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# The "All-American" Couple: Dating, Marriage, and the Family during the long 1950s, with a Foray into Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon

Christen Bryson

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pour obtenir le grade de

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Discipline : civilisation américaine

Présentée et soutenue publiquement  
par

**Christen BRYSON**

le 4 novembre 2016

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**The "All-American" Couple:  
Dating, Marriage, and the Family during the long  
1950s,  
with a Foray into Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon**

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## Résumé

Cette thèse espère contribuer à l'histoire socio-culturelle du couple américain après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. En discutant du récit national au travers d'aspects qui sont souvent considérés comme évidents – générations, âge, situation géographique, relation entre individu et institutions, entre cultures locales et nationales –, ce travail essaie de nuancer ces catégories qui en sont venues à représenter les années 1950 et 1960, tout comme l'omniprésence du discours sur la culture nationale. Le mariage, la famille, le genre, la sexualité, les sorties en couple (*dating*), de même que les pratiques sexuelles et la culture des jeunes forment le cadre grâce auquel cette étude essaie d'éclairer la norme incarnée par le couple blanc hétérosexuel de classe moyenne. En introduisant deux villes du Nord-Ouest des Etats-Unis – Boise dans l'Idaho et Portland dans l'Oregon – dans une réflexion portant sur le récit national, cet essai tente d'élargir l'histoire locale de ces deux villes et de complexifier l'analyse des conventions sociales. L'histoire orale associée à des documents issus des archives d'universités locales et d'annuaires étudiants (*yearbooks*) ont permis d'observer comment l'expérience d'Américains « ordinaires » tour à tour diffère du récit national ou s'en approche, et ce dans des villes qui, jusqu'à présent, ont été peu étudiées concernant la période et les thèmes choisis. Les chiffres des recensements, comme les documents et les discours politiques de l'époque étayaient le modèle répandu du couple-type américain, alors que l'étude des films éducatifs, des livres de bonnes manières et des rubriques de chroniqueurs démontrent le processus au travers duquel cet idéal s'est imposé et a été construit. Ce modèle connaît un âge d'or pendant la « longue décennie » des années 1950. Dans la mémoire collective, il constitue alors le dernier phare d'une certaine tradition familiale mais aussi peut-être son point de rupture. Cette thèse défend l'idée que cet archétype n'était ni traditionnel ni catalyseur de bouleversements. Le couple blanc et hétérosexuel de classe moyenne était plutôt le point culminant de facteurs politiques, sociaux, économiques et culturels qui ont finalement ébranlé le couple « traditionnel », ce modèle ayant échoué à véritablement incarner les idéaux de la nation qu'il était supposé représenter. A la fin de la « longue décennie » des années 1950 cette norme représentait un *statu quo*, alors que les jeunes qui devaient perpétuer son héritage avaient consciemment et inconsciemment déjà commencé à saper ses fondations.

**Mots-clés :** culture nationale – récit national – les années 1950 – le couple américain – mariage américain – famille américaine – *dating* – genre / rapports sociaux de sexe – sexualité – pratiques sexuelles – Boise, Idaho – Portland, Oregon

## Abstract

This thesis hopes to contribute to the socio-cultural historiography on the post-WWII American couple. In putting the national narrative into a discussion with some of its oft assumed aspects—generation, age, location, the individual and the institution, and local and national cultures—, this work attempts to provide nuance to the categorical definitions that have come to characterize the 1950s and the 1960s as well as the pervasiveness of the national culture’s voice. Marriage, family, gender, sexuality, dating, sexual activity, and youth culture are the framework through which this study has tried to elucidate the standard embodied in the white, middle-class, heterosexual couple. In incorporating two cities in the North-West U.S.—Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon— into a discussion about the national narrative, this dissertation tries to widen their local histories and complexify national convention. Oral histories paired with documents from the local universities’ archives and yearbooks have allowed for this work to look at how “average” Americans’ experiences differed from and coincided with the national narrative in places that have so far received very little scholarly attention, about the period and themes under study. Census data, scientific studies, political documents and speeches substantiate the pervasiveness of the “All-American couple,” while educational films, etiquette books, and advice columns have made it possible to explore the process through which the ideal came into being. This model experienced a heyday during the long 1950s. Dominant memory tells us that it was either the last beacon of familial tradition or the breaking point for change. This dissertation contends that the archetype was neither traditional nor the catalyst for change. Rather the white, heterosexual middle-class couple was a culmination of political, social, economic, and cultural factors that ultimately undermined the “traditional” couple because it failed to truly embody the ideals of the nation it was purported to represent. By the end of the long 1950s, this model had become the status quo, but the young people who were to carry it into the future had consciously and unconsciously began chipping away at its foundations.

**Key words:** national culture – national narrative – the long 1950s – the American couple – American marriage – American family – dating – gender – sexuality – sexual practices – Boise, Idaho – Portland, Oregon

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\* In order to respect the privacy of my interviewees, these appendices have been removed from the on-line version.

# Introduction

The American postwar era, 1945-1974, has been given great scholarly and social importance. It was at this time that a true national narrative began to emerge and the particularities of localities were swept aside as a relatively homogenous national identity took root in the nation (Bailey 1999). This, of course, did not begin in 1945. The political, economic, and cultural discourses that had helped define the United States as a modern nation can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and in some cases to the founding of the nation. This had a profound effect on the private lives of Americans and came to a head during the postwar era as the nation contended with the uncertainties that the Great Depression and World War II had left in their wake and the fear that the Cold War engendered. At the same time, the United States entered into a period of unprecedented prosperity: the economy shifted away from the primary and secondary sectors and the service sector and white-collar employment boomed. Economic opportunity abounded, especially for the white, middle class, leading to greater levels of consumption, more leisure time, and an overall higher standard of living. In the immediate aftermath of the War, Americans worried that the economy would slide back into a recession at the same time that they feared that the newfound affluence would prevent future generations from learning the sacrifices and commitment that American democracy would demand of them. As such, the private lives of Americans took on a great deal of public importance. It is this point of contact—where the individual and the nation's interests became one—that informs the basis for this dissertation.

Marriage and family became central tenets to the underwriting notions of what it meant to be American. Politically and economically, the nuclear family model—embodied by a heterosexual couple living with their children in an isolated dwelling—extolled the virtues of democracy and capitalism. Marriage had a long history of representing the political foundations on which the country was founded—freedom of choice, consent, and equality (Cott, 2000). In the postwar incarnation, the married couple, living in a single-family home, challenged the Soviet model of multi-generational households. The economy was heavily based on the importance that Americans would accord to the home and family. Culturally, marriage and family became fundamental to one's purpose in life. Marriage was the marker that one had finally reached adulthood and, thus, became the representative point of departure for the pursuit of the good life.

This was predicated on the idea that men and women would marry and then have children, reinforcing the primacy of heterosexuality and procreation and, therefore acting to exclude homosexuals, lifelong bachelors and bachelorettes, and the infertile from being part of the postwar American project. Suspicion was cast on gay men and lesbians as well as unmarried adults for supposedly not wanting to embrace the values of the nation. As such, playing one's role as a heterosexual man or woman became tantamount to securing one's place in one's community and society as a whole. Since marriage and the family took on such significance during the long 1950s—frequently defined as the period between 1945 and the early 1960s—one might expect that the establishment of the couple—through the practice of dating—would have been equally imbued with such cultural, political, and economic importance. Dating, in a way, can be taken as the means through which young people would demonstrate their intentions to fulfill their future roles as husbands and wives. But it was also a site for young people to take small steps away from the norm, in a seemingly inconsequential way. As the political, economic, and cultural rhetoric of the postwar era implored young people to accept their roles as engaged citizens, few anticipated that youth would make it so personal and in subtle ways rewrite public and private engagement.

This dissertation will focus on what might conventionally be called mainstream Americans and conventions of the postwar era, with a particular emphasis on the long 1950s. At the heart of this analysis are the white, heterosexual, middle-class couple; white, heterosexual middle-class youth; and therefore, white, middle-class norms. The reason for this is that the period under study and the construction of the national narrative put forth these identities as the basis for the model to emulate. The long 1950s have been remembered as culturally homogeneous times.<sup>1</sup> Though this was certainly true to an extent, such representations oversimplify an incredibly complex period of time. I hope to show the extent to which the national narrative was transposed into the private, personal experience of the individual and the ways young people consciously and unconsciously contested this narrative in their daily lives. I will do this by looking at a variety of political, economic, and cultural sources as well as individual accounts that make the

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, many studies have demonstrated that a lot of people were actually outside of the national narrative and did not conform to the dominant model, including gay men and lesbian women as well as unmarried adults as was just said, and also many ethno-racial minorities and the poor. See for example John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983), Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumer's Republic* (2003), and Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962).

picture of marriage, family, gender, sexuality, dating, and sexual activity more nuanced. The goal is to provide a deeper understanding of the weight of societal norms and the seemingly unimportant ways that people transformed them. This, of course, is not to undermine the more open contestations of political, economic, gender, racial/ethnic inequality that occurred at this time and that ultimately culminated in “The Movement” of the 1960s. Rather it is an attempt to create a bridge between these allegedly disparate periods, to create a link between the push for marginalized groups to be included in the American promise and the undercurrents of mainstream culture that made some of those cultural changes seem like the natural progression of the United States fulfilling its democratic promise.

I have referred to a white, middle-class, heterosexual couple as the epitome of the “American way of life.” The reason for doing this is in part because of the predominance of the domestic ideal that emerged in the postwar era. This was based largely on a return to a form of the Victorian “doctrine of separate spheres” and the “cult of domesticity” that came into being after the War. As it manifested in the late 1940s, the doctrine of separate spheres attempted to assert the primacy of a male breadwinner and a female homemaker, a reincarnation of the gender organization for many middle- and upper-class families during the Victorian era.<sup>2</sup> I stipulate that this was a variant of the doctrine of separate spheres because the status of women had changed greatly during the first half of the twentieth century. Women’s economic, political, and social rights were no longer framed so tightly within a legal discourse that kept them quite as dependent on men. More women worked; women could vote; and “proper” female sexuality was no longer seen as an absolute abnegation of desire. As such, women, especially middle-class women, were less confined to the private sphere of the home than their Victorian

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<sup>2</sup> The Victorian era is commonly understood to have begun by the mid-nineteenth century and to have declined by the century’s end. The “doctrine of separate spheres” asserted that the external world of work and business should be the man’s domain because it was harsh, competitive, and full of temptation, while the internal world of the home should be where women strove to provide their families with the moral fortitude necessary to go out into the world. This was based on the belief that women were morally superior to men, though weak and susceptible to the temptations of the world. “True womanhood” reinforced the separation of men and women into private and public spheres as women were encouraged to cultivate characteristics that would ensure their morality, both in terms of religious piety and sexual purity. The “cult of domesticity” was born out of the rise of the market economy, when wages were necessary and so work had to be performed out of the home. The home, thus, became an escape from the harshness of the outside world and it was a woman’s job to ensure the home was a refuge. See, Stephanie Coontz’s *Marriage, A History* (2005), Kevin J. Mumford’s chapter “‘Lost Manhood Found: Male Sexual Impotence and Victorian Culture in the United States” or Jesse Battan’s chapter “‘The Word Made Flesh’: Language, Authority, and Sexual Desire” both can be found in *American Sexual Politics* (1993), edited by John C. Fout and Maura Shaw Tantillo.

counterparts. The doctrine of separate spheres was always a mutual articulation of gender and sexuality: men were men because they did not behave like women, but desired women while women were women because they did not behave like men, but desired men. This co-dependent definition of one's gender role made it so that one's sexuality, or sexual orientation, was commonly understood as an extension of both one's biological sex—physical genitalia—and one's gender—one's masculine or feminine performance (Butler 1990)—, which was seen as sufficient justification for insisting on the fact that one must accept their larger economic, political, and social roles in life as complimentary to their gendered counterpart. Since women's place in society had changed so drastically<sup>3</sup> and because heterosexuality was seen as a mandate through which one was meant to express physical desire, the mid-century “doctrine of separate spheres” relied heavily on rearticulating a “cult of domesticity.” If women were to be persuaded to stay at home, in light of the fact that housework had lost much of its economic importance for the family, their role had to be imbued with significance, including as consumers (Cohen 2003). Within this framework, heterosexuality, was cast as a cultural imperative to attain the normative experience. Popular psychological understandings of homosexuality asserted that deviating from the heterosexual directive meant one had failed to become a “man” or “woman” as one's sexual desires sprung not from biology or social role, but from arrested psychosexual development. These “sick” individuals could seek treatment, and some were forcefully treated, so they, too, could seek out fulfillment and happiness through the companionship of someone of the opposite sex, through procreation and devotion to family and home.

The emblematic nature of class and race in defining the ideal couple speaks to other cultural imperatives present during the postwar era. The rapid growth of the middle class meant that larger numbers within the American population could identify as being relatively affluent. As the United States was fighting a war for the “hearts and minds” of every citizen of the world, it was particularly important that “average” Americans were enjoying the highest standard of living in the world. Breaking down the divide between the wealthiest and the poorest segments of society, the booming American middle class

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<sup>3</sup> Though I previously mentioned changes that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, WWII repositioned women in American society. Women were asked to perform men's jobs as part of the war effort on the home front, which changed the image of women, up to a point. When veterans returned from the War women were still expected to relinquish traditional male jobs. See Emilie Yellin's *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front in World War II* (2005) or Allan M. Winkler's *Home Front U.S.A.: America during World War II* (2012).

spoke to the supremacy of capitalism and its ability to spread equality through freedom of choice and markets rather than an authoritarian regime. Additionally, the rise of the middle class on the heels of two decades of insecurity reassured Americans that capitalism could solve the problems of economic hardship and political instability.

Being white has a long history of being the ideal skin tone in the United States. Despite the advances that African Americans had achieved since the end of the Civil War in 1865, their economic, political, and social positions continued to reassert the government's and the white populace's position that race should be a defining factor in who had access to the nation's spoils. Legal and de facto segregation limited job opportunities, housing, and African Americans' political voice. Though the nation had just fought a War against institutionalized eugenics, the color of one's skin continued to determine whether or not the promises of democracy would be extended to every individual. In looking at the domestic ideal as a white, heterosexual, middle-class couple then, it becomes evident that the "true" American citizen looked and acted a certain way. A growing middle class and the induction of some white ethnics—Poles, Italians, Irish, and Jewish people, for example—into that body were meant to boast of the country's ability to extend equality and freedom to the masses, regardless of those who were left out.

The majority of this work endeavors to provide a more extensive questioning of how transformative the long 1950s were, which means that at some point some of the effects they had on people's private lives in the mid- to late-1960s must be analyzed too. My interest in such a perspective comes from the diametrical opposition, frequently used, to pit the 1950s and 1960s against one another. In the following chapters, I attempt to provide an overarching theoretical framework that bridges the 1950s and 1960s, going beyond the oversimplified equation of cause and effect, the establishment versus the revolution, or tradition opposed to change. In focusing on issues of time (most notably the age of those affected by the postwar norms), the self (the making of an individual's story and the nation's), and place (from both the local and national levels as well as perspectives from both individuals and institutions), I have tried to show the connections that nuance the seemingly fixed paradigm surrounding America's golden age and her supposed nascent social consciousness. These two moments in time are known for their "exceptionalism," which is represented in the media and reproduced by many public figures, from politicians to religious leaders. The "exceptional" vision of the 1950s and 1960s demonstrates how these times are understood in popular imagination. Both

decades are frequently contrasted with the past and the future. The 1950s are seen as the purported pinnacle of family togetherness and happiness, while the 1960s are characterized by mass rebellion, battles for freedom, and times of letting go. Both eras are harked back to with nostalgia: the decade for which one longs usually depends on one's political outlook. Somehow both decades are simultaneously conveyed as separate from and the epitome of the common experience. All of this makes it difficult to identify whether or not the elements that characterize each period were seen and experienced in most American towns and cities or not. I believe time, the self, and place can best be explored when analyzed within the context of the quotidian. My work will focus on dating, morality,<sup>4</sup> sexuality, and marriage. These themes are nearly ubiquitous to every time and society; they straddle the private and the public; they define the construction of the self; they are all at once the essence of an individual and a society as well as the most ordinary of human experiences.

The national narrative of the postwar era has commonly been spoken about in terms of generations. Youth culture necessarily plays a very important role in forming a generational experience that would demarcate young people coming of age in the postwar era from other age cohorts.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently, youth coming to the fore as a cultural fixation was in some ways a response to changing societal life trajectories that increasingly looked at adolescence as a formative period of life and thus marked off the teenage years as a period when young people would begin the transition towards adulthood. Such a time was the opportunity for adolescents and young adults to be incrementally exposed to mature situations and behaviors, which would in turn prepare them for taking the reins when they reached adulthood. This transitory phase began at adolescence and was believed to continue until one married, as matrimony was seen as the last step towards

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<sup>4</sup> This term will be examined as it is produced in a dialectic relationship between the private and the public domains. Morality, in my work, becomes an issue of social importance when private acts enter public discourse, which then attempts to code what is and is not appropriate by assigning value-laden labels and creating social mores that valorize and stigmatize certain behaviors. Furthermore, I will nuance morality in regards to individuals' religious beliefs as their doctrine expressly defines what is moral and amoral. Puritanism, when used, will be cast then within this framework as a reference to strictly held religious dogma that delineates proper deportment.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of generations has been used in various ways in the writing of history in the past few years. See for example Michel Winock's *L'Effet de la génération* (2011), which looks at generations of intellectuals; Jean-François Sirinelli's "Génération, générations" (2008), which talks about the various experiences and references of those involved in the May 1968 revolution in France, even though they were labeled as one more or less homogeneous generation; or Héléne Le Dantec-Lowry and Ambre Ivol's *Generation of Social Movements* (2015), which examines generations of activists in the United States and France.

full maturity (May 1988, 31; 91). Invented in 1944, the word teenager attests to the growing significance of age in defining one's social experience. Properly defined, a teenager was someone between the ages of 13 and 19 (Blaszczyk 2009, 218). Though a whole range of social experts—sociologists, psychologists, marketers, pundits, and law enforcement officials—weighed in on the ways in which this life stage was distinctive from others, young people's growing access to public entertainment and accommodations from the 1920s on provided them with the space for a youth culture to be born (Borrie 2007, 29). Like all social phenomena, youth culture came from those it concerned, developed in response to social, economic, and demographic factors, and was seized upon and perpetuated by culture makers. This began with the growing presence of dance halls and amusement parks in the 1910s (Peiss 1994, 280-281). The emblematic “flapper and sheik” stood out as cultural icons to emulate and scrutinize in the 1920s (Nash 2006, 18). Beth Bailey notes in *From Front Porch to Back Seat* that by the late 1930s adolescents were acutely aware of how their cohort thought and behaved nationwide (1988, 4). By the 1940s, advertisers had taken notice of the burgeoning youth culture and sought to tap into youths' potential buying power by creating a youth-specific market that would cater to their interests (Cohen 2003, 318-319; Bailey 1988, 56). The proliferation of autonomous cultural spaces, a growing consciousness of national convention, and the development of a teen market helped to elaborate a unique set of cultural codes that would make American youth stand out as an exceptional element of the postwar era. By the beginning of World War II, there is evidence that young people had delineated boundaries for youth culture in terms of “language, customs, and emotional traumas” (Cohen 2003, 319). After the War, young people had more social and geographic opportunities for mobility that increased their access to autonomous cultural spaces and their exposure to growing national institutions as well as a national culture (Bailey 1999, 6). The expanding numbers of students in high school and college—enrollments in high school more than doubled, graduation rates nearly tripled, and the number of bachelor's degrees increased by six-fold between 1944 and 1970—meant that more and more young people would come into contact with the dominant youth culture (U.S. Census Bureau 1975, 368; 379; 385). Furthermore, the emerging consumer ethos of the postwar era had a tremendous effect on youths as consumption and commodities



became a major part of participating in youth culture (Bailey 1988, 56).<sup>6</sup> Exposure to national trends through magazines, radio, television, and Hollywood films encouraged young people to use consumer goods to express “*independent taste*” (Blaszczyk 2009, 217).<sup>7</sup> Cars, clothes, and records became a central part of expressing one’s place in the youth culture while magazines told young people “what to buy, what to do, and what to like” (Bailey 1988, 56). Though youth culture, and national culture for that matter, might have been expressed as a mass phenomenon, this does not mean that all American youth had the same access to the mass cultural experience. As Lee Borrie notes in his doctoral dissertation on teenage rebellion, the overarching umbrella used to describe American youth at that time was “riven with many axes of social difference” that necessarily undermine the universality of a term like youth culture (2007, 28). He stipulates that one’s gender, race, class, and/or geographical location affected one’s experience. Any one, or any combination of these social identities could disrupt an individual’s access to youth culture defined largely by white, middle-class, late teen, urban and suburban boys (ibid., 28-29). Nevertheless, during the twentieth century, national culture became increasingly democratized as educational levels climbed and more Americans had leisure time and disposable incomes to participate in public entertainments (Bailey 1988, 7).

In spite of the differences that limited one’s ability to participate in creating the norm, Borrie insists on the fact that young people shared a communal identity that separated this new generation from its forbearers (2007, 28-29). This was, after all, the

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<sup>6</sup> Although consumerism became the ultimate material expression of the middle-class lifestyle, played an enormous role in the creation of youth cultures, and was probably the greatest generator of actual material culture, consumer culture will only have a secondary role in my work. Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s *American Consumer Society* (2009) and Lizabeth Cohen’s *A Consumer’s Republic* (2003) have heavily influenced my discussion and understanding of consumerism during this era. Though postwar consumerism can be seen as a real tipping point for the cultural transformations undertaken at that time, I have chosen to look at consumerism as part of a larger discourse that helped to bolster the abstract values underwriting the family. The reason for this was because in terms of material culture I wanted to look at objects produced by individuals, like yearbooks and life histories. I thought these types of cultural productions might provide some explanation for why things were the way they were as well as show points of digression from the norm. This is not to say that consumer culture only speaks of the majority. Lizabeth Cohen wonderfully demonstrates the ways in which African Americans’ use of consumer rights became an active staging ground for them to demand citizenship rights. My interest really was focusing on marriage, the family, and dating as it appears in material culture and *microstoria*. According to Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman the pragmatism inherent in adopting a micro perspective while analyzing historical phenomena is that it can enrich traditional categories of historical study and help them evolve (2003, 21).

<sup>7</sup> This became a hallmark of 1950s market segmentation. Coined by Wendell Smith in 1956, market segmentation was seen as an alternative to creating one homogenous mass market. In targeting different types of buyers, advertisers and producers responded to and created demand for products that catered to particular interest groups, or market segments. This gave products more salability and provided steadier profits for companies through the creation of ever-expanding consumer markets (Cohen 2003, 295-298).

first generation to grow up in an environment that promised abundance and liberty for all, at the same time, that nuclear annihilation loomed on the horizon (ibid., 29). Borrie positions American youth culture within a framework of agency and constraint. On the one hand, young people were the ones who created and defined their own cultural spaces, while on the other, one's locality, race, gender, locality, and age—how far along one was in their adolescence—acted to define one's access to youth cultural spaces (ibid.). Borrie's study looks at youth culture through the larger containment narrative of the postwar era as it was presented in popular culture productions like films and television series. His argument hinges on the tensions of the era that left the American public in limbo: Would the future be brighter? Or a nuclear wasteland? Would postwar prosperity ensure upward mobility and create a more egalitarian society? Or would affluence lead to decadence and moral decay? The postwar consensus depended on stability and yet the political, economic, and social landscapes were in flux. Borrie makes the argument that this tension was apparent in the supposed generational divide that emerged during the 1950s. He writes:

The baby boom generation was pivotal to the nation's mythology, constantly feted by youth-specific organizations, educational institutions and consumer markets as an exalted segment of the population who were crucial to America's future prosperity. Yet, ironically, teenagers were vilified for their attempts to establish a unique, distinctive generational identity and cultural autonomy to which they were told that they were entitled (ibid., 32-33)

I agree with his overall assertion that youth were set apart through social, educational, and economic opportunities, and were encouraged to see themselves as representing a break with the past, at the same time adults consistently intervened in youth-specific behaviors and spaces to police youth culture. Still, I take issue with Borrie's very strictly defined use of generation. However useful a specified cohort is meant to be, I think Borrie hits on something even more important in identifying generational belonging: self-identification with the group (ibid., 28-29). Pitting the baby boom generation against the previous generation furthers the narrative that one generation was responsible for, as one of my interviewees put it, "the most enormous transition in social history" (Deborah, 2013).<sup>8</sup> Not only does such hypothesizing obfuscate the role of larger social phenomena, it de-historicizes a crucial moment in the making of the nation, rendering the postwar era

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<sup>8</sup> As will be explained shortly, I conducted interviews with people born between 1922 and 1955, who were teenagers and young adults in the 1950s and 1960s.

inert. Though there is merit in trying to identify when exactly such drastic change began, such labeling tends to freeze actors in time and space, rather than provide a nuanced fluidity to the historical lens. Concerning the postwar era, when it comes to discussing generations, this seems particularly true. The use of a generational divide is endemic to work on this timeframe, much of which seems to foster the idea that there was a decisive split between the 1950s and the 1960s, each decade being embodied by a different generation. As an example of how this appears in academic work, I would like to compare Lee Borrie's definition of who he is studying with Elaine Tyler May's in her book, *Homeward Bound*. In both works, the use of generation seems quite subjective and appears to be used more to make the period distinctive and/or to critique its shortcomings than to provide a holistic vision of the era. In both works, the authors focus on a generational cohort through which they can demonstrate the ubiquity of containment. Borrie's work focuses on 1950s teenage delinquency. Using James Gilbert's book on the juvenile delinquency hysteria between 1953 and 1958, Borrie fits the boomers perfectly into this timeframe by fixing the first year of the baby boom as 1940.<sup>9</sup> He substantiates this with a quote by J. Edgar Hoover who warned against the rising tide of juvenile delinquency throughout the 1940s and specifically identified those susceptible to degeneracy as those "new citizens born between 1940 and 1950" (as cited in Borrie 2007, 39). This is a convenient application of the baby boom generational label as those born in 1940 would become teens precisely in 1953. However, defining the baby boom generation as such is not universally agreed upon. In fact, in 2014 the U.S. Census released a population estimate and projection in which the baby boom is identified as beginning in mid-1946 and ending in mid-1964 (Colby and Ortman 2014, 2). If Borrie used this definition then, hardly any boomers would have actually been of the right age to take part in defining the teen delinquency of the 1950s. Elaine Tyler May, on the other hand, attempts to paint a picture of the "new" "white middle-class family of the 1950s" based on data collected for the Kelly Longitudinal Study (May 1988, 13).<sup>10</sup> This is problematic, however, because even though she defines them as the "first" to adhere to

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<sup>9</sup> Gilbert's book is *Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to Juvenile Delinquents in the 1950s* (1986).

<sup>10</sup> The Kelly Longitudinal Study was conducted by University of Michigan psychologist, E. Lowell Kelly, who was interested in marital compatibility. 600 white middle-class men and women, 300 couples, were given questionnaires between 1935 and 1938. Twenty years later, 512 of the original sample participated in a second questionnaire sent out in 1955. The numeric data from the questionnaires and standardized psychological measures for both periods at digitized as part of the Murray Research Archive at Harvard University.

“the new domestic ideology” of the 1950s, the participants were contacted to participate because they had announced their engagement in local New England newspapers in the mid- to late-1930s (ibid., 14; 31). In discussing the initial research purposes of the Kelly Longitudinal Study, May explains that the greatest extensive surveying took place in 1955 when “most of the respondents had been married for at least a decade and were rearing their baby-boom children in suburban homes” (ibid., 14).<sup>11</sup> Though May’s work has been described as standing “virtually alone in its attempt to subject the family experience to sustained historical analysis,” it might also be seen as circumscribing the 1950s generation as distinct from that of the 1960s (Hunter 1991, 526). She presents those who were parents during the 1950s as the true adherents to the containment narrative. Additionally, her description allows for a generational line to be drawn within the established middle-class family. May expands on this when she classifies the youth of the 1960s as being more like their grandparents than their parents. She contends that both the grandparents’ and children’s generations rebelled against sexual, marital, social, and political norms (May 1988, 8). While the in-between generation conformed to their expected roles. As I shall demonstrate in my discussion on marriage, however, much of the impetus for cultural change via matrimony was initiated by young couples marrying, not by firmly established couples. What is so interesting in both Borrie’s and May’s treatment of their target groups is that they want to show that their generational classification makes their populations particular. To do this, they provide explicit definitions of who those people were. In Borrie’s case, his definition can be contested based on the fact that he does not use a commonly understood time parameter for the baby boomers, while May’s work might not fully take into account the age cohort driving change. Both seem to reinforce the narrative that an insurmountable generational chasm developed at this time and yet, neither of them agrees where that divide should begin. In order to avoid the problematic nature of defining the postwar generation(s), I would like to look at the cultural elements of group cohesion and belonging that might be seen as typical of youth, in general. It is my argument that many people who lived through the postwar era chose which social and political elements that cohered with their own sense of self. From the life histories I collected in Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho while doing research for this thesis, some of those people who were born in the 1920s and

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<sup>11</sup> This is another example of the usage of the baby boom cohort that contradicts Borrie’s definition.

1930s—the prime age group for the return to domesticity in the 1950s—abhorred the “prison” in which they were supposed to find so much satisfaction, while some of those born in the 1940s and 1950s—the key age demographic for the explosiveness of the 1960s—felt very little affinity for the disruptiveness of the late 1960s and early 1970s because the discontent felt like it was a world away and they were “very satisfied” with their lives (Sandra, 2013; Susan, 2013).<sup>12</sup> Not only do some people’s group identification defy generational categorization, many of my interviewees actually expressed opinions that show they had incorporated values from both eras. Sharon, a resident of Boise born in 1947, concurred that “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll” embodied the later era, though she felt like a “bystander of that” as a conservative (2013). Like Beth Bailey, then, in *Sex in the Heartland* (1999), I intend to demonstrate that the revolutions of the 1960s took root in “widely shared values and beliefs and of major transformations in the structure of American society” (5-6). I hope to create a bridge between “two” generations that were actually moving in the same direction: towards more leniency in terms of social and cultural conduct (moving from “misbehaving” but not acknowledging it to openly contesting Victorian prudery<sup>13</sup> and/or religiously-inspired morality) and greater notions of personal freedom (breaking away from communities centered around the extended family to a sort of idolization of the nuclear family unit, and then to an insistence on the individual).

Throughout this thesis, the national narrative will be put side by side with two communities: Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon. These two cities are located in the northwest of the United States and have very little socio-cultural historical documentation on marriage, dating, and the family during this era. Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho are the largest population centers in their respective states. They are interesting additions to the historiography of the era, first, because they provide different perspectives on the geographical changes that were taking place at that time. Portland’s changing demographics were akin to the growth that much of the nation experienced after World War II—the city proper grew on average by 8.2 percent between the 1940 and 1970 censuses and the Standard Metropolitan Area increased in population by 20.8

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 2 for information about each interviewees year of birth, location of birth, the interview location, when the person arrived in Oregon or Idaho, and when they arrived in Boise or Portland.

<sup>13</sup> To further nuance the notion of morality, the references to Victorian manners and sexual norms point to the nineteenth century’s lasting influence on perceptions of behavior and decency in spite of twentieth century modernism. Victorian prudery is therefore employed to rekindle the legacy of restraint and decorum vis-à-vis sexuality and sexual practices.

percent between 1960 and 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau 1970b, 2; U.S. Census Bureau 1973b, 13). The suburbs of Portland experienced massive amounts of growth between 1940 and 1970 (see Tables 8 and 9, p. 115-116).<sup>14</sup> Boise, on the other hand, had no suburbs to speak of, which was due to the fact that it was much smaller than Portland. Portland had 305,394 inhabitants in 1940 and 382,619 in 1970, while Boise had 26,130 and 74,990 respectively (U.S. Census Bureau 1973a, 13; U.S. Census Bureau 1973a, 13). Proportionately the city of Boise grew much more than Portland over that period of time—49.8 percent—but that influx only happened between 1960 and 1970. Between 1950 and 1960, Boise’s population increased only by 0.3 percent (U.S. Census 1963, 15). Additionally, much of Boise’s population changes can be attributed to the city’s annexation of surrounding unincorporated localities between 1960 and 1970 (see Table 5, p. 111). As such, Boise and Portland give a glimpse into the ways in which small American cities and large American towns, outside of the places that have been more traditional objects of study, fit into a national narrative that extolled the new American way of life as a suburban phenomenon.<sup>15</sup>

Another reason why Portland and Boise are interesting places to study during the postwar era and in relation to the national narrative is that they were places in which the inhabitants had access to a slew of both local and national experiences, which provided for countrywide or regional cultures to coexist. Part of my interest as a researcher is to analyze minor and major historical events away from the larger centers of activity in order to gain insight into national and local narratives that provide complementary and contrasting visions of the larger history of the United States. The presence of the standard and the deviation allow for the notion of place to be analyzed as it manifests itself in relation to the distinctiveness and similarity of the local and national scales. Additionally, studying these two urban areas provides insight into the variations between the institutional, semi-institutional, and private spheres. When I use the term place, I am trying to employ a multiplicity of meanings: “a particular point in space,”—Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon—“a building or area used for a specified purpose or activity,”—

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<sup>14</sup> This was restricted in 1973 when the Oregon State Senate enacted an Urban Growth Boundary that requires each urban area to define how far from the central core the city can sprawl (Oates 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Larger cities and suburban areas in the East, the Midwest, and the West Coast have tended to dominate scholarly focus, with the exception of “Middletown”—the small city community that was the case study published under the same title in 1929 by sociologists Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd. Similarly, Southern cities were long ignored by research: they did not grow as fast in the depressed South. Still, see for example John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (1990).

Boise State University and Portland State University, the cities' state-sponsored higher educational institutions—and even “the regular or proper position of something”—the socially expected roles that people play and occupy (“Place,” 2004).<sup>16</sup> In so doing, I hope to add to the sociocultural history written about each city, presenting at the same time top down and bottom up visions of each locality.

On the local level, this will best be exemplified through my use of university archives, university yearbooks, and oral histories. This provides a dialectic angle of analysis of the local communities as individuals and institutions interact. To create a link between these cities and the national narrative, I have put these sources in communion with more generalized sources, those directed at a national audience or those coming from a larger sample size, like etiquette books and educational videos. I have also asked some of the residents from both areas to talk about themselves in relation to the city and their personal vision of the national narrative. Furthermore, the themes on which my dissertation concentrates—dating and marriage—lend themselves to the analysis of space as a concept, because they exist simultaneously within the public and private domains, allowing for a discussion of convention and practice within fixed settings that mutually shape one another.

In using oral histories, I hope to examine the ways in which individuals and the nation construct and then transmit their stories. My research questions revolving around the notion of the building of a generation are particularly important when it comes to story making and storytelling. I am interested in how people write themselves into and out of their own generation. I believe one way of accessing personal inclusions and exclusions is by looking at the construction of the personal narrative. For my purposes, I plan to focus on the way that local residents of Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon talk about their lives during these moments in time. Part of my goal in gathering oral histories was to talk to people who feel that their lives have been relatively normal and have thus experienced what most people of their generation have. This goal seems contradictory, in a way, as it hopes to emphasize the individual while simultaneously positioning them within the larger framework of their time. It corresponds with my desire to question the rigidity of the classification of the long 1950s and to answer the following questions:

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<sup>16</sup> On place, see Miles Orvell and Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Public Space and the Ideology of Place in American Culture* (2009) or Michel de Certeau's discussion of space as a practiced place in *L'invention du quotidien* (1990), 172.

does the national narrative lend itself to the general experience? Or has it become a story of exceptionalism? Having chosen to focus on two small to mid-sized cities that were not really noticed, and perhaps noticeable, during either period is an attempt to see how pervasive nationalized culture had become and yet to discover the ways that people deviated from it. Many of the oral testimonies that I gathered do not come from individuals who were born in the area of interest, nor were they living there at the time under study. This discrepancy should not undermine my goals because these people were never meant to be *the* representatives of each city. My objective in doing oral histories was to provide an individual's perspective on the era and relate their individual experience to the national one. I believe that using the term "oral histories" is probably a better representation of my own research as I tried during my interviews to get my participants to tell me their life stories while focusing on certain moments and themes in their lives. As I completed my interviews, I certainly noticed differences between the "types" of people who settled in Boise, Idaho and in Portland, Oregon. Twenty-four oral interviews, however, do not allow me to claim that these individuals had *the* normative experience or one that can even be generalized to their local environments. As such, I plan to use oral histories gathered by other researchers as well—one that is locally relevant, others that provide insight into thematic issues addressed—and the memoir of one woman to try to create a connection between my participants and the wider American experience. This will help me to have an actual picture of how the individual's and nation's stories meld.

It is important to note that of the 21 interviews I conducted with 24 participants,<sup>17</sup> most of the people I interviewed in Boise and all of the people in Portland were white. The white populations in both states and cities were by far the majority between 1950 and 1970. The 1950 Census reported Portland's racial demographic make-up as 97.7 percent white (90.2 percent of whom were classified as Native white and 7.54 percent as Foreign-born white), 1.55 percent black, and 0.72 percent other races (U.S. Census Bureau 1952e, 51), while Boise's was 99.1 percent white (95.5 percent of the city's population were Native-born Americans while 3.7 percent were of foreign-birth), 0.5 percent black, and 0.4 percent other races (U.S. Census Bureau 1952d, 42). Portland

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<sup>17</sup> The discrepancy in number is due to the fact that three of the interviews were done with a married couple, rather than one-on-one. On a technical level, this made transcribing the interviews slightly more challenging, but in listening to the way people told their life story it was interesting to watch how one's spouse completed and contested the way things were remembered.



showed slight shifts in its racial composition between 1950 and 1960. 97 percent of the city's inhabitants were white, while 2 percent were black, and 1 percent were of other races. Boise shifted slightly in the other direction at the same time with its population being 99.26 percent white, 0.26 percent black, and 0.48 percent other races. This can be attributed in part to the annexation of suburban populations, rather than outmigration, as non-white racial groups do show an increase in actual numbers between 1950 (290 persons) and 1960 (665 persons) (U.S. Census Bureau 1952d, 42; US Census Bureau 1971b, 5-6; 9). Data from the 1970 Census demonstrates a continued demographic racial shift in Portland as its population redistributed to 96 percent white, 2.3 percent black, and 1.5 percent other races (U.S. Census Bureau 1971c, 9). Boise joined in the national trend for urban racial diversification, ever so slightly, as its racial demographics became 98.97 percent white, 0.27 percent black, and 0.76 percent other races (US Census Bureau 1971b, 9). As can be seen from this data both cities had heavily concentrated white populations, especially for metropolitan centers, but this seems to be relatively consistent with the Western region, which averaged a 93 percent white presence in its metropolitan areas for the 1970 Census (U.S. Census Bureau 1971a, 11). Though my interviewees are not representative of America's racial diversity, some of them would have been considered ethnic whites—seven self-identified as belonging to Jewish families, one of whom came from a mixed family (Italian-Jewish), two said they were part of a Czech community while growing up, and one came from an Irish-Catholic family—and one of them was half Native American. Boise and Portland remain rather homogenous racially—whites represented 89 percent and 76 percent of these cities respective populations in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015a; 2015b). I have tried to discuss race when the data available lent itself to this sort of analysis but my focus remains the articulation between local stories and the national narrative at a time when whites were the main focus of cultural and political discourse.<sup>18</sup>

In order to speak about youth and dating culture, I thought it wise to focus on something that both of my study areas had in common: local colleges. Boise's was founded in 1932 after a study conducted in 1930 by Dr. Leonard V. Koos of the University of Chicago recommended that a junior college be established in Boise under the direction of the public school system (Chaffee 1970, 2). Unsure of the actual need to

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<sup>18</sup> Adding an analysis of race and ethnicity in regards to dating and marriage will be one of my objects of study in the future.

which a junior college would be responding, the Chamber of Commerce agreed to the founder's, Bishop Middleton S. Barnwell, proposition to set up the junior college for a two-year trial period during which the college provided continued education to women students only (ibid., 4-7). When a couple of Boise High School male students expressed an interest in attending the junior college because of the dire economic situation, the Bishop knew St. Margaret's Hall, the site where the college would be located, was too small to have a co-educational program and so asked the Chamber of Commerce to help him raise the \$20,000 necessary to build extra accommodations (ibid., 5). Because funds were wanting, Barnwell continued to promote the institution as a girls' school, but the male students from Boise High could not be discouraged, gathering petitions and meeting with the Bishop regularly that three weeks before the school's opening, Barnwell announced that it would indeed be coeducational (ibid., 6-7). Initially created as a private organization and housed in St. Margaret's Hall, the population of Boise voted to make Boise Junior College a public institution funded by local taxes in September 1939 (ibid., 3; 59). In November of that same year, local citizens voted on a bond that would move the school to its current location on the south side of the Boise River (see Appendix 1 for maps of the states, counties, and cities). In 1966, the junior college received accreditation for its four-year upper-division program, thus marking the transition from a junior college to a state-sponsored college (ibid., 90). In 1974, Boise State became a university.

