94; John Craig and Brian Barry, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 3 Side A SLNSW; In Newcastle: Beach and Esplanade Hotel, Shipmates Takeaway. Wafer, “Uncle Doreen,” 56.

Drag and cabaret clubs were also able to open late and were very popular. Drag was legitimised as a form of entertainment during the war, and many artists became famous during the post-war period. A professional New Zealand variety show toured Australia after the war and was very successful with mainstream audiences, and it launched the career of a number of drag artists who performed in it.⁹⁶ After the war drag artists performed at many camp parties and balls. Cabarets with drag shows were very popular in the 1950s and especially the 1960s.⁹⁷ However, these were for a mixed audience, with straight people coming in droves as well as camp men and lesbians. Erica and Shirley remember that as time went on, large straight audiences made these venues less comfortable for them, and they started feeling like the squares had come to “look at the queer people.”⁹⁸ Drag queens also worked at the growing number of bars catering directly to camp patrons. Chez Ivy and the Trolley Car both employed drag artists as barmaids.⁹⁹

The bar scene for lesbian women was complicated. The restrictions on women in public bar spaces created a legal and then cultural barrier for lesbians looking for public spaces in which to socialise.¹⁰⁰ Lesbians patronised camp venues such as the Chez Ivy in Bondi Junction or the Purple Onion on Anzac Parade in the 1960s, but these locations were “dominated by gay men and drag queens.”¹⁰¹ Pubs that did cater to lesbians, such as the Sussex Hotel, were often remembered as rough places, with stories of violence and aggressive behaviour. Erica and Shirley bemoaned the lack of a “respectable” place where you could meet like-minded women, with such venues only arriving in a small way in the 1970s.¹⁰² Others also found the 1960s bar scene too “violent, intimidating and connected with the criminal underworld.”¹⁰³ Jan Hillier and Doreen, who frequented the working-class public bar scene, experienced lesbian social spaces differently to such “middle- and upper class women who could afford to live and thus socialise in private outside the family home.”¹⁰⁴ In Melbourne, Val’s Coffee House provided a safe haven for lesbian women in the 1950s. Val

⁹⁶ Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side A SLNSW.

⁹⁷ Drag clubs in Sydney included Jewel Box, Stork Club, The Purple Onion, Les Girls, Kandy’s Garden of Eden. Ken (Kandy) Johnson, interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon June 1981, MLOH 448, Tape 8 Side A SLNSW.

⁹⁸ Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

⁹⁹ Scott McKinnon (host), “PridePod Episode 1: LGBTIQ Bars and Clubs in 1950s and 60s Sydney,” PridePod (podcast), Sydney Pride History Group, <https://soundcloud.com/pridepod>.

¹⁰⁰ Jennings, “Room Full of Women,” 816-817.

¹⁰¹ Jennings, “Lesbian Spaces,” 173.

¹⁰² Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side A, SLNSW.

¹⁰³ Jennings, “Lesbian Spaces,” 173-4.

¹⁰⁴ Ford, “Filthy, Obscene and Mad,” 95.

herself bucked gender norms by wearing men's clothing and lipstick, and welcomed lesbians and camp men openly during the conservative 1950s.¹⁰⁵ Customers affirmed the importance of finding a place where they could belong: "You absolutely saved my life... I would have somewhere that I could go where I felt I was somebody."¹⁰⁶ In the 1960s, lesbians like Laurie found their way to the camp Kandy's in Sydney, and found it a "seventh heaven."¹⁰⁷ Carolyn described Chez Ivy's as "a place that felt like home."¹⁰⁸ Throughout the 1970s, lesbian spaces and social groups grew, and the feminist movement provided a space for lesbian women to organise and socialise safely in public and private.¹⁰⁹

Dating

Beats allowed gay men to meet each other and sate their sexual desires, and bars allowed camp men and lesbian women to meet and socialise within established friendship groups. However, both of these spaces also allowed for a greater variety of dating behaviour. Couples would date at coffee shops, have regular hook ups with casual sex partners, and pursue long term serious relationships. Beats are associated with casual sex, but some men found love and companionship as well. Novocastrian Kevin Coleman met his partner Keith Robinson at a beat at Newcastle beach, after cycling in from his home in Adamstown. They would use Keith's car to go to the park, or friends' houses, as both men still lived with their parents. Keith, unlike Kevin, knew other camp men in town, and introduced him to a social circle. They would visit friends, and once a month go to the private dance at the National Park Ladies Bowling club. They were very cautious, as Keith was a well-known businessman in Newcastle. In 1952 the police initiated a blitz, questioning and arresting many men from Keith and Kevin's social circle on charges of "abominable offences." Kevin was not charged, and Keith's case was dismissed, but the damage had been done, and the couple moved to Sydney.¹¹⁰ Many others from the group faced gaol terms, and the bowling club dances ceased

¹⁰⁵ Ford, "Filthy, Obscene and Mad," 106.

¹⁰⁶ Roberta Foster, "The Bois of King Vic," in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI*, ed. Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett, (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2011), 158.

¹⁰⁷ Jennings, "Lesbian Spaces," 174.

¹⁰⁸ Jennings, "Lesbian Spaces," 174.

¹⁰⁹ Rebecca Jennings and Liz Millward, "'A Fully Formed Blast From Abroad': Australasian Lesbian Circuits of Mobility and the Transnational Exchange of Ideas in the 1960s and 1970s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25, 3 (2016): 476-7, 479.

¹¹⁰ Kevin Coleman, interviewed by John Witte, 15 May 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Group*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/66939>; "Newcastle Mercer Acquitted," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, May 29, 1953, 8.

operating.¹¹¹ Newcastle's gay scene had been small but vibrant, with camp dances at National Park beginning in the 1940s. The crackdown from Newcastle's vice squad, accompanied by the *Newcastle Herald* printing the names of those arrested and charged, drove the scene back underground.¹¹² Stories spread of the "yellow socks" gang, supposedly a signal used by the members of this social group to identify each other. Those within the scene say it was just a rumour, but all the same young Novocastrian men were warned away from yellow accessories for years afterwards.¹¹³ It was not until the late 1960s that a more public scene started back up again, moving around a number of pubs and eventually settling at the Star Hotel's back bar.¹¹⁴

Relationships varied from short but intense to long-lasting. Vernon, a twenty-five-year-old Australian soldier, met an American named Jack, at a bar in Brisbane in 1943. They dated for a while, going out for dinner and drinks and talking, before kissing and cuddling in darkened alleyways, and in time essentially moving in together after Vernon left the army.¹¹⁵ Paddy Byrnes and her wife Robbie had met at work in the 1950s, and in 1956 married themselves by exchanging vows and wedding rings, and taking the same last name. They then travelled as sisters, "telling those who asked why they were single that in their day, nurses were not allowed to marry."¹¹⁶ Christina and Carole took weekends away from the WRAAF to a bed and breakfast in Melbourne, where walks in the parks allowed them "something of privacy."¹¹⁷ They wrote love letters to each other when stationed on either side of the country, letters that they ended up destroying so they would not be found if the services were to investigate them.¹¹⁸ In the end, they left the WRAAF by "coming out" and being discharged, starting the next stage of their life together in a flat in Melbourne in 1968.¹¹⁹ Couples went on dates to the movies, holidayed together, wrote love letters and bought each other gifts, in one case a gold cygnet ring.¹²⁰ As Willett noted, camp relationships "could

¹¹¹ Wafer, "Uncle Doreen," 60-61.

¹¹² "Sex Perversion 'Rife in City,'" *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate*, July 9, 1952, 5.

¹¹³ Wafer, "Uncle Doreen," 61; Kevin Coleman, interviewed by John Witte, 15 May 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Group*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/66939>.

¹¹⁴ Danny Dodd, interviewed by John Witte, 21 January 2017, *Hunter Rainbow History Group*, Newcastle, NSW, <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/59992>.