Portland State was initially created as Vanport Extension Center in response to overcrowding at Oregon's other state institutions in the wake of returning veterans taking advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights (*The Viking '47* 1947, 17).<sup>19</sup> Vanport City was a wartime housing development built north of Portland on the banks of the Columbia River in the fall and winter of 1942 (Taylor 1981, 117). As reconversion was underway, Vanport City was the perfect site to accommodate educational and housing demands. Registration began in the summer of 1946 and when the school's doors first opened, 1,410 students were enrolled (*Faculty Handbook* 1961, 6). By 1948, the majority veteran student population had been replaced by local high school graduates (ibid.). On Memorial Day in 1948, the Columbia River flooded and destroyed the city causing the school to relocate at the Oregon Shipyards, in north Portland, where the school operated

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<sup>19</sup> The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, colloquially known as the G.I. Bill, was passed by the Federal government with the aim of helping returning veterans easily reintegrate civilian life. It provided many subsidies to white, heterosexual, male veterans in education, housing, and business. This will be discussed at length in chapter 1.

for three years (*Faculty Handbook* 1963, 5). In 1952, the institution moved to its current home in downtown Portland when the night and day extension programs became one (*Faculty Handbook* 1961, 6). At this time, Vanport Extension Center was renamed Portland State Extension Center (*ibid.*). In 1953, the school began offering four-year programs in education and general studies and in 1955, it became a four-year degree granting institution associated with the Oregon State System of Higher Education, thus becoming Portland State College (*ibid.*). Over the next fifteen years, the college expanded its degree offerings and graduate programs and changed institutional status once again in 1969, converting into Portland State University.

### **Methodology**

As I have previously alluded, I have tried to combine the sources used in my analysis incorporating local and national perspectives. The starting place for my local research began at Boise State and Portland State's university archives, where I was able to go through the boxes related to my period of study and discovered an institutional perspective to the student culture on both campuses. Looking at the university libraries' archives was a way for me to counterbalance the oral histories that I had collected by current residents of both areas, but who were not actually in the area during the time of my study. It also proved to be a means by which I could collect an institutional telling of the locality and the young people who lived there in the 1950s and 1960s.

An archivist at Portland State suggested that I look at the university yearbooks. Initially uncertain about what a yearbook might say about the student population, I decided to browse through a few editions. I realized quickly that yearbooks provided a student perspective on college life and were excellent representations of the historic moment. I thus decided to study ten books from each archive, one every three years, something which would allow for me to follow the entire postwar era. Looking at Portland State's *The Viking*, I started in 1947 and ended in 1974. I began in the 1946 Boise State's *Les Bois* and finished in 1973.

In order to gain a more individualistic perspective on my target cities and the national narrative, I completed 21 oral histories with 24 residents of Boise and Portland. I have been heavily influenced by an anthropological approach that focuses on the story of the individual and how this story complements and contrasts with larger, dominant

societal narratives.<sup>20</sup> The 1950s, if regarded in a more positive light, evoke a sort of golden era of a simpler America with the happy-go-lucky nuclear family, safely tucked away in their suburban home, striving for normalcy. When looked at in a more negative light the 1950s are seen as a moment when Americans conformed to a political and cultural consensus that ignored larger societal problems because, to put it simply, enough Americans were benefiting from economic prosperity. The 1960s from both a positive and a negative perspective are frequently portrayed as a disruption of the previous decade. The positive asserts the 1960s was a time when Americans became concerned about those who were less able to affect change for themselves—i.e. the Civil Rights Movement, the concern about the high rate of persistent poverty, etc.—, as a moment when people began to question the economic and political consensus that promoted hyper-consumerism and anti-communism—i.e. the environmental movement and dissension over the Vietnam war—, and as a period during which Americans broke with the restraints of the past and began redefining cultural norms—the Women’s movement, the sexual revolution, the counterculture, etc. The negative stresses that all of these changes disrupted the American way of life, undermined cultural values, and promoted a government welfare state. Both views of the postwar era are seen as valid on their own, but are not the full picture. And in doing research on these eras, I have come to the conclusion that creating a coherent link between these two decades is absolutely necessary if we are to understand either. I have discovered that the 1950s and 1960s have many overlaps and very few disconnects and I believe that in talking to people, especially as they tell their life stories, which most people attempt to do in a linear fashion, it becomes apparent how individuals’ lives create continuity between one moment and the next. Perhaps this is where my anthropological training has influenced me the most. I believe oral histories have given me the chance to retrieve the individual story as well as consider the dominant narrative from a personalized perspective. I have been able to hear about many counter examples to the fixed images I described before, which allowed me not only to try to nuance the individual’s story but also to add depth to the national narrative.

The second reason for which I have chosen to conduct oral histories is that my topic tends toward the intimate. I am interested in exploring the ways in which young

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<sup>20</sup> I received my undergraduate degree in Anthropology from the University of Idaho in the small town of Moscow, Idaho in the north of the state.

people met, if, how, and when they dated, their perceptions of premarital sexual activity, both in terms of frequency as well as acceptability, and the dynamics that did or did not lead to marriage, and married life during the postwar era. The studies available on these topics tends to rely on research conducted by others, for example: many look at vital statistics, which are necessary of course for quantitative analysis, but this data often does not allow to dig into the hows and whys motivating behavior. Others use longitudinal studies, research surveys that follow the same people over a period of time, but this data proved not always relevant for my purposes because the longitudinal surveys available during my time periods do not fit into my regional focus, nor do they necessarily concentrate on the precise age cohort that interests me. Still others focus on the dominant discourse of that time that established conventional attitudes and behaviors acting to write the national narrative. I have chosen to use many such primary sources that also speak from the institutional perspective, but I also found that oral histories help to distinguish how norms played out in the daily lives of Americans. In many ways oral histories—and those I have relied on to elucidate certain themes—made it possible for me to fill in the gap between what people said they did and their actual behavior.

A third reason why I decided oral histories would play a significant role in my research is based on the regional specificity of my study. I thought oral histories would provide a greater understanding of each locality at that time. There was little information about Boise's social and cultural history in the 1950s and 1960s, which makes it both a very interesting place to study as well as a real challenge.<sup>21</sup> Portland, Oregon, on the other hand, has been studied, especially in terms of urban development and the experiences of ethno-racial minorities in the city, but usually about other periods than my own.<sup>22</sup> Because there have not been very many studies pertaining to the history of both

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<sup>21</sup> Two books that have informed some of the background provided on Boise State give a history of the academic institution: Glen Barrett's *Boise State University: Searching for Excellence, 1932-1984* (1984) and former college president, Eugene B. Chaffee's *An Idea Grows...A History of Boise College* (1970). John Gerassi's *The Boys of Boise* (1966) also heavily contributes to my discussion on the presence of a gay community in Boise at that time. This book, however interesting, does not paint a very clear picture of why and how there was a communal-wide purge of homosexuals. This is due to the fact that the author gives little analysis of the court documents and newspaper articles referenced; the paternalistic tone he uses towards the residents of Boise—with the exceptions of those involved in the scandal, with whom Gerassi clearly sympathizes, and other marginalized members of the community, like black residents—; and the author's drive to prove that the witch-hunt for homosexuals was an attempt by Boise's power-elite to unseat a powerful member of this group who was a homosexual. This remains speculation as the author never provides any substantiating evidence, however.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Boag has published two monographs about themes treated superficially in my work: in *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (2012), he focuses on cross-dressing and the redefinition of gender and

cities in terms of the dominant American narrative of the postwar era, I felt that oral histories might begin to fill this gap, while providing an individualized perspective on the times and places.

I relied on snowball sampling to meet my interviewees. Initially asking the people I knew, personally and professionally, if they would forward an email of my research project to friends, family, and colleagues that were born between 1925 and 1955.<sup>23</sup> Once each life history was completed, I would ask that person if they might recommend someone else they thought would be interested in participating. The advantage of snowball sampling with my particular research is that it was facilitated by people who had already been through the process, when they recommended a friend, family member, colleague, or acquaintance participate. The person they suggested, for the most part, demonstrated that they trusted the judgment of the recommender and came to the interview at ease. In regards to my interview topics, this was very important and I think it helped establish a favorable interview environment. Using a snowball sampling technique resulted in a fairly homogenous group of interviewees: as I stated previously the majority of the 24 interviewees were white, one was Native American, and seven of non-WASP stock. I disproportionately had women participants, only eight oral histories came from men and sixteen from women. Three of the men I talked with were co-interviewed with their wives. Based on what I could glean from their accounts, most of these individuals were firmly part of the middle class. I am basing this deduction off of the type of work these people did and their educational backgrounds. All of the people in Portland had a bachelor's degree and seven of the twelve had completed graduate level work. In Boise, I interviewed five people who could be considered part of the working

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sexual identities in the "Old West" and *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (2003), which looks at same-sex male communities in both urban and rural environments. Both works look at the presence of the LGBTQA community(-ies), though neither looks at the postwar era. His article "'Does Portland Need a Homophile Society?' Gay Culture and Activism in the Rose City between World War II and Stonewall" (2004) does, indeed, provide insight into both sexuality and the period I have chosen to study. Unfortunately, because of my focus on the dominant narrative, I was not able to discuss Boag's portrayal of homophile activism during this time. In future work, I hope to be able to look at homosocial communities and the homophile movement in both Boise and Portland. Polina Olsen's *Portland in the 1960s: Stories from the Counterculture* (2012) provides some insight into life in Portland during the postwar era, but it is disjointed in theme and presentation. The personal and email interviews as well as the ephemera Olsen uses do not necessarily provide thorough historical analysis. Like John Gerassi's work, the events and community are not elucidated through her telling of the time.

<sup>23</sup> Although this sampling technique and the group it ultimately produced were valuable in furthering my discussion and understanding of my overarching goals, in the future, I would advertise in the local newspapers to try to get greater diversity in terms of life experience, race, class, educational attainment, gender, sexual orientation in my sample.

class—farmers, laborers, etc. The other seven indicated that they worked in white-collar employment. Each of these seven had completed a bachelor’s level degree and two had pursued Master’s and Doctorate’s. Every person I interviewed was heterosexual. All but one had been married at least once. Eight had divorced: four of whom had not remarried at the time of the interview, two had remarried once, while the other two had remarried twice<sup>24</sup>. Despite the lack in diversity, the individuals who shared their life histories with me, in a way, then reflect the values of the national narrative that I have tried to elucidate in the following pages. I have tried to relativize their memories when they seemed to exist outside the mainstream, but feel this small sample can be seen as representative of the white, heterosexual, middle-class model for the most part. Charlotte Aull Davis’s explanation of the generalizability of life histories is applicable to the way that I used them throughout this work:

Certainly no individual life history can be said to be representative in its entirety, in that each individual life experience is unique to a single person. On the other hand, it may be possible to abstract various themes from the lives of individual members of a given social category that are indeed representative of most of the members of this category and hence provide empirically generalizable knowledge (1999, 170).

In addition to using my own oral histories, I have occasionally cited *Boise by Heart: Memories of the 1950's*. This collection of interviews was gathered by “seven storytellers from the Guild of Idaho Storytellers” (Ross 2000, 2). It has 33 interviews in it, six of which include two interviewees. It is divided into four sections “Foundations” (ten interviews, two with two interviewees), “Possibilities” (nine interviews, three with two interviewees), “Spotlight” (seven interviewees), “Town to City” (seven interviews, one with two interviewees). Each section has a brief introduction, highlighting the theme and giving facts around it. The people interviewed here appear to have played an important role in Boise’s history, but their biography was not included. When their family name coincided with well-known leaders in the community, I have explained the connection. This is a very interesting collection of interviews that I hope to use further in future work.

In order to compliment the primary sources related specifically to Boise and Portland, I have also drawn on etiquette books and magazines as well as educational films. I have used advice columns and etiquette books to explore how certain activities in

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 2 for information about each interviewee.

life were emphasized at certain moments and to focus on recurring themes that created significant life events for young people, in essence, creating modern-day rites of intensification that prepared young people to become adults, through the advice extolled on dating and sexual mores. Educational films—produced specifically to be shown in schools—have also played a part in providing a glimpse into how experts and authority figures (parents, teachers, and community leaders) hoped to influence the younger generation as it navigated its way into adulthood. The majority of the educational films from which I have drawn were produced by the two of largest educational film production houses—Coronet Instructional Films and Crawley Films under the auspices of the National Film Board of Canada (Alexander 2010, 20). They are *Are You Ready for Marriage?* (1950), *Dating Dos and Don'ts* (1949), *Going Steady* (1951), *How Do You Know Its Love* (1950), *How to Say No: Moral Maturity* (1951), *Marriage Is a Partnership* (1951), *How Much Affection?* (1958), *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* (1953). *Marriage: Today* (1950) was made by Affiliated Film Producers as part of a five-part series entitled *Marriage for Moderns*. Another film, *As Boys Grow* (1957), was created by Medical Arts Production and *How to Succeed with Brunettes* (1967) by the U.S. Navy. I chose these films based on their ability to provide information about the values being shared with young people in regards to their expectations for marriage, the reasons given for getting married, the rules of dating, their mandates about sexual activity, and their overall treatment of politesse. Given the fact that the main characters in all of these films were either in junior high, high school, or college, I think it is a fair assessment to say that they were directed at different age groups, but more generally at young people. All of these might be considered part of the guidance or dramatization subgenres, as opposed to academic films. They used typical situations that young people would confront in their daily lives as a starting point to discuss appropriate behavior in marriage, dating, and sexual activity and to make young people aware of the adult perspectives on these issues. In every film, except *Marriage Is a Partnership*, advice comes from an “expert,” who is played by a community leader, a parent, a sibling, or a peer. Their advice usually helps the main character understand his or her situation better and adjust his or her behavior to be in line with the expectation. These films, at times, present alternative advice to what can be taken from an advice books. Nearly all of those that speak about premarital sexual activity accept that some foreplay is acceptable couple behavior. The small ways in which they try to relate to a young audience makes them a rich source for analyzing the conventions of the era because they frequently provide a



middle-ground for what has commonly been depicted as forbidden behavior. Additionally, these films seem to be explanations for changing behaviors, thus, telling youth how the norm has evolved so they may be like everyone else.

In the following chapters, I have tried first to explain the norms of the white, middle-class heterosexual couple, then I shift focus to the undergirding identities upon which this model was contingent, and finally I look at actual youth practices. I have tried to demonstrate that not only were the long 1950s an era of tremendous change, the values and mores for which they are known furthered this impetus.

In the first chapter, I look at the coinciding notions of companionate marriage and gender roles. In conjunction with the democratic family, companionate marriage and a reemergence of separate gendered spheres in the postwar era laid the foundations for equality and partnership to really emerge as central tenets in the institution of marriage. I focus largely on those who married during the 1950s, young people who were embracing and embodying the ethos of the era. My interest is to show how societal discourse influenced the postwar norm at the center of which was the family.

In the second chapter, I analyze the emergence of “togetherness” as being central to establishing the postwar way of life through consumer culture. In this chapter, I try to look specifically at the notions of space and place and how they greatly affected the rise of postwar American familialism. In looking at the ideologies behind togetherness, suburbia, and consumption, the norm emerges to leave out fundamental portions of the population depending on their race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. As the model grew in its ubiquity this would leave room for those who did not conform, even in the slightest ways, to begin demanding that the American way of life be shared with everyone in the nation.

In the third and fourth chapters, I delve into some of the social identities that affected the private lives of individuals and their access to the postwar norm: gender and sexuality. Understanding the systemic nature of a gender and sexual order paints a more detailed picture of how one needed to comply with convention in order to be part of the larger social order. The societal focus on the white, middle-class masculine experience in conjunction with heterosexuality defined the limits of how Americans could obtain the new postwar dream.

In the fifth and sixth chapters I look at the establishment of the couple through the lens of dating and sexual activity. Although these were both heavily coded aspects of young people’s lives, the varying discourses—whether they came from experts or young

people themselves—indicates that there was enough room to maneuver for change to become a central part of this. Postwar “youth culture” has been looked at as being either directly contesting social norms or conforming to them en masse. I try to emphasize the possibility that there was enough informality in dating practices that looking at them as categorically defined tends to oversimplify the picture. This is further articulated in my discussion on sexual activity amongst unmarried youths. Despite the social controls put in place that demanded young people wait to get married before engaging in premarital sex, the acceptability of and expectation that foreplay would be part of the young couple’s romantic experience undermined the discourse that tried to contain their sexual behavior, leaving room for things to evolve.

In my final chapter, I analyze the manifestation of youth culture through Boise State’s and Portland State’s yearbooks. In taking an angle that provides room for youths to describe their own cultural experience, the familial norm seems to emerge with force throughout the long 1950s. However, it is also during this time, through the university archives and comments by university officials included in the yearbooks that one can see a clear influence coming from “adult culture,” one that encourages independence and striking out on one’s own. This is particularly important for the intimate sphere of marriage, family, gender, sexuality, dating, and sexual activity because it allows for the difference between what one says and what one does to become glaringly obvious. Through very subtle shifts in the yearbooks and archives, it becomes apparent that young people took this discourse to heart and slowly told American society that they were the ones who were able to define their own normative behavior, which meant taking greater responsibility for themselves as private and public citizens.



## **Part 1: The Postwar Consensus**



## I. “Going to the Chapel and We’re Gonna Get Married”<sup>25</sup>

The contemporary perception that marriage is a union in which two people come together as an expression of their love and desire to create a partnership is a relatively recent phenomenon. In her book, *Marriage, A History* (2005), Stephanie Coontz asserts that prior to the rise of companionate marriage in the 1920s, marriage was the primary organizing unit in society to consolidate political and economic power, which meant in practical terms that it was a way for people to extend their kinship networks, through the accumulation of in-laws, and to ensure their economic viability, through the combination of familial wealth and property or by adding an extra pair of hands to the family business or farm. Coontz explains that in the past marriage acted “as markets and governments do today”. The unification of two families was often done to secure “political, economic, and military alliances” as well as to divide labor according to gender and age. Marriage was very much a social, political, and economic institution that defined both the public and private practices of individuals, legitimating and invalidating the couple, sex acts, children, and property. Coontz admits that, described as such, marriage sounds devoid of the sentimentality that is often attributed to it today, which she claims is not meant to divorce love from marriage, but rather to give an idea of how people entered into the contract and what they expected from it (Coontz 2005, 5-11).

The influence of the Enlightenment on the shaping of the political foundations of the young American Republic carried over into marriage, recasting the ways that marriage would be used to organize society and personal life (ibid., 5). In her doctoral dissertation (2008), Catherine Gildae documents the history of western marriage, claiming that the Enlightenment represented a second major shift in the meaning of marriage.<sup>26</sup> It was at that time that the law became infused with the idea that marriage

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<sup>25</sup> This is the opening verse of “Chapel of Love” written by Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich and Phil Spector. The debut version sung by The Dixie Cups was released in 1964 and occupied the number one slot on the Billboard charts for three weeks. The lyrics embody the positive and euphoric vision of marriage during the first part of the post-war era.

<sup>26</sup> Gildae uses the work of John Witte Jr. *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion and Law in the Western Tradition* (1997) to locate the origins of American perceptions of marriage. Witte claims that the American tradition is necessarily based in Western Christianity. Gildae thus follows the historiography of western marriage from the beginnings of Christendom. Witte states a theology of marriage came into being during the first seven ecumenical councils (325-787 C.E.). The first shift took place during the twelfth century and became official Catholic doctrine during the sixteenth with the Council of Trent (1563). It asserted that marriage was “natural, contractual, and sacramental.” Gildae notes that the former two features came to constitute western law, while the third remained unique to Catholicism (2008, 42-44).

was a “voluntary bargain” (Gildae 2008, 44). Renowned second-wave feminist, Kate Millett attributed this theorizing specifically to French radicalism during the French Revolution, which she claimed not only asserted that the “government relies for its legitimacy on the consent of the governed,” but also that each individual possessed inalienable rights (1970, 65). These ideas were also present at the founding of the American nation. Marriage law would, from its beginnings, be based on mutual consent. In *Public Vows* (2000), historian Nancy Cott argues that early American politicians and legal authorities had a particular idea in mind when it came to marriage. They held the precepts of marriage should be “lifelong, faithful monogamy, formed by mutual consent of a man and a woman, bearing the impress of the Christian religion and the English common law [...]” (Cott 2000, 3). The nation’s first leaders believed these ideas represented the values they were trying to infuse into the Republic. On the one hand, they wanted to bestow marriage with political purpose, so they drew parallels between government and marriage. They believed that a healthy government, like a good marriage, was based on consent (ibid., 10). In essence, the founders equated monogamous marriage with a government by and for the people. On the other hand, the American arrangement was deeply rooted in the notion that a heterosexual monogamous marriage provided the appropriate framework for the expression of sexual desires and the raising of children, rendering it utilitarian as well as a reflection of the nation’s values (ibid.). This latter conceptualizing of marriage served more to circumscribe gender and sexuality as it positioned men and women within complementary, finite roles, the fulfillment of which, or their failing, had moral implications.

American marriage was thus influenced by egalitarian political philosophies that granted power and independence through consent and natural rights as well as more conservative religious and legal traditions that were concerned with regulating appropriate sexual acts and ensuring that children had parents who would care and provide for them. With two seemingly opposing forces coming into one, it should not be surprising that the egalitarian model, being so revolutionary, was easily suspended for one member of the arrangement, especially as British common law, which greatly influenced the young nation, had already stipulated the dominance of the husband over the wife in the marital contract. In *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), English lawmaker William Blackstone defined the marital relationship thus: “By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law...” (430). This system was known as coverture. Married women were considered one with their husbands and “...the very

being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage” (ibid.). This meant that in most cases a married woman could not enter into contracts, sue or be sued, sell or bequeath her property (“Coverture” n.d.). Millet writes, “The principle of ‘coverture’ or *femme couverte*, general throughout Western jurisprudence, placed the married woman in the position both of minor and chattel throughout her life” (1970, 67). Additionally, this placed the husband at the head of the family and named him the financial provider, while making the wife his dependent (Cott 2000, 7). When the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791, it allowed states to enact their own marital laws as marriage was not a delegated power in the Constitution. By the end of the eighteenth century many states had written marital laws, disposing of the common law, but the idea that the couple was a single unit continued to influence cultural, political, and economic decisions well into the twentieth century (ibid., 7). Through marriage, men and women were assigned public and private roles, known as entitlements and obligations (ibid., 3). As the economic provider, the husband was required to provide his wife with life’s “necessaries,” which tended to be a very vaguely defined term and varied greatly between states. In some cases, it simply meant providing the bare minimum like running water, while in others it included more luxurious trappings like new clothing (Coontz 2011, 8). This system lasted over time and, as late as 1963, the President’s Commission on the Status of Women confirmed in 1963 that the legacy of coverture still held decisive sway when it came to the ownership of assets and income. In the 1960s, a wife still had “no legal rights to any part of her husband's earnings or property during the existence of the marriage, aside from a right to be properly supported” (ibid., 5). The husband was the responsible party when making decisions, allowing him to choose where the couple resided and to sign-off on all family and individual financial ventures (ibid., 6-7). As the homemaker, the wife’s legal obligations were to take care of the children and the home (ibid., 8). Some states required that she take her husband’s name when she married (ibid., 6). The husband was entitled to his wife’s services, including sex, and could punish her physically when she was not compliant (Coontz 2005, 9). Needless to say, the common law tradition that stipulated separate and disparate gender roles for men and women helped to define the political, economic, and social existence for men and women in the United States, regardless of the egalitarian ideals on which American marriage was based.

Another feature of the Enlightenment’s influence on marriage was the radical notion that couples should marry for love (ibid., 5). Stephanie Coontz postulates that this



evolution in familial and partnership norms evolved over 150 years, reaching its apogee in the 1950s and 1960s (*ibid.*, 4-5). Pairing true love with marriage weakened the pillars—growing one’s extended family and ensuring the family’s economic stability—that had for so long defined the institution. As couples began to look to marriage as the source for personal satisfaction, marriage went from a practical arrangement to an emotional one (Cherlin 2004, 851; Coontz 2005, 4-8). It increasingly became centered on love and personal fulfillment, making emotional and sexual satisfaction part of its key tenets (Cherlin 2004, 851; Coontz 2005, 4-5; Cott 2000, 179, 181). This transformation is commonly referred to as companionate marriage and understood as a relationship “premised on equal sexual desires and mutual emotional fulfillment” (Davis 2008, 1137). The rise of a more emotionally and sexually intimate couple made way for the “democratic family”—a concept that developed towards the beginning of the twentieth century, largely in response to the waning Victorian ideology of separate spheres and the gradual weakening of the idea that the family unit must necessarily be headed by an authoritarian father figure. By the 1920s, the common understanding of companionate marriage asserts that family life had become more participative; husbands, wives, and children had specific roles and responsibilities, which placed them on nearly equal footing. The democratic family was epitomized in companionate marriage as the couple came to symbolize a true partnership, placing great emphasis on emotional satisfaction, and the necessity of deriving gratification from one’s marital roles (Cherlin 2004, 851).

In ““Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry”” (2008), Rebecca Davis contests the seeming neutrality and eventual conquest of companionate marriage in the United States. Despite being commonly used by historians to evoke “mutuality and intense emotional bonds within marriage,” Davis describes the controversy companionate marriage provoked in the 1920s, when the phenomenon was officially coined (2008, 1140). There were at least two different usages of the term in the 1920s, in addition to its usual historical application. Sociologists employed “companionate marriage” as a way to describe shifting social and economic meanings among white, middle-class families and engaged in lively debates about the social and eugenic concerns that these changes implied (*ibid.*, 1138; 1140-1141). They largely attributed these transformations to the metamorphoses in public life for women. In legal matters, women gained great independence through the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1920, which granted them the vote. On a social and cultural level, women won greater control over their bodies as the birth control movement gained ground and there was larger acceptance of the idea

that women naturally possessed sexual desires, like men. Additionally, rising trends in premarital sex, divorce, and women's white-collar employment fueled the argument that women had moved away from nineteenth-century ideals of "true womanhood" (ibid., 1138).<sup>27</sup> The eugenic arguments tended to be concerned with a couple's "fitness" to reproduce and a larger societal hope for "desirable" whites to reproduce and better the American race (ibid., 1140-1141; 1144). "[...S]ociologists explained [that companionate] marriages embraced democratic family organization, produced fewer children, and prioritized couples' mutual emotional and sexual needs" (ibid., 1138). The most controversial contributor to the understanding of companionate marriage, according to Davis, was Judge Ben B. Lindsey, who attempted to cast it within legal terms. Lindsey championed companionate marriage as a way for Americans to renounce the "puritanical traditions" that made many a hypocrite in the modern era. Sexual immorality in the form of premarital sex could be circumvented if marital behaviors were modified to include a second kind of marriage, Lindsey argued (ibid., 1141-1143). Quite simply "Companionate marriage," for Lindsey was, "[...] legal marriage, with legalized Birth Control, and with the right to divorce by mutual consent for childless couples, usually without payment of alimony" (1929, xxiii). Davis explains that Lindsey's ideas generated an explosive response from clergymen and laymen alike. Many people believed that Lindsey was advocating trial marriages, or short-term marriages that allowed for individuals to engage in sexual activity without the attached stigma of promiscuity (Davis 2008, 1143). Some of his critics believed he was promoting "Bolshevik Communism, atheism, and prostitution" (ibid., 1139; 1146). The amalgamation of companionate marriage with Bolshevism is significant as those who proffered this type of criticism were renouncing the possibility that these contracts could be associated to American democratic and capitalist values (ibid., 1139). Furthermore, Lindsey's critics recognized that this radically egalitarian vision of marriage could upset the gender, sexual, and ethno-racial orders as it attempted to make the institution, rather than the actors, accommodating (ibid.). These detractors believed the problem with marriage could be located in the poorly adjusted individuals who contracted marriages and who

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<sup>27</sup> As a reminder, "true womanhood" cast women as the more virtuous sex. Their moral purity was held up as a beacon to all of society. Women's moral rectitude would serve as an example to their husbands while they were out in the marketplace and made them perfect instructors for their children as they prepared them to become conscientious citizens. This also extended to their sexuality. Women were seen as "sexual innocents." Their asexuality was meant to inspire men to curtail their own sexual urges (Coontz 2005, 159; 165; 173; 189).

were in need of marriage education and counseling (ibid., 1158). Thanks in part to the debate around companionate marriage, an entire field of expertise developed to ensure that young couples were falling in line with the more traditional form of marriage, leading to the development of the first marriage counseling clinics in the United States in the early 1930s (ibid., 1159). The religious and educational specialists who built the philosophy of marital therapy saw the individualized tenets of companionate marriage as antithetical to the familial prerogatives of its more traditional form. The religious groups focused their concerns on sexuality and gender. First, they objected to the insistence on sexual satisfaction over “life-long companionship” and reproduction (ibid.). Second, they maintained the importance of a gendered division of labor that positioned men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. They recommended that women take home economics courses in order to prepare to properly manage their households, and that wealthier women take up their motherly responsibilities rather than paying maids and governesses (ibid.). Third, they encouraged churches to play a role in providing counsel to married couples that reinforced the breadwinner/homemaker duo (ibid.). “Sociologists and practitioners in the new field of ‘marriage counseling’ combined earlier social science descriptions of companionate marriage with new rationales for expert intervention” (ibid., 1160). In spite of resistance to the legal applications of companionate marriage, the more sentimental notion that marriage was a partnership gained steam and social scientists emphasized “the modern ideal of ‘marital companionship,’” insisting on a more democratic family and loving couple, while downplaying the need for institutional adjustment (ibid.). If couples were unable to achieve marital companionship, they were in need of marriage counseling.

The controversy surrounding the initial introduction of a structural form of companionate marriage helps elucidate what many people believed was at stake if this modern arrangement for marriage were adopted. Firstly, society would accept non-procreative sexual acts based on desire and pleasure, something which would upset the bedrock of the family as the married couple could be seen as distinct from the familial unit. Secondly, legal companionate marriage would sanction the idea that marriage had temporal limits if the couple discovered they were unhappy or incompatible with one another. Finally, companionate marriage presented an arrangement that ran contrary to the gender order that positioned men and women as equals but independent from one another. In conclusion, the development of “marital companionship” was a means to subtly reconceive marriage without upsetting its institutional supports—the family,

heterosexuality, monogamy, and gender. The married couples of the postwar era came to symbolize this middle ground. They were supposed to want children, to find joy in their sexual expression, to remain faithful to their spouses, and to find fulfillment as men and women. Andrew Cherlin acknowledges the potential contradictory nature of this:

Although husbands and wives in the companionate marriage usually adhered to a sharp division of labor, they were supposed to be each other's companions [...]. However, through the 1950s, wives and husbands tended to derive satisfaction from their participation in a marriage-based nuclear family. That is to say, they based their gratification on playing marital roles well: being good providers, good homemakers, and responsible parents (2004, 851).

The evolution of marriage towards a more companionate model is fundamental to understanding the impact of both gender and sexuality in the postwar United States. Maintaining clearly defined gender roles helped reinforce heteronormative sexuality. In the immediate postwar era, marital companionship would reign. Its apotheosis would turn the statistical trends of the first half of the twentieth century on their head. The 1950s were a historical anomaly in terms of how many people married—95 percent compared to 90 percent in previous decades—, when couples married—the age at which men married fell from 26 to 23 and from 22 to 20 for women—, and how many children they had—between 1946-1964, the birthrate remained above its prewar levels climbing to 24 births per one thousand in 1946, peaking at 26.5 per one thousand in 1947, and hovering around 25 births per one thousand until the mid-1950s, before reaching its prewar levels in 1964 (May 1988, 59; Colby and Ortman 2014, 2-3). These changes in marital behavior helped usher in a new era, one in which the family would be strongly emphasized as a core unit.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how companionship was used to advance marriage as an equal partnership while also reinforcing men and women's roles vis-à-vis one another. Taken together, the democratic but gender-based couple would establish a normative marriage model for the era that would ultimately be short-lived, precisely because it insisted on an egalitarian duality that invited contradiction. At the heart of postwar American marriage was a heterosexual, middle-class couple. The unique economic, political, and social circumstances of the postwar era helped to reposition young people's prospects for marriage. Between the 1920s and 1950s, an army of experts emerged to guide America's youth toward adulthood via marriage. Once young couples embarked on marriage, there was a slew of advice and expectations that defined how husbands and wives were supposed to behave. By looking at the influence of popular discourse, the economy, specific policies, and expert opinions, I will highlight the

interplay between societal discourse and the establishment of the postwar norm.

### 1. “Marriage for Moderns,” or the Anomalies of Marriage in the Postwar Era

The convergence of several phenomena in the aftermath of World War II had an enormous impact on marriage. Young people were in many ways venturing into new terrain. They had to reconcile the scars left by the instability of the Great Depression and the War with the promise that better times were ahead (Chafe 2007, 8). In spite of wartime prosperity and constant reiteration in political and popular discourse about American exceptionalism, many Americans felt a great deal of uncertainty about the future. “Public opinion surveys showed that seven out of ten Americans expected to be personally worse off after the war, and six out of ten expected lower wages. Only 37 percent believed that their children would have a better opportunity after the war than they now enjoyed” (ibid., 29-30). Adding to the fears of economic decline, popular discourse suggested that American society was in the throes of massive change. An example of this can be seen in the educational film, *Marriage: Today* (1950), in which the idealistic image of marriage was juxtaposed with the “nightmare” of postwar living. The film opens on a young couple dreaming about marital life—playing at domesticity: the woman mimes making eggs, while the man pretends to read an imaginary paper—only to confront the “a social blight called slums,” “a health problem called overcrowding,” and an “economic deadlock called housing” (*Marriage: Today*, 2:14-2:20). The economic and social challenges facing the nation were portrayed as potential obstacles to the couple that could be overcome through the security and happiness of marriage. In contrast to the postwar push towards domestic bliss, social commentators lamented the instability of marriage and the family throughout the first half of the twentieth-century (Bailey 1988, 120-121). They saw the shift from a “self-sufficient” unit anchored in communal institutions like the church or the school, towards an increasingly dependent and impressionable entity that was subject to the whims of the government and the economy as inherently problematic (ibid., 120). Yet, at mid-century, young people were turning towards marriage to stave off the insecurity and pressures of the modern world. As Elaine Tyler May explains it, security was a driving motivation behind domestic containment and was rooted in the home (1988, 15-16). “Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, so they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar women and men aspired”

(*ibid.*, 16). It seems fitting then that the immediate postwar era be cast within a framework of change, a rebalancing of social, political, and economic unease with the security and comfort of marriage and family. The political, economic, and social variations that rewrote the marital script resonated so profoundly with enough Americans that domesticity and togetherness became synonymous with the American way of life. In this first section then, I am going to attempt to identify these transformations in order to provide an explanative framework of the uniqueness of postwar marriage.

In terms of political influence, the American Federal government started promoting marriage as the means to access middle-class respectability. It is significant that the government took an active role in defining the ideology that sustained the institution of marriage as this was a break with the past. Stephanie Coontz specifies that one of the lasting effects of the Enlightenment was the privatization of the marriage contract. She writes, “After the late eighteenth century, according to one U.S. legal historian, marriage was increasingly defined as a private agreement with public consequences, rather than as a public institution [...]” (Coontz 2005, 147). The Federal government redefined its position in relation to marriage in part through the introduction of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, or the GI Bill of Rights. Through this Act the federal government took it upon itself to provide the couple with an economic framework that positioned the man as the breadwinner and the woman as his financial dependent. This economic differentiation stipulated appropriate production roles for men and women, making gender a defining factor for the household division of labor. Nancy Cott describes this as both shaping and monetarily sustaining a public discourse that participated in redefining marital roles (2000, 190-191). Men were cast as the “husband-heads of households,” “property-owners,” “job-holders” and “providers” through the entitlements afforded by the Bill (*ibid.*). The GI Bill reinforced men’s role as the head of the family by providing them with superior educational and economic opportunities. Margot Canaday also contends that the GI Bill effectively acted to institutionalize heterosexuality as it privileged “channeling resources to men so that—at a moment when women had made significant gains in the workplace—the economic incentives for women to marry remained firmly in place [...] while it stigmatized homosexuality” (2003, 957). Financing these benefits represented as much as 15 percent of the federal budget in 1948 (*ibid.*, 937). The GI Bill providing returning veterans with medical coverage; it afforded ex-GIs access to low-interest, 30-year, no-down-payment Federal Housing Administration mortgages, by providing insurance for almost 2.4 million home

loans between 1944 and 1952; and it “subsidized 100% of postsecondary education costs, including books and living expenses” (Blaszczyk, 2009, 200; Astin and Lindholm 2002, 18).

The GI Bill came to embody who was a deserving beneficiary of the Federal government’s investment. The very fact that the government chose to privilege the soldier over the rest of the citizenry spoke volumes about the value of some people’s wartime contributions over others, and did not recognize the many accomplishments on the Home Front during the war. The government’s investment in some soldiers, but not all citizens, acted to reinforce white, heterosexual, male privilege and define the “true” American citizen. African American male veterans did not have access to these entitlements as easily as their white counterparts. For example, the Veteran’s Administration (VA) actively denied African American men unemployment benefits when they refused to take jobs that did not provide a living wage—jobs, often, that did not match their specific skills and that restricted them to underpaid manual labor and menial tasks (Herbold 1994-1995, 105). Home loans were frequently provided through private lenders and real estate agencies, whose discriminatory policies not only kept blacks from qualifying for loans, they actively sequestered African Americans into “redlined” communities (Cohen 2003, 170; Herbold 1994-1995, 106).<sup>28</sup> Juggling higher education with the demands of economic isolation and poverty made it particularly challenging for blacks to take advantage of the educational benefits of the Bill (Herbold 1994-1995, 105). When they were not facing such circumstances or could manage them without undue difficulty, African Americans had to contend with the lasting legacy of segregation that had left many of them with a substandard education rendering them ill-prepared for higher education as well as the actual reality of segregation that kept them in overcrowded black colleges (ibid., 106).

Another category of soldiers denied access to the perks of the GI Bill were those who had been issued a blue discharge. An intermediary category between honorable and dishonorable, a blue discharge eventually became known simply as an “undesirable”

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<sup>28</sup> “Red-lining” was a property rating system devised by the Home Owners Loan Corporation that defined four categories for real estate holdings. The first, colored green, included new properties that had a uniform character and remained sought-after properties regardless of the ups and downs of the market. The second, marked with the color blue, were also desirable areas, but had “reached their peak.” They were expected to maintain their homogeneity for years to come. The third, defined by the color yellow, were seen as neighborhoods and communities in decline. Finally, the fourth grade was differentiated by the color red and comprised older housing in poorer neighborhoods. Any area that housed African Americans was colored red (Jackson 1985, 197-198; Hillier 2003, 395).

discharge (Canaday 2003, 940). The Army began to use the blue discharge systematically to rid its ranks of male soldiers for incidences of homosexuality in 1943 (Canaday 2003, 941; Potter 2006, 368). According to legal and political historian, Margot Canaday, this exclusion allowed the army to [...] build a closet within federal social policy” and “pretend that homosexual soldiers had not defended their country, that they could not meet the obligations of good citizens” (2003, 956). Not only did the blue discharge demand little proof before it was issued, many of the soldiers who were excused on the pretext of homosexuality were kept from gainful employment after the War in addition to being denied the financial and social benefits of the GI Bill (ibid.).

Concurrently, establishing worthiness as part of the conditions of accessing the Bill acted to limit women’s ability to use the entitlements it promised. On the one hand, it equated “masculinism” with the “citizen-soldier,” by giving married men dependency allowances—that were greater than women’s—as well as survivors’ benefits, requiring women to prove they were not supported by a male wage earner before receiving unemployment benefits, and providing them with smaller educational allowances for dependent spouses than their male counterparts (ibid.). The government effectively rendered masculinity synonymous with breadwinning as it prioritized men’s monetary roles over those of women. On the other hand, the government acted to minimize the presence of women veterans and female citizens’ contributions to the war effort at home. For veterans, Canaday notes, this was most blatant in the limits placed on women’s participation in the military. Only two percent of the total force could be women until 1967, which meant that 98 percent of the resources set aside for veterans were destined for male recipients (ibid., 956-957). For all women, this acted to reinforce the ideology of coverture. “[...W]omen would experience the expansion of social citizenship through their husbands’ benefits” (ibid., 957). Not only were women placed in an economically dependent position, their recognition as citizens was through the auspices of their husbands.

The situation on the university and college campus is one telling example of the ways the Federal government used the GI Bill to underwrite the economic relationship between men and women. First, veterans were given privileged access to higher education. Of the 15 million eligible male veterans, more than 2.2 million of them took advantage of the educational benefits it offered (Bound and Turner 2002, 785; Canaday 2003, 957), which had a real effect on female registrations. As institutions were making way for GI Bill beneficiaries’ enrollments to double, they were implementing admission



quotas for women and non-veterans (Cohen 2003, 140). This was taking place at a time when the amount of young people continuing their educations was swelling. According to the Bicentennial Edition of the Census, 9 percent of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 attended college in 1940, while 14.7 percent did in 1948 (1975, 383). GIs had to enroll in school by July 1951. However, the conflict in Korea caused Congress to enact a similar piece of legislation in July 1952 allowing an additional 600,000 to 700,000 veterans a year to pursue their college educations ("GI Bill Extended to Korea Veterans," 1953). This revised Veteran's Readjustment Act stipulated school or training had to begin by August 1954, or two years after discharge, whichever was later (ibid.). We can hypothesize the positive effect of this subsequent legislation in veteran enrollments as there was a drop in higher education registrations in 1952, only 13.8 percent of the population aged 18-24, and then a bump in 1954 when 16.2 percent were enrolled (U.S. Census Bureau 1975, 383). This can be further substantiated when the ratios of men and women student enrollments are compared. Between 1948 and 1954, men's registrations in higher educational institutions initially declined, between 1948 and 1950 by 8.7 percent, between 1950 and 1952 by 11.5 percent (ibid.). However, between 1952 and 1954, when the GI Bill was in effect for Korean veterans, male enrollments increased by 11.7 percent (ibid.). For women students, enrollments steadily increased between 1948 and 1952, first by 3.7 percent and then by 4.4 percent (ibid.). Though numerically only 36 percent of the student population in higher education in 1954, women's enrollments had grown by 14.6 percent since 1952 (ibid.). Not only do these numbers indicate an increase in men's enrollments after 1952, they suggest that once men's registrations fell women were allowed to slowly return in higher numbers.