¹¹⁵ Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 173.

¹¹⁶ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 8-9.

¹¹⁷ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 50.

¹¹⁸ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 51-2.

¹¹⁹ Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence*, 53.

¹²⁰ Smaal, "Friends and Lovers," 170; Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, 88.

embody all the romantic paraphernalia of mainstream relationships,” only with an added layer of anxiety and subterfuge, and no ability to have their relationship legally recognised.¹²¹

Gay and lesbian relationships also took forms more unfamiliar to heterosexual people, and, indeed, to some of their community members. One woman remembered meeting a group of lesbians who had a complex web of partners and ex-partners within their social network. She evidently did not feel comfortable with this idea, describing it as “playing musical chairs” in their relationships and asking, “what do you do when you go through all eleven?”¹²² Casual relationships, non-monogamous relationships and companionable marriages were all equally valid explorations of romantic conventions even without negotiating the added challenges marginalised groups were faced with. Gay men and lesbians sought and found pleasure, love and friendship in a world that violently objected to their very existence. For some people, these relationships were precursors to marriage and long-term love. For others, connections remained transient and casual. Of course, this mirrors heterosexual dating patterns, however without the framing of marriage and procreation. The fact that people sought love and friendship, despite being discriminated against and isolated, makes the acts of pleasure they participated in even more radical.

Some of the people in the gay and lesbian scene participated in heterosexual dating and marriage as well.¹²³ The stereotype of the guilty married man at a beat could hide stories of bisexuality, open marriages, and closeted men. Margaret and her university girlfriend both acquired boyfriends “as a distraction” in the early 1950s.¹²⁴ Many gay and lesbian people negotiated a double life, although not always to those levels.¹²⁵ Some people lived relatively open lives within gay circles, with other lesbian women and gay men, as well as trans and gender-non-conforming people. They acted ‘square’ at work and often with their families and had to endure significant pressure to get married. Some gay men and lesbian women had children, in and out of heterosexual marriages and homosexual relationships. Smaal noted that many camp men found comfort, companionship and love from both communities: their camp friends and their square families.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 8.

¹²² Erica Mann and ‘Shirley’ interviewed by Garry Wotherspoon, March 1980, MLOH 448, Tape 5 Side B, SLNSW.

¹²³ Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 182.

¹²⁴ Ford, “Filthy, Mad and Obscene,” 102.

¹²⁵ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, 29-30.

¹²⁶ Smaal, “Friends and Lovers,” 182.

Towards Revolution

Towards the end of the 1960s, the lines between public and private began to be blurred, at last. However, this was only due to the sustained organising and activism of gay men and lesbians themselves. In 1969 the first gay groups were established, including the Australian chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, and the Campaign against Moral Persecution (CAMP). The gay liberation campaign won many successes in the 1970s, but decriminalisation was not achieved throughout Australia until the 1990s. This is not a story of clear progression from repression to liberation. It is instead an outline of a community adapting to changing types of oppression and continuing to find ways to seek out love and pleasure in each other's company.

The public/private divide is one that marked gay and lesbian experiences for the entire period studied here. However, Michelle Arrow's work on the 1974 Royal Commission into Human Relationships and its many submissions uncovers a glimpse into the way people worked to deconstruct this binary. She argued that testimony from gay men and women "contested the public/private split as they sought to construct homosexuality as a public identity rather than one narrowly confined to the private sphere."¹²⁷ Gay men and lesbian women experienced the secrecy and privacy of their relationships and friendships differently during the 1950s and 1960s, but the activism of those working to construct new understandings of identity allowed for the possibility of people freely choosing to participate in romantic behaviour in public as well as in private.

Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s, gay and lesbian romantic and sexual rituals were enacted in a time of repression and provided a space for resistance and pleasure. They were structured around the heart of gay and lesbian communities at the time: the private social network. Within these groups, gay men and lesbian women met, dated, fell in love and became friends with other people who shared their same-sex attraction, and helped form distinct identities through this community. This chapter has outlined the way that introductions to these communities generally started with a single meeting, with gay men and women introducing

¹²⁷ Arrow, "'These Are Just a Few Examples of Our Daily Oppressions': Speaking and Listening to Homosexuality in Australia's Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974-1977," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, 2 (2018): 236.

their friends and lovers alike to their wider social groups. These introductions were very different to those practised in heterosexual romances, as the fear of discovery ensured the process was discreet and careful. Gay men and lesbian women became adept at interpreting subtle signs in body language. Some took part in gendered behaviour that signalled homosexual preferences to others also looking, and this play with gender was often met with increased violence and repression. The disruption and enforced transience of the war led to more opportunities both for people who had and had not experienced same-sex desire before, and also created a space where introductions could at times be a little bolder, with the safety of anonymity in a large and shifting crowd.

Within these constraints, dating was, despite anxieties about being found out, often focused on pleasure. As a future of socially recognised marriage was often denied to these couples, dating rituals existed for their own sake. People fell in love and entered into serious and long-term relationships but were not always on the same pathway of dating to marriage as heterosexual contemporaries. This foregrounding of pleasure can be seen through many of the experiences in this chapter, where individuals and social groups chose to embrace the joys of living and loving with like-minded people, throwing parties and dances and building strong friendship networks, once they were able to find a safe space to do so.

Conclusion

Romance and dating are important parts of our social lives, and how we participate in romantic rituals informs the way we see ourselves and interact with one another. Therefore, the historical study of romance and dating incorporates examination of many other aspects of society. Constructs of gender, sexuality and identity are often intertwined with socio-cultural dating conventions and paradigms, providing a rich text for understanding the interrelated histories of gender, sexuality, marriage, national culture, and pleasure. This work follows changing dating conventions through the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in Australia, considering different groups of people in society and examining the varied ways their lives interact with and are changed by romantic rituals. Dating does not have a single clear definition; in fact Norma reminds us that while growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, her friends did not use the word at all, preferring 'going out' or 'going with.' The rituals surrounding going out with a romantic partner were complicated and multi-faceted and were created and recreated constantly by those participating in them. The lack of clear or defined boundaries meant that dating could include friendships, sex, and deep romantic partnerships. Although parents, churches and the state attempted to constrain dating practices, this also meant that people participating in dating rituals were able to, at least in part, articulate their meaning themselves.

This study of dating over a crucial thirty-year period of transition in Australian history has allowed for a close analysis of changing practices, both subtle and overt. It is therefore able to link a number of disparate studies on sexuality, pleasure, and desire through different time periods. In particular, the research links work on femininity and sexuality during the Second World War with studies on the apparent sexual revolution in 1970s Australia. In doing so, it demonstrates the way changes of the late 1960s and 1970s were born of movements in the 1940s and even earlier. This is a valuable tool in dismantling unrealistic periodisation of the decades. Importantly, the 1950s are here placed in context and examined as part of a longer time period, rather than a unique moment of conservatism and social domesticity.

This history of mid-century dating provides an Australian counterpart to similar studies in America and England, such as those of Beth Bailey and Claire Langhamer.¹ The nature of Australian culture at this time, where the influence of Britain and the United States vied for prominence, makes this a particularly fruitful companion to these works. As Hsu Ming Teo has pointed out, studies of romance and pop culture in Australia “tend to highlight connections and engagements with the wider Anglophone world.”² These links are particularly important in the decades considered in this study, where Australia absorbed, commodified, and reshaped British and American cultural imports. The nation did remain resistant, however, to cultural influences from non-Anglophone countries, even during the boom of immigration from Europe in the post-war decades. Chapter Six has outlined the ways in which romantic rituals were central to the experience of European migrants’ lives but has also illustrated the resistance to ‘foreign’ ideas of love, dating, and marriage.

Lisa Featherstone’s work has provided a framework for this study both with regard to theoretical understanding of pleasure and the methodological approach of bringing together prescriptive texts and self-representation of individual experiences.³ The study of dating in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s makes clear the crucial role of pleasure in romantic rituals and experience. The pursuit of pleasure was a goal of dating for many people, both alongside and instead of mainstream understandings of dating as preparation for marriage. Those choosing to participate in behaviour outside the norm were able to use pleasure as a form of resistance against middle-class moralising, and in doing so create spaces for exploration and self-identification. The tension between prescription and experience provides a valuable focus for this kind of study, and this work has shown the value in foregrounding this relationship.

This research has built on that of Teo and Finch in demonstrating the key role consumerism played in dating in mid-century Australia. Their work on the entrée of consumerist dating practices during the first half of the twentieth century and especially the Second World War is used as a basis for further work on consumerist practices throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁴ Tracing a history of consumption and dating through the post-war decades reveals an important interrelationship, whereby dating became an integral part of teenage culture and self-expression in an age of mass market consumerism. The linear

¹ Bailey, *Front Porch*; Langhamer, *English in Love*; Langhamer, “Love and Courtship.”

² Teo, “Introduction,” 31.

³ See for example: Featherstone, “Rethinking Female Pleasure,” 727; Featherstone, *Let’s Talk*, 4.

⁴ Teo, “Americanisation;” Teo, “Introduction;” Finch, “Consuming Passions.”

examination through the 1940s to the 1960s helps link studies on popular culture and consumerism in each of these decades.

Changing Conventions

The most important changes from courtship to dating included the move from the private to the public sphere, the introduction of casual, temporary partnerships, a novel relationship with consumption, and a focus on fun and pleasure alongside other purposes and goals. As demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, the move from calling to dating shifted courtship from private homes into the public sphere. This thrust the practice into the masculine public realm, and accordingly, gender roles were carefully reconstructed to ensure they worked within new understandings of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in the mid-twentieth century.

The construction of dating conventions was intertwined with the creation and adaptation of ideas of gender and sexuality. People participating in this construction were able to use the space to reinforce or destabilise these ideas as relative to their own experience. Mainstream dating conventions worked to bolster compulsory heterosexuality through their reinforcement of rigid gender roles. As Judith Butler has argued, heterosexuality may be secured through the regulation of gender expression and behaviour.⁵ Of course, the rewriting of dating scripts also allowed people to challenge these ideas and constructions.

Crucially, dating was more casual than calling, and its temporary nature was more widely accepted. This was partially due to the emergence of the teenager as a concept in the mid-century, and a focus on this age group as the principal dating cohort. People began to date in their early teens, before marriage could be seriously considered. The change was also due to the disruption to social mores during the Second World War, as illustrated in Chapter Two, where uncertainty and transience of Australian and American men and women meant that relationships were cut short, or intentionally kept casual.

Some new aspects of dating were seemingly born entirely to be pleasurable. Marriage was undoubtedly a serious and worthy business, yet the idea that the stage before it could be more frivolous and fun was a popular one. This shift coincided with the rise of consumerism in Australia, and an increase in the range of public leisure activities. Gifts, previously seen as

⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1999, xii.

inappropriate and non-romantic, began to be accepted as long as the relationship did not appear too transactional.

These conventions were created, reworked, and challenged from several different angles. Conservative, middle-class authorities, including mainstream churches, educational institutions, medical and psychological experts, and the print media, all worked to contain the new public dating into a palatable form in a world of consumption, entertainment, and pleasure. Chapter Three demonstrates the way sex education texts and advice columns in the media were focused on constructing dating conventions that would preclude teenage sexuality and promote social and psychological growth.