On a local level, the state-funded junior colleges located in Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho reflected the priority given to men to ensure their economic prospects. In its first year, Portland State University, known as Vanport College at that time, had 2,000 students, a whopping 90 percent of whom were veterans (*The Viking* 47, 1-2). In the academic year of 1946-1947, Boise State, then Boise Junior College, recorded having 840 students enrolled, 390 non-veterans and 450 veterans (Minor, 1946). In *Boise College: An Idea Grows* (1970), Boise Junior College's second official president, Eugene B. Chaffee, recounts the impressionable impact of the veteran presence on campus. First, Chaffee notes the sudden shift in enrollments from women to men in the winter and spring terms of 1945-1946 (1970, 124). Second, he postulates that the veteran was a new species of student, "serious," "older," and "no nonsense" (ibid.). Third, he conveys the

novelty of the veteran student who, if he had not yet married, hoped “to capture a normal, family life and this of course meant a wife and children in many cases” (ibid. 125). Chaffee’s recollection attests to the marked change GIs made to the small campus and the effect the War had had on the young college student. Being in college was no longer antithetical to marriage. The “standard” life trajectory that assumed marriage came after one finished their studies realigned to incorporate married students and helped single students look for marriage while in school.

President Chaffee’s papers in the Boise State University archives offer ample evidence supporting the priority given to veterans’ issues at this local college. Housing was a particularly telling category. For the 1945-1951 period, there were two folders dealing with housing, both of their labels express the focus of college administrators: “Veteran’s Housing 1945-51” and “Veteran’s Emergency Housing Program 1946-1947.” They included copies of documents issued by the National Housing Agency’s Federal Public Housing Authority that spoke about the national housing shortage and its drive to convert emergency war housing for use “by distressed families of servicemen, veterans and their families, and single veterans attending educational institutions” (National Housing Agency 1947, 1). Amongst these papers was a “Standard for Selection of Tenants” that defined each of the categories who were to benefit from housing at Boise Junior College. Distressed families of servicemen were those “in need of housing” because “they are actually without housing,” “they are living in quarters not designed for family occupancy,” “they have been or are to be evicted,” “they have lived doubled up with another family [...],” or “they have a dwelling which is totally unsatisfactory for their use [...].” (“Boise Junior College Project Management Plan” 1946, 1-2). Veterans were those who had served in either the military or naval forces and had been discharged under any conditions other than dishonorable (ibid.). The families of veterans were defined as “a natural family consisting of a family head and one or more persons living alone” (ibid.). Taken together, the “Handbook of Information” and the “Boise Junior College Project Management Plan” not only reveal how important national and local agencies took the issue of housing veterans, but they highlight the federal government’s and academic institution’s interest in ensuring that returning soldiers could provide their families with a secure and stable living environment.

From the few letters kept in President Chaffee’s papers on this issue, it becomes clear that those involved felt a great sense of responsibility in guaranteeing that the needs of veterans were being met. Raymond J. Briggs, an engineer in Boise, wrote George W.

Coplen, the Regional Representative for the Administrator of the National Housing Agency Region VII in Seattle, Washington, saying:

The Boise Junior College is in dire need of housing for war veteran students. Present enrollment is burdensome, whereas alarming increases, imminently so, will add further worry and grave concern as to these veteran's [*sic*] interests. The BJC is fully accredited with the University of Idaho and other full course collegiate institutions, therefore its housing relief will directly relieve conditions in our other schools (1946).

The official response could not have provided much comfort. Coplen acknowledges that communities with higher educational institutions seemed to be bearing more of the burden for housing returning soldiers as they took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, the housing shortage was a nationwide problem with which the government was attempting to wrestle. “[...I]t seems that the entire country is approaching the most difficult housing problem we have ever seen” (Coplen, 1946). While Boise was struggling to fulfill its promise to provide housing and education for soldiers, Portland, Oregon was inaugurating a local campus as a direct response to these two concerns.

In the pages of *The 1947 Viking*, Vanport’s yearbook, housing seems to have played a fundamental role in the founding of Vanport College. As the inaugural edition, the 1947 yearbook included a history of the college and described its origins thus: “Jumble a housing shortage, over-crowded universities, the G.I. benefits derived from Public Laws 346 and 16, confused veterans, a perplexed nation, and the country-wide education calamity takes full form” (*The Viking* 47, 17-18). Vanport was born out of necessity, as a feeder school to the other overcrowded higher education institutions in the Oregon State System. Its appeal, however, was that it was constructed in a war-built emergency housing project part of which was easily converted for educational purposes while the rest remained housing. *The Viking* reprinted the prodding of advertising circulars that extolled, “Vanport College is the only school in the Northwest able to offer registrants on-the-scene housing. Hot and cold running water, nursery schools, bedroom, and shower” (ibid.). These criteria, *The Viking* staff opined, “were more pertinent data than curricular information” (ibid.). This is further reinforced in a promotional film created in 1947 by The Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon and Vanport College entitled *A College Comes to Housing*. On-site housing was a central tenet of the attraction of the school. The film touts “Vanport Extension Center [...] is the nation’s pioneer and outstanding example of moving college facilities to housing facilities thereby alleviating our crowded conditions in the state colleges” (*A College*

*Comes to Housing*, 0:23-0:37). The underlying appeal of housing, however, is to accommodate the changing college student, veterans looking to marry, or who were already married and had children. The film boasts that this is precisely the kind of student that fills the college's classrooms. "Nearly half of the students were married and many of those married had children. A majority of the married students and a considerable number of the single students had moved into Vanport apartments. They were actually utilizing the housing as well as the college" (ibid., 3:25-3:40). Perhaps most importantly, the film attempts to contextualize the benefits of this type of environment with its effects on the home and family.

The veterans were home. They had found a place to live, a place to study, and for many Portland offered a nearby place for part-time employment. [...] When home is right on the campus it's an easy transition from classroom to playground. Family is just as important to our students as it is to any workingman. [...] School days all have their ending and so to home. Time to meet the youngster. Children enthused, happy with their liberty, without being conscious of their happiness. The kind that makes a father proud (ibid., 3:41-3:50; 8:56-9:06; 9:16-9:30).

Images of domesticity are present throughout *A College Comes to Housing*. Oscillating between the young male veteran finding his footing in the classroom and his wife and children establishing their home, this promotional film embodies the dogma of the postwar era. The film portrays the important role that Vanport College played in ensuring that GIs had access to that ideology. The institutional preoccupation with the veteran student, as a private citizen, at both Boise Junior and Vanport Colleges, demonstrates the federal government's drive to shore up the economic value of the man in the family. The Serviceman's Readjustment Act was meant to provide stability as male veterans re-assimilated, making more opportunities readily available to them so they could continue on into the middle class and could thus, assume their duties as breadwinners.

The postwar boom in the American economy was also conducive to the husband/breadwinner-wife/homemaker arrangement as a family wage was extolled as a workingman's prerogative. This was not an invention of the postwar era, however. The rise of wage labor in the eighteenth century had already repositioned men's and women's familial contributions (Coontz 2005, 146). As the economy transitioned away from bartering and as households produced less of what they used on a daily basis, wage-work became essential to the family's survival. Store-bought products still required a great deal of labor. Women had traditionally combined the labor-intensive tasks of housekeeping with childrearing, but the financial necessity for actual money complicated this dynamic. Lower-class women went into wage-labor until their children could take

jobs, while the economically better off began to exalt the virtues of the wife as a homemaker. Moreover, the household's transition to a consuming unit caused the productive tasks in the home, traditionally performed by women, to lose their economic value, infusing them instead with emotional significance. "[...A]s housekeeping became 'homemaking,' it came to be seen as an act of love rather than a contribution to survival" (*ibid.*, 155). Homemaking, consequently, became a marker of middle-class status for some women (*ibid.*, 154-156). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the family wage was introduced as a means to not only ensure the survival of the family, but also to bolster the man's role of providing for his wife and children in the working classes (May 1982, 400-401). By the end of the nineteenth century, the struggle for a family wage, or living wage, was integral to organized labors' demands. It necessarily meant that the familial unit was economically dependent on a male breadwinner, thus underwriting an economic and gender arrangement in the public and private spheres for the lower classes. There were two assumptions upon which this understanding was predicated. On the one hand, it was presumed that all women would become wives, while, on the other, it consigned women to the "non-productive" home. In fact, women who worked outside of the home were seen as challenging men's access to a family wage and undermining the masculine role as the provider. "Working women were believed to devalue wages, making a 'living wage' difficult to achieve and upsetting a natural sexual order" (*ibid.*, 402-403). Between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the Great Depression the rhetoric of a family wage gained ground and women's domestic contributions continued to lose their monetary importance, while they gained in social and emotional significance (*ibid.*, 402-404).

The period after World War II essentially saw the combination of the middle-class and working-class ideologies where women were in the home "performing proper feminine tasks" and the family wage guaranteed an "improved standard of living" (*ibid.*, 403), making marriage an increasingly attractive arrangement for both men and women. This was possible, in part, because of the prosperous economy and the rise of mass consumption in the United States. The gross national product ballooned between 1945 and 1960, expanding by 250 percent (Blaszczyk 2009, 182; Chafe 2007, 106). As the economy shifted towards a post-industrial and service economy (Blaszczyk 2009, 183; Chafe 2007, 108), consumer goods and services expanded exponentially. The majority of jobs available shifted to the white-collar sector and were directed at the consumer (Chafe 2007, 108-109). The average worker saw a significant increase in his/her purchasing

power, gaining more between 1947 and 1960 than it had in the first half of the twentieth century (Coontz 2011, 106). Approximately ten years after the War, as many as 60 percent of American households had achieved a middle-class standard of living (Blaszczyk 2009, 182; Chafe 2007, 106; Coontz 2011, 106). Historian William Chafe explains, “America had entered what the economist Walt Rostow called the ‘high mass consumption’ stage of economic development” (Chafe 2007, 106). A significant part of postwar life, then, was focused on the family’s ability to consume, something which was predicated on the husband’s ability to keep up with “improved living standards.”<sup>29</sup> As median and mean family incomes doubled between 1949 and 1973, mass consumption ensured Americans could invest in large purchases like homes, cars, televisions, and other home appliances, which in turn fueled economic prosperity (Chafe 2007, 106; Cohen 2003, 121).

Economic good times brought a great sense of optimism with them. As more people joined the ranks of the middle classes, politicians and economists purported that the economic good tidings would eventually bring prosperity and equality to the masses. William Chafe notes that even as late as the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy and his advisors believed the United States faced no structural problems at that time (2007, 170). Persisting inequality would eventually be meted out through minor adjustments to the economy that would make it more efficient (*ibid.*, 178-179). Sociologist Todd Gitlin explains this in *The Sixties* (1993) where he writes, “Surveying the postwar boom, most prominent liberals were convinced not only that America was prosperous [...] but that it was becoming steadily more equal. Economic growth was apparently the solvent for social problems, which would be addressed by skilled managers” (61). Not all of Kennedy’s contemporaries bought into the outlook that the economy was the panacea for America’s problems. In his book, *The Affluent Society* (1958), economist John Kenneth Galbraith attempted to discredit the belief that a productive economy would rid the nation of its inequality. He argued there was no social balance between public services and private consumption, and thus called for more investment in education and infrastructure as a means to address society’s ills (Galbraith 1969 [1958], 123; 210-214). Galbraith reported that 13.4 million households were poor in 1959 (*ibid.*, 260). The vast majority of cases he identified belonged to the category he labelled “insular poverty”—or

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<sup>29</sup> A thorough analysis of consumerism and the postwar American family will be provided in the following chapter.

those who live in rural and urban areas where nearly everyone was poor, “frustrated by some factor common to their environment” (ibid.). He attributed their “frustration” to race, poor educational facilities, crowded living environments, and disintegrating family life (ibid., 262). Galbraith attempted to elaborate on the institutional barriers the poor faced, while acknowledging but not expanding on how class, race, and location compounded the problem of the poverty.<sup>30</sup>

One group that might have been expected to pull themselves up by their bootstraps given the belief that a change in the nation’s economic fortunes would affect equality was African Americans. Having made social and economic gains since the War, blacks for the most part still found themselves enjoying a disproportionately smaller piece of the pie of economic prosperity. The African American men who received middle-class wages had one-tenth of the assets that their white counterparts did (Coontz 2011, 121). While 60 percent of whites had achieved the middle-class dream of homeownership in 1960, only 40 percent of black families had (ibid.). Blacks had restricted access to government aid, like the GI Bill of Rights of 1944 and the Federal Highway Act of 1956, which effectively subsidized economic and geographical mobility for whites leaving African Americans to accumulate wealth at much slower rates (Coontz 2011, 121; Herbold 1994/1995, 106). Between 1939 and 1958, the average non-white worker’s wage had climbed from 41.4 percent to 58 percent of a white worker’s, a considerable gain that was the result of wage gains during the War, not political or economic policies that attempted to overcome the pay gap between whites and people of color afterwards (Macdonald 1963).<sup>31</sup> Even higher educational achievement did not guarantee that a black male college graduate would earn as much as a white male high school graduate in 1963 (Coontz 2011, 122). An overall lack of governmental investment, persistent wage discrimination, as well as the official stance that justified the inferior position of African Americans due to their alleged “inherently problematic” family structure (Le Dantec-Lowry 2010, 60)<sup>32</sup> made it much more difficult for young

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<sup>30</sup> For another contemporary attempt to address the issue of poverty taking the intersection of race, poverty, age, and geographical location into account see Michael Harrington’s *The Other America* (1962).

<sup>31</sup> This article does not explicitly state whether these numbers are based on male or female employment figures.

<sup>32</sup> I am referring to Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965), which sought to create a link between equality and gainful employment in hopes of alleviating racial economic inequality. However, the report’s primary focus on the African American family, its charge that said family found itself in a “tangle of pathology” characterized by its matriarchal structure, lacking father figure, criminal youths, as well as undereducated and absent men created heated debate

African American couples to attain middle-class living standards. Notwithstanding the barriers faced by many minority groups, growing prosperity and governmental assistance encouraged many young people to adopt changing social norms that would allow them to access the American way of life more readily. This optimistic atmosphere encouraged Americans to look to the future in a way that they had never had by framing the postwar era as a break with the past.

A catchword entered public discourse to refer to the different attitudes and actions of young people: the moderns. The idea behind such usage was to set the practices of the younger generation apart from those of their parents. A considerable amount of attention was paid to marriage and youth behavior. This was done in a variety of ways. One of the focuses was the need for young couples to establish a home that was self-sufficient and private (Coontz 2005, 128). Popular commentators encouraged young couples “to adopt a 'modern' stance and strike out on their own” (Coontz 1992, 26). This meant newlyweds were to set up in single-family homes away from the prying eyes of their extended families. The ideal locale for many young people was in the suburbs (ibid.). If we take the educational dramatization *Marriage Is a Partnership* (1951)—a Coronet Instructional Film—as an example of the growing trend towards nuclear family independence, we can see that the source of the main characters’ largest problems in their first year can be found in the fact that they had yet to cut the cord from their parents. The film attempts to chart all the struggles newlyweds might face during their adjustment to married life—“learning to live together, love together, learning to adjust different sexual responses” as well as “making decisions together” and “planning as partners.” Though these problems are acknowledged, the plot turns around the characters’ nagging feelings that their in-laws are too present in their lives (*Marriage Is a Partnership*). The film is told from the perspective of Dotty, the young bride. She describes their living situation as “fortunate” because they did not have to contend with the postwar housing shortage. They simply moved into the “two-family house” Pete’s mother owned. Having her husband’s mother living above them turned out to cause Dotty much discomfort. Whether it was a social event, spring cleaning, or Pete stopping in to visit his mom on his way home from work, Dotty was left feeling “awkward,” “inferior,” and “mad” when it came to dealing with her mother-in-law (ibid.). In response, she would confide in her parents. When she did,

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about its actual applications (Geary 2015).



Dotty compared her parents' relationship to hers and Pete's, noting that her parents "understood each other" and "anticipated each other's needs," which made her wonder why she and Pete were unable to grow in their own marriage (ibid.). As the tension mounts and Dotty finally musters the courage to talk to Pete about his mother, he announces that he has had a job offer in another city, saying, "It's time we get away. Do something really decisive about the influence of your parents on our marriage" (ibid.). Taken aback by Pete's feelings towards her parents, Dotty tries to listen to his concerns, which turn around his inability to get out from Dotty's father's shadow at work—they work in the same plant—and Dotty's failure to commit to their home and their relationship because she is always calling her parents' home hers and comparing her relationship with Pete to her parents. Pete's announcement and the ensuing discussion help the young couple realize they both need to grow up more and gain more independence from their parents. The young couple sees this new job prospect as the perfect occasion for them to strike out on their own, without running away from their in-laws. The overriding argument, then, for young viewers was the importance of newlyweds creating their own life, on their own terms, without the potential ruinous influence or meddling of their parents.

Another feature of modern marriage for youth was a reformulation of what was taken into account when choosing to marry and a reshaping of what marriage should bring to the individual. *Marriage: Today* (1950), an educational film produced by Affiliated Film Producers, claims that "moderns" were looking at qualities other than "geography" or "class" when deciding to marry.<sup>33</sup> The film explains their vision of marriage: "moderns" did not see marriage as an obligation or duty; they did not marry for money or connections; to avoid the outdated label of spinster; or even because they were smitten by the uniqueness of their feelings for their partner. The film turns first to a newlywed couple and notes that the woman, Phyllis "could take" or "leave" marriage. What she really wanted was children. While her husband, Chad, "wasn't looking for a miracle: he was looking for a wife" (*Marriage: Today*). Though infused with an ideology that is meant to set "moderns" apart from the past, the example of Phyllis and Chad simultaneously conveys tradition and change. Phyllis's desire to marry for children fits

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<sup>33</sup> *Marriage: Today* was one of a five-part series entitled "Marriage for Moderns" (Aitken 206, 666). The series was inspired by a McGraw-Hill textbook of the same name written by Stephens College professor Henry Bowman.

into the historical conventions of marriage, while Chad's need for a wife could be seen as a desire for companionship, a relatively recent attribute of marriage. It could also be seen as him looking for someone to fill the wife role, which was similarly a contemporary manifestation of femininity and womanhood. Then the film turns to a more established, but still young, modern couple in order to explain the new features that had been incorporated into their "modern" marriage. The wife, Katherine, believes in the inherent personhood of the wife in marriage and the children in the family. She believes in an equitable partnership between husband and wife. Her husband, Frank, has a practical vision of marriage. He believes it requires care and maintenance. Additionally, Frank thinks marriage must bring each individual in the family happiness. Taken together, these examples are meant to show that modern marriage was about choice, personal fulfillment, and feeling accepted in one's role in life. This message imbues the institution with more sentiment, focuses more on the couple's need for attention, and insists on the importance of the individual not only in marriage, but also in the family.

The unique economic circumstances of the postwar era combined with the changing role of the federal government in Americans' private lives and at least 150 years of evolving social norms culminated in the 1950s incarnation of marriage. Prosperity in the wake of the War gave Americans hope that even better times were ahead. The government tried to focus this optimism on the family. Young people took this assurance and set out to make life anew.

## **2. Following Expert Advice: Marrying Young for Love**

Another phenomenon of the postwar era was a marked decline in the age of marriage. The rise of dating certainly played a role,<sup>34</sup> but as was seen in the concerns expressed by Judge Ben B. Lindsey in *The Companionate Marriage* (1927), changing sexual practices amongst America's youth needed to be accounted for on a societal level. Otherwise, sexual hedonism would threaten the very foundations of civilized society, as men's sexuality would go unchecked and women's honor would be defiled outside the bonds of marriage (Davis 2008, 1149). A growing panel of experts emerged on the

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<sup>34</sup> Dating will be discussed extensively in the fifth and sixth chapters, as I will argue that it was more of a transformative practice that reflected wider societal change, in spite of its strict gender and sexual codification. Additionally, dating must be contextualized within the rise of a national youth culture, which is better suited to a targeted analysis of age and generation.

frontlines to encourage marriage education and counseling that would restore the “natural” and “essentially beneficial arrangement” as well as remind young people of the intrinsic value of parenthood and childbearing (ibid., 1158). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, more attention was given to preparing young people for the demands of marriage. Not only was there concern about a “sexually permissive popular culture,” “women’s emancipation” endangered “prescribed marital roles” (ibid., 1159). Helping young people prepare for marriage became a society-wide endeavor. Reinforcing the bonds of the couple through the private obligations of gender became an important means to ensure that young men and women understood their complementary roles at home and in society at large. Interestingly, the United States involvement in the Second World War was an opportunity for the state to call men and women to serve while simultaneously insisting that their service was an extension of their gender roles. Once the War was over, the discourse surrounding men and women’s wartime contributions continued in a vein that positioned husbands and wives within a dynamic of mutual obligation.

During World War II, the U.S. Government set up a very effective propaganda machine that enlisted men to join the military cause and brought women out of the home to work for the duration. Propaganda reminded soldiers that they were fighting for their sisters, mothers, girlfriends, and wives, infusing their patriotic efforts with their familial and masculine obligations (Westbrook, 1990); it encouraged women to remember their true calling was in the home taking care of their families, contextualizing their public role as temporary and patriotic (Le Dantec-Lowry, 2016). As the war was drawing to a close and soldiers were returning home, the government and media began to worry about how these men would be re-assimilated into civilian life. In her analysis of postwar films, Sonya Michel underlines the expectation that women would privilege men’s well-being over their own, resuming their roles as men’s dependents (1993, 249-250). Women were told that men’s egos had been wounded when they saw how well women had gotten along without them during the war (Coontz 2011, 49). It was, therefore, women’s responsibility to build up their self-esteem by renouncing their independence and goals (ibid.). “Experts’ generally instructed American women to defer to the men returning from war. [...] Women were not only to surrender their jobs, but also to subordinate their own dreams, ambitions, and desires to those of the veterans” (Michel 1993, 249-250). This debate also played out in the courtship process, and eventually influenced the rapidity with which young people married. Young women had to adjust their expectations for dating to be in line with returning veterans’ desires for marriage and family.

Beth Bailey asserts in *From Front Porch to Back Seat* (1988) that the urgency for marriage was exacerbated by the social, demographic, and economic conditions that preceded and accompanied the postwar era. She explains this by stating that “scarcity” greatly influenced the mate selection process as women noted that “marriageable men” were wanting in the 1930s and that men, period, were largely absent during the war years (Bailey 1988, 34). As veterans returned home, popular books and magazines insisted that women were still facing a “man shortage,” in spite of the soaring marriage rate and the inundation of men on the nation’s campuses (ibid., 38). Rather than explaining the numerical discrepancy between men and women in demographic terms, and thus accounting for the fact that fewer women would marry as a matter of fact—higher female birth rates, greater infant mortality rates for males, adult men working in more stressful and dangerous jobs, and larger rates of fatal diseases and accidents amongst men, not to mention the 250,000 men lost during the war (ibid. 38-39)—, alarmists laid the responsibility at American women’s feet. Lucy Greenbaum estimated in an article published in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1945 that 750,000 women would end up “neurotic and frustrated” spinsters (ibid., 38). American women were already losing the fight to European women, according to the media, as 90,000 GIs had married foreign women (ibid, 39).<sup>35</sup> Bailey notes that returning veterans saw a fundamental difference between American women and their European counterparts. “Unlike American girls, European girls were interested in ‘the rather fundamental business of getting married, having children and making the best homes their means or conditions [would] allow’” (ibid., 41). In order to compete and ultimately secure their own prize, American women needed to change.

While young women hoped to go back to the dating system that existed before the war, which was based largely on popularity, returning soldiers were eager to find the “old style” woman: “a pretty solid all-round girl” (ibid., 39-41). Robert Westbrook explains in “I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl that Married Harry James”<sup>36</sup> (1990) that American soldiers embedded their defense of the nation in their moral obligation as the “protectors” of American women (592). He nuances this argument by saying that soldiers often

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<sup>35</sup> According to Bailey 50,000 of these women were English, 10,000 Australian, and the remaining 30,000 were comprised of French, Belgian, and other nationalities (1988, 39).

<sup>36</sup> Harry James was a trumpeter and band leader whose career began in the 1930s. The reference here is more to who he married—Betty Grable, a popular American actor in the 1930s and 1940s—than James, himself.

claimed they were “fighting for,” or “on behalf of,” American women (ibid.).<sup>37</sup> The pin-up, according to Westbrook, played a decisive role in constructing an aura around American womanhood, and continually reminding the soldiers why they were there as it acted as a “stand in for wives and sweethearts.”<sup>38</sup> This is evident in the most sought after pin-up during the War, a demure portrait of Betty Grable in a swimming suit looking over her shoulder with a big smile (ibid.). Grable was a “representative woman,” her beauty ““of the common sort,”” in essence she was an everywoman (ibid., 596; 599) The Hollywood Victory Committee, responsible for providing soldiers with entertainment, also noted GIs preferred women who reminded them of home. They thus offered films in line with these desires (ibid., 596). It is only logical then, that when soldiers returned home, they hoped this ideal woman existed in reality. “The model girlfriend, wife, and mother” was “sincere, honest, with both feet on the ground” (ibid., 599-600). To their mutual dismay, in the aftermath of the war, young men and women had fundamentally different preoccupations. Women hoped for a return to normalcy: they wanted to have dates and seemed concerned predominantly by their wardrobes, make-up, and looks (Bailey 1988, 39-40). While men, changed by the experience overseas, claimed to want “women”: stoic, deferential, and aware of their place. It, of course, did not help that returning soldiers seemed to find the whole business of dating childish and frivolous (ibid., 40-41). As young men and women came back together after the War, a divergent perception of the obligations of men as protectors and women as the benefactors of their protection seemed to emerge.

On the one hand, the sacrifices made by women were seen as inconsequential compared to those of men. This sentiment is expressed in Betty Fussell’s memoir,<sup>39</sup> *My Kitchen Wars* (1999), as she articulates time and again how the War left her and her peers feeling fundamentally helpless in the war effort because of their age and their gender. In high school, she and her friends helped sale war bonds, participated in Victory

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<sup>37</sup> As opposed to seeing women as “the spoils of war” or asserting their “proprietary sexual claim” over American women, U.S. soldiers saw their role as defenders of the defenseless women—their mothers, their sisters, their girlfriends, and their wives—in their lives. Their moral obligation to protect was based more on the way they valued the women in their lives rather than their sexual claim and conquest.

<sup>38</sup> The U.S. government-issued Hollywood pin-ups to soldiers as a means to channel their sexual urges and is one of the most dominant artifacts in material culture left over from the War (Westbrook 1990, 589; 595-596).

<sup>39</sup> Betty Fussell is an accomplished American food writer. Her memoir *My Kitchen Wars* centers around her life as a teenager during the War, being a young woman on campus after the War, and her attempts to juggle her professional life with her domestic responsibilities during the 1950s and 1960s. Her relationship with her ex-husband is a central aspect of this memoir.

Gardening, wrote to the men overseas, and patriotically withstood war-time rationing, all the time knowing that their efforts did not reduce the horrors of the War and the only reason they were spared them was because they were girls (Fussell 2009 [1999], 46-47). Men were doing the real work. As a result, according to Fussell, the War drastically changed the position of women in society, “stamping women as sexual inferiors” (ibid., 52-53). On the other hand, women’s desires for a return to normalcy were supplanted by veterans’ redefinition of what normal was. For Fussell, this became increasingly apparent as GIs returned from abroad and many of the young women around her experienced a great sense of guilt as soldiers realized these women were not “in the flesh what the men imagined they had left behind, those movie-perfect images of purity and innocence” and for whom they told themselves they had been fighting (ibid., 56). Women could not be who they were supposed to be, but they felt like they should try. Fussell writes, “We tried hard to comfort them for all their losses. We put their heads in our laps and stroked their hair and let them cry. We listened to their war stories and their tales of comic snafus and their broken laments [...]” (ibid.). Many of these college-aged women went from being independent, looking towards *their own* futures, to total self-effacement. The reason for which seemed obvious, from Fussell’s perspective: they had done nothing; they had been having fun, being free, waiting for the men to come back so they could have adventures together, but on their return, these men were damaged. It was women’s turn for service: as girlfriends, wives, and mothers, they had to nurse them back to health. Returning veterans’ needs, encouraged by the government and media, recast women’s roles within the nurturing bounds of womanhood, many sources of conventional wisdom believed this would reinvigorate the masculinize role of providing. The youth of America would thus become the representatives of a nation-wide movement towards marriage, children, and family. The natural consequence of which was a fall in the age of marriage.

As Bailey explains it, however, early marriage had implications outside of youth culture (1988, 46). Parents would need to abandon their notions that marriage should take place once the couple could financially support itself and exist as an autonomous unit. In many cases, it fell to experts to convince parents that their children were indeed mature enough to assume the responsibility of marriage. There was a conscientious effort, made for the most part by academics, to bring early marriage into the mainstream (ibid., 46).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bailey gives the examples of Dr. William F. Snow, chairman of the American Social Hygiene Association, and Howard Whitman.

Though popular culture played an important role. “Several women’s magazines endorsed early marriage quite directly in articles aimed at parents. These articles, based on the testimony of a range of prominent ‘experts,’ argued that early marriage was much healthier for the couple and for society, and that parents should be willing to subsidize their children for the first years of marriage” (ibid.). Speaking about early marriage as a matter of societal health was a way to contain sexual activity in marriage. Allowing young people to marry sooner would account for the changes in sexual practices without having to adjust the moralistic codes that governed sexual behavior at that time. One preoccupation of the experts was the implication that engaging in premarital sexual activity would have on married life. There was a double standard when it came to how premarital sex would affect the couple: sex before marriage was discouraged, but long-term resistance to sexual relations could have negative consequences on the marriage, which in turn fueled the argument in favor of early marriage. On the one hand, these authors asserted that “the choice of sin” would lead to distrust; the husband would always wonder if his wife might have done the same with another man (ibid.). While on the other, those who waited for marriage might end up incapable of having a passionate and fulfilling love life with their spouse, “leading to frigidity or impotence” (ibid.). By placing the debate within the framework of societal health and concern over the institution of marriage, experts were able to impress their authoritative opinions on parents who would, naturally, have hoped their children’s marriages would be happy and satisfying.

Moreover, this push towards younger marriage appealed to many young people. First, it allowed them to get around the stigma of premarital sex, while encouraging young people’s desire for sexual experimentation (Bailey 1988, 47). Second, it facilitated the larger societal movement towards greater independence and individualization at a younger age, within the secure bonds of matrimony (ibid.). Finally, it supplanted the pre-war dating system, which was based on a superficial pursuit of peer acceptance and popularity (ibid.). Educational films produced at that time are great examples of how young people longed for marriage, the resistance they faced from their parents, and the role that experts filled in helping both sides find a common ground.

If we look at *Are You Ready for Marriage?* produced by Coronet Films in 1950, the divide between the older and younger generation and their divergent approaches to marriage is gracefully navigated and bridged thanks to the help of a marriage counselor. According to Geoff Alexander this film belongs to the “guidance” sub-genre of

educational films, which he defines as having “the prime objective of inculcating a certain form of behavior, or promoting behavioral change” (2010, 5). Though Alexander’s study in *Academic Films for the Classroom* focuses largely on what he dubs “academic films,” his second sub-genre of educational films, he still provides key insights into the definition of guidance films. Regardless of his focus, all educational films have, for the most part, been left out of scholarly analysis (Alexander 2010, 1; Ellsworth 1991, 42; Erdman 1987, 223) and thus, serve as a largely untapped resource for looking at education and convention, as well as the production and dissemination of knowledge. Alexander defines guidance films as being value-laden and time specific, rendering many of them obsolete as societal norms have evolved (2010, 5). The explanation that disqualifies guidance films from Alexander’s study helps make them relevant for my own, however. The films I have chosen to analyze are incredibly pertinent to a discussion on normative behavior as they attest to dominant values and the means by which institutions used them to reinforce these ideals as the standard.

*Are You Ready for Marriage?* falls, perhaps, into a more fitting subcategory of educational films: the dramatization. Barbara Erdman and Elizabeth Ellsworth developed this categorization in two separate papers based on the same film archive in 1987.<sup>41</sup> Both stress the importance of the production of the educational film between 1930 and 1970 as a period not only when demand peaked (Erdman 1987, 225) but also when “the aesthetic and ideological characteristics of educational dramatizations became similar and stable across films” (Ellsworth 1987, 211). Ellsworth and Erdman draw an association in the development of the narrative between educational dramatizations and classical Hollywood films (Ellsworth 1987, 210; Erdman 1987, 223). Where they differ is in the means the plots employ to advance their narratives and their overall aims (Ellsworth 1987, 211). Educational dramatizations are for all intents and purposes meant to educate, while Hollywood films attempt to entertain and make a profit (ibid.). Ellsworth explains the incorporation of Hollywood narrative and stylistic techniques was a means for educational filmmakers to bring “the pleasure, popularity, and legitimacy” of Hollywood productions into the classroom, while simultaneously drawing the viewer into one reading of acceptable behavior and the means by which they can verify whether or not

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<sup>41</sup> Both Ellsworth and Erdman worked from the American Archives of Factual Film at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa and presented their initial findings in papers at the Annual Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology in Atlanta, Georgia.



they conform appropriately (ibid.).

The narrative of *Are You Ready for Marriage?* turns around a young couple who have decided to get married in order to avoid separation as the young man, Larry, returns to university and the young woman, Sue, plans to attend the local community college once she finishes high school. The opening scene shows the lovers kissing on Sue's porch before saying goodnight. The following introduces the problem the couple will have to resolve—Sue's parents object to their marrying. The longest scene takes place in the office of Mr. Hall, a marriage counselor at a local church, where Sue, Larry, and Mr. Hall discuss what the couple needs to consider before tying the knot. The resolution is then shown through a montage during which each character contributes to a voice-over description of how Larry and Sue followed the advice of Mr. Hall. The final scene shows the parents of both Sue and Larry in Mr. Hall's office, with Sue's father promising the young couple his approval if they continue to follow Mr. Hall's advice. Initially, the film appears to follow classical Hollywood narrative conventions: boy proposes marriage; girl says yes; girl's parents object; boy and girl try to subvert girl's parents; boy and girl suffer; girl's parents come around; boy and girl live happily ever after. However, if we look closely at the characters and the large role accorded to Mr. Hall, the narrative seems to shift, corresponding well to Ellsworth's description of educational dramatizations being based around the advice doled out by the expert.

Rather than following the classical Hollywood tradition where "characters make things happen" (Ellsworth 1987, 211), Sue and Larry fall into the conventional depiction where they seem to be "representatives of social types and attitudes" and "appear as if they are unmotivated to learn what they do not know" (ibid., 213). Larry and Sue are portrayed to varying degrees as ignorant, emotionally volatile, and resistant to logic. Larry, though oblivious, is consistently shown as the more levelheaded of the two. He surmises, rather simplistically, each one of Mr. Hall's points and by the end of the film becomes the unwitting student. He has been persuaded by the "analytical, rational, and linear" (ibid., 214) arguments presented by the expert, Mr. Hall. There is no better example of this than when Larry concedes that Mr. Hall's logic has won out, saying, "Gee, hun, it doesn't take an engineer to see that we're on the bad part of the curve of these graphs, all of them!" (*Are You Ready for Marriage?* 1950). Sue, on the other hand, seems to be less likely to see reason, more erratic and resistant. This arises first when she admits she does not know or understand anything to do with Larry's chosen profession and therefore does not want to hear about it, at all. It resurfaces once Mr. Hall asks if

they do not owe it to themselves to take the time to verify that they could work as a married couple and Sue tries to impress on Mr. Hall that they have no time: their separation is imminent. Finally, this comes to a head when Sue erupts once Larry recognizes the wisdom in taking the time to become real friends. “Yes, well can’t we settle these differences after we’re married?” she cries (ibid.). The portrayals of Larry and Sue as unaware, naïve, and stubborn is meant to keep the viewer from identifying with either of them. It is a consistent reminder of their youth, folly, and need for guidance. Despite her resistance, in the end, Sue comes around to Mr. Hall’s way of thinking. In positioning Larry and Sue as simplistic and reactionary throughout the narrative, the plot is driven not by the problem originally proposed at the film’s outset but by the characters’ realization that marriage should be seen as a responsibility, not a cure-all; a mature act, not a flight of fancy. As such *Are You Ready for Marriage?* is consistent with Elizabeth Ellsworth’s assertion that “[...] characters move from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge only through the intervention of an expert” (1987, 213). Though the narrative is deceptively entertaining and the characters bereft of depth, the guidance film’s educational impetus becomes blatant once the expert’s agenda is fully outlined.

The larger issue that *Are You Ready for Marriage?* hoped to address was early marriage. The characters were presented as being 18 and 19 years old. Sue was still in high school; Larry had two years left of college. They were portrayed as uninformed and impulsive, thinking the only issue they needed to resolve was how to provide for themselves financially—in their minds, Sue’s parents would give the newlyweds the money they were planning to use to send her to college, Sue would forgo her own schooling and work full-time, and Larry would continue at his part-time job. Once they arrive in the office of the expert, they are gently nudged towards the idea that the economic considerations of marriage are but one part of a larger whole. *Are You Ready for Marriage?* differs on one major point from Ellsworth’s description of the educational dramatization. She claims that “proof” in the form of actual evidence or research is rarely presented (ibid., 214). This, however, is precisely how Mr. Hall convinces Larry and Sue of their hastiness. The use of scientific proof was a significant feature of Coronet Instructional Films. This production house had a reputation for playing by the book when it came to providing instruction to American youngsters. Geoff Alexander explains “Coronet’s philosophy [...] was to strictly correlate films to existing textbook curriculum rather than create new takes on subject matter. They were often didactic, formulaic, and

unexciting, devoid of filmmaker credits while always crediting scholars” (2010, 30).<sup>42</sup> This is very much the approach that Mr. Hall takes when addressing the couple. First, he introduces three areas that need to be explored by the couple: their backgrounds, friendship, and developing an understanding of marriage. Next, he introduces data that show Larry and Sue how these areas would affect their marriage. The first piece of evidence he uses is a “Marriage Development Board,” which Mr. Hall explains “represents the psychological distance between a husband and wife” from birth to death (see Figure 1). The “Marriage Development Board” is a visual aid used to explain to Larry and Sue how their familial environments and the maturation process—including their gender, intelligence, emotions, morals, and dreams—will influence them as a couple. Once he has explained all this, and the young couple seems to understand but continues to show hesitation because they are afraid of being separated, Mr. Hall turns to his next prop (see Figure 2). Citing two separate studies, which are never explicitly identified, Mr. Hall explains that waiting for at least six months before getting married will give the couple a “fair” chance for happiness. Again, even though he faces resistance, this time just by Sue, Mr. Hall perseveres with his scientific data to assure the couple that his message is for their benefit (See Figures 3 and 4). He shows them two different charts that look at the age of marriage for men and women, interpreting the ages that seem to prove the most promising as 21 for men and nineteen or twenty for women. Age is not the only indicator that Mr. Hall is referring to though. He returns to the issue discussed earlier—the couple’s psychological development—to emphasize the importance of the process of maturation. Once Mr. Hall has used data to make a larger point about the couple’s marital preparedness, Sue and Larry concede. They then set out to put the expert’s “proper knowledge” to “proper use,” which is illustrated via a montage of Larry and Sue addressing each of the three areas Mr. Hall mentioned with a voice-over explaining in detail what this entailed (Ellsworth 1987, 215). The implementation of the “proper use” of knowledge is important in bolstering the expert’s advice as it provides evidence that his counsel is “neutral, scientific, natural, true,

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<sup>42</sup> The company was founded by David Smart—founder of *Esquire*, the men’s magazine—with the help of his brothers Alfred and John Smart in 1934 (Alexander 2010, 29). David Smart was inspired by the “educational-propagandistic potential of films being made by the Nazis,” though he aimed to “fill America’s classrooms” with short educational films, some of which provided advice on navigating social situations (*ibid.*, 29-30). Coronet was one of four major companies—the other three being Encyclopedia Britannica Films, the International Film Foundation and the National Film Board of Canada—to provide educational films in the postwar era. All of them saw their mission as enhancing educational programs, providing facts, and inspiring young people to continue learning (*ibid.*, 20).

inherently good and benevolent” and thus reinforces his guidance as synonymous with standard behavior (ibid.). Additionally, since Sue and Larry follow Mr. Hall’s advice they are rewarded in the closing scene as Sue’s father pledges support for their forthcoming engagement. Not only has the expert provided a socially acceptable path for the young couple to follow that ensures their marriage will be stable and based on considerations beyond the physical realm, he has bridged the gap between the youths’ desire for independence attained through marriage and the parents’ hope to instruct their children in making wise and rational life decisions. *Are You Ready for Marriage?* quite simply embodies the overarching goal of educational dramatizations. That is, in basing its educational message on scientific research conveyed through a marriage expert, it bound social appropriateness up with the ideological project of demarcating the parameters of early marriage. Though the physicality of their relationship is never mentioned, Larry and Sue acknowledge they have a strong physical attraction, which Mr. Hall describes as a “boing.” This euphemism is meant to suggest that physical attraction and desire are inherently unreliable and certainly not the basis for a life-long marriage. Stipulating early marriage as acceptable only when it surpasses the “baser” impulse to simply satisfy one’s physical desires is part of the educational project to which *Are You Ready for Marriage?* contributed by framing early marriage as a social good when those involved hoped to attain the more “noble” goals of stability and monogamy.