Young people also participated in the creation of these conventions, working within social systems to re-write scripts and taking advantage of their new consumer status to create novel frameworks. Some did this in conversation with prescriptive texts, such as the young people featured in Chapter Three who took part in the creation of participatory texts. Others worked explicitly to challenge these systems, choosing to exist outside the boundaries of what was acceptable. Chapter Four includes teenagers who chose both of these routes, with regard to dating as well as other forms of self-expression and identification. Others still were thrust into this space regardless of their preference, as they were considered outside the norm and not able to take part at all. Chapters Five, Six and Seven look at the construction of these scripts outside of white middle-class heterosexual society. European migrants, Aboriginal people, gay men, and lesbian women all had to construct a set of romantic conventions that made sense for their own circumstances, where the path to marriage was difficult or even non-existent.

Normality and Abnormality

The creation of these norms and conventions of dating was circular. Social and romantic scripts helped define what was normal and desirable, and what was unacceptable. As Cryle and Stephens have argued, “the meaning of ‘normal’ encompasses both the norm, understood as a descriptive (or positive) fact, and normativity, understood as the affirmation of cultural values.”⁶ Dating behaviour could help perpetuate ideas about what it was to be a normal, healthy citizen in mid-twentieth century Australia. It played an important role in bolstering heterosexuality and consolidating traditional ideas of gender roles. However,

⁶ Cryle and Stephens, *Normality*, Introduction, 2 of 17.

people also pushed against these boundaries and worked to challenge and break down existing ideas of femininity and masculinity through their participation in dating culture. In Chapter Four, it was shown that young men in the 1960s chose to style their hair and clothes in a way previously seen as purely feminine. Young women began to pursue and admit to sexual pleasure. Gay men played with gender through art forms like drag, and through their self-expression socially and sexually, as shown in Chapter Seven. Lesbian women used masculine clothing as an identifier and a signal to other women that they were interested in dating and relationships.

Teenagers are a focus of this work precisely because they are so important to this idea of normality. Adolescence was seen as a time of change and potential, and also one of danger. Teen bodies were caught between the child's world and the adult, and often their physical and emotional journeys to maturity were seen as out of step with each other. Teenagers were also symbolic of the future of Australia as a nation, and therefore there was great pressure on making sure they navigated this difficult path with care. A productive, happy, and healthy marriage was seen as the correct endpoint of adolescence, and teenagers were guided carefully on a dating pathway that would lead them there. In Chapter Three, the importance of ideas of normality in guiding teenagers through this period was demonstrated, and in Chapter Seven, people who found themselves defined as outside the norm worked to create identities and communities through love and friendship. As Cryle and Stephens have articulated, the idea of abnormality in sexological discourse was crucial to understanding normality, as the two concepts existed in relationship with each other on a spectrum, and "normal sexuality" was conceived as a "fragile state, easily unbalanced."⁷

The Purpose(s) of Dating

Marriage was largely seen as either the endpoint or the culmination of dating. Teenagers were encouraged to see dating as the preparation for marriage both in terms of getting to know what they liked and did not like about other people, and in relation to their psychological growth. This is particularly evident in the construction of the advice and guidance material treated in Chapter Three. Many young people throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s accepted that marriage was their inevitable goal. Those who expressed opinions to the contrary were considered aberrant and dangerous. However, young people throughout this

⁷ Cryle and Stephens, *Normality*, chap 7, p. 7-8 of 28.

period did not see marriage as the only purpose of dating. Instead, it held many different roles in their lives.

Importantly, dating was considered pleasurable and fun in and of itself. Teenagers enjoyed the emotions of romance and crushes, the physical pleasure of dancing and kisses, and the stimulation of films, music, and each other's company. This idea of dating as pleasurable is particularly clear in the context of the Second World War, as demonstrated in Chapter Two. It is also evidenced in Chapters One and Four, where young people defined dating as an essential part of the enjoyment of being a teenager. Dating was an important part of young people's social life; it structured the way they went out as friends, not only as boyfriend and girlfriend. Dating played a key role in teenage culture of the 1950s and 1960s, informing participants' experience of music, fashion, and cinema. Through these avenues, teenagers were able to express themselves and identify differently from the generation before. Dating gave teenagers a space for agency as well as pleasure.