The characters and context of this film were particularly representative of the real-life debate over early marriage. Though there was a wide-scale media blitz in favor of early marriage, the most effective campaign seems to have been undertaken on American college campuses. The university environment should be fertile to the development of expertise on any particular subject, but academic experts could not have found a more favorable petri dish for hypothesizing on dating and marriage than the college campus. This was especially true for that period of time because the age of marriage was on the decline and many young people saw their years in college as *the* time to find their mate. In fact, the growing influence of the marriage expert gave rise to marriage and family courses at colleges and universities (Bailey 1988, 120-27) as researchers and instructors believed it was their responsibility “to prepare students for mate selection” (Landis 1959, 37). Beth Bailey explains that marriage educators saw themselves as filling two roles. First, they were assuming a position of personal authority in their students’ lives (Bailey 1988, 134). Second, they were real scientists, dealing in the world of facts and figures

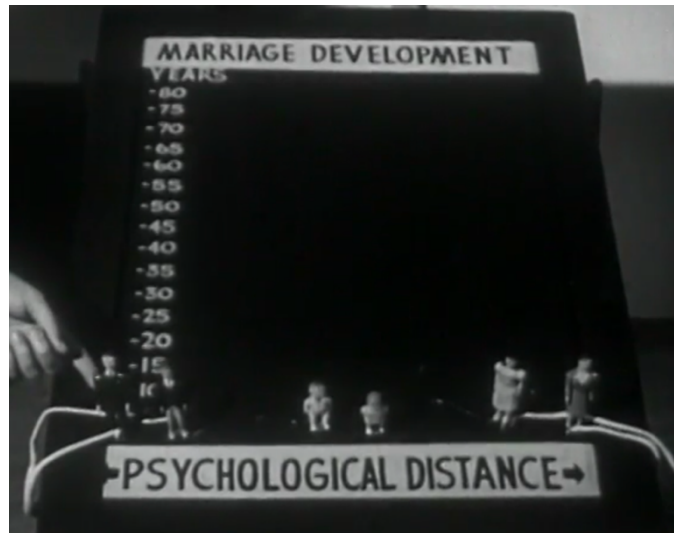


Figure 1 Screenshot of the "Marriage Development Board" (*Are You Ready for Marriage?* 1950)



Figure 2 Screenshot of a line graph presenting the correlation between a couple's changes for happiness and the length of their engagement (ibid.)



Figure 3 Screenshot of the correlation between men's age at marriage and their chance for happiness (ibid.)

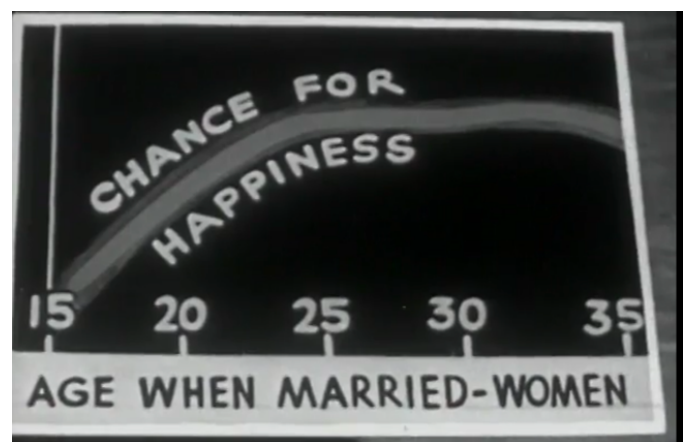


Figure 4 Screenshot of the relationship between a woman's chance for happiness and her age (ibid.)

(ibid.). Not only were they offering their expert counsel in their courses, they were collecting their data from their students (ibid.). A study conducted in 1959 by Judson T. Landis, an established marriage educator at Michigan State College, might shed some light on some of the goals of marriage educators.<sup>43</sup> Understanding who was teaching these courses provides some insight into the larger epistemological questions at work. Landis found that the most influential field on these courses was sociology. When a prerequisite was required it was most commonly a sociology class (ibid., 38). The instructors were predominantly trained in sociology (68.8 percent for functional courses and 81.7 percent for institutional courses)<sup>44</sup> and it was largely sociology departments that were offering these courses (49.4 percent and 66.8 percent, respectively) (ibid., 38-39). The very fact that sociologists and the field of sociology in general pulled marriage and family under their umbrella speaks to the theoretical turn that sociology had taken towards functionalism in the United States at the time. Seeing marriage and the family within a framework that emphasized the interplay of social structure and social function granted the nuclear family great importance as it provided the family and its members with specific roles that supposedly benefited society and the individual. The best-known functional perspectives on the family then were advanced by George P. Murdock and Talcott Parsons, both of whom insisted on the positive arrangement between one's social function in the family (husband/breadwinner, wife/homemaker) and society, thus making their theory more a scientific inculcation of normative gender roles and heteronormativity than an analysis of the interaction, positive or not, between institutions and social actors. This theorizing on the family had an enormous effect on marriage and family course instructors. If educators could convey the proper functions of marriage and the family to their students, then students would enter into marriage aware of their respective roles and would approach both marriage and parenthood with the knowledge that they were contributing to social order and

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<sup>43</sup> The express purpose of Landis's study was to get an idea of the types of marriage and family courses being offered in college. Of the 768 institutions that responded, 630 (or 82 percent) proposed courses in marriage and family. Landis found that three kinds of classes existed: functional, theoretical/institutional, and professional. Functional courses were meant to help train students for marriage and parenthood. Theoretical/institutional courses emphasized the normative, philosophical, and/or religious implications of marriage and family. While, professional courses were aimed at upper division and graduate students and focused on counseling and teaching (Landis 1959, 36).

<sup>44</sup> See the definition for both in the preceding footnote.

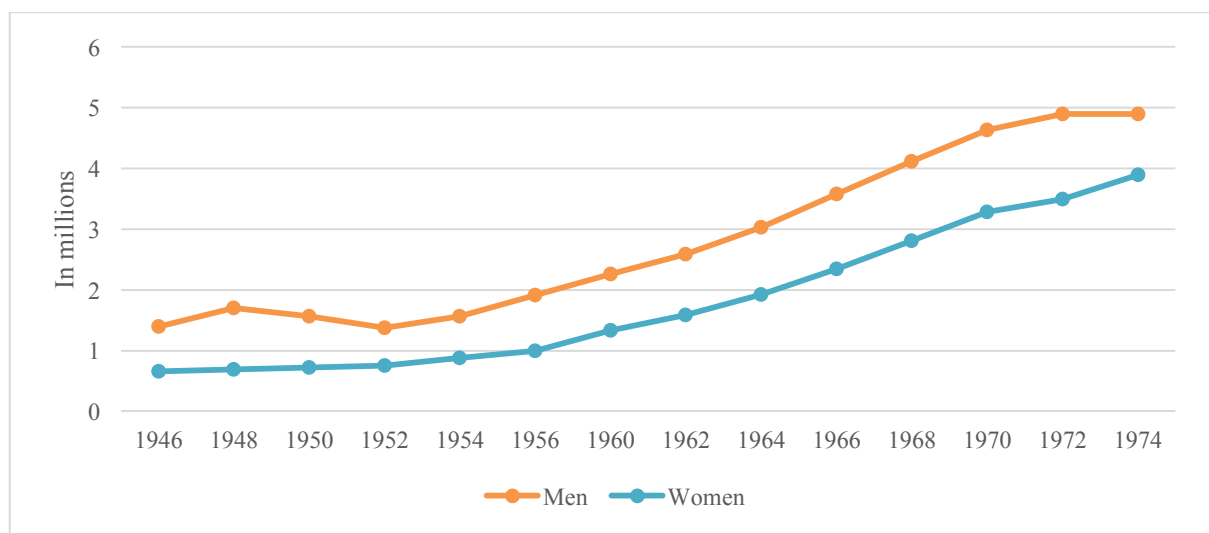
stability.

As experts, these researchers endeavored to add to the wealth of knowledge available, producing large statistical studies and offering anecdotes in marriage and family course textbooks (Bailey 1988, 135). In his study, Landis found that both the functional and the theoretical/institutional classes were based on textbooks that featured similar material. He thus deduced that the overall course content would have been relatively standardized in functional and theoretical/institutional courses. Uniformity across course content seems to coincide with Beth Bailey's point that marriage educators played a decisive role in the overgeneralization and overpersonalization of their data (1988, 136). That is, in their attempts to seek truth through scientific reasoning and the compilation of statistics, marriage educators asserted the primacy of normative practices, without questioning their samples—which was usually composed of exclusively white, middle-class, college-going students—and without much awareness that when they extolled a practice as probable, their students read it as desirable (*ibid.*).

Another interesting feature of marriage and family courses that can be drawn out of the Landis study is what the sheer quantity of these classes might say about the student population at that time. Landis noted that 1,027 classes were offered during the 1955-1956 school year and 76,805 students were enrolled in a marriage and family course, which translates to 1 in 15 students (Landis 1959, 36). If compared to the rough estimate made for the 1947-1948 academic year, when 1 in 50 students was enrolled, we can see that by the mid-1950s there was a sharp rise in student interest and participation in these types of classes (*ibid.*). It is not incidental that along with rising student enrollments course offerings multiplied. Landis posits that at least half of the functional courses and 40 percent of the institutional courses were proposed between 1945 and 1955 (*ibid.*, 37). The question remains whether the proliferation of marriage and family courses spurred student interest, or if student demand garnered institutional support. This is not meant to contradict the assertion that the expanding reach of marriage experts incited a rise in college and university marriage and family classes, rather it is to draw attention to the issues of conformity and individual agency. The immediate postwar era has consistently been portrayed as time when people tried not to stand out. Though the jump in marriage and family course admissions is striking, it is not an indicator of all college-aged students being preoccupied with marriage or feeling pressure to marry. In fact, one of my

interviewees, Susan, who was raised in Portland and attended Portland University, a parochial private school, seemed relatively impervious to the push for young people to marry. When I asked her if she had noticed a rush towards marriage amongst the women around her and if this made her feel eager for marriage, she said, “Not eager, particularly. I mean I knew I was ready, but I didn’t feel compelled to. Some of my friends were married, some of them weren’t, so...” (Susan, 2013). Not only did she finish college before marrying, she also worked for a couple of years even though she met her future husband in high school. Early marriage though a novelty was not necessarily the dominant arrangement for everyone.

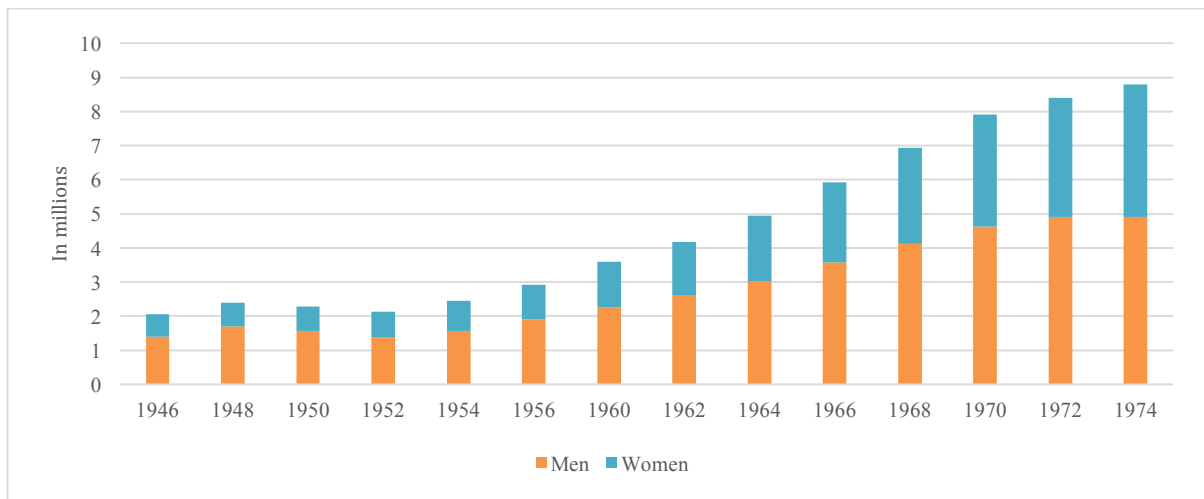
The Landis study also reveals a difference in interest in marriage and family courses by gender. “Women students outnumbered men in the functional marriage course while men outnumbered women in the institutional family course” (Landis 1959, 37). In the spring of 1956, 20,222 men and 22,637 women were enrolled in



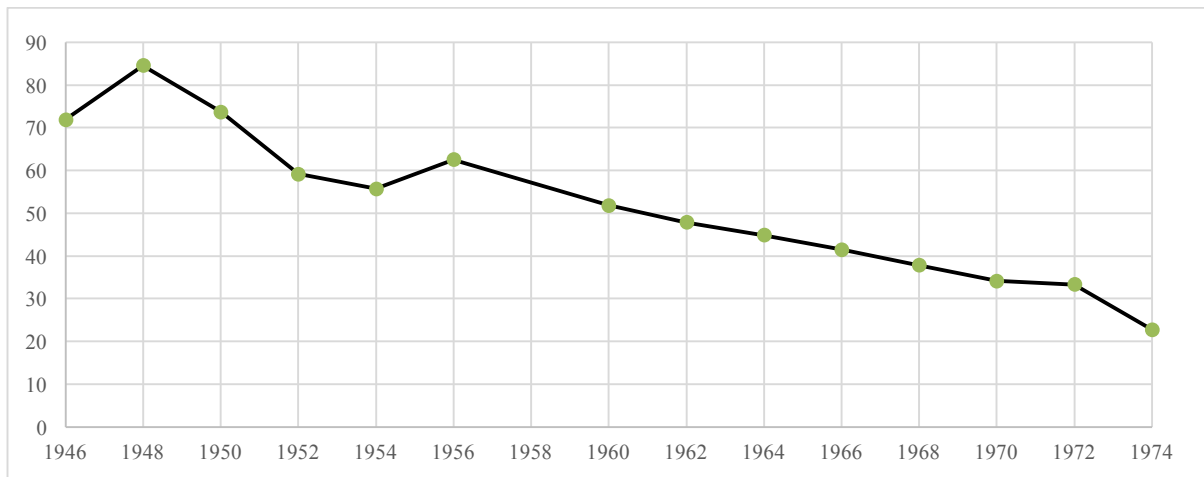
**Table 1 Higher education enrollments by gender (1946-1974).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau of the, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (1976, 119); *Bicentennial Edition* (1975, 383).

functional and institutional marriage and family courses (ibid.). Given the importance placed on women assuming their roles as wives and mothers as the ultimate achievement of female maturity and the insistence by many experts that women could avoid “a role crisis” if their education were continuous with their future occupations (Friedan 1963, 67), it seems surprising, at first, to see men outstrip women in the institutional courses and for there to be a relatively small difference in their numbers. There are, however, a couple issues that may explain these numbers. First, Landis





**Table 2 Proportional enrollments by gender (1946-1974).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (1976, 119); *Bicentennial Edition* (1975, 383).



**Table 3 The percentage difference between men and women students enrolled in higher educational institutions Bachelor's degrees conferred by gender (1946-1970).** Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Bicentennial Edition* (1975, 385).

acknowledges that the large presence of men in these courses is skewed by the presence of Catholic colleges in his study, where men were enrolled at much higher rates than the other three types of colleges—teaching, junior, and four-year institutions (1959, 37). Second, campuses became increasingly imbalanced in terms of gender in the wake of GI enrollments and the incipient adoption of the husband/breadwinner and wife/homemaker roles. Though registration in higher educational institutions increased between 1946 and 1974 for both men and women (see Table 1), when looking at proportional enrollments, it is clear that men significantly outnumbered women (see Table 2). This, of course, was most remarkable in the immediate aftermath of the War when returning soldiers took advantage of the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act” (1944). Without looking at

enrollments prior to and during the War, it appears that going to college increased gradually over nearly three decades, with a slight decline in enrollments for men in 1950 and 1952. Given that 1947-1948 was the peak year for veteran enrollment (Freeland 1992, 240), we can see from Tables 1 and 2 an increase of 21 percent in men’s enrollments between 1946 and 1948. Though registrations declined for men in 1950 and 1952, women’s enrollment continued to climb and made significant gains in reestablishing the gender balance from 1956 on (see Table 3). It therefore makes sense that male students would outnumber female students in marriage and family courses, simply because they were a much larger proportion of the student body.

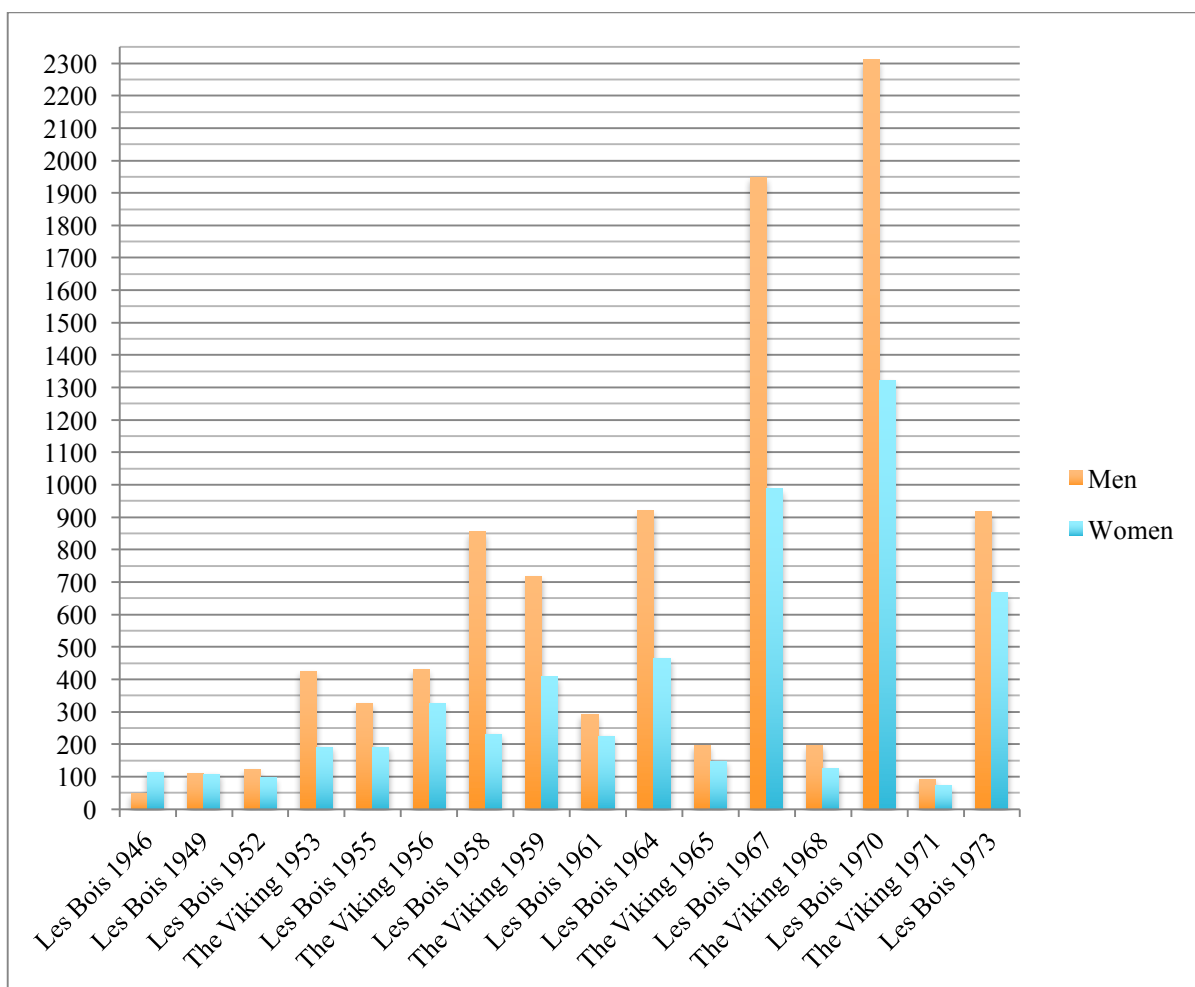


Table 4 Men and women students pictured in *The Viking* and *Les Bois* between 1946 and 1973

Discrepancies between the amount of men and women attending university and college made the campus environment conducive to a woman’s matrimonial prospects. This can be seen if we return to the issue of “scarcity.” The social scientists, Ernest Groves and William Ogburn, postulated in 1928 that high marriage

rates corresponded to a disproportionate sex ratio in favor of men (Bailey 1988, 34). If women were concerned that they would end up unwed, colleges and universities became a great place to ensure that women would find enough marriageable men to secure their future prospects. Bailey asserts as much when she says, “Women went to college for ‘an education and a man’ asserts, not to become once-arounders on the dance floor. The more abundant men and dates the better one’s chances of landing a husband” (ibid., 44 [emphasis Bailey’s]). If we try to apply this to the local levels of Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho, women’s chances of finding a husband seemed to skyrocket throughout the entire postwar era (see Table 4).<sup>45</sup> One of the women I interviewed in Idaho attended Northwest Nazarene University, a private religious college in Caldwell, Idaho about 50 kilometers from Boise and part of the greater metropolitan area. The way she described the motivations of her female classmates likewise attests to the fact that for many young women marriage was a major reason for them to pursue their educations. She said:

Remember I said earlier that the freshmen class got smaller and smaller as it moved toward the senior class? A large part of that was because the girls got married and didn’t come back. They might have married somebody who was already there or they might have married someone at home but they got married and started their families, which was pretty common in that era. To get married and have a family was a lot of people’s goals” (Linda, 2013).<sup>46</sup>

The examples of youth in Portland and Boise are indicative of the larger national trend towards the normalization of early marriage. The disproportionate presence of men on these campuses reinforced middle-class men’s roles as husbands/breadwinners, making more men than ever before desirable marital partners and placing more women in a position of economic dependence. This is not to overlook the reality of many working-class women and women of color who had always worked and would continue to do so. Rather it is meant to draw an association between the growing middle class and the entrenchment of a middle-class way of life, contingent on the “productive” labor of the husband and the “nurturing” devotion of

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<sup>45</sup> Though I went through twenty yearbooks, not all of them had student portraits. This table is based on students pictured and named in the not pictured section, which does not make it an entirely accurate representation of the actual student bodies. See Appendix 3 for a full listing of the information that was pulled from each book.

<sup>46</sup> Linda and Susan both attended religious higher educational institutions in the Boise area and Portland, respectively. Although Linda says here that going to college to find a spouse was relatively common, remember that Susan claimed she did not feel pressure to marry. This might be a manifestation of a difference between these women’s personalities or between the environments at their schools or in their communities.

the wife. Additionally, the larger-than-life importance that marriage took on for many young people, as expressed by Linda—who certainly was not the only person who acknowledged this phenomenon—attests to the seductive power and eventual ubiquity of this convention. Experts, marriage and family courses, as well as guidance films played an important role in ensuring that young people looked at marriage through the lens of societal expectations. Marriage, regardless of age, was foundational to the proper functioning of society. If young people were to take on the responsibility they needed to understand the importance of long-lasting fidelity, appropriate sexual expression within the bonds of marriage, as well as knowing and fulfilling one's roles as a husband/father or wife/mother.

### **3. A Strict Gender Codification for Husbands and Wives**

The nineteenth century saw a rapid acceleration towards the couple being founded on “domestic love” and the home being a “sanctuary” for the middle classes (Coontz 2005, 164-166). The result was the development of a doctrine of separate spheres that not only dictated the precepts of gendered behavior inside and outside the home, but also infused both spheres with moral value (*ibid.*, 166). The intimate domain of the home was meant to provide respite and regeneration whereas competition, self-regard, greed, and pride were worldly goals pursued outside its walls (*ibid.*, 165). Feminine and masculine characteristics thus became synonymous with their appropriate spheres: women's home-based lives embodied moral rectitude, while men's interactions in the public domain became morally ambiguous (*ibid.*, 166).<sup>47</sup> Stephanie Coontz argues in *Marriage, A History* (2005) that the Victorians revolutionized marriage as they idealized the preponderant role that love should play in the institution (177-195). Romantic love undermined the doctrine of separate spheres, though, as it promised companionship and intimacy, which were ultimately thwarted by what Coontz calls a “doctrine of difference” that brought about “a meeting of two gender stereotypes rather than two individuals” (*ibid.*, 184; 187). During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the strict separation of men and women and the morality attached to their roles waned as women increasingly gained

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<sup>47</sup> Again it is worth reminding the reader here for all the efforts to separate men and women, these spheres were mutually articulated and thus not that separate after all.

access to the public sphere in schooling, work, and the political domain. Additionally, sex and sexual pleasure entered into mainstream discussion placing even greater emphasis on the couple's ability to find personal, and sexual, satisfaction in marriage. While some feared that the changes in women's public roles would displace the importance of marriage, other shifts in marital intimacy as well as husband's and wife's roles within marriage buttressed the institution. First, women's extensive networks and intense female friendships disappeared as marital companionship was given primacy in terms of emotional relationships. Women's emotional commitment to their children became increasingly suspect as they were expected to invest that passion into their marriages. Second, masculinity became increasingly associated with providing, which resulted in women's job segregation and pay discrimination. "It was during this period that for the very first time in U.S. history, a majority of American children lived in families in which the man was the primary wage earner, the wife was not involved in full-time labor outside the home or alongside her husband, and the children were in school instead of in the labor force" (ibid., 209). The Great Depression did not undermine the expectation that the husband would be the provider, if anything it exacerbated this claim, leaving many breadwinners with the feeling that they had failed their families when they were unable to make ends meet. The onset of World War II moved many women into the workforce "for the duration" and despite a sizeable number of women's desires to continue working, "most women agreed the veterans should get their old jobs back [...]" (Coontz 2005, 222). Yet, enduring years of general instability left many Americans anticipating when things could return to husbands having good-paying jobs and wives would have the privilege of staying at home. In the aftermath of the War, Americans flocked to marriage. They were the generation that birthed what many have come to believe "the traditional and permanent form of marriage" that was heralded as the glue that would keep society together (ibid., 177-229).

Though no longer within the framework of an absolute doctrine of separation, sexual differentiation and a mutually understood gendered division of labor was ostensibly the means by which American society could achieve stability and young people could obtain happiness. As the postwar cultural consensus of universal marriage—headed by a male breadwinner and sustained by a female homemaker—was being molded, many social theorists asserted that the very health of the nation was dependent on men and women carrying out their assigned gender roles.

“Sociologists argued that unless society encouraged a clear differentiation of the sexes, everything from the nuclear family to the economy itself could disintegrate” (Coontz 2011, 70). This type of thinking presupposed that every person played a functional role in the family, which then, as an institution, sustained the practical mechanisms of society as a whole. Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales claimed that the “husband’s instrumental” and the “wife’s expressive” roles served not only to ensure a financially and emotionally independent familial unit, but also provided a conducive environment for children to learn their appropriate gender roles, which would, in turn, prepare them to become breadwinning fathers and homemaking mothers (ibid.). The functional vision of society contends that if men and women assumed their masculinity and femininity within the confines of marriage, the nuclear family would maintain stability as both physical and emotional needs were met by complementary masculine and feminine actions. Gender, thus, becomes an integral component in perpetuating society. “[...] Parsons and Bales frequently explain that unless marital roles are distinguished in this way, neither personalities nor social systems will operate effectively” (Lee 2000, 853). Though *Family, Socialization, and Interaction Process* (1955) was by no means written for the American public as a whole, Parsons and Bales’s explanations of the changes in divorce rates, sexual morality, and dropping birth rates being the product of structural differentiation helped set “the tone for most of sociology and other social sciences for the remainder of the century” (ibid., 852).<sup>48</sup> Despite its seemingly limited reach, Parsons and Bales’s theoretical framing of the family and gender roles influenced the intellectual conversation about the purposes of the family, which eventually trickled into marriage and family courses and out into popular culture. This might be one reason that many of the people I interviewed in Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon indicated that marriage and companionship were expected mainstays of adulthood, but seemingly could not provide further explanation for why things were that way. Sandra, who was born in 1930 and arrived in Portland, Oregon as a divorcée in the mid-1960s, seemed dumbfounded as she explained the circumstances in which she married:

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<sup>48</sup> Structural differentiation assumes that societies evolve from simple to complex systems. As societies become more complex their components become more specialized (“Structural differentiation,” 2015).

We married after [our college] graduation. We graduated and got married right away. In those days that's what you did. You were supposed to. That was the goal. Girls wanted to get married. I mean, I was twenty-one. It was *insane* for me to do such a thing! But girls didn't have careers. They didn't have any career expectations. As I say, it was closer to Queen Victoria's times than it is to today. We're talking 1952" (2012).

Sandra, like many of her peers, saw marriage as a feature of adult life. Getting married young had become so ubiquitous and its contribution to society almost universally lauded that it quite simply became "what you did." Sandra does provide greater explanation for what this norm meant on a social level, though. First, she gives marriage value not only by saying it was something one sought as "a goal," but that it was an expectation. The people, the culture, the society around Sandra gave her the impression that marriage was the logical step after graduation. Second, she conveys a tension between individual choice and adhering to the norm. She accords this decision with some degree of freewill acknowledging that it was something the young women around her wanted. But she also limits that choice by saying that "It was *insane*...to do such a thing" and by positioning young women at that time as having seemingly no other alternatives. Marriage was a desirable outcome when one did not have a career or prospects for a career.

Another woman I interviewed, from Boise, Idaho, and born an entire generation later in 1946 expressed similar sentiments. She, however, voiced them when I asked her if after her first divorce she did not consider abandoning marriage altogether. Her response was, "We were raised believing no matter how independent we were, on some level, having the background we did, it was better to be with a man. You needed a couple to really negotiate this life" (Kathleen, 2013). For Kathleen, marriage was not just something she did, it was "the be-all and end-all of life" (Coontz 2005, 227). Though the question of gender is certainly at play in Kathleen's understanding of the marriage norm, her ability to acknowledge the primacy given to the couple is significant. The rise of the couple-oriented family was a hallmark of the postwar era. As Elaine Tyler May explains, an individual's happiness was contingent upon it. "Postwar Americans believed wholeheartedly that the happiness of men and women depended on marriage. According to one study, only 9 percent believed that a single person could be happy. While higher education and career aspirations would enhance the potential for a man to be happily married, that might not necessarily be the case for women" (May 1988, 78-79). Both Sandra

and Kathleen's understandings of the ideal takes into account that expectations for men and women were different. From a social science point of view, it was precisely these differences that provided this new form of marriage with its stability.

The doctrine of separate spheres did not necessarily reemerge as such. Women's roles in the home were redirected from "the drudgery of 'old-fashioned' housework" with timesaving appliances to "child rearing and their families' comfort or recreation" (Coontz 2005, 235-236). At the same time, men, in addition to assuming the role of provider, were encouraged to learn how to help out around the house and with the children as well as ensure that sexual relations with their wives were "mutually satisfying" (ibid., 238). The emphasis on marriage as a partnership was everywhere. In her guidebook, *Book of Common Sense Etiquette* (1962), Eleanor Roosevelt began her discussion on the manners of modern life by focusing on the couple in a chapter entitled "The Family of Two." She says, "A marriage is a partnership in which success and happiness are achieved by joint decisions and joint actions" (Roosevelt 1962, 18). In spite of the changing roles for men and women in the home and the accentuation of the couple being a partnership, egalitarianism was not the goal of this modern marriage arrangement. Several long-term studies of gender equality and shared power between spouses have shown that in popular media discussions of flexibility in the household division of labor and of women gaining more autonomy in expressing their needs and personalities as well as having more control over family-decision making declined in the 1950s, especially towards the end of the decade (Coontz 2011, 67).<sup>49</sup> In fact, many family experts and marital advice columnists made a point of saying the domestic division of labor, whether it was taking care of children or doing chores around the house, should not be split fifty-fifty, per se (Coontz 2005, 238-239). There was value in understanding the demands placed on one's spouse. This did not, however, mean that men and women should abandon their respective roles. Social stability, after all, depended on men and women knowing their place.

If the breadwinning/homemaking couple was seen as the ultimate embodiment of masculinity and femininity—demonstrating each member's willingness to assume their roles in the adult world and was seen as the point of departure for "real life"—

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<sup>49</sup> Coontz cites the work of Francesca Cancian, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (1987) and Ralph LaRossa, "The Culture of Fatherhood in the Fifties" (2004).



then, there was a need for the development of a comprehensive framework that would articulate what that looked like. For many cultural commentators, marriage and domestic harmony were not necessarily guaranteed parts of the marital package. It was quite common for etiquette books to repeat in detail the expected roles of the husband and wife as well as to acknowledge the unexpected roles they would be taking on in order to prepare couples for the challenges they might face.

*Eleanor Roosevelt's Book of Common Sense Etiquette* is rather traditional in its approach to etiquette. It is a 602-page tome that charts manners from the intimate domain of the home, including family life, entertaining, and dating, to one's public life at work and in the community. In talking about marriage, Roosevelt emphasizes companionship and the responsibilities that accompany the roles one assumes in a marriage. This book could be said to be a part of the growing "marriage counseling industry" that provided insight into how to "attain modern marriage" (Coontz 2005, 235). As a novelty, the modern marital arrangement needed reinforcement and Americans turned to experts to give them a "crash course" (ibid.) Roosevelt devoted fifteen pages to the ideology behind marital harmony and the appropriate behavior of husbands and wives.

She identifies the wife's roles as multitudinous; she emphasizes three qualities as the basis for ensuring that the woman was performing her duties faithfully in her home. Roosevelt first identifies the woman's position in relation to her husband; she is a "lover." Her priority should be the happiness and pleasure of her spouse. Then, she mentions the woman's domestic role in the home; she is a "housekeeper." Her main occupation would be caring for her home. Though Roosevelt does acknowledge that women had begun to share the responsibility of earning the family's livelihood, she insists that the care the wife put into the home would be a direct reflection on her ability to fulfill her responsibilities. Regardless of the reasons why a woman might work, Roosevelt insists "her home, husband, and children will be her primary concern [...]" (Roosevelt 1962, 23). Thirdly, the wife was identified as a "mother (not only to her children, but in many ways to her husband as well) [...]" (ibid., 20). The wife, then, should provide comfort to all members of her family, including her husband. Possible expressions that might undermine any one of these roles were identified as:

[...] habitual nagging, habitual slovenliness, neglect of her duties as a wife and a mother, habitual rudeness in addressing the other members of the family, indifference when loving tenderness is expected, and a general pattern of conduct that seems to intimate that she is living in her house for herself

alone and that all other members of the family are there by sufferance and are no concern of hers (ibid.).

In Roosevelt's general introduction to the appropriate behavior of the wife, she associated each of her roles in relation to others in the home. Her obligations extend to her husband, home, and family respectively.

As Roosevelt begins to detail how a wife should perform her duties as a "lover, housekeeper, and mother," she continues the line of argument that the wife's efforts are directed toward others' needs. "Personal neatness" would maintain the wife's physical allure, while "household neatness" would show the wife's care for her husband and children (ibid., 21). Discussion of the wife's physical appearance does not end on a note of "neatness," though. Roosevelt charges the "good wife" with continuing the habit of taking care with her dress even after marriage, regardless of whether her husband's attention lags or any other man notices (ibid., 22). Though Roosevelt never appears to directly comment on sexuality, she seems to make implications about it, her very use of "lover" indicates as much. This insistence in the first couple of paragraphs on a woman's appearance might be extrapolated as Roosevelt's attempt to remind wives that they should continue to play the role of seductress even though they have already landed their man. Such an inference suggests the importance of maintaining an active sex life in marriage. Nevertheless, wifely devotion extended beyond a woman's ability to make herself physically attractive. It meant crafting one's appearance to be presentable at all times of the day, ensuring meals were served when the husband was ready for them, studying and catering to a husband's preferences, and greeting him when he returned from work with "an inner and intimate warmth that is reserved for him alone" (Roosevelt 1962, 23). Wives were also supposed to be "a natural sounding board, a sympathetic listener, a mother-like comforter, and at times a counselor" to their husbands. If he did not immediately take her advice, but later proposed it as his own idea, Roosevelt stipulated that wives should praise their husbands as a matter of "good wifeliness" and "good manners." This was part of the way a "well behaved wife" showed her husband that she accepted shared life was not just an ideal (ibid., 24). In spite of the specificity of appropriate wifely behavior, Roosevelt concedes that many women were helping provide for their families at that time and tries to take this into consideration by saying, "Neither a woman nor a man can do everything, under such circumstances it is not unreasonable to expect a man to be helpful in the matter of

household chores” (ibid., 25). Even though Roosevelt insists on the respective roles of husbands and wives, she also acknowledges that they were changing. In commenting on women’s economic contribution to the home and the possibility that men were expected to help out, she actually ends up making some room for redefining gender, albeit in a minimal way.

*Eleanor Roosevelt’s Book of Common Sense Etiquette* was not the only advice book released in 1962 perpetuating the idea that a wife’s primary status came through her relation to others. Helen Gurley Brown released *Sex and the Single Girl* in which she contends that unlike single women, there was no reason for a wife to have a role crisis because she was, after all, somebody’s wife. Brown wrote, “A married woman already *is* something. She is the banker's wife, the gangster's wife, [...]. Whatever hardships she endures in marriage, one of them is *not* that she doesn't have a place in life” (Brown 1962, 97). In her hyperbolic portrayal of the luxury of being a wife, Brown argues that a woman does not even have to possess the features that make her a good housewife and, yet, she retains her identity. “A wife can be a lousy housekeeper, indifferent cook, lack-lust bedmate, self-centered mother, dull-as-grime companion, and the law protects her! When she finally *is* dismissed, the man who served her papers often has to pay her half his salary. *Quelle* severance pay!” (ibid.). With this demeaning depiction, Brown, like many cultural commentators of that time, positioned the full-time housewife as the era’s “emancipated woman” (Coontz 2005, 235). Her incredulous tone overlooked the very fact that the wife’s identity was obfuscated by her husband’s. It is precisely this subsuming of individual identity that Betty Friedan railed against the following year when she released *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan lamented the fact that the husband, the children, the home and the things in it had become tantamount to all the woman was (1963, 236).

Perhaps one of the most insidious features of positioning the wife’s personhood in relation to the husband’s was that women did not always have much say not only in terms of domestic roles, but also in the grander scheme of personal choice. Mary, a Portland, Oregon resident born in 1945, who was raised on a farm in a rural community not too far away, described the contradictory ways her father treated her and her mother. “My father was torn sometimes between what he really wanted and he always encouraged me for school and wanted me to go to school. Yet, he didn’t want my mom to drive, she didn’t; he didn’t want her to work, she didn’t except when she had to” (Mary, 2013). She acknowledged that her father might have

been a little more old-fashioned than average, given that he was born in 1910, but she still explained it away as “the male-female dynamic of the forties-fifties” (ibid.). She even went on to say that for her father if his wife were doing either of these things it was a reflection of his inability to provide. For someone like Mary’s father, the association between masculinity and being the sole provider mirrored the modern conception of masculinity that emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Coontz 2005, 219). Furthermore, having been a young adult during the Great Depression, he would have been influenced more than later generations by the association between a working wife and a husband’s economic failure (ibid., 222). Modeling his own family on his ability to provide makes sense, especially if we take into account the optimism that many Americans felt after World War II as political, economic, and social factors made the male breadwinner / female homemaker home all the more accessible. Though the primary role for any breadwinner seems to have been just that, the change in the family towards a more democratic model and the infusion of the notion of companionship in marriage required further articulation of what the “modern” man in marriage would look like.

In *Eleanor Roosevelt’s Book of Common Sense Etiquette*, the husband’s roles are equally elaborated, but they reflect a very different type of advice. The book focuses much more on situation-based manners and the considerate treatment of one’s wife than it does on one’s role as a husband. Roosevelt does not attempt to qualify manhood by saying the successful husband is a lover, provider, and father, like she does with women. Instead, she finds common ground between husband and wife in that they both need to recognize that they are members of an intimate community when at home, one in which each member has their own place. At first, this appears to put husbands and wives on an equal footing. However, as her advice to “courteous husbands” unfolds, it becomes apparent that men have a completely different level of investment in family life. This is only one of the communities they interact with on a day-to-day basis, which seems to indicate that men’s identities were not expected to be so thoroughly interwoven into the fabric of the home. The very distinction made between home and “the outside world” grants the husband multiple positions in life. Roosevelt’s advice encourages him to not take his home life or the people in it for granted. In order to do this, his behavior must reflect an understanding of his intimate and public communities. Roosevelt states that it is the husband’s responsibility to remember special dates and mention them first thing in

the morning (Roosevelt 1962, 26). He shows his consideration for his wife by not “dawdling” while getting ready so that he arrives promptly at the table; he behaves chivalrously towards her by pulling out her chair; and he makes a point to talk to her while they eat (ibid., 26-27).