For those whose path to marriage was more complicated, dating played a different role. For European migrants to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, marriage was an essential part of committing to the new nation. As shown in Chapter Six, dating was therefore a serious, and often fraught, business. Migrants navigated complicated cultural and economic barriers to romance, and often sought and found love with others who had shared their experience, whether from their home country or another. Many who found their lives difficult in Australia reframed their experience once they had married, and especially once they had children: seeing the next generation as Australian even if they continued to view themselves differently. European migrants also brought their own cultural understandings of romance and marriage to Australia, and many were adults who sought pleasure in marriage and the creation of a family rather than casual dating.

Aboriginal people in Australia were subject to governmental control and surveillance and were not free to date or marry as they pleased. Different state governments employed legislation to institutionalise Aboriginal people and remove children from their families and country, working toward biological absorption and eventual elimination of Aboriginality. As such, Aboriginal people needed permission to marry each other, and were often punished for romance before marriage. For Aboriginal people in this time, dating could be a path to marriage and a potential escape from one form of institutionalisation; as time went on and Aboriginal people were able to move beyond the reach of state protection boards, romance could take place within a wider space of community organisation. Chapter Five demonstrates

the importance of freedom in mainstream dating at this time, as Aboriginal people were unable to participate fully in teenage leisure culture or dating rituals, because it would provide them more agency and freedom of movement than the state was willing to provide. Marriage was tightly regulated by legislation and often arranged by mission staff, a direct affront to traditional marriages based on kinship structures, and on the freedom of young Aboriginal people to choose partners for themselves.

Gay men and lesbian women were not legally able to marry same-sex partners, and indeed male homosexuality was criminalised throughout the entire time period studied here. Dating, then, took on a different role. Chapter Seven displays how for many gay men and lesbian women, romance was tied up inextricably in experiences of friendship and community. Introductions were made through private networks of friends and lovers, and men and women lived and loved cautiously on the edges of public spaces, finding pleasure and joy in each other. Over the decades they worked to reconstruct this public/private divide, as can be seen in the nascent years of the Gay Rights movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Public/Private Divide

An important theme of this work has been the tension between the public and private realms. Dating, unlike calling, was built on the practice of going *out* together. However, couples were able to find privacy in public. Outside the supervision of their family homes or chaperones, young men and women found moments of privacy. This could take the form of the back seat of a car or a darkened cinema, but also the anonymity of walking together in a busy city or dancing in a crowded hall, as seen in Chapters One, Two and Four. During the Second World War, the visibility of romancing soldiers and women caused a moral panic about sexuality and female virtue. For servicemen and their partners, it was difficult to find privacy in public, and many resorted to kissing and cuddling in parks or doorways in the evening.

Attempts to contain this sexuality after the war led to increased intrusion into the private lives of young people. Sex education texts and advice columns made the private sexuality and desires of adolescents the very public business of the nation. Authorities also worked to coax teenagers partially back into their family homes, by encouraging the practice

of introducing dates to one's parents and attempted to reinstate a form of chaperoning by instructing teenagers to date in groups, so as never to be alone.

The public/private divide was a key feature of camp life and social structures in the 1950s and 1960s. Gay men and lesbian women often found each other in public, using discreet methods of introduction and identification. For many men and women, these introductions could then lead to acceptance into a larger private social network, where one could make friends, fall in love, and find a community. As the 1960s progressed and the gay liberation movement began to take hold, these networks started to be formalised through the creation of social clubs and groups, as well as camp bars and nightclubs.

Methodology

Oral histories are a vital tool of the social historian, particularly when studying private knowledge and experiences. This work rests on the labour of many interviewers and historians, and on the generosity of those who shared their life stories. I had hoped to contribute to this wealth of knowledge with my own interviews, however the barriers to interviewing older Australians during a global pandemic meant that I have only been able to include information from two completed interviews: with Novocastrian Trixee, and Melbourne-born Norma. Their generosity and insight have been invaluable to this work. Thankfully, many other scholars have undertaken the work of finding and interviewing a great many people about all aspects of their lives, and through visits to libraries and archives as well as access to digitisation projects, I have been able to find stories of love and romance. Often, this information arises when discussing marriage or long-term partnership. It would be interesting and valuable to pursue this thread further by examining the way people remember the romance that led to their marriage compared to other relationships.