The “courteous husband” compliments and praises his wife, whether it is her cooking or her appearance (ibid., 27-28). Roosevelt warns that he must not “overcriticize” nor “be indifferent” to his wife's appearance (ibid., 28). She implores husbands to acknowledge the effort their wives go through in trying to please them, which helps women know that their husbands are proud to be with them. Though Roosevelt talks about many instances in which a husband might pay his wife a compliment, she seems to emphasize the wife's physical appearance the most. In talking about women and the continued effort that they were supposed to put into their looks, I postulated that this might be an indicator of sexual intimacy in the couple. It seems appropriate to mention here that Roosevelt's intention might have more to do with creating domestic harmony through the perpetuation of expected gendered performances: women were meant to entice and men to ogle. In acknowledging the sexualized femininity of their wives, the husband would give her reason to continue trying. Roosevelt does say, “[...] for a husband to seem not to care how his wife looks is to give the impression that she is really of little importance to him, an old shoe that is comfortable, nothing to be proud of” (ibid.). Such a statement equates the depth of a husband's feelings with his willingness to express the pleasure his wife's appearance brings him and reduces the woman to her looks. This second reading of Roosevelt's insistence on the wife's appearance is further substantiated when she claims “the nicest compliment a husband can pay his wife is to notice what she is wearing, to praise it when it is particularly becoming, and by quiet and intelligent suggestion to let her know that she is not making the most of her natural attractiveness” (ibid., 29). Though Roosevelt is trying to instruct men on how to make their wives feel good and bring them happiness through their expressiveness, it is problematic that it is based on the superficial stereotypes of gender. She gives the husband's words great influence over the wife not only in her use of the superlative form, but also in the way she subtly alludes to his ability to redirect her efforts more to his liking. She provides husbands with a means to compliment their wives and to get them to dress more attractively. The well-mannered approach for Roosevelt is when the husband expresses himself kindly, regardless of the way this might limit his

wife's self-expression.

The final realm of advice aimed at husbands in the *Book of Common Sense Etiquette* is the ways in which they can be respectful towards their wives in how they interact with outsiders. The most important thing for any man to remember was that he needed to show respect for the privacy and intimacy of his shared home life. This meant that he needed to use small courtesies, like alerting his wife when he would be home late or consulting his wife when it would be convenient to have a colleague over for dinner. Finally, a “gentleman,” for Roosevelt was a man who always respected the privacy of his marriage and never shared these intimacies with others (Roosevelt 1962, 29-30).

In elaborating the expectations of the married man and woman, discrepancies seem to emerge in the detail of the definitions provided and the nature of articulating each person's role. These discrepancies indicate first a difference in the advice literature's ability to expand on what is expected of a man and a woman. The very exact definition of the woman and her role, which is at the same time her very essence and her component parts, gives a precise portrait of femininity. The husband's behavior is treated prescriptively; giving advice that, if followed, should promote domestic harmony between husband and wife, but does not entail his obligations as a husband, provider, and father. This could be based on the assumption that the readers of her book would more than likely be women. It does leave the following question: how did her audience understand masculinity as it should be expressed in marriage? A few assumptions can be teased out in regards to male spousal obligation: the husband will provide for his family, he will be less present in his family members' lives because he is providing for them, and he needs to be instructed on how to be courteous and caring towards his wife. Masculinity can be inferred from Roosevelt's advice, but she does not attempt to capture its essence, which may indicate that masculinity and femininity are not comparable—one being more complex and thus harder to depict and the other being simpler and easier to articulate. Her ultimate goal does seem to offer wives, and to a lesser extent husbands, help in reaching domestic harmony, not through sugar-coating reality, but through shoring up her dominant readerships' expectations of what a husband should be.

From a contemporary perspective, companionship and love seem like worthy,

if not the only, reasons to marry. The adoption of the breadwinning husband and homemaking wife as the ideal marital arrangement after the War actually furthered the claims of love and companionship. It was at that time that marriage incorporated more individual expression and emotional meaning as couples were hoping to provide each other with sexual fulfillment, to become one another's closest confidantes, and to live a married life that recognized the individuality of each person. Though the first modern couples of the 1920s were the first to experience relationships that acknowledged mutual passion and marital camaraderie, the Great Depression and Second World War turned people's attention elsewhere. As these ideas were allowed to re-blossom in the promising circumstances of the postwar era, Americans flocked to the novelty of this type of marriage. Stephanie Coontz tries to emphasize the pleasure and opportunity that many people saw in pursuing this new model when she describes the seeming stability of 1950s marriage as being attributable to "the thrill of exploring the new possibilities of married life and the size of the rewards that men and women received for playing by the rules of the postwar economic boom" (2005, 238). Though the division of labor became quite rigid—thus restricting white middle-class women's opportunities and further relegating women of color's employment and pay—women's opinions varied greatly about the development of such an arrangement. Feminist historian Sara Evans described the reaction of many minority and working-class women as being a mixed bag. Many of these women never had the economic liberty "to invest their entire identities in the roles of housewife and mother," which rendered this status a luxury that many pined after and simultaneously condemned (Evans 2003, 115). In speaking about the women, that she interviewed while studying shifts in suburbanization, Kim England found that some women were unhappy housewives or suburban residents, while others "felt that marriage had 'rescued' them" (England 1993, 33). A couple that I interviewed in Boise, Idaho who married in 1952 said that for them the 1950s "[...] were the happiest times of our lives" (William and Karen, 2012). Despite the seeming inequality that was generated as a result of a gender-based division of labor, marriage as it was embodied by the breadwinner-homemaker duo has left a contested legacy. For some, it garnered discontent amongst women who felt confined by their roles as housewives and it positioned women as men's economic dependents whether they stayed at home or worked. For white middle-class women who lived the ideal, the value society placed on men's economic contributions to their families

undermined women's paid work as it was seen as supplemental income. For women of color and working-class women who worked out of necessity, this arrangement kept their wages low and limited their opportunities. For others, the focus placed on the family imbues the mother and father's roles with societal and moral importance. Having a mother at home who is able to nurture and educate her children according to the values her and her husband espouse grants the family the primary influence in a child's life. This maintains the family unit as one of the fundamental building blocks of society.



## II. The American Way of Life Becomes Synonymous with Family, Suburbia, and Consumerism

“What is, after all, more ‘natural’ than the family?” sociologist Remi Lenoir asks in *Généalogie de la Morale Familiale* (2003, 17).<sup>50</sup> It is the place where its members learn the solipsism of their class (ibid.). From its ideas about property, manners, morality, social mores, culture, education, housing to consumer goods, the family confers value to nearly every social category that is meant to either set it and its members apart from or in opposition to others. Furthermore, it is the site with which social groups identify in order to maintain or improve their position in society (ibid., 18). When a culture becomes preoccupied with the importance of the family in society—known as familialism, familism, or family values in its current American manifestation—, there is a tendency to obfuscate the influence of the family’s institutional roles and its culturally and temporally constructed nature. Familial values act to establish a singular vision of and divisions within the social world, creating mental, physical, social, and emotional categories that structure one’s experience in society (ibid., 32). The seeming naturalness of the family—understood as the most basic organizational unit, preceding all else—perceived in conjunction with familialism provides a matrix through which every social category is legitimated as a natural extension of familial structures (ibid., 32-33). “This circular reasoning is the result of symbolic investment strategies by the dominant classes which, in imposing evaluatory schemas that favor them and encouraging practices that are likely to benefit them, contribute to the seeming naturalness of their economic, cultural, and political domination” (ibid., 33).<sup>51</sup> The fact that the family is taken for granted tends to position it as an ahistorical institution, rendering its functions seemingly permanent no matter the era, the place, or the social conditions (ibid., 89). However, this reading of the family negates the historical framework that links the family to social conflict both on a material and symbolic level and acts to restructure the existing social order. The very fact that the family is linked to social conflict is indicative of the fact that, as an institution, it plays an important temporal and spatial

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<sup>50</sup> The original citation reads, « Quoi de plus « naturel », en effet, que la famille ? »

<sup>51</sup> In the original, Lenoir writes, « Cette adéquation circulaire est le résultat de stratégies d’investissement symbolique des classes dominantes qui, en imposant les schèmes d’évaluation qui leur sont le plus favorables et en facilitant les pratiques susceptibles d’être appréciées en leur faveur, contribuent à faire apparaître comme naturels les fondements économiques, culturels et politiques de leur domination ».

role in the construction of reality (ibid., 24).

It is from this perspective—the family is a social construction dependent on time and place—that I will endeavor to define what the “traditional family” has come to mean in the American context. In spite of its frequent association with the 1950s, it is important to note, from the outset, that the traditional model is in fact “an amalgam of structures, values, and behaviors that never coexisted in the same time and place” (Coontz 1992, 9). At the heart of the 1950s model was a young, middle-class, college-educated, white, heterosexual couple. On the surface, the roles of the couple were positioned as functional opposites where the man took on the tasks of financially providing and the woman looked after the home and children. As previously discussed, this dichotomous model traces its roots back to the nineteenth-century doctrine of separate spheres, which allotted men and women separate spaces where they could fulfill their duties as husbands and wives. The early twentieth-century push towards a family wage made this familial arrangement more accessible to ever larger proportions of the American public. Though certainly not a universally lived experience, by the end of the 1950s, a cultural consensus had emerged that would eventually define the “traditional family” based on the male breadwinner and female homemaker (Coontz 2005, 229). One of my interviewees even associated this model to the decade when I asked her to describe the 1950s. She said, “The father in a three-piece suit who was greeted by a perfectly groomed wife with a martini and whose children ran to greet him when he walked in the door. Then they all sat down together. This was the life,” she claimed, “not a TV fantasy” (Patricia, 2012). Patricia’s memory of that time fits with the familialism that emerged as the basis for the American way of life at mid-century. She sees a clear image of a happy, heterosexual couple with their children. On a larger cultural level, the happy couple symbolized the importance placed on stability.<sup>52</sup> Imagined within the familial context, it also speaks to a societal yearning for meaning on an intimate level. The cultural consensus on the family was based on real demographic trends, like the surge in marriage rates amongst young adults, the declining number of childless and one-child families, and the increased time women devoted to raising their children thanks

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<sup>52</sup> See Philip Abbott’s article “Eisenhower, King Utopus, and the Fifties Decade in America” for a discussion of the 1950s as a utopian/dystopian era. Abbott focuses on assessments of the Eisenhower presidency that support and contest “the normative character of the decade” (Abbott 2000, 7). A consistent feature of utopian discourse asserts the primacy of societal stability (ibid., 8).

to the prosperity of the era (Coontz 2005, 225; 227; 236). After more than twenty years of hardship, Americans hoped for a return to normalcy, but the previous two decades had uprooted most people's everyday lives, so they reinvented themselves through their families. The political and economic stakes of the time encouraged this. The Cold War placed the family front and center as a symbol of protection from and defense against the Communists. The emergence of the first real mass-consumer economy in the wake of the War was welcomed as the means by which Americans could begin living the "good life" they had been promised since the beginning of the 1940s.

Consumerism emerged as an important component in defining postwar American family life. Historian Lizabeth Cohen argues in *A Consumers' Republic* (2003) that mass consumption was not only central to stabilizing the economy, but also became a crucial axis around which political and cultural life turned during that time (11). Between the 1920s and 1950s, American citizenship increasingly became associated with consumerism. Cohen explains that this took place in a sort of tug-of-war between two conceptions of consumers—purchaser consumers and citizen consumers, the former asserted themselves through their purchasing power, while the latter did so through the construction of consumer protection rights (Cohen 2003, 18-19). During the Depression, the purchaser consumer model ultimately won out as consumers were increasingly charged with the task of rebuilding the economy through their aggregate purchasing power (ibid, 54). This was hailed as the ultimate "enhancement of American democracy and equality" because reviving capitalism was the way to ensure the "survival of democracy in the world as an alternative to revolution (communism) and reaction (fascism) [...]" (ibid., 55). These two consumer types resurfaced during World War II as Americans struggled to balance their patriotic consumer restraint with their "pent-up consumer desires" (ibid., 62). It was at that time that much of public discourse began to sell America on the postwar dream of a consumer-driven, suburban life (ibid., 70-71). By encouraging those engaged in the war effort to "anticipat[e] future consumption," government publications, advertisements, and popular culture were preparing Americans to invest in their homes and families after the War (ibid., 73). Civic duty and consumption permeated both types of consumer models; as the American economy reconverted to peacetime production many Americans consumed to help reconstruct the economy and society in order to promote American values as well as enjoy the psychological

and material comforts offered by the mass market (ibid., 408). Stephanie Coontz asserts that “consumer aspirations were an integral part of constructing the postwar family” (2005, 232). As modern life became the catchword of the era and was increasingly paired with consumption, family togetherness became inseparable from consumerism (ibid.).

Framing the family as a socially-constructed institution is essential to understanding how it creates and perpetuates social identities and roles through the prism of gender, class, race, and location. As a microcosm of the larger social structure, the family takes these social identities into account and attempts to bolster those that are culturally valued, often to the detriment of those that are not. Positioning it as the sanctuary where happiness and desires can be expressed, maintaining it as *the* site in which individuals can seek refuge from the controlling power of a capitalist economy, bureaucracy, and the state imbues the family with a sacred quality and seemingly divorces it from its larger social, economic, and political functions (Lenoir 2003, 18-19).

Additionally, the framework that casts the family as a haven for individualism overlooks the inner workings that confound interpersonal relationships within the gendered division of labor. Sociologist Roland Pfefferkorn argues in *Inégalités et rapports sociaux* (2007) that the insistence on mutuality within the familial unit obscures the gender differentiation that takes place within the domestic economy (254-255). Taking into account Christine Delphy’s call to see domestic production in relation to its economic counterpart and borrowing Colette Guillaumin’s claim that gender relations perpetuate a system of material appropriation from women by men, Pfefferkorn asserts that interpersonal domestic interactions create two classes: one composed of men, the other of women (ibid., 253-255). A gendered division of labor based on Parsonian instrumental and expressive roles contrasts men’s work with women’s as men were expected to maintain a link with the outside world and economically support the household, while women were charged with taking care of the home, maintaining the daily operations of the family, and rearing the children (ibid., 238-239). As such, women’s work had a permanence to it that men’s did not: women were supposed to always be available, which not only imposed constant material demands on wives/mothers, but also required women to support the weight of their entire families’ emotional well-being (ibid. 255-256).

If location is added as a conceptual framework to analyze the postwar

American family, race and class conflict become central tenets of the discussion. The entire development of a way of life based on the family living in the suburbs imbued the single-family, suburban home with great symbolic meaning. Adopting a geographical perspective will allow me to tease out some of the values behind the construction of the family, its residence, and its locale. Though difficult to define and differentiate, “space” and “place” play a significant role in bolstering the 1950s family as they provide a framework to identify the “uniqueness” of the suburban home and its residential area as well as provide an understanding of how spaces are “networks that change over time and that vary for different social groups” (Staeheli and Martin 2000, 141).<sup>53</sup> I will attempt to look at the traditional family in the suburbs then from the perspective that Lynn Staeheli and Patricia Martin advocate, as the means to show how the multiplicity of meanings found in places are “contested, multiple, layered, subject to shifting and porous boundaries, and constructed in relationship to systems of power, including economic relations, racialization, ethnicity, and gender” (ibid., 140). In the postwar American suburban context, space becomes particularly problematic as systems of power based on one’s ethnicity, race, class, and gender, acted to construct the traditional family model, effectively erasing, or denying, any alternatives as being feasible. In looking at the family as a socially constructed unit, we are able to see that it fits and operates within a spatial network, creating links between the micro (or individual) and the macro (or society), on both physical and social levels. The family comes then to define itself around central, interconnecting points of its own spatial network. These points create physical manifestations of familial places like the home and the suburbs and social demonstrations of place for husbands and wives, whites and blacks as well as other people of color, and for people according to their class. Just as the family operates within a spatial network that produces particular familial places, it also functions within a larger social system that constructs social identities, which accord status based on race, class, and gender.

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<sup>53</sup> Jenna Vinson, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, provides a very clear explanation of Michel De Certeau’s use of space and place that might further elucidate this discussion. She explains that “place” is understood in its relationship to other things, implying stability. She provides the example of a school building. When seen a school building is understood as a “concrete distinguishable ‘place,’” organized in such a way to facilitate its purpose as a place. Space, on the other hand, is how that place is used. The school building is not only a space for education, but socializing and various other things that students, teachers, and administrators do. Vinson thus concludes her explanation saying “space is a practiced place” (Vinson, n.d.).

Attempts to understand why the breadwinner/homemaker-based family was short-lived have tended to idealize and eternize this arrangement, which is a risk of trying to historicize the institution, says Remi Lenoir (2003, 28). In fact, endeavoring to write a history of the family frequently naturalizes its “essentialist representations” of social groups and society (ibid.). Inscripting the American way of life in the practices of the family was a way to rewrite the familial script. Lenoir explains that the staying power of such a discourse elevates the institution, making it independent of its members as it creates a family life that transcends the individuals within it (ibid., 43). This is accomplished through the familial narrative that emerges through the activities in which the family members engage (games, cooking, meals, parties, vacations); the economy, ambiance, intimacy, environment, atmosphere they enjoy; the spaces (the yard, the house) the rituals, the secrets, the identity (their name) they share; and the obligations, traditions, memories, and pathologies that weave their individual stories into one (ibid., 43; 46). Stephanie Coontz furthers the application of the development of a family narrative for the postwar period in the United States because of the prominence accorded to it. “The emphasis on producing a whole world of satisfaction, amusement, and inventiveness within the nuclear family had no precedents” (Coontz 1992, 27). I will endeavor to unlock the way that this normative script constructed an archetype of the 1950s American family by looking at the ideologies behind its primary supports: togetherness, suburbia, and consumption. Each of these creeds should provide insight into the interplay of race, class, and gender and provide the grounds for their eventual contestation of material and symbolic hegemony.

### **1. The Era of Togetherness**

In her *Book of Common Sense Etiquette* (1962), Eleanor Roosevelt attempted to naturalize the nuclear family unit by endowing it with historical significance; she described it as the “smallest,” “most intimate,” “oldest” and “most primitive” community known to humankind (109). From these assumptions she hypothesizes that, “It is reasonable to believe that there was a time in man's early history when man, woman, and children constituted a more or less isolated unit” (Roosevelt 1962, 109). Roosevelt was furthering a popular explanative theory of marriage and the family of that time, dubbed the “protective theory” by Stephanie Coontz (2005, 35).

It associated the contemporary gender division of labor to the Paleolithic hunter-gatherer economy, where males were presumed to do the hunting and females the gathering. The undergirding argument of this theory posits that males and females contributed unequally to their groups. Females were incapable of providing food for themselves and were restricted in their movement because of their offspring, while males hunted nutrient-rich animals, and were strong, inventive, and capable of keeping themselves alive (ibid.). In this arrangement, females were dependent on males for survival. They, thus, exchanged sex for meat and protection. “Proponents of this protective theory of marriage claim that the nuclear family, based on a sexual division of labor between the male hunter and the female hearth keeper, was the most important unit of survival and protection in the Stone Age” (ibid., 36).<sup>54</sup> Regardless of the criticism that has effectively rendered the protective theory obsolete, it does speak to the larger cultural assumptions of its time. “The idea that in prehistoric times a man would spend his life hunting only for the benefit of his own wife and children, who were dependent solely upon his hunting prowess for survival, is simply a projection of 1950s marital norms onto the past” (ibid, 40). Like other cultural commentators, academics, and the general political discourse of that time, Roosevelt’s definition of the family insists on the fundamental character of the nuclear unit in relation to modern American life. This is an important component in mapping mid-century norms. The nuclear family played a seminal role in the private and public lives of Americans as family “togetherness” became the hallmark of the era. Roosevelt’s insistence on the primal origins of the family, not only dehistoricizes and depoliticizes the movement towards familialism, but shores up the importance of family life on a cultural and individual level.

In 1954, the women’s magazine *McCall’s* gave name to the underlying way of life that would define the 1950s family: “togetherness.” From its inception, the usage

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<sup>54</sup> The protective theory has been contested on many levels. First in comparing early hominids to great apes’ behavioral patterns, the evidence does not substantiate the notion that males are more likely to share food in exchange for sex. Second, studies of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies demonstrate that the primary share of food is provided through foraging not through hunting. Furthermore, hunting is not strictly seen as an exclusively male prerogative in hunter-gatherer societies. When our hominid ancestors finally began hunting big game, they hunted in large groups to trap animals. Third, women in contemporary non-sedentary social groups are not limited in their mobility because they have small children; nursing babies are carried as women forage. Finally, small societies organized around the nuclear family would have been unrealistic for survival in the Paleolithic era (Coontz 2005, 36-37).

of this concept granted the family a quasi-sacred status. Togetherness elevated the home as the environment where personal fulfillment could be attained through family life. It became the framework through which individuals could achieve their greatest satisfaction and reach their true potential as their endeavors were placed within the larger cultural context, which imbued them with greater social and spiritual meaning. The home became the perfect space for the nuclear family to gather where one had a position and an identity. As Coontz argues, “For the first time, men as well as women were encouraged to root their identity and self-image in familial and parental roles” (1992, 27). These roles were meant to generate a sense of community and create a common project undertaken by husbands and wives. Equality was not the goal, self-realization was. In imbuing familial roles with greater importance, togetherness gave the individual’s life more meaning.

An integral part in constructing togetherness as part of the postwar way of living was focusing on it as a stabilizing force. The isolated nuclear family norm was new. The novelty of such an arrangement made it vulnerable. In order to combat the seeming instability of the emerging cultural norm, popular culture outlets attempted to anchor the newness of this arrangement in feelings of tradition. The idea being that togetherness as an organizing principle for family life would go unchallenged if it were depicted in continuity with the past rather than as a departure from it. In his article “The Meaning of Memory” (1986), American Studies scholar George Lipsitz discusses the ways that sitcoms—increasingly popular and more widely watched starting in the 1950s—provided a normative model of the family in spite of changing cultural practices. “Ostensibly representations of ‘tradition,’ these images actually spoke to a radical rupture with the past: the establishment of the isolated nuclear family of the 1950s with its attendant change in family gender roles” (ibid., 366). In glossing over social changes in their portrayals of “‘therapeutic’ images of desired [...] behavior,” sitcoms attempted to elude a gap between the past and present as well as tradition and change (ibid.). Such a discourse gave priority to an idealization of togetherness that positioned the attainment of true satisfaction via the family. The thematic emphasis on domestic life in sitcoms—like *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*, or *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*—helped to establish the important precepts of togetherness: family life was meant to be part of the shared experience, a communal effort in its construction. The genesis of a term to describe the era is indicative that family life had changed in a significant way for many



Americans.

Togetherness's greatest support probably was mass consumption. The commodity goods available on the market after the War introduced Americans to an entirely new way of living. Consumerism was also the means by which people's familial and political identities combined. Advertisements and the media used the popular discourse of togetherness to fuse citizen consumers with purchaser consumers, so the notions of citizenship and consumption aligned (Cohen 2003, 119). Purchasing as a civil duty and for private gain would guarantee full employment and raise everyone's standard of living (ibid., 113). The general good would best be served if Americans would pursue their hedonistic desires through consumption (ibid., 121). In terms of cultural values, self-indulgence was losing its stigma as "fun morality" pervaded American life (Wolfenstein 1951, 21-23).<sup>55</sup> There was no better way to fulfill one's civic responsibility while simultaneously pampering oneself than to invest in a home and all of its accoutrements. Single-family housing starts jumped from only 114,000 in 1944 to 1,692,000 in 1950, while household furnishings and appliances became a billion-dollar market (Cohen 2003, 123; Jackson 1985, 233). In combining family happiness with postwar consumerism, advertisers, television programs, and mass-circulation magazines furthered Americans' desires to live the good life (Coontz 2005, 232).

In women's magazines, [...] togetherness was always pictured in a setting filled with modern appliances and other new consumer products. The essence of modern life, their women readers learned, was 'abundance, emancipation, social progress, airy houses, healthy children, the refrigerator, pasteurized milk, the washing-machine, comfort, quality and accessibility' (ibid.).

It was also through consumerism that togetherness was able to assert itself as a new lifeway without undermining the family it was meant to support. Togetherness, as it was actualized through the citizen/purchaser consumer, acted to reinforce the historical interplay of citizenship, family, and national values, which helped to anchor this recent incarnation of American family life in the national narrative.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Wolfenstein contrasts "fun morality" with "goodness morality." The former represents a shift around the middle of the twentieth century in attitudes towards a preoccupation with having a good time. "Play, amusement, and fun have become increasingly divested of puritanical associations of wickedness" (Wolfenstein 1951, 22). The latter is described as a concerted effort to control or interfere with one's impulses (ibid.). Wolfenstein associates "goodness morality" with behavioral attitudes during the first twenty years of the twentieth century.

<sup>56</sup> See Nancy Cott's *Public Vows* (2000) for a development on the ways the state has cast marriage as

Togetherness became central to the dominant cultural discourse on postwar living. Places like Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho have material remnants that speak to the seductive power of togetherness as the underlying motivation for the 1950s family model, as evidenced in two different types of sources. First, I will look at the portrayal of families in the *Les Bois* and *Viking* yearbooks. Then I will return to *A College Comes to Housing* (1947) the promotional film produced to advertise Vanport College, the predecessor of Portland State. In drawing on these sources, I hope to demonstrate how pervasive images of togetherness were after the War, even before a name was put to the phenomenon.

In their portrayals of the informal sphere, Portland State and Boise State's yearbooks included photographs of the family. Of the eleven photos that clearly depicted family settings, seven of them predate the invention of togetherness. Thus, it appears that these yearbooks were more likely to portray domesticity immediately after the War. Three of the eleven photographs focused specifically on married couples (see Figures 4, 5, and 6). Figure 4 is a photographic montage of Vanport's living quarters, featuring a variety of students.

This photomontage looks like an advertisement for the comforts of modern living offered by Vanport. The first and third images seem to be selling a lifestyle more than the others. In the first one, the woman smiles at the camera, spatula in hand. The scene imparts homeliness and abundance: the back wall is papered, the shelves over the stove hold the residents' serving and eating finery; and the bar displays the staples of any kitchen: a bowl of fruit, sugar bowl, and creamer. This kitchen is also outfitted with a large refrigerator. The third picture shows the couple engaged in a leisure activity together. They both sit near a desk: she reads a magazine, he a book. The blinds are down and the room well lit. They look like they are spending a quiet evening at home. The second, fourth, and fifth photographs portray a more scholastic environment. The second photograph appears to be a meeting between a school official and the husband. The wife perched on the edge of the sofa in her apron looks on as her husband speaks. The fourth shows a man in front of a well-stocked bookshelf, looking away from the camera, perhaps deep in concentration. And the fifth shows a woman intently reading. This photo montage

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a means to define private and public citizenship.

seems to emphasize several ideas: Vanport's living quarters were comfortable; they had modern appliances and furnishings; these features made the housing at Vanport conducive to one's private and public pursuits. They provided the conveniences of postwar life, the space for leisure activities, and the environment for one's academic pursuits. For the young married couple, these images of Vanport's living quarters might have represented their first step towards the good life.

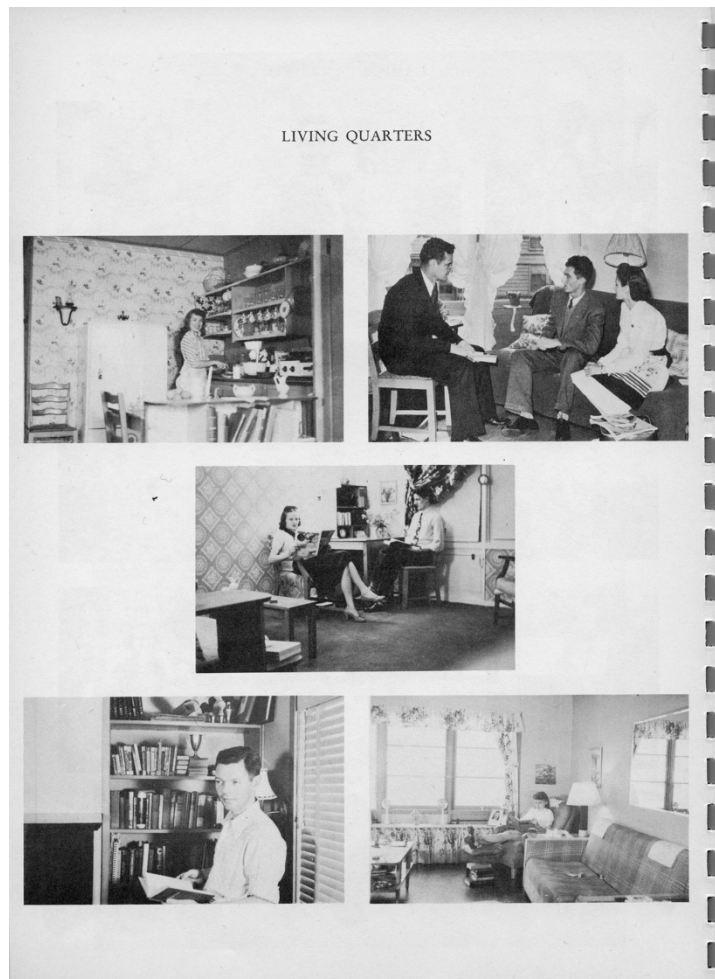


Figure 4 "Living Quarters" from the 1947 *Viking*, 65

The next two images, (Figures 5 and 6), feature married couples, which are less obviously portraits of the family, but their presence attests to the importance of the couple at that time. It is only by reading the caption of Figure 5 that the link to



Elaine Bertholf and Edward Shannon at Press Club's Winter formal (before they were Mr. and Mrs.).

**Figure 5 Elaine Berthold and Edward Shannon from the 1946 *Les Bois*, 89**

At the IK-Valkyrie carnival—Marryin' Jerry Lessinger "joins up" Whitey Halmrast and Noreen Wright.



**Figure 6 Whitney Halmrast and Noreen Wright pictured in the 1964 edition of *Les Bois*, 94**

the family is made. The photograph itself is a relatively standard depiction of a couple at a dance. The information in the description actually indicates that this couple is not yet a family, as it notes, “before they were Mr. and Mrs.” (*Les Bois* 1946, 89). It is significant that this detail was added to a portrait of a couple at a dance. On the one hand, it conveys the integral part that dances and dating played in student life on college campuses. In the 1946 *Les Bois* alone, thirteen dances were featured. Two of these references had generic titles, “Union Nights” and “Coke Dances,” which implies that student associations regularly organized casual dances that could be held any weekend evening to provide students with entertainment for the evening. They would have regularly taken place after a sporting event. The majority of the dances depicted were informal gatherings. Some had themes that were meant to inspire costumes for dress: one was girl-ask-boy, with a farm theme to boot. Regardless of whether or not the dance was informal, semi-formal, or formal, dances tended to require a date. Of the four photographs of dances in the 1946 *Les Bois*, two of them show couples in pairs.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, the caption alludes to the role

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<sup>57</sup> The other two show the audience interacting with the night's entertainment.

that dating played in forming married couples. This photograph was taken at the Winter Formal. A man would not have invited just any woman to such a fancy event. As Beth Bailey explains both men and women proved their personal value through dates (1988, 58). In the postwar era, this was more fully achieved through pairing off, but the couple's worth continued to be defined through consumption. "In this system, men and women often defined themselves and each other as commodities, the woman valued by the level of consumption she could demand (how much she was 'worth'), and the man by the level of consumption he could provide" (ibid.). A formal dance cost more money than the regular casual dances held most weekends. Certain amenities were expected: a corsage—which we can see pinned below her right shoulder—and dinner at a restaurant that paralleled the tone of the occasion. The dance would also have had an admission price. All of which does not address the costs behind their clothing. Nevertheless, this seemingly banal photograph of an engaged young couple speaks to the economy of dating and the financial relationship a couple would assume upon marriage. Its presence also suggests that married couples were a mainstay of college life.

Figure 6 shows a couple "pretending" to get married at a school carnival in 1964 at Boise Junior College. This ceremony is a gag—in good spirit. Both the bride and groom look pleased. Its inclusion demonstrates that marriage was not only important for young people, but could be reenacted in a space of leisure as something silly and fun. This was one of the contributions of the modern marriage arrangement. It no longer had to be clothed in an aura of solemnity; instead it could and should be amusing. "The idea that marriage should provide both partners with sexual gratification, personal intimacy, and self-fulfillment was taken to new heights in that decade. Marriage was the place not only where people expected to find the deepest meaning in their lives but also where they would have the most fun" (Coontz 2005, 233). To add a little reality to the scene, some of the tell-tale décor of a wedding is present; the faux bride wears a veil and holds a bouquet in her hands. Despite its light-hearted mood, "joining up," even as a joke, reinforced the larger ethos of the married couple and made togetherness all the more appealing.

The next two images are explicit portrayals of family life as they show a

husband and wife with children. The first of these (Figure 7) is taken from the student life section of the 1949 *Les Bois*. It was featured on one of three pages devoted entirely to photographic representations of college life. This is the only graphic representation of a family with a child amongst the 25 photos present. Its caption

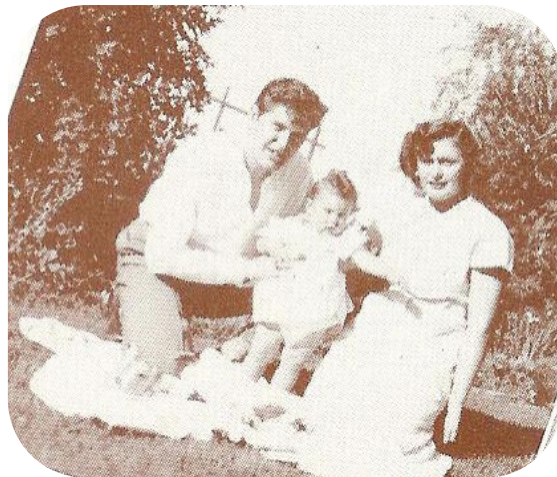


Figure 7 Family featured in *Les Bois* 1949, 33

affirmed that the photograph is what it seems to be. It reads, “So this is John’s other family” (*Les Bois* 1949, 33). Many of the captions on these pages jest, the uninitiated can only guess at the meaning. In spite of the humorous caption, the photograph looks like a picnic portrait: the three of them can be imagined sitting on the blanket beneath them, enjoying one another’s company in the sun. Like the other photographs in the student life section, this takes place in what appears to be a leisurely environment. Its inclusion amongst a variety of images that show students going about their daily lives and who usually appear happy and carefree as the smiles and activities depicted suggest, demonstrates the abiding place families occupied in student life. Boise Junior College President, Eugene B. Chaffee, wrote about the growing combination of pursuing one’s education and having a family as he described the changing conditions of college life after World War II. “Before the war it was very rare for any of the students to have families and those that did were looked upon as ‘old’ men although they might only be in their early 20s” (Chaffee 1970, 125). Being married and having children was not antithetical to the fun that student life entailed, as the joke in the caption intimates, and pursuing one’s

education did not disrupt family life. It could be fully incorporated into one's activities.

The second photographic representation of the family (Figure 8) was taken from Portland State's yearbook, which was fortuitously relabeled *A Portland Family Album* in 1974. Between its 1947 and its 1971 editions, *The Viking* did not include any explicit visual portrayals of the family. By this I am specifically referring to photographic representations of husbands and wives with children.<sup>58</sup> This is noteworthy as there seems to be a gap between visual representations of the family



Figure 8 Family in living room in *A Portland Family Album* 1974, 39

between 1947 and 1971.<sup>59</sup> The 1947 *Viking* had two pages consecrated to families. The 1971 *Viking* editorial staff announced that it would focus more on Portland State as a community and thus reintroduced families both pictorially and textually. In this same edition, three photos of children and one family were included. In *A Portland*

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<sup>58</sup> I feel it important to remind the reader that this part endeavors to give an idea of what the conventions of gender, marriage, and the family were. In doing so, I am not attempting ignore the existence of alternatives to the norm, but trying to emphasize the predominance of it.

<sup>59</sup> There are still a couple nods to the family between these dates. They are less explicit in their contributions to building a standard image of togetherness. Couples appear on multiple occasions in the 1950 and 1959 editions, usually in the context of dances. There are no indicators—explanative captions, children—that they were serious, steady, or married though. The 1968 *Viking* features a three-page interview with Portland State's basketball coach, most of what he says refers to shifting behaviors and family values.

*Family Album* two portraits of families were on display.<sup>60</sup> Figure 8 is one of them. This is particularly telling given there are disruptive elements to the traditional yearbook format starting in 1962.<sup>61</sup> In spite of the alternative route *The Viking* took in producing its yearbook, this portrait shows many normative elements of the family. It is interesting to see that the TV is central in the picture and turned on, perhaps a nod to the pervasiveness of mass consumption and the mass media. It corresponds to some extent to the visual clichés of the family circle tableaux that arose between the 1920s and 1940s described by historian Charles Marchand in *Advertising the American Dream* (1985). It portrays “nuances of closure and intimate bonding” (Marchand 1985, 248). It possesses the archetypical representations of husband, wife, and children defined as “the father, at home [...], relaxed in a big chair with his wife perched beside him and his arm around his small son[s] or daughter[s]” (ibid.). Even the lighting and vignette effect further the family circle ambiance as they give the portrait a sort of softness. The inclusion of such an image as late as 1974 demonstrates the persuasiveness of togetherness throughout the postwar era. Even though the male breadwinner/female homemaker archetype had been challenged by many the 1960s countercultural movement and during the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s,<sup>62</sup> *A Portland Family Album*, undeterred by its eccentricities and quiriness, allots a place for the conventional.

Another manifestation of togetherness and the importance with which postwar American culture endowed it can be found in *A College Comes to Housing*.<sup>63</sup> Unlike the depictions of family life in yearbooks, this short ten-minute promotional represents the participation of academic institutions in furthering the value of

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<sup>60</sup> The evolutions in formatting and subject matter in *The Viking* will be treated in the last chapter.

<sup>61</sup> The 1962 yearbook switched to a heavily-based picture format. These images had large amounts of contrast, there were no page numbers, or labeled sections. Like other yearbooks, however, it was organized by the academic calendar, beginning in the fall with football, homecoming, and registration; winter with dances, service events, and ski trips; and ending with spring, with sunshine and student elections.

<sup>62</sup> For books on the counterculture and the 1960s movements, see Claude Chastagner’s *Revoltes et utopies : militantisme et contre culture dans l’Amérique des années soixante* (2011); Todd Gitlin’s *The Sixties : Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (1993); or David Farber and Beth Bailey’s *The Guide to America in the 1960s* (2001).

<sup>63</sup> By way of reminder, this was produced by the Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon in collaboration with Vanport Extension Center in 1947.



togetherness. The film turns around several different themes: the pioneering vision of Vanport as it combines academic and familial pursuits, the underlying events that made this combination possible (war jobs and emergency war housing), the housing and educational crisis, the establishment of an institution adapted to the GI and his family's needs, the college's environment (including the faculty, academics, student government, and social life), and the facilities available in the housing project. It is not simply advertising an educational institution on the basis of its scholastic merits: making Vanport both a home and school seems to be the overriding sales pitch. In nearly every discussion of its qualities, the video insists on the added value of Vanport's ability to accommodate families. It boasts that since its construction, "Vanport [...] housed nearly 40,000, [and] became known as the largest family housing project in the nation and one of the largest cities in the state of Oregon" (*A College Comes to Housing*, 1947). As this is said, images of local domestic life roll across the screen. First, a wide-angle view of the housing project appears and then narrows to single-family residences. Children playing on the sidewalks and in the street and a man mowing his lawn are shown.

Then, the film transitions to Vanport's contribution to the re-assimilation of veterans. It announces the change that college-aged men had undergone, "Ex-GIs who had gone to war as boys, returned to home as men, many were married" (ibid.). They had matured; they were responsible for others. It insinuates that the State and its institutions owed them something for their service. "Oregon, like other states, faced a crisis with its institutions of higher learning not being able to accommodate all of the thousands who decided to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights and continue their schooling after war service. Oregon tried" (ibid.). The video concedes that the initial efforts fell short, but the idea of one man, Dr. Stephen A. Epler, Vanport's first President, would fix the problem. As a veteran, he was acutely aware of returning servicemen's needs. His vision placed the Vanport community's services at their fingertips. "[...L]ate in the spring of 1946, Vanport became a college town: shopping centers, nurseries, apartments and other buildings of the housing project were found to be readily converted to college use" (ibid.). Given the marital status of many potential students, the amenities of Vanport would be particularly

accommodating to their family's lives.

Next, *A College Comes to Housing* details the college's academic set-up and initial success. While one might expect that this theme would be represented exclusively within the context of academia, family life seems partially integrated. Images of the registration process transition to a man pushing a child on a tricycle in front of row houses and then back to students studying. The video then enumerates the subjects available to study as a series of six scenes illustrate. In each, men are studying, collaborating, or conducting experiments. No women are presented as taking part in the academic environment. The only potential non-normative visual element is during a scene where two students appear to be in a lab experimenting and a black man wearing a white lab coat, perhaps connoting his status as professor, arrives and seems to give them advice on what they are doing. In spite of this all-male atmosphere, some of the majors listed would have been dominated by women—secretarial science, pre-nursing, home economics—or would have been more balanced between men and women—music and education.<sup>64</sup> This discrepancy between the images shown on screen and the actual script demonstrates the cognitive dissonance present in postwar American society. Women's presence in the public domain was increasing and yet, there was reticence in acknowledging this shift.