This work has also interrogated prescriptive texts designed to create and enforce conventions and guidelines for dating alongside self-representation and explored the tension between the two. This tension is vital to work on concepts such as dating and romance, where the scripts are constantly being re-shaped and re-written. These prescriptive texts offer a guide on what was supposed to be the ideal, or the norm. The way people responded to these texts has demonstrated the importance of these conventions in their own lives, and their own priorities in living within or challenging them.

This type of social history can allow for greater understanding of societal structures and scripts, as well as people's lived experiences. Studying pleasure, romance, and recreation is a fascinating and effective way of locating the agency of individuals in history, and foregrounding stories that have not always been told, or, in the case of oral histories, told and listened to, but deserving of a wider audience. In that sense, this research responds to Jill Julius Matthews' call for studies of 'fun' and pleasure in order to bring these "other lives into the light."⁸ In particular, this work has done so for those who were frequently left out of mainstream narratives, for whom oral histories and life writings have proved particularly important. However, as Katherine Ellinghaus noted, a focus on pleasure for marginalised groups needs to be balanced carefully with the very real violence and discrimination they also experienced. When discussing romantic relationships between Aboriginal people and white settlers, she asked: "how might historians balance the important project of finding Indigenous negotiation, emotion and empowerment with an acknowledgement of the suffering caused by attacks on Indigenous lives and sovereignty?"⁹ Future studies will certainly be able to contribute to this project of balancing agency and violence, which are of course not mutually exclusive. In particular, more focused studies of oral histories and Indigenous life writings would provide a fuller history of dating for Aboriginal men and women.

National studies are limited as the lines between different spaces and locations can blur. In this research, I have worked to include experiences of those living in different circumstances across Australia. The importance of this variation is especially clear in Chapters Five and Seven. Experiences of Aboriginal people varied widely depending on the policies of the state in which they lived, and the reach of the governmental authority that sought to regulate their lives. The divide between regional, rural, and urban experiences is also particularly clear for gay men and lesbian women. Young people growing up in small towns or regional areas were less able to access a network or subculture of other same-sex attracted people, and often found themselves very alone. Future studies into the importance of place in the experience and construction of romantic rituals would be remarkably fruitful, both for these specific experiences and more broadly. As James Bennett and David Betts have pointed out, many histories of same-sex desire and identity in Australia are focused on

⁸ Jill Julius Matthews, "They Had Such a Lot of Fun," *History Workshop* 30 (August 1990): 23, call repeated in her Keynote Address for the Australian Women's History Network, Sydney 8 July 2015 – "History of Gender, then and now."; Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 7.

⁹ Katherine Ellinghaus, "Review of *Illicit Love*," *Australian Historical Studies* 28 (2017): 295-6.

east-coast cities and expanding the lens to rural and regional locations would provide a richer understanding of different experiences.¹⁰

This work has continued to foreground the experiences of pleasure and desire in romantic life. This pleasure was sometimes sexual, but often it was about the enjoyment of activities relating to dating physically and emotionally, and about the idea of taking part in an activity for the joy of the moment. The malleability of dating conventions meant that there was room within them for experimentation. People were able to form their own relationships with romance, sexuality, and gender roles through the way they experienced and understood dating. Throughout this work, people have been shown to push the boundaries of what was considered acceptable, finding distraction and pleasure and joy even in times of great darkness, and, despite many barriers, falling in love.

¹⁰ David Betts and James Bennett, “An Australian Regional Response to Marriage Equality: Newcastle and the Hunter,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, published ahead of print, June 04, 2021, 10-12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2021.1935619>

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