Student life is portrayed in several ways. The film touts the respect accorded to its students when it describes its student government. "Recognizing the student body, preponderantly veterans, as adults, officials of the college have been strong supporters of student government over student affairs. An elected student body handles student body finances, policies, and social activities" (*A College Comes to Housing*). This could be read as a comment on the larger debate taking place at mid-

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<sup>64</sup> This is substantiated by the data found in eight of the twenty yearbooks over a 28-year period. Secretarial Science is reported in four instances. Of the 66 people shown, only one was a man. Nursing, which subsumes pre-nursing to account for the transition from a two-year to a four-year institution, is likewise recorded in four yearbooks. 131 students are represented; three of them men. Home Economics was also included in four manuals. All 20 enrollees were women. Music was present as a major in five yearbooks and had a relatively equal amount of men, 13, and women, 12. Educational majors were depicted in seven of the eight yearbooks. Spanning across the different specializations of education—music, pre-educational, elementary, P. E., and secondary—821 students claimed to be education majors, 318 were men (or 38.7 percent) and 503 were women (or 61.3 percent). See Appendix 3 for a complete breakdown by academic year and institution.

century over colleges and universities' positions on *in loco parentis* and parietal rules.<sup>65</sup> In any case, from its inception Vanport College appears to take the stance that students were not under its supervision. Many of them had, after all, fought in the War, which guaranteed their adulthood in this environment. Student life is also featured in the school's offerings of athletics, physical education, and downtime. In getting in line with the importance of postwar consumer society, leisure and outfitting one's family is associated with capitalist enterprise.

A campus social center and eating headquarters is student operated an excellent example of small business. In addition to this privately operated lunch room, there is a student cooperative that stocks books, classroom supplies, and canned goods, featuring canned milk for the many babies of the Vanport campus. Of course, the Housing Authority leases out business space to merchants so that all residents of Vanport have excellent shopping facilities right at hand. Groceries, drugs, a new suit, a magazine or chocolate soda, all are to be conveniently found at Vanport (ibid.).

Part of the salability of Vanport as a good environment for families meant being able to provide the consumer goods that any college town or city would have already had. Vanport's commercial options made living there all the more appealing. As the "Report on the President's Commission on the Status of Women" noted in 1963 local shopping figured into the domestic economy's "self-sufficiency" and played a significant role in home management (16; 60). George Lipsitz explains that television's association between consumerism and family—as is evidenced in Figure 8—was part and parcel of the 1950s narrative that attempted to ward off the values crisis born as a result of mass consumption. They did this by extolling the natural association between the two. "By collapsing the distinction between family as consumer unit and family as part of neighborhood, ethnic, and class networks, television programs in the early 1950s connected the most personal and intimate needs of individuals to commodity purposes" (Lipsitz 1986, 380). Another implication that can be drawn out of the emphasis on commerce in *A College Comes*

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<sup>65</sup> *In loco parentis* was commonly used to describe the administration standing in for parents as authority figures while young people were away at college. Parietals were rules that tended to support this position as they imposed curfews meant to provide for students safekeeping, actually acted more to circumscribe sexual behavior (Allyn 2000, 94; Bailey 1999, 78). These will be discussed a great length in the following part.

*to Housing* is the entrepreneurial spirit it lauds and offers to its student body. In emphasizing community partnership, Vanport proposes local experience and opportunities. The visuals that accompany this description intimate sociability and community by showing four people sitting and talking at the lunch counter and a clerk at the co-op helping two customers. It also portrays consumer choice in its depiction of an older woman inspecting a can of food while she stands in front of a wall of preserves.

Vanport also boasted considerable public facilities. Originally built as a response to massive housing shortages during the War, Vanport was planned as an autonomous city “apart from Portland” (Fryer Winter 2004/2005, 4). As a relatively new urban space, having become ready for occupancy in 1943, Vanport offered everything the modern family could want (ibid.). This meant that it housed a “modern, well-equipped and excellently staffed” hospital, “an efficient police force” and “fire stations” as well as good public schools (*A College Comes to Housing* 1947). Such services would have been particularly important to the family’s wellbeing, especially the wife’s. The Report of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women drew the link between public services, commercial amenities, and the housewife. “Homemakers count among their resources the local library and the local museum as well as the local shopping center and the local hospital” (1963, 70). The connection to home and family is made all the more blatant as these facilities come to life on the screen. Two people stroll in front of the hospital. Children are seen streaming out of school, playing on the playground, drinking milk at a lunch table, and gathering around a teacher as they listen to a story. Next an image appears of a couple standing on a hill overlooking the city with Mount Hood looming in the background. There is sentimentality to the depiction of communal life, which further incorporates Vanport into the search for home and belonging. What is not mentioned, but probably played a role in the construction of Vanport, was the continuing viability of the community in the wake of reconversion. Bringing new blood to Vanport was important as wartime productions were scaled down. Even though the film enthuses over the 20,000 residents, when it opened its doors in 1942 it housed 35,000 (Fryer Winter 2004/2005, 4). In order to keep the community alive, Vanport

needed to attract new residents.

The film presents Vanport as an affordable alternative to Portland. The rising costs of the urban center are explained as being a result of rapid growth due to the influx of war workers and their choice to “stay on” after war jobs dried up. This combined with postwar inflation made Vanport especially attractive. To demonstrate the challenges faced by veterans in looking for housing, a young couple at a table in a diner is shown pouring over the classifieds as they drink coffee. This is followed by full-screen shots of two signs that stipulate the housing restraints they were up against: “Apartment: No Dogs or Children” and “For sale: This new home. \$13,500. Seen by appt” (*A College Comes to Housing*). The solution was clear as day to the voiceover: To the “[...] young couple in search of the ideal combination—housing and education—Vanport College is the answer” (ibid.). The homes were ready for occupancy:

Moving in is easy. The new home is a compact, modern, and comfortable apartment—not palatial, but certainly better than the proverbial port in the storm. Now to believe [*sic*] the first thing is the woman’s touch: the drapes, paper on the shelves, rearranging the furniture, wondering about a new rug. Get settled into the house: just put up those books, have them handy for evenings of study. Then comes the visit to the college or registration (ibid).

Seamlessly combining private and public lives was the major draw of Vanport. As the film lists the ease with which students could settle in, the young couple at the diner table reappears. They are shown strolling in front of row houses when they happen upon a mother and baby sitting on the front porch. Their first visit to Vanport projects a sense of community and emphasizes its family-friendly environment. Then the camera moves to the interior of the home and the voiceover explains that its potential charm lies in the transformation it would undergo once the woman converted it from a house to a home. The husband’s role in creating a sense of hominess was in making space for his education. This naturally leads to the husband’s matriculation, which is shown as a meeting between him and an administrative official. Quickly, however, the film returns to domestic life, reinforcing the abiding importance of togetherness. Here more explicitly than elsewhere, the video speaks about individuals having a place in the private and public sphere. As the film touts, “There’s fun; there’s study; there’s work. That family to

wash and cook for, those classroom lectures to attend,” a series of images depict a gender division of labor (ibid.). The man, who was previously meeting with the administration, is shown pitching a baseball to a child at bat, while the woman, who had previously hung curtains in her tract house, is seen putting the laundry up on a clothesline to dry. Though there are indicators that both took care of domestic chores—he picks the kids up from school, she sets the table—this is portrayed more as the husband “helping out” than him assuming equal responsibility (Coontz 2005, 238-239). In fact, fatherhood had come to include some degree of nurturing and was seen as a way to foster togetherness, away from the previous “authoritarian” father’s role. Candice Leonard found “in the 1950s an increase in the percentage of articles that seemed to say men’s involvement in family work would improve the husband-wife relationship, and that fathers were especially important for socializing children” (LaRossa 2004, 50). Vanport’s promotional film showing the man undertaking such tasks speaks to their target audience: they were selling a “modern” way of life to America’s young couples. Going from the man studying to him with his children positions education, or work, as a means to an end. As Coontz argues, “many 1950s men did not view male breadwinning as a source of power but as a burdensome responsibility made worthwhile by their love for their families” (2005, 240). The reiteration of visual depictions of the family throughout the film represents the centrality of domesticity for both men and women.

How effective would this film be as a promotional advertisement if it did not incorporate national values? The propagandist tune of the war years permeates it. There are several moments when *A College Comes to Housing* associates the Vanport project with that of the nation. The recurring images and allusions to civic and military participation during the War provide a base for continuing the association between the individual and his/her country. The voiceover reassures the potential student that the administration was aware of their anxieties as they were reintegrating and would thus provide “a friendly and sincere welcome” (*A College Comes to Housing*). Not only was Vanport a simple means to take advantage of the opportunities of the GI Bill of Rights while enrollments swelled elsewhere, its “endeavoring” and “pioneering spirit,” projected as part of its *raison d’être*, would

allow young veterans access to the American promise, which American Studies scholar Ada Savin describes as both a “spiritual and physical, idealistic and materialistic” quest (2010, 13). Integrating national values into the school’s purpose was a means for students to write themselves into the postwar national narrative. It is on this note that the film concludes. As the sun is shown setting over a forested mountain, the voiceover boasts that Vanport’s first class was on its way to “security,” “citizenship,” and “leadership.” Through the material opportunities extended to GIs, Vanport students could readily piece together their own American dream.

## **2. A Postwar Vision of Happiness: Suburbia**

Using Vanport as a jumping off point for the following discussion seems particularly apt. Vanport was born out of the wartime housing shortage as workers flocked to Portland by the thousands to find jobs in one of the shipyards created by the Kaiser Shipbuilding Corporation in 1942 (Abbott 2016b; Fryer 2004/2005, 3). Portland residents had long fought public housing, but the urgency of the housing crisis reached its breaking point as “masses of newcomers camped out in cars, trailers, and shacks across Portland’s tidy urban landscape” (Fryer 2004/2005, 4). When the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) announced it would be building dormitories for single black workers, Portlanders turned out to protest (ibid.). Portland—and Oregon more generally—has a history of discriminatory housing practices that acted to segregate and limit the presence of African Americans in the area (Geiling 2015).<sup>66</sup> Henry J. Kaiser feared he would lose his workers if housing could not be provided and so joined forces with the FPHA and the U.S. Maritime Commission to build an entire city outside of Portland that would accommodate his workers’ housing needs (Fryer Winter 2004/2005, 4). The influx of 160,000 “rough”

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<sup>66</sup> Natasha Geiling cites the 1859 Oregon state constitution as forbidding black people from living, working or owning property within the state, which remained the law until 1926; the large presence of the Ku Klux Klan at the beginning of the twentieth century; the Realty Board of Portland’s implementation of a “Code of Ethics” in 1919 that sequestered African Americans into the Albina district, which in 1940 housed 1,100 of Portland’s 1,900 black residents within two square miles. See also Rudy Pearson’s article “‘A Menace to the Neighborhood’: Housing and African Americans in Portland, 1941-1945” (2001) for a focus on Portland’s struggle to accommodate its African American residents during the War.

war workers was unsettling to native residents, but Portlanders directed much of their displeasure at the growing African American community, which grew from 2,000 in 1940 to 9,529 in 1950 (Fryer 2004/2005, 4; Pearson 2001, 162; Taylor 1981, 109). In many ways Vanport represents the tensions that came about with the proliferation of suburbia during the postwar era. Interestingly, though Vanport must be looked at as a counterexample, as should Portland to some extent, because the relationship between central Portland and peripheral Vanport operated in the reverse of suburban development.<sup>67</sup> What Vanport reveals, however, for this particular discussion is the rising interconnectivity between city centers and their suburban fringe as well as the nascent conflict over governmental funding of private and public spaces.

Throughout the nineteenth century, suburbs appeared on the periphery of larger American cities, and were seen as paragons of wealth and personal success (Jackson 1985, 20-25). Having a suburban residence implied that a family had the means to maintain two residences. The prosperity of the 1920s led to a rise in suburban developments for the middle and upper classes (ibid., 164). After the Second World War, tract-housing suburbs began to spring up. In his seminal book *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), historian Kenneth T. Jackson identified five characteristics that most suburbs of that era had in common: their location on the periphery of cities, their low density, their architectural uniformity, their affordability—which helped to dissociate suburban living from wealth—and their economic and racial homogeneity (ibid., 238-241). These features begin to paint a portrait of the topography, spatial distribution, style, and class(es) of suburban life. In terms of its geographical structure, space was a central feature of suburbs. Situated in expansive environments, the physical layout of suburbia was premised on automobile ownership.<sup>68</sup> Everyday life required residents to own cars in order to go to work or do their shopping (ibid., 239). Production had to be streamlined to meet the housing

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<sup>67</sup> In spite of its growing suburban population between 1960 and 1970, Portland has remained centered around its downtown (Abbott 1994, 54).

<sup>68</sup> Between 1945 and 1955 the number of cars doubled, going from 25,793,493 to 52,135,583, while trucks increased from 5,079,802 to 10,302,987 during the same period (Jackson 1985, 162).



demands. Though some members of the upper class continued building custom-made homes, tract-housing developments made homeownership more affordable to the middle- and working-classes (ibid.). William Levitt, probably the best-known housing contractor of the postwar era and the driving force behind the Levitt Brothers construction firm, commented on the disappearing market for custom-built homes as well as the impracticality of trying to manufacture them *en masse*. Levitt extolled the virtues of rationalized, high-volume housing:

We believe that the market for custom housing, like that for custom tailoring, no longer exists. People who want to buy that kind of thing will always be able to get it, but the real market is for the ordinary mass-produced suit of clothes. And you can't build thirty thousand-dollar houses by the six thousands (as cited in Halberstam 1993, 134).

The Levitt Brothers helped thousands of Americans realize the new American dream of homeownership. They simplified the buying process requiring “no down payment, no closing costs, and no secret extras” (Halberstam 1993, 139). These financial incentives paired with the promise of “space,” “independence,” and “security” contributed to a mass exodus to the suburbs (ibid., 132). “Between 1947 and 1953 the suburban population increased by 43 percent, in contrast to general population increase of only 11 percent [...]” (Cohen 2003, 195). A full 75 percent of the new housing starts in 1955 were in “Levitt-type” subdivisions (Halberstam 1993, 142). As suburban developments like Levittown, those produced by the Levitt Brothers, spread across the country, streamlined housing in streamlined subdivisions enveloped the postwar landscape. Critics railed against this apparent homogenization. John Keats referred to them as “fresh-air slums” and blasted them for their seeming sameness, “inhabited by people whose age, income, number of children, problems, habits, conversations, dress, possessions, perhaps even blood types are almost precisely like yours” (as cited in Halberstam 1993, 139). Lewis Mumford, a distinguished architectural and social commentator, attacked them as “bland people in bland houses living bland lives” (ibid., 140). Sociologist Herbert Gans defended, to some extent, the people of Levittown in his book *The Levittowners* (1967) saying “the Levittowners resemble other young middle-class Americans” (1967, 66). While experts were debating the value of suburbanization, its growth reduced the association between homeownership and wealth, thus, to a certain degree,

democratizing the American dream.

As buying became increasingly affordable for the white, working- and middle-classes, urbanized areas were transformed. Rather than bringing about social and ethno-racial diversification through the democratization of consumerism, suburbanization actually further stratified housing by class and race (Jackson 1985, 219). From the federal government on down to the local suburban developer, stipulations ensured that certain kinds of “difference” would not be tolerated in the white, middle-class suburbs. In terms of race, the Home Owners Loan Corporation implemented a rating system, known as redlining, based on newness, uniformity, and stability—the latter was used as a euphemism to refer to the presence of people of color; incidentally unstable or declining neighborhoods were inhabited by non-whites—that restricted people of color to certain “zones,” while contractors assured potential homebuyers that African Americans would not move in and “depress their property values” because they had blanket policies that defined their subdivisions as white-only (Cohen 2003, 213; 219 and Jackson 1985, 197-198; 241). In terms of class, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the the Veteran’s Administration (VA) prioritized loans in middle-class communities; real estate developers created subdivisions catering to class tastes by building homes that went for a certain price, were of a certain size, and provided certain amenities; and cultural critics of Levittown-type developments took the privilege for granted of being able to see housing as “a preference”, thus casting the massification of homeownership as inherently low-brow (Cohen 2003 202-212; Halberstam 1993, 139-140). The movement from urban centers to the suburban fringes redefined the American population’s vision of the good life. This transformation not only changed actual practices—by facilitating mass consumption, making Americans increasingly dependent on their cars, and separating the family into nuclear family units—, it also rewrote Americans’ visions of economic mobility, the division of labor and leisure, as well as the place of the economically and racially disenfranchised (Jackson, 1985, 4). It should also be noted that this alteration cast the suburbs as a retreat from urban and public spaces, thus remolding the social landscape and reducing places of communal life (Cohen 2003, 254-255).

With these elements in mind, it is important to see suburbia as much more than a place where people lived and went about their daily lives as families. The construction of such spaces represented an important ideological aspect of American political life at that time. Not only were these places of retreat, providing security and stability to suburban residents, they were spaces where citizenship was promised to some and not to others through material accumulation. Suburbia became a network of power relations where the government could extoll official ideology about the American way of life by financing its construction and participating in controlling who had access to it. The model resident fit an economic, racial, and social mold that furthered the U.S. government's vision of the world.

The government played an enormous role in the development of suburbia. Its most notable contributions came in the form of legislation and agencies. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 financed the construction of highways and interstates between urban centers and suburbs following in the footsteps of the 1916 Federal Highway Act (Jackson 1985, 191). The idea behind this piece of legislation was that it would considerably increase the network of roads and highways in the U.S., which would facilitate commuting between one's job and one's residence. The government continued to use the FHA after the War, but in conjunction with the VA to ensure that the promises of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act were aiding ex-GIs during the postwar housing crisis.<sup>69</sup> The pairing of the FHA with the VA effectively redefined the housing industry by reducing the amount needed for a down payment on a home loan (from 30 percent to no more than 10 percent), by prolonging the reimbursement period to 25 or thirty years, by establishing minimal building codes that became the industry standard, and by providing security to mortgages through governmental insurance (ibid, 204-205). As some programs specifically targeted certain industries, others developed as a response to the social problems that the nation was facing after the War. The housing crisis was acute as were the living and building conditions in many American cities. Thus, housing and urban renewal were taken up as targets for governmental aid and financing in the 1949 Housing Act.

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<sup>69</sup> The FHA was created during the Depression in 1934 to stimulate the housing construction industry and create employment opportunities (Jackson 1985, 203).

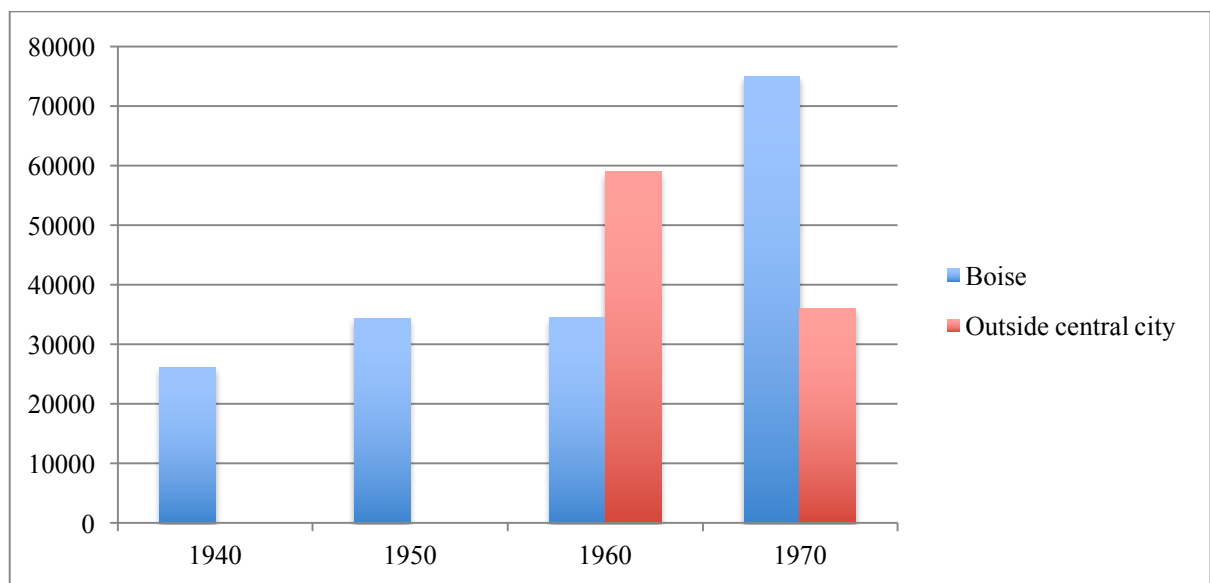
Political scientist, Richard H. Leach, criticized the government's approach to urban renewal under the umbrella of treating housing issues in his article "The Federal Urban Renewal Program: A Ten-Year Critique" (1960). He argues that housing became the overriding issue, which consequently left major urban renewal issues by the wayside (Leach 1994 [1960], 360). Residential building and improvement were the main sites of financing and concern, which did not address the larger metropolitan issues of highway and street construction, water supply and sewage, traffic and parking, as well as mass transit in the urban center (ibid., 361-362). Additionally, Leach argues that Congress's focus on low-income housing in cities effectively priced middle-class families out of the center, forcing them to "join the exodus to the suburbs, or to continue to live in deteriorating houses in deteriorating neighborhoods [...]" (ibid., 365). Leach's juxtaposition between urban renewal and housing attests to the federal government's aim in privileging suburbia over the entire metropolis, which created spaces for the "haves" and others for the "have nots." Furthermore, these policies made the difference between private space, represented by the suburbs, and public space, represented by cities, even greater (Jackson 1985, 191). It is important to note that even though this was the perception, this separation between private and public sites was also a political and social construct. Suburbs were not exactly private (in spite of private property ownership); they depended on public financing (local, state, or federal) for sewage, water, electricity. Moreover, personal and familial choices in the suburbs were also defined and oriented by political choices and laws. Nevertheless, as the suburbs expanded across the urban landscape, the amount of people who could buy increased considerably. The sudden availability of housing helped position the home as the ultimate status symbol of the middle class (Błaszczuk 2009, 200). It became less expensive to buy than to rent. The middle-class suburban family, with its new home and its associated long-term low-rate loan, facilitated the rise of a new American way of life (Jackson 1985, 205-206). Thanks to the financing of highways and interstates, the prioritizing of suburban housing over urban regeneration, and the stability of home purchasing, a large number of urban residents rushed to the suburbs (Cohen 2003, 197).

Suburban growth had both negative and positive consequences on American

society. On the one hand, many families could move to the suburbs, which were extolled as more capable of providing intimacy and togetherness. The home thus became the ultimate product of consumption and abetted economic growth and the rise in the standard of living for many Americans (ibid., 195). On the other hand, many of the beneficiaries of this prosperity already belonged to the middle class; their buying power increased and allowed them to escape the overcrowding that characterized many urban centers, which further contributed to metropolitan decline (ibid., 24). The fact that some people did not have the means to leave the city to set themselves up in the suburbs led to a concentration of underprivileged populations in urban centers, most notably based around class and race. The federal government had not only facilitated white flight into suburbia through its policies and agencies, it also kept people living in exclusively black areas from leaving. The long-term effects of which were devastating. While the white working classes prospered and joined their middle-class counterparts in the suburbs, African Americans were losing economic ground. They were forced to live in low-quality urban housing that was excluded from the prosperity of the postwar economy and they were systematically kept from allocations available to whites (May 1988, 11). African Americans were excluded from the majority of suburbs even when they had the means to buy a house there. This exclusion kept them from accumulating capital and from climbing the socio-economic ladder: two important effects of being able to buy property. In analyzing the suburbs as a politicized space, we can see the bias in priorities that supported private enterprise, the economy, and the white, middle-class, nuclear family. The American dream manifested itself to some extent as exclusionary while suburban home ownership perpetuated the marginalization of those who did not fit the right image or belong to the right group.

Additionally, physical problems abounded in both the city and the suburbs as a result of this shift in lifestyle. Federal subsidies that helped build suburbia contributed to the deterioration of public transportation systems, public housing, housing projects, and the isolation of poor families in general, especially minorities, within city centers (Coontz 1992, 78). The government's transportation policies systematically improved private means of transportation instead of public ones,

favoring the commercial development of suburban living to the detriment of revitalizing urban centers. In cities, public transit deteriorated, the costs skyrocketed, and the services decreased (ibid., 79). At the same time, the influx of residents generated unexpected problems in the suburbs. The costs of living were not as high in the suburbs, but the infrastructure was not always extensive enough to accommodate the crowds. Sewage systems, garbage collection, and toxic waste disposal became problematic for many burgeoning communities (ibid., 88). Due to the relatively new phenomenon of suburbanization, municipal governments had less experience with planning and development, which led to traffic jams and pollution (ibid.).



**Table 5 Population changes in Boise, Idaho and its surrounding urbanized areas, 1940-1970. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1952a, 19); U.S. Census Bureau (1961b, 17); U.S. Census Bureau (1973a, 16); and US Census Bureau (1971b, 9).**

Let's now try to narrow our focus to the specific examples of Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon to see the ways in which shifting demographics influenced these states' most populated cities. Boise, by no extent of the imagination, could fit into the national narrative of suburban development. Boise's population totaled a meager 26,130 in 1940, 34,393 in 1950, and 34,481 in 1960 (See Table 5) (U.S. Census Bureau 1952a, 19 and U.S. Census Bureau 1961b, 23). One native resident interviewed by Jeanette Ross, a member of the Guild for Idaho Storytellers, described

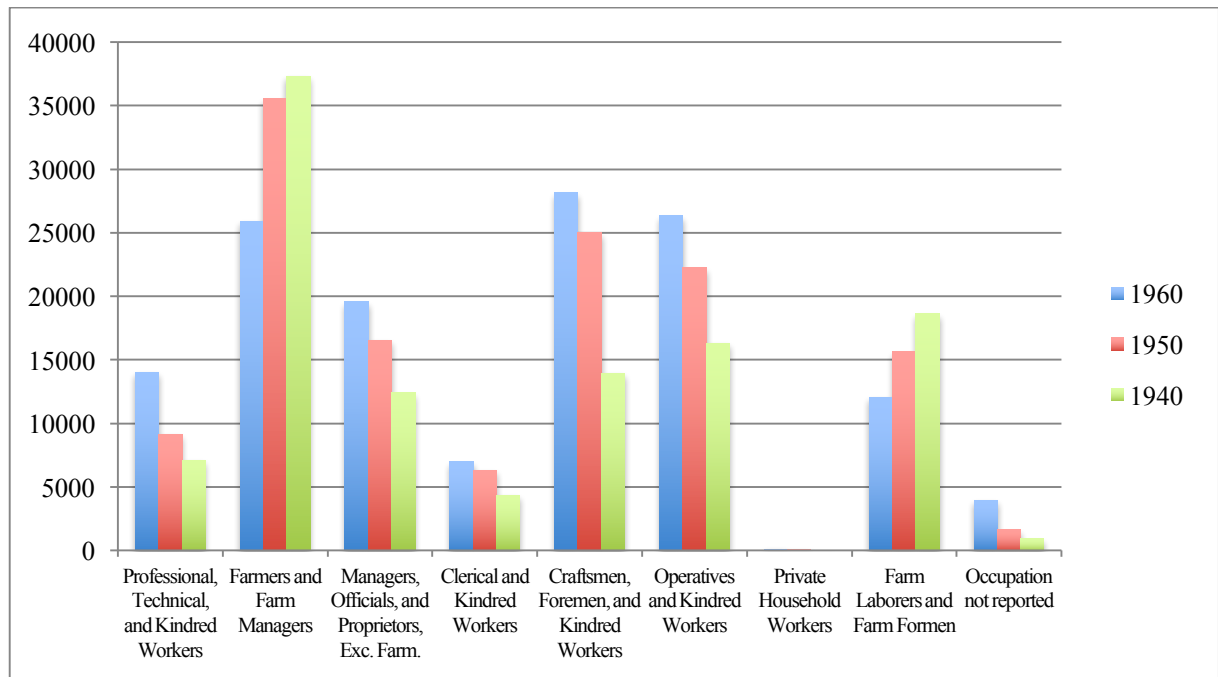
the situation thus, “Boise grew slowly” (Lorry Roberts as cited in Ross 2000, 52-53). Adelia Garro Simplot, the daughter-in-law of businessman J.R. Simplot,<sup>70</sup> also talked about the lack of growth in Boise. She believed it was part of a vicious cycle that kept Boise from attracting or retaining inhabitants because it did not provide sufficient opportunities. She said:

We came back to Boise 1959. There were very few homes to buy [because] there hadn't been any growth spurt. It seemed like a very content population. Things were just beginning to change. The government was building mission silos; I think that brought some money in. There was a struggle between people who didn't want growth and those who did. One time we were at one of the children's graduations, Boise was losing population. Here we are, 1,200 people graduating and my father-in-law looked down and said, “Where will all these young people get jobs?” They were leaving the state (Adelia Garro Simplot as cited in Ross 2000, 39).

Others thought the state faced problems of growth because Idaho had long been divided into three separate regions that contended for power and influence. Political scientist James Weatherby and writer Randy Stapilus describe Idaho as a regionally-divided state made up of four distinct regions. Northern Idaho’s population has historically been concentrated in timber production and mining, with smaller numbers of residents working as farmers and educators (Weatherby and Stapilus 2005, 15-18). Both authors describe regionalism as particularly important to the inhabitants of this part of Idaho, who often feel misunderstood or unacknowledged by their southern counterparts (ibid., 15). The second region is defined as southwest Idaho. Employment there has traditionally been found in timber production, irrigation-based farming, and mining (ibid., 18-20). Southwest Idaho is the home of Boise, the state’s capital and its leading and largest city—except in 1962 when it was temporarily surpassed by Pocatello in southeastern Idaho (ibid., 20). Then, there is the Magic Valley, located between southwestern and southeastern Idaho. It is largely composed of “vast tracts of uninhabitable land” (ibid., 20). Nevertheless, the Magic Valley’s economy was founded on irrigated farming, cattle-ranching, and fishing (ibid., 21). And finally, they turn to southeast Idaho, whose economy has always been based on irrigation farming. It is distinct also in that it was founded by members of The

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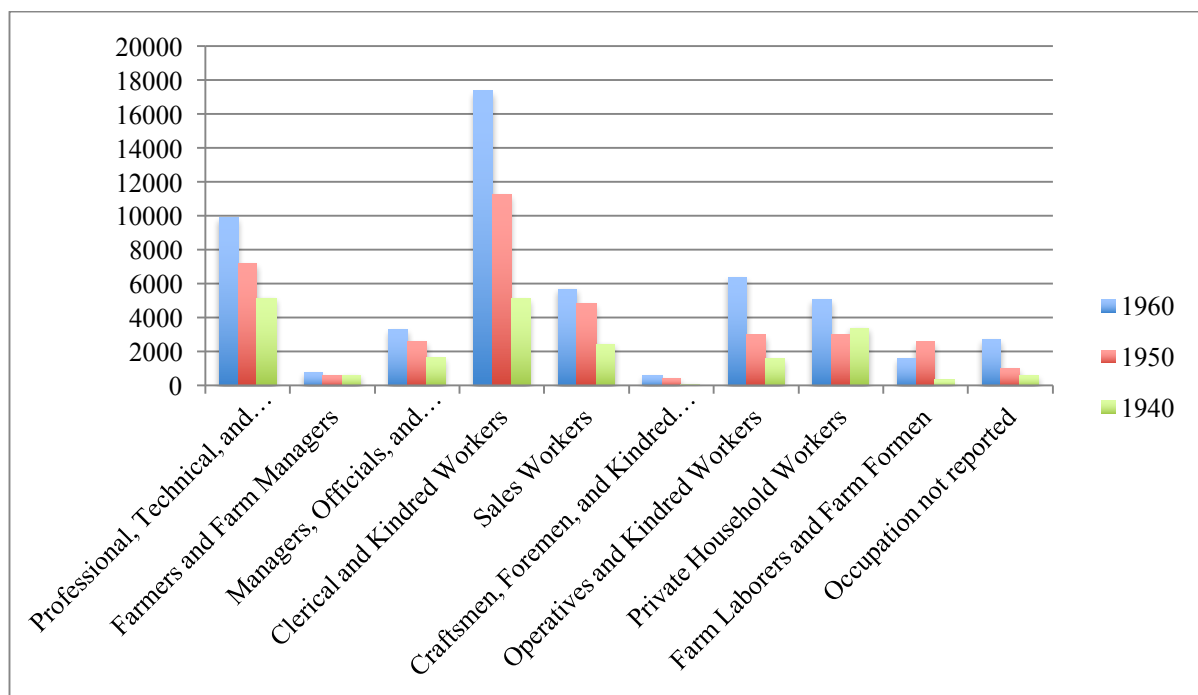
<sup>70</sup> J.R. Simplot was the founder of the J.R. Simplot Company and Idaho’s largest potato magnate.



**Table 6 Male employment figures for Idaho by occupational group. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1961b, 93).**

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (i.e. the LDS Church or the Mormon Church) from Utah looking to establish new farm settlements (ibid., 23). It thus has been heavily populated by Mormons who have had their own religious and close-knit community interests at heart when dealing with the state as a whole (ibid.). Southeastern Idaho became the home of the National Reactor Testing Station in 1949 (today it is known as the Idaho National Laboratory) and was a testing site for nuclear reactors (ibid., 177). In looking at the different regions of Idaho, it becomes clear that industry and employment have historically been based in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. Between 1940 and 1960, employment in Idaho could be found mostly in farming, craftsmen, and operatives (see Table 6). Ian D. Wyatt and Daniel E. Heckler give examples of job titles that might clarify craftsmen and operators. The former included “construction workers, mechanics and repairers, and production and other craftsmen” (Wyatt and Heckler 2006, 46). While the latter were those who worked as “operators of motor vehicles and fixed machinery; assemblers, inspectors, packers, and related workers; and apprentices to craft work” (ibid., 50). Wyatt and Heckler equally note the largest decline in



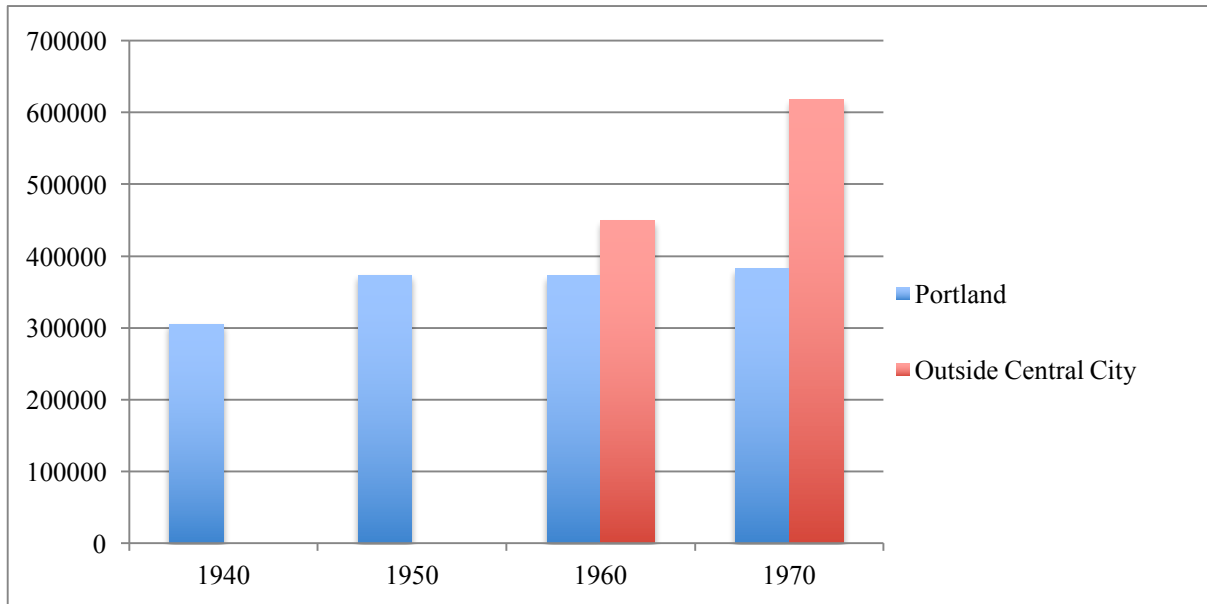


**Table 7 Female employment figures for Idaho by occupational group. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1961b, 93).**

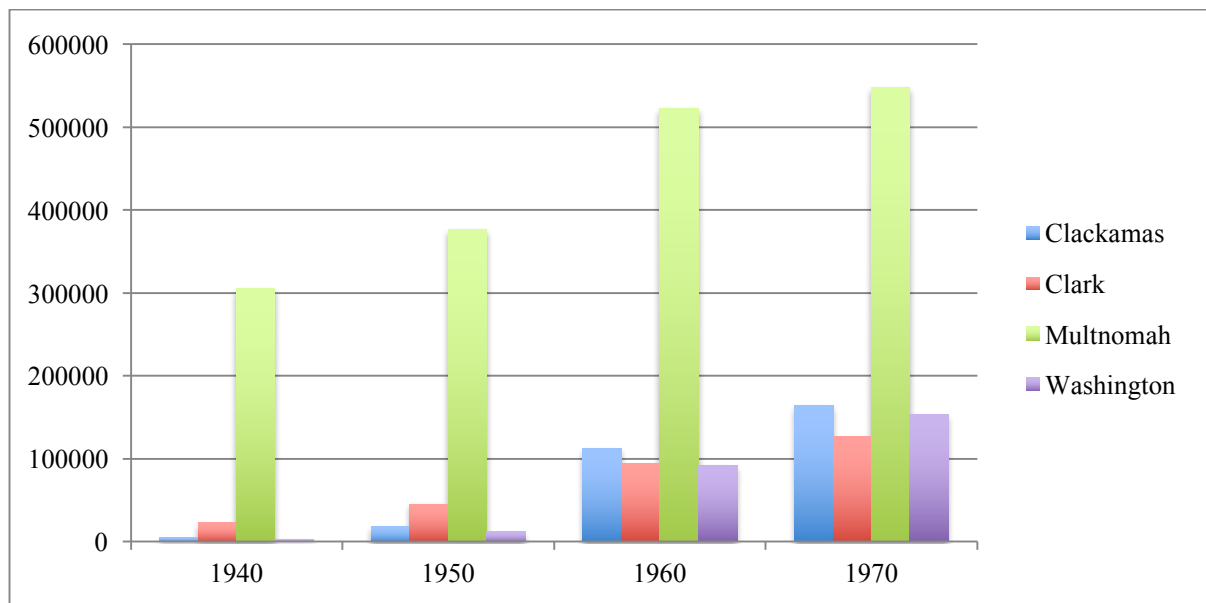
employment throughout the twentieth century by both percentage and actual numbers took place in the farm and farm laborer categories (ibid., 37). Additionally, the number of those working in the agricultural, mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation industries fell (ibid.). If this were the case for the twentieth century at large and compared to the occupations available in Idaho amongst male workers between 1940 and 1960, Idaho would not have been attractive if one were looking for employment opportunities of the future. The most growth was seen in the “Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers” (ibid.). Increases thus took place mainly in white-collar professions (ibid.). In looking at the data in Table 7, “white collar” work employed a relatively small percentage of the male workforce. The “Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers” occupied 5.3 percent in 1940, 5.7 percent in 1950, and 8.4 percent in 1960 of all male employment; while the “Clerical and Kindred Workers” only represented 3.3 percent in 1940, 3.9 percent in 1950, and 4.2 percent in 1960 of the male workforce. When compared male employment figures and female employment, it appears that Idaho’s women were better situated for jobs of the future (see Table 7). While women’s numbers increased in the “Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers” category, their proportional employment shifted

towards the “Clerical and Kindred Workers” category, going from 20.1 to 16 to 14.9 percent respectively in the former category to 19.9 to 25 to 26 percent in the latter. The issue of growth should be linked to the employment opportunities available. If Idaho’s workforce were still largely concentrated in the primary and secondary sectors, then the state did not have much to draw new inhabitants. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s when Micron Technology and Hewlett-Packard established Boise as their corporate headquarters, providing thousands of jobs in the tertiary sector, that Boise doubled in size and began down the path to suburbanization (Weatherby and Stapilus 2005, 20).

While the 1960 Census classified Boise’s urban population as living in “Outside Urbanized Areas,” Portland was considered a proper urbanized area with urban fringes. Portland’s population numbered 305,394 in 1940 373,628 in 1950, and 372,676 in 1960 (see Table 8) (U.S. Census Bureau 1952b, 23; U.S. Census Bureau 1970b, 2). In comparison to Boise, which lost suburban growth as a result of incorporating surrounding developments, Portland’s suburban growth exceeded that of the city proper. This is most evident in looking at population growth in the counties across which the metropolitan Portland area spans (see Table 9). Portland is



**Table 8 Population changes in Portland, Oregon and its surrounding suburbs, 1940-1970. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1952b, 23); U.S. Census Bureau (1970b, 2)**



**Table 9 Growth in the counties that make up Portland’s urban core and suburban fringe. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1952b, 13; 1952c, 9); U.S. Census Bureau (1970b, 2)**

found in Multnomah County. Though it grew considerably during this timeframe, its significantly higher population minimizes the growth of the surrounding counties. In terms of percentages, Multnomah consistently experienced the least amount of growth: between 1940 and 1950 it increased by 23.3 percent while Clackamas did by 213.5 percent, Clark by 99.8 percent and Washington by 220.2 percent. Between 1950 and 1960 Multnomah only expanded by 38.8 percent, while the surrounding counties exploded with Clackamas increasing by 488.9 percent, Clark by 102.2 percent, and Washington by 668.8 percent. Growth leveled out a bit between 1960 and 1970 across all counties but Multnomah’s was the least staggering because, proportionately, it had experienced less growth over the entire thirty-year period. In spite of such strong indicators of suburban growth, today Portland is heralded as an urban planning utopia—meaning it avoided massive sprawl—, but it was not always so (Hovey 1998). In fact, in the same article that urban design and planning scholar Bradshaw Hovey praises Portland’s utopian project, he also explains that in the aftermath of World War II, it was facing many of the same problems as other cities were and that city planners nearly went down the same path as the rest of the nation. Hovey says, “Following the orthodoxy of the day, they believed that when close-in neighborhoods decayed, government should use its power to hasten the inevitable process of wholesale redevelopment. Land would be acquired, ‘dilapidated’ housing

demolished, and the land turned over to developers who would create new and modern neighborhoods” (1998, 72). Like other city leaders, “Their goal for the postwar city was social and economic stability” (Abbott 1994, 56). The growth that Multnomah County experienced during the long 1950s can be attributed in many ways to Portland’s unique geographical, social, and economic development, which later allowed for city planners in the 1970s to focus on the urban core rather than the development of a mega-metropolis with resources being filtered out to its many appendages. Historian Carl Abbott explains in “Metropolitan Portland: Reputation and Reality” (1994) how these geographical, social, and economic features came together to make Portland particularly resilient in maintaining a centralized metropolitan core while other cities followed the national trend towards outward expansion. First, Portland continued to maintain the “viability of close-in, elite neighborhoods” that developed in the hills right on the edge of downtown, thanks to the availability of automobiles in the 1910s and 1920s (ibid., 54). This provided the best of both worlds to upper-class residents: “leafy’ living” which attested to their socio-economic status and a convenient ten-minute commute to work or downtown shopping (ibid.). The second feature was Portland’s racial homogenization (ibid., 55). African Americans constituted less than 1 percent of the city’s population in 1940, 2.5 percent in 1950, and just over 2 percent in 1960, despite the black community’s expansion by 400 percent during the boom years of the war (Taylor 1981, 109). Black housing was located away from the downtown district, reserving it for Portland’s older, middle-class and upper-class neighborhoods (Abbott 1994, 55). In cities where many whites fled urban centers as a way to avoid mounting racial tension and the possibility of integration during the postwar era, white Portlanders lived in an unofficially segregated city that kept most African Americans away from its center (Abbott 1994, 55 and Mcelderry 2001). The third component that protected Portland’s urban center was highway expansion. When developers initiated a suburban beltway in the 1950s that would connect the core to the outlying fringe, they “took advantage of available or easily acquired rights of way,” which left central Portland intact and easily accessible (Abbott 1994, 55). Finally, Abbott states that the city had a unique relationship with its suburban offshoots that primed it to maintain

its power and influence over the metropolitan area. As suburban municipalities expanded at Portland's edges, public utilities were provided by "special service districts" that were "single-function" (ibid., 55-56). This meant that services and amenities, such as fire protection, water, sewage, trash and recreation, were fragmented and made available through private-market providers, leaving the larger network of metropolitan development to the central hub (ibid., 56). Though Portland experienced many of the same trends that were taking place nationwide, the city changed course in the early 1970s as a new generation took over city leadership (ibid.).

In spite of the discourse that positions Portland's relationship as being unique to growth, very little acknowledgement is given to what the city was doing before 1972. In her book exploring the presence of a counterculture in Portland, *Portland in the 1960s* (2012), local writer Polina Olsen provides a couple stories that show the city was engaged in urban renewal that encouraged redevelopment of the downtown core while demolishing low-income housing. The South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project voted on in 1955 cleared fifty-four blocks in the city's historic Italian and Jewish neighborhood, making way for Portland Center Apartments, office buildings, and the Lovejoy Fountain (Abbott 2016; Olsen 2012, 15; Toll 1985). The city classified the 84-acre area as blighted because the "2,300 residents were over the age of 60 and 1,000 of those residents lived alone in low-rent hotels and apartments" (Abbott 2016). Larry Howard, a native resident of Portland, bought the city's first coffeehouse—Caffe Espresso—from its second owner. His business was closed down twice during this project's renovations (Olsen 2012, 30). A bohemian enclave, known as the Village, located within the renewal zone was condemned in 1963 (ibid., 31). Though from the perspective of Olsen's interviewees urban renewal displaced small, local businesses and the growing counterculture, William Roberts, a prominent business leader and investor in the 1960s and 1970s, believed the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project was the beginning of downtown Portland's regeneration (Abbott 2016).

In their own ways, Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon do not fit neatly into the national narrative about suburban development. On the one hand, Boise could not be

conceived as a metropolitan center at that time. It was a decent-sized town, not a large city. Suburbanization is a metropolitan trend and Boise was just barely considered an urban environment. The 1960 Census classified Boise as “other urban territory” right before “rural territory” and after “urbanized areas.” Additionally, Boise lacked one of the major pull factors that would have drawn more people to it—white-collar work—and would have contributed to its growth. On the other hand, Portland suburban growth appears to correspond with the larger national trends that moved many families out of the central cities into the suburbs. In the mid-1990s, 65 percent of the residents of Portland’s metropolis lived in the suburbs and 45 percent of the jobs were found there (Abbott 1994, 53). As Bradshaw Hovey contends, though, Portland’s suburban development differs from the national narrative in the way that locals and outsiders have told its story of growth (1998, 69). The emphasis put on the importance of “strong public leadership, informed planning practice, and robust democratic life” in the early 1970s made Portland different. This is an important element in understanding the vision of Portland planners who redirected the city’s growth towards “small-scale and vernacular urban environments and the diversity and excitement of large cities” (Abbott 1994, 56). Further research might look at the city between 1945 and 1972 to see whether or not the urban planning revolution can be given sole credit for the preservation of the city’s core. Abbott’s identification of four unique geographic, economic, and social characteristics built into the urban environment, William Roberts’s claim that the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project was the source of revitalization, and the numerical growth of Portland’s surrounding counties merit additional investigation to give a more comprehensive picture of suburbanization in the area.

### **3. Consumerism Begins at Home**

Perhaps Portland and Boise defy, in their own respects, the conventions of postwar suburbanization. Physical location, however, did not exclude one from being seduced by the larger discourse that normalized suburban living as the ideal way of life, nor did it isolate local inhabitants from the pervading theme of togetherness that became emblematic of the happy family model. It is important to see beyond the

suburbs as a physical space and look at them as the incarnation of an ideology that underwrote the prevailing values at that time. The single-family home was a driving force behind the expansion of suburbia. It also played an important role in the construction of a new American dream by elaborating an ideological and physical landscape synonymous with the family, and thus transformed both rural and urban spaces. Howard and Melissa Ward, residents of Boise, Idaho described the home they bought with a Veterans Administration loan as “an oasis” (as cited in Ross 2000, 13). This description is an indicator of the interplay between object and ideal. The question becomes, then, how did strong family values become so thoroughly intertwined with the dogma of suburbia? I would like to make the argument that this was done through the idealization of one cultural artifact: the single-family home. Those who did not necessarily fit into the national narrative about suburbanization as the quintessential way of life were still able to fit themselves into the larger norm through the acquisition of a home. It was both place and product, a site of cohesion and an object for sale. In glorifying the home as an intimate place, an escape and refuge from the world, where one’s happiness and fulfillment would be met, Americans sought the security, tranquility, and satisfaction that had been absent from their lives for two decades. As a commodity, the home came to be the ultimate signifier of “the good life.” It fused American citizenship with material affluence. Homeownership was increasingly cast as an individualized pursuit of happiness. Urban historian, Dolores Hayden, succinctly brings these ideas together, “[...] Americans have never placed a high value on urbanity and group interaction. ‘The dream house is a uniquely American form because for the first time in history, a civilization has created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than the city or the nation’” (as cited in Jackson 1985, 288). Buying a home then became integral to one’s patriotic purpose and, for many, represented their attainment of the American dream. The democratization of homeownership, through affordable housing offered by Levitt-type developments, made this dream a reality for hundreds of thousands of middle-class and working-class families (Jackson 1985, 236). Continuously returning to the discourse of that time, the home became the artifact of the era and stood in as a reminder to all of the nation’s values—private property, work ethic, the nuclear

family, individualism, the pursuit of happiness. The mass construction of tract housing firmly entrenched these beliefs at the same time that it erected a material object in a new environment that redefined the American landscape in cognitive and physical terms. I will look at the material and cultural aspects of the home together then because of their reciprocal relationship in forming a place that became indissoluble from the ideologies that make up the postwar cultural space. American studies scholar Jeffrey L. Meikle explains this in his article “Pasteboard Views,” (2009) “[...] representations of place actively reflect or shape beliefs, confirm or motivate behaviors, and in turn influence ongoing transformations of actual physical space” (112). As the mystique around the home grew, the family, its meaning and environment were increasingly drawn up into the image of an idealized space that could be obtained through consumerism.

Changes in housing and suburban construction made the home more affordable, while the interior and exterior redesign made it more accommodating to new ways of life. The most revolutionary contributions to the pricing of suburban homes came from the rationalization of the construction process. The Levitt Brothers introduced planning and control procedures that rivaled Henry Ford’s (Halberstam 1993 132). William Levitt first acquired experience in mass construction during the War, when he won a contract to build 2,350 war workers’ homes in Virginia (ibid.). It was then that he came up with the idea to compartmentalize the building process into 27 specialized steps and to train his workers in one part of the process (ibid.). Rather than assembling parts on-site, the Levitt Brothers had centralized shops where this was done (Jackson 1985, 234-235). The pre-assembled parts were then brought to the lot where the unskilled workers pieced them together. Additionally, the Levitts were able to drive down production costs by cutting out middlemen suppliers. By adopting a vertical integration model, they produced every part of the house from start to finish: they made their own concrete as well as grew and cut their own timber (ibid., 235). It was not just the raw materials and simplified construction process that made Levitt homes so affordable, the developers also equipped their new homes with appliances from their own subsidiaries (Halberstam 1993, 138). Even before construction of the first Levittown began in Hempstead, Long Island in 1946,



William Levitt encouraged investors to think about the possibilities of mass housing for the families of young veterans. “When some talked about the risks involved, he would tell them to examine their own desires and needs. What did they want? A car, and then what else? A house, of course. What were their friends all telling them about their own postwar plans? That the first thing they were going to do was get married or, if they were already married, have kids [...]” (ibid., 133). From its initial formulation then, the Levitt Brothers envisioned their homes as familial spaces (ibid., 133-135). This is evident in the types of homes they offered. The first Levittown home, dubbed the Cape Cod, was simple. It had four and a half rooms: a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bathroom (Halberstam 1993, 135). The slightly larger updated version, known as the Ranch, included two new elements: an attic and a carport—a predecessor of the garage (Blaszczyk 2009, 202). Another seductive feature of the first Levittown home was the relatively small amount of space it took up on its lot, a meager 12 percent (Halberstam 1993, 135). These homes were envisioned with growing families in mind and provided the necessary space both inside—the attic—and outside—the large yard—for expansion (ibid.).

Changes in the architecture of the home and suburban living went hand in hand with postwar life and reflected the changing preoccupations of daily living. This new home was the antithesis of urban life. The quality of life in urban centers during the Depression and War diminished considerably, as housing quarters fell into disrepair, were short in stock, and overcrowded (Blaszczyk 2009, 203-204). In contrast, the new open floor plans of suburban homes had fewer walls and were situated in expansive environments. Togetherness and a higher standard of living were conjoined through the recreational spaces they provided to their residents: fresh air, large grassy yards, swimming pools, playgrounds, sports fields, shopping malls, schools, churches, etc. (Blaszczyk 2009, 203-204; Jackson 1985, 235-237). The suburban environment extended the domestic sphere outside, where children could safely play and where families and neighbors could build their own haven. Historian William Chafe describes the importance of outdoor entertainment to the family and community when he says, “social life revolved around the outdoor barbecue, with practically every suburban household boasting its own redwood picnic table and

outdoor grill” (2007, 114.). Familialism and a more affluent lifestyle became synonymous with suburbia. The suburbs, like the Levittowns, attracted, in particular, returning GIs not only because they were affordable but because they were emblematic of familialism. It is precisely the insistence on family that Herbert Gans criticized when he presented the single-mindedness of the residents found in the Willingboro, New Jersey incarnation of Levittown. He writes, “Although they are citizens of a national polity and their lives are shaped by national economic, social, and political forces, Levittowners deceive themselves into thinking that the community, or rather the home, is the single most influential unit in their lives” (Gans 1967, 67). In spite of such critiques, the social and economic conditions of suburban living were a large part of their draw. Eight of the people I interviewed in both Boise and Portland lived in metropolitan environments as children, three of them moved to the suburbs and one spent his entire childhood there. Nancy, whose family moved to a suburb of Chicago when she was seven, explained they went because of the value for the money, “You could get more house for the money” (2013). Her husband Michael, who grew up in a “posh” suburb in Florida, noticed differences between the GI suburban developments, like the one his wife grew up in, and the more affluent one he lived in.

My neighborhood wasn’t a GI Bill neighborhood, like Nancy’s was. I had cousins that lived in those neighborhoods. I had a cousin who grew up in Park Force, which is just the same version of Nancy’s, and there were just a zillion kids all over the place. [...] Even though [my neighborhood] was not in a GI Bill place, it was [...] slightly more posh. There were just a zillion kids all over the place (2013).

In talking about their childhoods in the suburbs, Nancy and Michael both speak of the opportunities and ambiance that suburban life offered: their family’s purchasing power went farther and their communities were populated by children. The large incidence of children could be seen as an indicator that suburban communities were family and child focused. Two of the four interviewees who did not experience suburbia first hand were born in the 1930s and therefore would have been more likely to move to the suburbs as adults. One of them, Patricia, described the 1950s as “an innocent time.” She elaborated, “It was a time of recovery from the war during which people worked together to make it, and yearned for the suburban lifestyle.” Patricia’s

comment brings the notions of security, fulfillment, and abundance together under the umbrella of the new American dream. The last two of my interviewees were actually born during the Baby Boom but their families stayed in the city. The fact that they never made it to the suburbs left an impression on them. Carol said, “We didn't have the affluence of the fifties, so I didn't live in suburbia, so the whole *Mad Men* thing, I don't know the whole *Mad Men* thing” (2012).<sup>71</sup> Both Michael's and Carol's comments indicate that access to affluence was a central component of suburban living. In Michael's case, he noticed class differences between neighborhoods. While in Carol's, a lack of prosperity meant deprivation.

The interior architecture of the home also manifested the transformations in daily living habits. The open floor plan meant there would be fewer barriers that divided day-to-day activities by gender (Coontz 1992, 28). The Ranch house opened the kitchen, the office, and sewing room up so that there was more of a lived environment of togetherness (ibid.). The one space that retained privacy and grew in size was the master bedroom (ibid.). This was due to the importance placed on couples having a sexually-satisfying marriage (ibid.). Furthermore, the lifestyle of the family became more relaxed, which encouraged more insistence on livability, comfort, and ease within the home (ibid.). The reconfiguring of both inside and outside spaces in the suburbs allows for several different readings of the developing importance of family values in relation to the individual and the larger economic and social ambiance of that time. The creation of a more open home, with less enclosed spaces, might be evidence of the incorporation of the democratic family into the space itself. The lack of barriers in the home created a space to which each member of the family had access, engendering more egalitarianism in the home, while it also encouraged the family to spend more of their leisure time together. The elaboration of new uses for the interior and exterior spaces of the home took place at a time when the economy was growing and more Americans saw their buying power expand.

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<sup>71</sup> *Mad Men* was an American television series that ran between 2007 and 2015. As a 1960s period drama it attempted to depict life throughout the decade. The main character worked at an advertising firm on Sixth Avenue in New York City and made the commute between the big city and his suburban home.

Changing economic circumstances provided suburbanites with a sense of security, which in turn furthered the expansionist vision of postwar life.

Analysis of the ideological and spatial components of the home is made more complete when it is contextualized within the economic shifts that were taking place at that time. One of the most significant changes in Americans' daily lives was their ability to consume. Stephanie Coontz describes what families' purchasing power looked like before the War:

Up until 1950 most families' discretionary income did not cover much more than an occasional meal away from the home; a beer or two after work; a weekly trip to the movies, amusement park, or beach; and perhaps a yearly vacation, usually spent at the home of relatives. Few households had washing machines and dryers. Refrigerators had only tiny spaces for freezing ice and had to be defrosted at least once a week. Few houses had separate bedrooms for all the children (2005, 230).

Like Coontz, historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk and essayist Gilles Lipovetsky identify the postwar era as a decisive moment when consumer patterns shifted. In *American Consumer Society* (2009), Blaszczyk defines three periods of consumption. She situates the 1950s in her third and most contemporary categorization. She distinguishes each phase by the relationship between the consumer and their purchases. Blaszczyk insists that the Baby Boom generation experienced a fundamental change in their interactions with consumerism. In the past, consumers placed a lot of value on the objects themselves. After 1945, however, the experience consumer goods provided became their largest asset. In her conclusion, Blaszczyk argues that this not only defined one's experience of the home, but also shaped a person's experience in and outside of it (Blaszczyk 2009, 273). Lipovetsky also proposes a three-stage process for the rise of consumerism in *Le Bonheur paradoxal* (2009). He situates 1945-1965 during the second phase, however. He argues that it was during this wave that mass consumption and the pursuit of abundance became cultural values in and of themselves, increases in buying power redefined the limits of what one could expect from life (Lipovetsky 2009, 29). For the first time, the masses had access to durable goods, leisure, vacation, and fashion that had heretofore been reserved for the elite (ibid., 30). "A new society was born, in which growth, improved living conditions, successful consumer products became the ultimate

criteria of progress” (ibid., 32).<sup>72</sup> In opposition to Blaszcyk, who concludes that the most recent wave of consumerism has increased the value of experiences and devalued the objects themselves, Lipovetsky criticizes mass consumption as a vicious circle where no one can find oneself, nor find their way out, because the pursuit of the object has become an end in itself. “Indeed, work and the acquisition of money are more valued than the pleasures of life; frivolity, aesthetic values, interior design, distinguished tastes, and cultural life are all objects of persistent distrust. In America, the pursuit of comfort commands consumer’s attitude; the small pleasures of life and the maximization of satisfaction are not essential goals of life” (ibid., 146).<sup>73</sup> For Lipovetsky, the 1950s precede and prepare for the final phase, which he calls “hyper-consumption.” Blaszcyk and Lipovetsky appear to draw different conclusions about the home as it relates to consumerism. Where Blaszcyk sees consumption playing a distinctive role in the physical and ideological construction of the home, Lipovetsky believes that the home’s comforts were reduced to its mechanization (ibid., 203). Even though it seems that Blaszcyk and Lipovetsky’s analyses are at odds, they will both inform the following discussion on the underlying role that consumerism began to play in constructing American identity, via the home, at mid-century.

It seems appropriate to return to postwar economic growth to really insist on the feeling of abundance that permeated the era. I have already cited the gross national product as growing by 250 percent between 1945 and 1960. In actual dollars, it went from \$206 billion in 1940 to more than \$500 billion in 1960 (Blaszcyk 2009, 182 and Whitfield 1991, 69-70). The United States’ population represented six percent of the world’s population in 1953 but consumed more than one third of the goods and services available worldwide. American industries used half of the steel and oil in the world. Fully three-quarters of the cars and appliances bought in the

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<sup>72</sup> The original citation in French is as follows, « Une nouvelle société naît, dans laquelle la croissance, l’amélioration des conditions de vie, les objets-phares de la consommation deviennent les critères par excellence du progrès ».

<sup>73</sup> The original text reads, « En effet, le travail et l’acquisition de l’argent sont plus valorisés que les jouissances de la vie ; la frivolité, les valeurs esthétiques, la décoration d’intérieur, les saveurs élevées, la vie culturelle sont l’objet d’une méfiance persistante. En Amérique, c’est la recherche du confort qui commande l’attitude du consommateur : les agréments de la vie et la maximisation des satisfactions n’y sont pas les buts primordiaux de l’existence ».

world were purchased by Americans (Whitfield 1991, 69-70). This reduced the disparities between classes and changed the class composition of America. Though the numbers in the highest income brackets had grown since 1929, their proportion of the total national income had shrunk (*ibid.*, 70). Between 1929 and 1953, families in the middle class had grown from 5.5 million to 17.9 million. They accounted for 35 percent of the American population and earned 42 percent of the national income (*ibid.*). Between 1945 and 1965 the American economy expanded considerably, the housing industry in particular. 44 percent of Americans were homeowners in 1940, this climbed to 62 percent in 1960 (Coontz 1992, 24; Cohen 2003, 195). Housing construction also exploded after the war. 1955 saw the most housing starts undertaken, 1.65 million. 85 percent of these houses were built in the suburbs (Coontz 1992, 24). Given such affluence, it does not seem very surprising that consumer habits changed drastically. The invention of obsolescence and the association of buying with citizenship stoked the flames of mass consumption. In addition to the policies that favored homeownership and the expansion of suburbia, the government predicated economic growth on mass consumption through the extension of consumer credit (Cohen 2003, 118).

The construction of suburbia required much more than homes, it needed infrastructure—roads, highways, interstates, sewage systems, electrical lines, etc.—a lot of which the government financed. These investments grew the economy as much as they aided returning veterans (Lipsitz 1986, 356). By providing subventions for infrastructural development, the government encouraged Americans to look at homeownership as part and parcel of the new consumer lifestyle. Mass construction of new homes provided a stable foundation for the economy of mass consumption, thanks to the transformation of the home into an independent product available to increasing amounts of consumers. It also became the site where consumer demand focused as people wanted to fill their homes with the latest appliances (Cohen 2003, 121-122). The house thus became a symbol of prosperous times. The emergence of consumer credit played a large role in continuously growing the economy and encouraging Americans to outfit their homes. In fact, these two things were intimately linked: consumer credit was based on a growing economy and a growing

economy encouraged consumer credit (ibid., 360). Buying houses with small down payments ensured that consumers would have money left over to equip them with brand new, modern appliances, something which further encouraged economic growth (ibid.). One example of this can be seen in a Boise resident's explanation of how affordable becoming a homeowner was at that time. Lorry Roberts said, "My husband and I bought a house in 1950 in the north end, at 1814 north 16<sup>th</sup> street. We paid \$6000 for it. The man who sold it to us was Richard B. Smith. He asked us how much we could put down. We said we had \$60 and he said, 'That'll work.' If you can imagine that!" (as cited in Ross 2000, 52). Being able to purchase a home with a one percent down payment allowed the Roberts to buy a home in central Boise that was within walking distance of good schools and conveniently located for downtown shopping. Inevitably, this meant that they had a substantial mortgage, but we can assume that low interest rates would have allowed them enough disposable income to really enjoy the consumer lifestyle. At that time, Americans indebted themselves so they could participate in the abundance of postwar living: "The value of total consumer credit grew almost eleven-fold between 1945 and 1960, and installment credit—the major component of the total by the postwar era—jumped a stunning nineteenfold, with car purchases responsible for a major portion of that" (Cohen 2003, 123). Many Americans remembered what life was like before the proliferation of consumer goods. One Boisean described life during the War as making do with what one had. In trying to paint a picture of what it was like at that time, she emphasizes the availability of household goods, "When we were first married, we had an apartment at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Bannock. Because of the war you couldn't buy appliances; we bought a fishing ice box. Our washing machine was a table top affair that turned, just a box. You could only wash a few things. I'd take our laundry on the bus to Mom's" (Jackie Ferney Baxter as cited in Ross 2000, 2-3). One of the very tangible differences between pre-war and postwar living was the type of home appliances that became a normal part of everyday life. As wartime industries converted back to their normal production lines, consumer goods became increasingly available to the public. Consumer credit facilitated the purchase of automobiles and appliances. Between 1941 and 1961, the annual consumer expenditure for housing and automobiles

tripled, growing from \$713 to \$2,513 per household (Blaszczyk 2009, 200). Another Boisean described the joy she felt when her father was able to purchase an expensive commodity after the War.

My father sold our car as the war started, because you couldn't get gasoline. We had a Studebaker after the war. And then finally when the cars started coming out my frugal father told my mother that he'd put his name on the list for a new car but they had to pay cash for it. He never owned anything in his life. And that's what they did, in 1948. He got a new Ford, so we thought we were just too, too snazzy, too wonderful, with this brand new car (Adelia Garro Simplot as cited in Ross 2000, 38).

As is evidenced from the testimonials of life during and after the War, consumer goods did more than make life easier. When a family had to go without, it left an impression. Both Jackie Ferney Baxter and Adelia Garro Simplot use commodities to explain daily living for Americans at different times. Baxter's description of young married life implies that she and her husband experienced a material change when the War ended. Simplot's explanation is more explicit about the implications of abundance. She never says her family could not afford their car, but that it no longer served a purpose due to gasoline rationing. In spite of this, there was a real financial change in her family after the War because her father could buy an expensive commodity outright. She implies that her father refused to buy their car on credit, which was a true feat for him as he was "frugal" and "he had never owned anything." Simplot's memory of this moment also attests to the status that purchasing commodity goods conferred on a person and family. She describes herself as feeling "too, too snazzy" and "too wonderful" because of a "brand new car." Her description is a good example of how people entered into a relationship with their possessions that extended beyond the object itself. For Simplot, having a brand new car made her feel special, thus enhancing her social experience of the world while making a statement about her family's class status.

Though there were plenty of other consumer goods available consumerist desires were most often focused on the home and family, "People's newfound spending money went to outfit their homes and families. In the five years after World War II, spending on food in the United States rose by a modest 33 percent and clothing expenditures by only 20 percent, but purchases of household furnishings and



appliances jumped by 240 percent” (Coontz 2005, 232-233). The GI generation invested psychologically and financially in marriage and the nuclear family more than any other generation before or since (Blaszczyk 2009, 183). “Putting their mouths where their money was, Americans consistently told pollsters that home and family were the wellsprings of their happiness and self-esteem” (Coontz 1992, 25). Leisure and recreation began to play a big role as well, especially for those who lived in the suburbs. They were economically better off than their centralized urban and rural neighbors, earning wages that were 70 percent higher than the national average (Chafe, 2007, 114). In the 1950s, the wealthier suburbs, families spent money on boats, swimming pools, and expensive vacations (ibid.). While eight million Americans went abroad during the 1950s, those who did not travel to distant places still traveled in the United States, revitalizing American tourism by visiting national parks, camping on beaches, and frequenting amusements parks (ibid.). The convergence of the development of mass consumption encouraged by economic growth, while the idea of family happiness and abundance posed the foundations for a powerful domestic movement.

The 1950s consumer revolution might have been expressed through the way families spent money, but it was intimately linked to the cultural and economic ambiance of the Cold War. “In the 1950s, 'patriotism, freedom, and consumption became interchangeable ideas” (Coontz 1992, 171). There is perhaps no better example of the government’s involvement in bringing the home, consumerism, and patriotism together than the 1959 “Kitchen Debate” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev at the American Exposition in Moscow. This debate attests to the primacy the federal government placed on consumerism and its importance to the American way of life in extolling the superiority of American Capitalism over Soviet Communism. Before the staging of the debate, both countries engaged in prolonged negotiations over their increased contact. This ultimately culminated in the first bilateral agreement of the postwar era, known as “The Cultural Agreement” (Hixson 1997, 154). In Article XIII of the agreement, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. decided that each country would host an exhibition where the visiting country would display their scientific, technological and cultural developments (ibid., 161). Exchanges would

include radio and television programs, as well as feature and documentary films and discussions between students and professors, artists and writers, scientists and agricultural experts, athletes, as well as civic and youth groups (ibid., 153). Not only was this agreement significant because it was the first of the postwar era, but also because it represented the beginnings of a large-scale exchange between the two countries. From the outset, President Eisenhower saw the American exposition as an opportunity to show something that would have “a spectacular impact” on Soviet society (ibid., 161). Though both sides were aware that their reciprocal expositions were cultural battlegrounds in the larger Cold War, they also understood the need for restraint (ibid., 165). Conscious of the potentiality to undermine political ties, American diplomats decided consumerism was a safe thematic focus for their expo. Through consumerism, American values could be presented to the Soviet public without any reference to the freedom of choice or speech, which would have been seen as a direct affront to Soviet officials (ibid., 167). In his book *Parting the Curtain* (1997), historian Walter Hixson cites one American diplomat as saying the Kremlin hoped the American exhibition would spur economic progress by motivating Soviet citizens to produce consumer goods that they did not have yet and that would benefit their daily lives (ibid., 165). American officials hoped the exhibition’s impact would extend beyond promoting economic progress in the U.S.S.R.; they thought it might create dissatisfaction among Russians as they realized how limited the Soviet government’s vision of higher living standards was (ibid., 167). American embassy diplomats in Moscow, who were familiar with Soviet life, thought the Soviet public would be interested in American shoes, clothing, books, and records as all of these items were available on the black market for astronomical prices in the U.S.S.R. (ibid., 165). These same diplomats encouraged the planners to include an exhibit focused specifically on children’s commodities, like clothing and a playground, because of the Soviets inclination to “dote” on their children (ibid.). American officials then approached this exhibition as a means to extoll the superiority of capitalism.

Elements of the home and family were dispersed throughout the entire exhibit. Some objects that might be seen as integral parts of the American way of life were

there in their entirety: new cars, trucks, tractors, sports boats, and camping equipment. The most emblematic was the new model home, the epitome of togetherness and abundance. It was there that Nixon and Khrushchev engaged in the “Kitchen Debate.” This home, renamed “Split-nik” by journalists, was a luxury home, following the popular “Ranch” style (Blaszczyk 2009, 204). It cost \$14,000 and was equipped with \$5,000 worth of the most up-to-date technology, including a built-in washing machine, a color television, and a “do-it-yourself” workshop (ibid.).

Appropriately named, the “Split-nik,” was meant to rival Soviet achievements in science and technology—most notably the *Sputnik* satellite—by showing how the United States was incorporating progress into the daily lives of the American middle class. While Vice President Richard Nixon and the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev toured the exposition together, they spoke about life in both countries. Nixon used the example of the “Split-nik’s” kitchen as proof of his claim that the average American enjoyed a superior standard of living (ibid.). On the one hand, the “Kitchen Debate,” was a significant battle for each side because high living standards, represented by “superabundance and unprecedented prosperity,” were meant to ensure the viability and appeal of each model on the world stage (Reid 2002, 224). The American discourse during the Cold War used mass consumerism as a defense of democratic capitalism, which, from this perspective, would make economic egalitarianism possible, a system that the Soviets had claimed to have already created with their classless society (Cohen 2003, 125). The Vice President declared that the possession of consumer goods and prosperity indicated that the United States was better at rapidly attaining an egalitarian society. “Nixon boasted that with three-fourths of America's 44 million families owning their own homes, along with 56 million cars, 50 million televisions, and 143 million radios, 'The United States comes closest to the ideal of prosperity for all in a classless society'” (ibid., 126). Indicators of a good quality of life like the acquisition of property was meant to undermine the Soviet argument that declared capitalism created extremes of wealth and poverty (ibid., 125). The discourse of the American government imbued mass consumerism with economic, governmental, and utopian idealism.

On the other hand, consumerism as a societal issue was inherently linked to

representations and roles for women, as women were seen as the consumer for the household in both countries (May 1988, 72; Reid 2002). The location of the debate in the kitchen of the “Split-nik” is particularly telling then. As art historian Susan E. Reid notes in “Cold War in the Kitchen” (2002), “The domestic and conventionally feminine setting for this confrontation between the superpowers was not as incongruous as it might appear; in the context of ‘peaceful economic competition’ the kitchen and consumption had become a site for power plays on a world scale” (223). The perception of women, particularly women’s work, was a concern for Khrushchev. Images of Soviet women engaged in manual labor made the West think of the society as backward and uncivilized (Reid 2002, 224). In his March 1958 election address, Khrushchev admitted his embarrassment at such observations (ibid.). It is in this context then that the “Kitchen Debate” represents such a significant moment for the Cold War. Materialism and consumerism were inherently linked to the economic organization of gender. The American breadwinner/homemaker division of labor became an opportunity for Khrushchev to criticize the Americans as backward in their treatment of women and irrational in their consumer habits and desires (ibid., 218). In his memoirs, Khrushchev remembered the debate started with a comment that he made about a lemon press:

'What a silly thing for your people to exhibit in the Soviet Union, Mr. Nixon! All you need for tea is a couple of drops of lemon juice. I think it would take a housewife longer to use this gadget than it would for her to do what our housewives do: slice a piece of lemon, drop it into a glass of tea, then squeeze a few drops out with a spoon. [...] It's not a real time-saver or a labor-saver at all. In fact, you can squeeze a lemon faster by hand. This kind of nonsense is an insult to our intelligence (as cited in Lerner 1986, 25).

His remarks echo what many U.S. governmental officials thought was at stake in these cultural exchanges. This lemon press represented consumerism, American materialism, and obsolescence, but it also spoke of the way that gender organized everyday life. Khrushchev admits shortly after this citation that his questioning did not have much to do with the device itself or even home appliances, he wanted to question the tenets of capitalism by pointing out the ridiculousness of such an object’s existence (ibid., 26). Though the lemon press comment is not recorded in the debate’s official transcript, Khrushchev’s critique of the American system was

apparent from the very beginning of the discussion. When Nixon and Khrushchev arrived at the “Split-nik’s” model kitchen, Nixon pointed to the dishwasher and said, “In America, we like to make life easier for women” (Khrushchev and Nixon 1959). Khrushchev retorted, “Your capitalistic attitude toward women does not occur under Communism” (ibid.). Though Khrushchev had previously claimed that they had such devices there, his reaction to Nixon focused on the place and capacities accorded to American women by Nixon, rather than the material goods. The Soviet Premier might have been trying to redeem the image of his female citizenry by pointing out the condescending and paternalistic regard directed at American housewives by the Vice President. This critique went unanswered, however. Nixon’s response was to naturalize the place of women and America’s treatment of them, “I think that this attitude towards women is universal. What we want to do is make life more easy for our housewives...” (ibid.). As Nixon would not cede the sexist premise of his own comments, he demonstrated a larger patriarchal vision of American women and housewives, in particular. However, he also showed just how important the breadwinner/homemaker model had become to the American way of life. As Elaine Tyler May notes in *Homeward Bound*, “For Nixon, American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members” (1988, 19). As the “Kitchen Debate” so clearly demonstrates, both leaders saw their respective country’s exhibitions as the staging ground for a cultural battle in the Cold War. The American Exhibition brought consumerism and family together as central tenets of the American doctrine of the era.

Place mattered less when it came to the all-out production of the ideal around the American home. The home became so wrapped up in different ideologies and layers of meaning that it took on new spatial dimensions that embedded it within a larger framework of power. The suburbs were significant in the sense that they had a very specific meaning in terms of class and race and connoted more than anything else the changing norms of the postwar era, but the home was more relatable because of its ubiquity. Suburbia might have been what people yearned for, but home was where they could create togetherness and really bask in the luxury of consumerism.

In terms of the national narrative, the home was central to the establishment of a familial ideal. As a place it provided respite from the outside world; it made room for Americans to pursue their own happiness and seek fulfillment through their families. This is most apparent through the layout of the home, both inside and out. Fewer walls meant more time as a family; more space meant more recreation and fun. As a product it was wrapped up in meaning. It connoted affluence and it charged Americans with a patriotic purpose that was reinforced by the government's discourse on each American's responsibility to keep the economy growing. It fused patriotism and consumerism and, as a result, it drove American consumer habits toward new lifestyles that accepted and even encouraged living and consuming on credit as part of everyday life.

The white, middle-class, suburban family became the archetype for American living through the cultural, political, social, and economic emphasis placed on togetherness, suburbia, and consumerism. As far as the cultural and social influence of the family is concerned—magazines, etiquette books, videos, advertisements, television shows—almost every type of material culture produced at that time had some relationship to the family. On almost every level, the American government assisted in creating a pervasive image of the postwar family. It initiated large-scale programs and adopted laws that would facilitate a certain type of family living. It encouraged an economic system that required discretionary income and placed a large emphasis on leisure. Given the hardships that Americans had faced in the recent past, the family, suburbia, and the home were an easy sale. As ideas, they provided comfort. As representations of social identity, they redefined what it meant to be American and opened up the possibilities of the American dream.



**Part 2: The White, Middle-Class, Heterosexual  
Couple:  
Normative Gender and Sexual Identities**





### III. Crafting a Gender Order: Male Breadwinners and Female Homemakers

This chapter will lay out the social and cultural framework that positioned the gender norms of the postwar era as *the* desirable model for masculine and feminine behavior. The importance of gender at that time cannot be overstated. I will argue throughout this dissertation that gender should be understood as one of the primary organizing principles of mid-century American society. In order to support this assertion, I would like to draw on the work of Sandra Lipsitz Bem, who in *The Lenses of Gender* (1993), identified three axes around which gender structures contemporary society: androcentrism, gender polarization, and biological essentialism. Bem explains that each of these manifestations is complex, having insidious consequences that shape society into the patriarchy that it is.

Androcentrism regards men as existing at the center of society, rendering their experience of the world as the neutral or standard one (Bem 1993, 2). Social critics at mid-century decried the state of American manhood; lamenting his loss of self-determination as more and more men worked in white-collar, middle-management positions. Masculinity had lost the strength of character for which it was known in days past and this created a great deal of cultural anxiety in the context of the Cold War (Pendergast 2000, 111; Cuordileone 2000, 516). This is but one example of how men's professional and personal crises were considered to be at the heart of American identity.<sup>74</sup> These same critical observers juxtaposed men's experience with that of women, who were portrayed as being free from the demands and dehumanization of bureaucracy (May 1988, 24). When feminine discontent emerged from the middle-class white suburbs starting in the mid-fifties,<sup>75</sup> many members of society were unprepared to sympathize with the lot of these women who had been

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<sup>74</sup> To fully illustrate this example, it is important to note that women were not left out of this crisis in masculinity. Both Wini Breines in *Young, White, and Miserable* (1992, 87) and Elaine Tyler May in *Homeward Bound* (1988, ch. 4) discuss the role that "containing" feminine sexuality played in bolstering the man, the home, and the nation.

<sup>75</sup> Most notably recognized in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), though Stephanie Coontz points out in *A Strange Stirring* (2011, 21-22) that many were discussing the woes of the American suburban housewife earlier; they had not yet put a name to it, however.

painted as the beneficiaries of men's self-sacrifice for more since the War.<sup>76</sup> The androcentric lens of the postwar era furthered the reputed naturalness of a gender dichotomy as it not only reinstated the doctrine of separate spheres, but also reinvigorated the cult of domesticity (Lichtman 2006, 39-40; Nickerson 2003, 18; Smith 1992, 329).

In the fifties, the private and public spheres and men's and women's respective obligations were greatly contrasted, political discourse along with popular culture contributed to this. The assumption was that men went out into a hostile world, unsuitable for women, where endurance and mental agility as well as strength were required; while women stayed at home because their fertile wombs and inclination for nurturing children predetermined their function in society. Gender, as a cultural, political and social construct, unified the seemingly separate and complementary roles of men and women: masculine identity is tied to feminine identity and vice versa. This intertwining calls into question the singularity of masculinity and femininity by making these gendered identities not only archetypes, but also objects that exist as byproducts of the other. In other words, as a trait is defined and attributed to one gender, its opposite is assigned and given to the other. As such, masculinity and femininity interact in a dialectic that gives them a sense of familiarity, commonality, and universality. Yet the "performance" of these models is based on perceptions and distortions of reality,<sup>77</sup> making the resulting gendered portrayals all the more subjective. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler explains that "[...] acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are

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<sup>76</sup> The education, class, and race privilege of many of these women made Friedan's portrayal of "the problem that has no name" particularly problematic for women of color and women who belonged to the lower classes, who were busy working while striving to be included in the good life that the postwar American dream promised (Coontz 2011, 101-102). See also Daniel Horowitz's *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.

<sup>77</sup> In order to be specific in regards to my use of reality, I have turned to the work of Catherine Belsey who in *Culture and the Real* (2005) explores theorizing around "the real." In her discussion of poststructuralism she gives Jacques Lacan's definition of the real as the basis of her analysis. She writes, "Lacan's real is not to be confused with reality, which is what we do know, because culture defines it for us. The real is what is there, but undefined, unaccountable, perhaps, with the frameworks of our knowledge. It is there as such, but not there-for-a-subject" (5).

fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs” (185). Though clear gender norms emerge from this dialectic as the basis for defining masculinity and femininity, their reenactment serves to highlight their constructed nature as many individuals fail to perfectly emulate the expectation. The result is a gap between the norm and one’s ability to conform to it entirely. bell hooks’s definition of stereotypes seems relevant here as a means to explain how gender norms become easily conflated with stereotypes.<sup>78</sup> “Stereotypes, however inaccurate, [...] serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. [...] Stereotypes abound where there is distance” (1992, 341). The distance that hooks refers to here is that which existed between white and black Americans, in both cognitive and physical terms. It is important for hooks because it is this distance informing the stereotypes that embodied whiteness in the black imagination prior to the end of legalized racial segregation.<sup>79</sup> This distance can equally be applied to the construction of gender as the space that proliferates between the masculine and feminine, making it susceptible to Othering and ripe for stereotyping. It is within this framework that gender polarization exerts much of its power. Through the recreation of strictly defined gender spheres, masculinity and femininity were positioned as diametrically opposed. This furthered a societal vision of gender as not only complementary, but the product of naturally opposed characteristics, which inevitably led men and women into inherently distinctive familial and social roles that reinforced society’s gender order (Bem 1993, 2). Androcentrism interacts with the process of gender polarization as two distinct

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<sup>78</sup> I have written bell hooks name as she does. She has chosen not to capitalize her name in order to place the ideas in her work above herself. She adopted bell hooks as a pen name because it was the name of her maternal great-grandmother. In adopting it, she hoped to create a link between herself and the women who preceded her (hooks 2012).

<sup>79</sup> hooks came to this topic through her exploration of the Whites’ inability, and unwillingness, to recognize that the gaze of the observer might not belong to a white person. This is yet another manifestation of the privilege of whiteness and the racially specious vision that it is invisible. hooks explains that inherent to this power struggle is the ability to define who is allowed to look; in controlling the black gaze, Whites were able to deny them their subjectivity (340). hooks’s intention is to move beyond the definition of stereotypes that she provides to get to the heart of white supremacy, which she equates with terror (341-346). The centrality of whiteness to hooks’s schema, in a way, is the racial equivalent of how gender polarization and androcentrism interact. In drawing this parallel, I do not intend to make the argument that sexism trumps or is even equivalent to racism.

spheres are created that place men at the center and displace women to the margins. This interplay reinforces Othering.

Androcentrism and gender polarization are bolstered through the societal belief that biology determines one's social roles, this is what Bem refers to as biological essentialism (1993, 2). Many mid-century scientists insisted that one's sex assignment at birth determined whether or not a person would become a man or woman. Thus, the term sex role was initially used to describe the differences in behavior, personality, and ambition between men and women, necessarily taking for granted the idea that an individual's social role in life was determined by his or her sex. As researchers explored sex and sexuality during the postwar era, however, sex role was replaced with gender role as a means to signify "a person's personal, social, and legal status [...] without reference to sex organs" (Heidenry 1997, 99).<sup>80</sup> Despite the emergence of a terminology that separated sex from gender, the debate over the interconnectedness of one's biological and social roles raged on. According to John Heidenry in *What Wild Ecstasy* (1997), the scientific reconfiguration of sex and gender had not penetrated the scientific community or public even as late as 1965: "anatomy was destiny" (90-91). This last axis is perhaps the most problematic as many people emulate the gendered behaviors that coincide with their sex assignment at birth and for many these seem like a natural extension of the latter. This deduction, which for many, is gleaned from their lived social experience runs counter to social theorizing that asserts human nature is itself a cultural construct. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann note, "[...T]here is no human nature in the sense of a biologically fixed substratum determining the variability of socio-cultural formations. [...M]an constructs his own nature, or more simply, [...] man produces himself" (1966, 67). Though Bem asserts that she does not mean to deny any biological facts, but intends to question how scientific discourse has been used to legitimate sexual inequality (1993, 2; 6); my purpose is to return continuously to the notion that all social

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<sup>80</sup> John Money, Joan G., Hampson, and John Hampson's article "An Examination of Some Basic Sexual Concepts" defines gender role thus, "[...] all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively" (1955, 302).

characteristics exist within a dialectic of constructedness and that gender is at the heart of social order.

As an analytical framework, I will use the concept of gender to look at the societal as well as the individual, to see how the categorizations of masculinity and femininity were writ large and singularly inscribed. Interestingly, the process of standardization makes the concept appear fixed and immutable. This is what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the process of “eternalization and dehistoricization of the structure of the sexual division” in *La Domination Masculine* (1998, 8). If gender can be established as a seemingly impermeable and immovable status in time and space then the other cultural and social institutions in which it has played a foundational role, like sexuality, marriage, and the family, could likewise seem to calcify in time and space. In essence, the preponderance of gender as a fixed category could assert great influence over these institutions,<sup>81</sup> thus multiplying exponentially its hegemony in defining social life and its effect on the individual.

In order to paint a picture of masculinity and femininity during the postwar period, it is important to understand how the systematization of a hegemonic gender order established a reciprocal relationship between men and women, one which was based on the premise that masculinity and femininity were fundamentally different, and which inevitably led to a primacy placed on the masculine experience. It is

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<sup>81</sup> There is a certain taken-for-granted understanding when one refers to a social institution, especially ones like marriage and family, something which tends to be less clear when talking about sexuality. I believe it is useful to provide some clarity on what precisely is meant by institution and how these social structures come into being. Institutions are manifestations of shared habitualized behaviors that are shaped by language, memory, and transmission to others. As actions are repeated in a group, they come to represent a shared history. They are, at once, reinforced by individuals and greater than them (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 76-77). The way that institutions come into being is through the reification of actions. That is, as many people do the same thing, society names it, creating a representation of those actions. These representations are shared and accessible to all members of a given social group. They come to symbolize not only actions, but the actors themselves. Institutions serve as mechanisms of social order as they provide society with historicity and structure. As such, they serve to control behavior, primarily through the mere fact that they exist (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 72-73). If the above explanation can serve as a definition for what constitutes an institution, then sexuality is necessarily an institution. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Michel Foucault provides the evidence of shared behaviors, a developing language, and a historicization of sexuality. “[...F]or two centuries now, the discourse on sex has been multiplied rather than rarefied; and that if it has carried with it taboos and prohibitions, it has also, in a more fundamental way, ensured the solidification and implantation of an entire sexual mosaic” (53). Though Foucault has much to add on the process and nature of sexuality as an institution, I will reserve a full discussion of his work for subsequent parts that deal extensively with sexuality.

within this framework that the exploration of mid-century gender norms will be explored. In looking at gender as an organizing principle of society, this dissertation will be able to solicit a greater understanding of the social and cultural norms that reified gender as an institution during the postwar era, creating a hegemonic order that provoked a large-scale response from those who felt constrained by its limitations. To begin, an image of the normative gender system must be provided. This model will be framed by its presence in many different social and institutional arenas—education, work, domesticity, social life, beauty standards, relationships—thus demonstrating its seeming omnipotence in defining daily life.

### **1. The Housewife and The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit<sup>82</sup>**

In order to delve into the subject, the best point of departure seems to be the stereotyped roles that men and women were supposed to assume on entering adulthood. Beginning from a general perspective will allow me to provide a basis of analysis that can be teased out into its various component parts. For women adhering to the gendered stereotype meant finding a husband, getting married, having children, and providing a nurturing home environment where husbands and children could seek refuge and solace from the outside world. To be able to provide such a welcoming space to their husbands and families, women were expected to carefully craft their appearances, homemaking skills, and interests, catering specifically to the pleasures and desires of their husbands. Men remained the patriarchs, albeit their roles as husbands and fathers had changed considerably since the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>83</sup> Husbands and fathers were now expected to be less authoritative, to give their children and wives the sense that their family unit was a miniature democracy. On the one hand, this meant fathers were to be more present in their children's lives, demonstrating their affection and being attentive to their children's needs and desires.

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<sup>82</sup> This image was created in the 1955 novel of the same name written by Sloan Wilson and then further popularized by the 1956 film *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.

<sup>83</sup> Stephanie Coontz traces the origins of the democratic family all the way back to the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and the American and French revolutions in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. She claims that the conversion from absolutist to democratic rule “dealt a series of cataclysmic blows to the traditional justification of patriarchal authority” (Coontz 2005, 148).

On the other, wives were given a greater voice in decision-making. The expectation that men provided financially for their families remained the same. In the postwar era, for many, though not all, this meant getting a college education and embarking on a corporate career.<sup>84</sup> No matter how a man provided for his family, he was able to in part because of the sizeable increase in wages and tax breaks targeted at the breadwinner/homemaker duo during the 1950s (Cohen 2003, 146; Coontz 1992, 28-29). Many of the people that I interviewed in Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon, when asked what their parents did, positioned them within these dual roles, one example comes from Diane, born in 1950 and raised in a small town in Montana, she said, “My dad owned a livestock hauling business [...] and my mother was a homemaker. Very traditional family” (2013). Without being asked, Diane commented on the normative nature of her parents’ situation: her mother stayed at home and her father worked. The perception that men and women played opposite, yet complementary roles in the domestic and public spheres informed young people as to what was expected from them in order to demonstrate that they had obtained adult status.

In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan identified the elements that converged to constitute white, middle-class femininity during this era:<sup>85</sup> wifehood, motherhood, and utter devotion to the home. She described “... the new image of feminine fulfillment” as women who had “four, five, or six children,” “baked their own bread, helped build the house with their own hands, sewed all their children’s clothes” (1963, 206).<sup>86</sup> Friedan equated this new sense of femininity with

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<sup>84</sup> I would just like to remind the reader that this model did not apply to everyone in the nation because it mainly concerned the growing white middle class. However, more Americans were part of the middle class due to the nation’s prosperity, changes in the economy and at work, and the GI Bill of 1944 at that time.

<sup>85</sup> The ubiquity of white middle class values and their dominating influence on social, economic, and political institutions during the postwar era is heavily documented. See the following classics Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound* (1988), Lizabeth Cohen’s *A Consumer’s Republic* (2003), Kenneth Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985) for examples of how these institutions coincided to produce a coherent vision of the “American way of life.”

<sup>86</sup> There is some debate about the way that Friedan described the American housewife. Some argue that Friedan shared in a reversed patriarchal vision of women’s work that positioned the housewife as the superior sex: she had the leisure of staying home, while the husband labored away at his job for her pleasure (see Ehrenreich 1983, 100-101), while others look at Friedan’s critique as a call for housewives to seek meaning in things outside of their roles as wives and mothers (see Coontz, 2011,



motherhood and domestic work. Though it is not mentioned in this particular citation, the assumption was that the first move towards femininity in the capacity of an adult would be for a woman to marry. Next, she would bear several children. From the time she was married, she would maintain her femininity by continually demonstrating that her focus was on her home and family. A means to provide said demonstration could be through the execution of labor-intensive tasks, like making bread or clothes, both of which would often have been financially unnecessary for middle-class women, but proved to have greater meaning.

The perspective that femininity was realized through the domestic gendered division of labor was pandemic in the postwar era. In *Women and Their Bodies* (1970),<sup>87</sup> The Boston Women's Collective reprinted a letter from the "Confidential Chat Column" of the local pseudonym given was "Disillusioned and Disgusted"—complained that his wife had taken leave of these duties and he thus felt betrayed. "My problem is how to persuade my wife, a junior college graduate, that it is her job to provide her family with clean clothes, decent regular meals, and a reasonably clean home. [...] Is coming home to a wife who has given of herself during the day for your comfort a Utopia?" (as cited in The Boston Women's Health Collective 1970, 44). "Disillusioned" believed that his role was first to direct his wife's attention to respecting her place within their family. The language he used does not assume his role as an authoritarian one; rather it conveyed a sense of leniency. He did not demand that his wife respect his wishes; he hoped to convince her. Additionally, he was writing in to get expert advice on how to best address this issue. This further demonstrates that "Disillusioned" did not see himself as a patriarchal despot; he wanted to approach his wife on terms that would be respectful of her defiance.

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32-33). For my purposes, I am using Friedan's description as a taken-for-granted definition of how womanhood was understood during the postwar era. I will look at both sides of this argument in subsequent sections.

<sup>87</sup> The Boston Women's Collective was a consciousness-raising group in Boston Massachusetts. Sarah Evans explains in *Tidal Wave* (2003) that consciousness-raising was a form of self-education about women's issues and a support network through which women could share in their common experience as women (30; 44-46). Within a short period of time lesbian and black feminists would contest the universality of a "common" woman's experience (ibid., 50-52; 77; 153). The Boston Women's Collective produced a manual and gave a course that was meant to help bring more awareness to the issues women were facing in their daily lives. This course booklet was turned into the bestselling *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1971).

However, his endgame stayed in line with the gendered expectations of womanly duty: it was her job to cook and clean. It is telling that this letter was included in a chapter entitled “Some Myths About Women.” The authors clearly felt that this type of thinking was the norm. Society—political discourse, the media, national conventions—had made the roles of the housewife so homologous with those of women that there was no distinction between who a woman was and what she did. Interestingly, in commenting on this letter The Boston Women’s Collective added an affective level to women’s performance of wife and mother saying, “Disillusioned has made a common mistake in that he has equated his wife’s loving with housework and child care” (1970, 44). The execution of domestic tasks, according to convention, was not just a means for women to fulfill this feminine ideal, it was the way they showed their families they loved them. The pseudonym provided, “Disillusioned and Disgusted,” reflects this perspective. The choice of such a name indicates at the very least a sense of disappointment and at the most, revulsion—whether this is directed specifically at his wife or more broadly at his life at home or even his marriage—, as his wife’s behavior seemed to be depriving him of the domestic ideal: a comfortable home and a content wife.

As men were supposedly the ones occupying a superior social, economic, and political position, one might suppose that the gender norms guiding them might be less reductive, that is, as the superior gender they would have more outlets for self-determination and dimensionality. Though this was true in some regards, the expectations placed on men and what they had to do to achieve masculinity were also formulaic. “In the 1950s, [...] there was a firm expectation [...] that required men to grow up, marry and support their wives. [...]T]he man who willfully deviated was judged to be somehow 'less than a man.' This expectation was supported by an enormous weight of expert opinion, moral sentiment and public bias [...]” (Ehrenreich 1983, 11-12). Masculinity, like femininity, was contingent on conforming to a role that constituted one’s personal and professional self. To be a man, one became a husband and father, which meant taking financial responsibility for one’s wife and children. The role of breadwinner was so synonymous with manhood that the two were axiomatic. This is something that I also noted in my

interviews: many of my interviewees relied on the certainty that the man provided. Michael, who was born in 1949 and raised in Miami, Florida said, “My father obviously worked and my mom worked intermittently throughout my childhood” (2013) and Thomas, who was born in 1955 and raised in Nampa, Idaho, described his peers’ families thus, “Their dad usually had a job, most the mothers worked at home, taking care of the house, the kids, and the family” (2013). Both of these statements convey a certain standard for masculinity. Michael goes as far to use the word “obviously,” to describe his father, tapping into the pervasiveness of the notion that “real” men worked; while Thomas grants a little more leeway, employing “usually.” What is interesting about both of their descriptions is that they move quickly from what the fathers did to the mothers, spending more time describing her than him. This seems to imply that the ubiquity of the masculine role was such that it required little definition. It was within this framework that successful masculinity was writ large in American society at this time.

If femininity was reducible to motherhood and wifehood, and masculinity to fatherhood and husbandhood, then their achievement marked a person’s passage from adolescence into adulthood. In *The Hearts of Men* (1983), Barbara Ehrenreich documents the influence of psychiatry in the postwar era. Though her focus is on men, her discussion of psychiatry’s debate on maturity proves itself relevant to both genders as the achievement of adulthood. Becoming mature meant accepting one’s “sex role”.<sup>88</sup> Failure to do so would result in immaturity, which usually implied an “over masculinized” woman and a “sissified” man; in both cases the specter of homosexuality loomed large (17-18, 23).<sup>89</sup> The steps that a young adult must take in order to attain maturity identified by psychologist R. J. Havighurst in 1953, included: “[...] selecting a mate, learning to live with a marriage partner, starting a family,

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<sup>88</sup> Ehrenreich is certainly not the only one to discuss the power of psychiatry on the American public at that time; it is her pairing of psychiatry with adulthood that merits mention here. For other references to psychiatry’s influence on public opinion see chapter 5 of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) for a discussion on Freud in postwar America; see chapter 2 of Beth Bailey’s *Sex in the Heartland* (2002) for an examination of the shifting sexual mores and the societal need for scientific explanation; or see chapter 1 of David K. Johnson’s *The Lavender Scare* (2004) for a description of the Cold War conflation of homosexuality with psychopathology.

<sup>89</sup> The problematic nature of homosexuality as perceived during the immediate postwar era will be discussed in the next chapter.

rearing children, managing a home, getting started in an occupation, taking on civic responsibilities and finding a congenial social group” (as cited in Ehrenreich 1983, 18). Havighurst’s eight steps were specifically designated for men, which is made clear by the reference to an occupation independent of the home, but the other seven applied to both sexes. It is telling about the times, that the majority of these prescriptions, six, revolved around family life and creating an amenable home environment. The other two were related as they allowed for both partners to create ties to the community, rooting, on the one hand, their civic behavior in shared political, educational, or cultural activities and, on the other, building a network of friends centered around the couple. Some of these steps refer to larger social phenomena that were widely discussed in America at that time, like “selecting a mate,” that is, the process of dating, or “learning to live with a marriage partner,” expressly, getting passed the “honeymoon period” and growing accustomed to one’s role as either husband or wife, or “rearing children,” a “softer” vision of parenting was popularized with the publication of books like Dr. Benjamin Spock’s *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946). When it came to making a case for maturity, the underlying belief was that men and women had to assume their proper gender roles to find fulfillment. Though experts agreed that this process and its continuation required sacrifices, there was a general belief that this was the route to happiness (Ehrenreich 1983, 22-23).

It was not enough, however, to simply go through the motions. Just as “Disillusioned” suggested in the use of his pseudonym, part of adhering to the gender norms of the time was finding enjoyment in the roles that one’s gender designated, or at the very least accepting them as inevitable and thus respecting them. David, an interviewee born in 1954 and raised in Boise, Idaho, described his mother precisely within this framework when asked if she liked being a housewife, he said, “...She understood her role and, and she accepted it. And I thought she enjoyed it. I mean, she always seemed happy” (2013). From this description it looks like there was, at first, an understanding, then, an acceptance, and finally, an emotion associated with what it meant to be a housewife/mother. In David’s case, his mother exemplified perfectly the essence of what she was meant to be. On the one hand, “she did the

laundry, did the cleaning, the cooking, she cared for us and always had time for us,” and on the other, she appeared more than satisfied (ibid.). This description paints her as one of the women who “America’s psychiatrists, sociologists, women’s magazines, and television shows had portrayed as the happiest person on the planet” (Coontz 2011, 22). All of which amounts to a well-incorporated gendered self. It was not just women who were meant to find fulfillment in their domestic selves; for men, home life was meant to be a true haven, a justification for the many hours they spent at work, slaving away providing for their families (Ehrenreich 1983, 100). As fathers, men were finding a new sense of joy in spending time with their children (Friedan 1963, 212). As husbands, they were meant to enjoy the efforts of their wives and relish in the comforts she provided. As Betty Fussell, the wife of a Princeton professor, describes it in her memoir, *My Kitchen Wars* (1999), the pleasure and satisfaction a husband found at home was based on the housewife molding herself to his liking:

The wife's job was to prepare the food, mend the clothing, and tidy up the house of the One Who Did. Other duties of a housewife were to be pretty but not recklessly beautiful, to be attentive but never boring, to be intelligent but not to have a mind of her own, to be entertaining but never to upstage her husband, to be educated but for no practical or professional purpose, to be available for sex when wanted but not to want it on her own (78).

Deeming the husband as the “One Who Did” places great significance on the masculine contribution not only as a provider, but as a producer of things out in the world. The feminine role is seen as a complement to such magnanimity, a response to everything the “One Who Did” might desire: beauty, attention, wit, charm, sophistication, and sex. This is an apt portrayal of the differences in gendered expectations at that time. “In terms of sexuality, women were to be responsive, but not assertive. In terms of mothering, they were to be nurturing and accepting, but not domineering. And somehow they were to embody the qualities of both sexual partner and mother [...]” (Michel 1993, 251). Wives were meant to create a hospitable, loving environment that their whole families could enjoy, while husbands paid for it. Because the home was a sanctuary from the harsh realities of the outside world, the position of the housewife was seen as a privilege and there was the expectation that she should find happiness in this role.

If anyone were to lament their lot, many social observers believed it was men who were seemingly worse off. The enduring image of the happy housewife was juxtaposed with the “man in the gray flannel suit.” Popularized by the 1955 novel by Sloan Wilson and the subsequent 1956 film directed by Nunnally Johnson (distributed by 20<sup>th</sup> century Fox), *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, this metaphor has come to symbolize the supposed soul-crushing power of the corporation that forced men to conform to company standards in dress, behavior, and personality, while speaking to the ennui of materialism and domesticity in the wake of World War II. Barbara Ehrenreich uses the protagonist, Frank Wheeler, from Richard Yates’s *Revolutionary Road* (1961) as the ultimate symbol of what she calls the “gray flannel rebel”: a white-collar worker “trapped” in a mind-numbing career, married (out of social responsibility) with children, living in a spacious home, who is acutely aware of the emptiness of the postwar way of life and philosophizes about conformity and its erosive effects on masculinity (1983, 31-32). Frank Wheeler was nothing more than the fictional embodiment of masculinity that academic writers had been bemoaning for at least a decade. Though supporting one’s family was seen as the basis for “true” masculinity, many critics found the working environment and conditions corrosive to masculinity’s other prerogatives: virility, strength of character, individuation, etc. “Men had to ‘get along’ in organizations; work no longer provided arenas for the display of aggressive, ‘manly’ individualism. The public world in which they worked was more ‘feminized’ in that they now had to rely on interpersonal skills” (May 1988, 85). One of the greatest fears was that the hyper-masculinity instilled in men during the War after its alleged loss during the Depression was in danger (Lichtman 2006, 40; Canaday 2003, 956).<sup>90</sup> The most

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<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, many of the supposed lost features of masculinity were not particular to twentieth century conceptions of masculinity, but rooted instead in eighteenth and nineteenth century understandings of American manliness. Michael Bronski asserts in *A Queer History of the United States* (2011) that in the aftermath of the War of Independence American men needed to distance themselves from their British counterparts in order to do so masculinity was applied to the American context, that is, “This new American man was bold, rugged, aggressive, unafraid of fighting, and comfortable asserting himself” (29). This was very notably embodied in the frontiersmen and militiamen, representations of “true” citizenship as both placed white, propertied men at the top of the pecking order, while subjugating and excluding enslaved and free black men, Native Americans, and the white underclasses (Bronski 2011, 29). In *Creating the Modern Man* (2000), Tom Pendergast

notable contributions came from Philip Wylie, William H. Whyte, David Riesman, and C. Wright Mills, all of them tapping into different, yet similar anxieties around masculinity. In *Generation of Vipers* (1942), Wylie led a crusade against the establishment of a supposed American matriarchy, in which women were “victimizing” men who were already “weak” and “helpless” (Cuordileone 2000, 523) and “smothering” their sons with “unnatural love”, through what was called “momism” (Corber 1993, 197). Whyte takes on the degeneration of independence in describing the workplace as the site where “*The Organization Man*” (1956) was losing touch with his individuality as “group ethos” put pressure on men to give up their free-will (Cuordileone 2000, 523). David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) mourns instead the loss of “inner-directedness”—or the personal pursuit of success, a fundamental characteristic to American manhood—which seemed to be slipping towards “other directedness”—or the appropriation of values outside of one’s self, via the media or expert advice, for example (Whitfield 1991, 71). This chipping away of American manhood was all the more significant because it appeared as though men were expected to assimilate traits that had heretofore been associated with women (Cuordileone 2000, 523). In *White Collar* (1951), C. Wright Mills speaks about the bureaucratization and alienation of the worker that brought about a “variety of personality ‘types’” that served thus to produce men who were the antithesis of the American “self-made man” (Abbott 2002, 12-13). While each of these critics make reference to feminine personality traits imposed on men—momism, other-directedness, conformity—none of them thought to look at the effect that these changes would have had on women (Cuordileone 2000, 523). The absence of any discussion of women’s roles in society reflects the way that androcentrism was at work during that era.

Social critics believed there was much at stake with the feminization of manhood. Popular culture and opinion ruminated on the dangers of a seeming

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bases his entire 200-source study on the premise that masculinity underwent a considerable shift in the first half of the twentieth century becoming increasingly defined through “consumerism” and “the pursuit of perfection,” while holding Victorian masculinity—“personality,” “self-creation,” “wealth,” and “appearances”—in constant tension (111, 127).

increase in adolescent delinquency despite a lack of corroborating evidence (Borrie, 2007, 39-40). In *Wild Ones: Containment Culture and 1950s Youth Rebellion* (2007), Lee Borrie links this rise to a budding youth culture that appeared to reject middle-class sensibilities in favor of “black and white working class cultures” (42). Ilana Nash postulates in *American Sweethearts* (2006) that the media representation of “the disaffected male teen” was a means for “disaffected male adults [...] to project their own desires for rebellion onto others, while still protecting the privilege they enjoyed as lawful conformers to dominant ideologies” (174). Through these mediatized personae male consumers were able to reconnect with the masculine traits that they were denied in the workplace and at home (174). Having the possibility to touch base with the rawer traits of masculinity was particularly important in bolstering manhood at that time, as the larger societal fear was that its eventual feminization would disrupt the entire social order. Men would abandon their domestic, economic, and political roles in favor of “crime, ‘perversion,’ and homosexuality” (May 1988, 85). Within the Cold War context, this was acutely threatening to the “containment culture” that had become the panacea to American problems.<sup>91</sup>

The androcentrism of the postwar era that privileged the worries of men over those of women and positioned their woes as tantamount to civilizational failure used the home as a site to reinvigorate men and anchor them in the ideology of containment. One way this was done was through the glorification of domestic leisure. Leisure activities expanded exponentially during the two world wars and became part and parcel of “the good life.” The interior space of the home became more and more significant for leisure as “togetherness” permeated American culture. In spite of the supposed unity of the home under the auspices of “togetherness,” many leisure activities were targeted at one gender. From the middle of the 1950s on,

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<sup>91</sup> Borrie defines the containment narrative as “the rigid boundaries demarcating the ‘normal’—that is, everything that buttressed the notion that America was a happy, harmonious, idyllic society—from the ‘deviant’—everything that threatened this notion” (2007, 42). Elaine Tyler May explores the ideology of containment on the home front extensively in her book *Homeward Bound* (1988), in which she specifies that containment was synonymous with security (15-16), which was achieved through a strict adherence to family values (97). Joanne Meyerowitz contests women’s ultimate conformity to the domestic ideal in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (1994).



DIY (Do-it-Yourself) projects became the most popular American pastime and the third most popular hobby among men, who spent only slightly more time reading and watching television (Lichtman 2006, 42). DIY projects and other manual activities attributed tasks to men and women based on traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which in turn helped to affirm their domestic roles. For those who dedicated themselves to the improvement of their homes, or even those who applied themselves to the safeguard of their families through the construction of nuclear fallout shelters, which were quite popular during the beginnings of the Cold War, home improvement gave the couple a feeling of control during very uncertain times. It provided men with a “badge of masculinity” that helped to forge their domestic sense of self. These projects allowed for men to tap into their “true” masculine selves by asserting their strength and demonstrating their abilities to handle power tools; they were able to assert their role as protector of the “weaker sex” and the children by building bomb shelters (Lichtman 2006, 39; 42; 49-50). For women, these projects could be seen more as a continuation of their domestic responsibilities, reinforcing the primacy of their roles as “housekeepers and childcare providers” (Lichtman 2006, 40). Home improvement projects were also a good occasion for children to learn from their parents where they fit in the gender balance (Blaszczyk 2009, 242).

The magazine columns “Emily Taylor’s Corner” and “Henry Taylor’s Corner” very much represented this gendered-task mentality. They appeared in the April 1950 women’s monthly *Good Housekeeping*. Both columns offered advice and ideas for DIY projects. Presented similarly to letters to the editor, the titles and the formatting on the page suggest that the authors of the articles were married and collaborated in order to promote “togetherness,” the importance of investing in one’s home, and the separation of the genders when it came to domestic work. The titles were always identical, with the exception of each author’s first name. The subtitles, “She Cleans Things” and “He Fixes Things,” attributed each gender their appropriate role. The articles were placed adjacently, one following the other. Taken together, all these elements indicate a complementarity between the articles, just like that between the man and woman, while insisting on the distinctiveness of each.

This dichotomy manifests itself in the style and subjects of each column.

“Emily Taylor’s Corner,” targeting women, tells a little story or gives examples of everyday situations within the family in order to give context to the advice that follows, whereas “Henry Taylor’s Corner,” addressed to men, goes straight to the point. In their debut pieces, both columns reflect on their intended audiences. “Emily’s” opens with “Hello, Emily Taylor speaking. Each month in this corner I’ll discuss easy ways to clean things around the house. This time, I’d like to chat with the brides about cleaning and putting away their new china and glassware” (1950, 32). The author begins by introducing herself and explaining the purpose of her column. She then reaches out to her readers, the “brides,” by stating that her first focus will be on their hope chest—objects for the home that women collected before marriage in order to furnish their own homes. She is most certainly intending to provide counsel to a newlywed young woman or one about to marry as is made evident by her word and subject choice. The ever-married woman would no longer be referred to as a bride, nor would she be in need of advice on the subject of her trousseau or wedding gifts. Additionally, the subject and its presentation assume ignorance on the part of the reader when it comes to dealing with such finery. The first three sentences of “Emily’s Corner” position *Good Housekeeping’s* readers as young and married. They are concerned about the articles that will represent their home and are charged with the duty of ensuring the longevity of these beloved objects, despite their lack of knowledge on their upkeep. “Henry’s” begins similarly with an introduction and statement of purpose, “I am Henry Taylor, and I take care of those fiddling little jobs that women want done around the house. No matter how simple they sound, they take the right tools and the know-how” (1950, 34). A striking difference from the beginning is the tone. At first, the author minimizes the importance of his projects by using the words “fiddling” and “little,” but he demonstrates that he is serving a greater good. That is, he does them for his wife. The second sentence asserts an air of authority though, as he introduces the necessity of being capable and knowledgeable not only with tools, but also of handiwork, thus imbuing the task with importance, and demonstrating that only men can take care of those things. He goes on to explain what the project will be, “This month’s job is making and putting up a small wooden shelf in the kitchen, with space on top for

pepper and salt and a measuring cup or two, and hooks below for spoons, bottle opener, and the like” (ibid.). When it comes to the work itself, he is direct and detail-oriented about the finished project. The rest of the column follows in an instructive style, which is reflected in its organization. It is divided into three parts: “the materials you need”, “putting the shelf together”, and “drilling the wall”. There are no flourishes; “Henry’s Corner” does not mince words. While “Emily’s Corner” is full of small embellishments, like “If a friend can help, so much the better” or “Washing so many pieces will be a dull job. But you can make the china and glasses sparkle!” (1950, 32). These small writing differences echoed gender-appropriate characteristics: men were serious, knowledgeable, and blunt; while women were social and could get great satisfaction out of the mundane if they put in the effort. Both columns gave practical advice, albeit in distinctive ways that reflected the gender polarization of the era. The examples given here reflect on the roles that men and women were meant to have in the home when it came to DIY projects. Men were providing a service to their wives or families and fulfilling their obligation to make their wives happy and efficient in their homes. They were demonstrating their manly capacities in their use of power tools and knowledge of construction. Furthermore, men’s communication skills were laid out as rudimentary and direct. Women’s work and leisure were indistinguishable: a happy housewife invested herself wholeheartedly in her home. Everything there was a reflection of her and on her. Taking care of the objects in her home would allow her to show them off to others as a representation of herself and her family.

## **2. The External Trappings of the Self**

Though beauty norms were of course present prior to the turn of the twentieth century, it was at that time that those standards became overtly sexualized. According to Maria Elena Buszek’s *Pin-Up Grrrls* (2006), this can be attributed to women’s increasing presence in the public domain. Buszek charts the history of the pin-up—

represented by the burlesque performer, the “Gibson Girl,”<sup>92</sup> the “Varga Girl,” the “Playboy bunny,” Betty Page, the Asian and African American Playmates, and the feminist pin-up—as a means of self-expression and control of the feminine self and sexuality. At the end of the nineteenth century, as the women’s suffrage movement attempted to gain momentum a novel image emerged, the “New Woman,”—an expression originally coined in 1894 by the English writer Sarah Grand in order to personify and speak for the demands of the suffrage movement—who exemplified the modern conditions of womanhood. Though a polymorphous figure, Buszek notes one unifying feature of all these female representations: the woman was consistently shown interacting “with social spaces that were public, urban, and modern” (as cited in Buszek 2006, 78). Upper- and working-class women easily identified with the “New Woman” as the embodiment of women embracing new public roles (ibid.). New opportunities for women also served to rewrite the script for feminine sexuality as women were coming increasingly into contact with men in the workplace and began frequenting unsupervised entertainments like dance halls and amusement parks (ibid., 81). At the same time, societal visions of sexuality were changing as Freudian theory was widely disseminated and sexologists, like Havelock Ellis and Ellen Kay, advocated shared desire and pleasure, leading to a normalization of companionate marriage, that is, marriage would include sexual satisfaction for both members (ibid.). The characterization of the “New Woman” is important precisely because she was both lauded and condemned; she represented youth, beauty, and potential sexual availability as well as progressive womanhood (ibid., 85, 100). It was precisely this combination that separated her from the risqué unacceptability of her predecessor, the burlesque performer, rendering her appealing to men and women alike and threatening to the old Victorian order. She was the inspiration for the “Gibson Girl,” who was “held up as not just an actively desiring, but an abundantly *desired* sexual subject—a fact that would inevitably lead to her gradual evolution from illustration to

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<sup>92</sup> Illustrations created by Charles Dana Gibson in 1886 and reproduced in *Life* magazine for twenty years. His drawings were fictionalized and romanticized versions of the “New Woman” that epitomized the magazine’s forward-thinking philosophy that promoted progressivism and a modern lifestyle (Buszek 2006, 85-86).

pin-up” (Buszek 2006, 91). As women gained ground in the public sphere, their representations in the media played an increasingly important role in normalizing their endeavors. A growing association between empowered sexuality and womanhood would inevitably influence beauty norms as the media, convention, and women themselves attempted to redefine femininity in the new century. From the “New Woman’s” inception, suffragettes used her beauty as a weapon. Though, Buszek acknowledges that this could be considered pandering “to traditional and even compulsory standards of beauty for young women rather than making an effort to challenge them,” she explains how these images were used to counter the stereotype that a suffragette was necessarily ugly, precisely because society “expected to see the virtues and vices of femininity *written on the body*” (2006, 130; 133). In a patriarchal society, the simplification of the Other, that is women, is but one way to keep her at a distance, to define her through one lens, to reduce her. Using the mold of feminized beauty as a means of subversion is a powerful way to complexify and challenge this. Though Buszek endeavors to do precisely this, the following section will look at beauty norms at mid-century as a means of establishing a hegemonic vision of femininity that further confined women to the housewife/mother template.

While men also experience pressure from societal beauty norms that demand conformity to a certain type of masculinity, in the postwar era, men were given more outlets of expression. Whether or not these were reductive or harmful to men’s personalities does not undermine the symbolic power of their existence: educational and occupational opportunities allowed men to seek many avenues of self-realization. For women, beauty norms weighed more heavily on their self-definition, precisely because opportunities that were meant to be life-altering, like university, provided men and women with fundamentally different experiences and expectations. Two of the women I interviewed, born nine years apart, in 1936 and 1945, and raised in fundamentally different places, Chicago, Illinois, and Brush Prairie, Washington, expressed nearly the same sentiment when it came to women and their academic potential. Mary said, “The expectation of what women would do was you would go to college and get your “MRS.” And so, the expectation was that they would just get

married and then move on or they would be teachers, nurses” (2013). While Patricia, the older of the two, also spoke about how class played a role in women’s access to education and jobs, “It was the wealthy girls that went to school and for the most part they went for their “MRS.” degrees. Otherwise, it was a job as receptionist or secretary until marriage” (2012). For both women, whether a woman pursued education or occupation, both routes led to the same place: marriage. These were seen as transitory phases before women achieved full maturity through wifehood and motherhood. If we return briefly to the idea mentioned earlier that attaining maturity was fundamental to full incorporation of one’s gendered self, then a mature-gendered self would afford men and women very different means and ends when it came to realizing their potential. Men and women would thus take advantage of opportunities in different ways. College and pink-collar employment were supposed to be the “hunting grounds” for mate selection for women, while university and career were outlets of growth and advancement for men. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan cited a study from *The American College*, which reiterated this point. The study found that “the need to be independent and find identity in society” placed men and women on different grounds in college as men evolved through their focus on work, while women stagnated as their identities were anchored exclusively in their sense of self as sexual beings (1963, 143). If marriage, sex, and children were women’s primary means of achieving fulfillment, the weight that beauty norms represented for them would far outstrip the role that these same standards would have on men.

Lois Banner claims in *American Beauty* (1983) that the pursuit of beauty unites women of different classes, regions, and ethnic racial identities, a fact which has greatly contributed to and “constituted a key element in women's separate experience of life” (3). She nuances this, however, by adding that beauty is not the great democratizer, as one might assume when confronting this idea. Unifying women under one umbrella as having a similar feminine experience of the world should not erase the differentiation as expressed through beauty norms that has arisen between classes, regions, and the ethno-racial identities of women (3). In other words, the importance of beauty norms in a patriarchal society affects women similarly but trickles through the myriad of race, class, age, sexual orientation,

ability, etc. differently. Popular culture played an enormous role in ensuring women received a constant and consistent image of what it meant to be beautiful, while incessantly drawing a link to a larger domestic and gender order. “Mainstream culture celebrated traditional family life and its strictly separated gender roles. Images of girlhood in periodicals, advertisements, and popular narratives focused heavily on romance and the eventual goal of marriage, emphasizing beauty, fashion, and ‘boy catching’” (Nash 2006, 170). For American girls and women, then, properly embodying beauty norms was seen as heavily influential on their future prospects. This, quite naturally, led to what Ilana Nash has dubbed “the labor of neurotic self-correction,” or the consumption of advice books, columns, and booklets that could teach a young woman “how best to serve boys' moods and desires” (2006, 15). Truly embodying feminine beauty norms meant fine-tuning all parts of the self. Physically that meant a woman should give attention to her clothing, make-up and hair, diet, and overall demeanor. The latter would have been heavily influenced by the requirements placed on the personality, which likewise needed to be worked and sculpted to be amenable and deferent to men.

The media underwrote the beauty norms of the first half of the twentieth century. From the inception of the silver screen, its female stars embodied the physical ideal and set the standard for American women (Banner 1983, 283). Advertising likewise played an important role, as it spread through media and markets. In spite of the growth in advertising and the development of television, the film industry maintained its dominating influence on beauty throughout the 1950s (ibid.). Though movie stars set the ideal, they also portrayed different types of acceptable womanhood, which held beauty norms in a sort of tension as society wrestled with its “good girl/bad girl” double standard. In a similar vein to Banner, Wini Breines maintains that the 1950s were an era when sexualized representations of women simply reduced them to “blond, buxom, and sexual,” i.e. bad, or “wholesome and pretty,” i.e. desexualized good girls (1992, 102). I would make the argument that the postwar period actually was a time when it became increasingly important for married women to try to embrace both images. Artificial additions and modifications, including make-up, hairdos and styling, as well as cosmetic surgery,

have been the norm since the 1920s (Banner 1983, 274). However, it has not been the alterations to the body that have made it an increasingly sexualized canvas. Rather dress, itself, has moved “toward new versions of sexually attractive clothing,” according to Valerie Steele (ibid., 300). In fact, in her review of *American Beauty*, Steele explains that sexuality is inherent to the concept of beauty (ibid., 301). Using Steele’s understanding then, it is compelling to see that mid-century cosmetic companies attempted to infuse the paragon of femininity, the housewife, with an outright sexual allure. In fact, it is Banner who points to this conclusion when she explains the tremendous success of two major make-up companies when they used their products in conjunction with sexualizing the housewife. First Revlon did this, then Clairol did in 1955. The latter launched an ad campaign featuring bleached blond hair. Acting on the knowledge that many women associated dyed blond hair with sexual promiscuity, the ad executive, Shirley Polykoff, lessened the inappropriate suggestiveness of the product by framing it within the bounds of permissive sexuality. The advertisements featured blonds with children (ibid., 272-273). Despite their suggestive blond hair, they fit into “the good girl” mold: wholesome, mom-ish community members. The purpose of which was to bestow the image of the demure housewife with a titillating sexuality. Largely associated with the actress Marilyn Monroe, the adoption of light blond hair meant women wanted to portray themselves as “feminine,” “sensual,” and perhaps “unintellectual” (ibid., 285). The integration of overt sexuality into women’s self-presentation and society’s larger beauty standard reflected the cultural trend toward an increasingly desirous and desirable woman. Companionate marriage being a feature of adult life since the 1920s encouraged married women to show more and more interest in sex, writing this onto the body through dress, hair, and make-up thus became increasingly important.

According to Banner, many of the fashionable trends of the 1950s were reincarnations of Victorian styles. Skirts were at mid-calf and either full circle, puffed out by starched crinoline petticoats, or skin-tight. The waist was an accentuated zone of the body, reduced as much as possible through the use of girdles or corsets, and offset by exaggerated, conical, and buxom bosoms (ibid., 285). Padded bras were but part of the numbers game—measuring hips, waist, and



breasts—into which many women were drawn as they tried to fit into the desirable form (Breines 1992, 100). Additionally, trendy shoes were narrow at the toe and high-heeled (Banner 1983, 285). Incidentally, Banner presents these, and other, fashion trends from the perspective that fashion is inherently oppressive. In matters of dress and self-adornment, she thus fails to acknowledge the role that women played in sexualizing themselves and any agency they might have possessed in doing so.

Helen Gurley Brown, eventual editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, attempted to empower all women through sexuality. Though she was supposedly targeting a single audience in her *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962), this advice book reflects on the larger cultural phenomenon of the sexualized woman, but specifically offers to guide single women to “the good life.”<sup>93</sup> Her discussion of sexuality and womanhood was very representative of the dialogue taking place publically, but it parted ways with that conversation through its intended audience: single women. Notwithstanding, much of what she says might be looked at within the larger framework of feminine beauty standards. Her etiquette book covers everything from loneliness to meeting and surrounding oneself with men, from being sexy to having a career, from being wise with one’s money when picking the right apartment to entertaining, exercise, diet, hair, and make-up, and from having an affair to attaining “the rich full life.” Throughout, Brown returned consistently to a woman having the right physical allure. Her rhetoric is both liberating and restraining. When it came to the wardrobe, women needed to think about pleasing themselves in order to please men. Brown recognized women’s desire to be beautiful and reassured them that they were experts on their own beauty:

You should dress in a manner that preserves and strengthens [your image]—makes it feel cosy and secure! But how about men? Shouldn't you dress to

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<sup>93</sup> Though some see her as “a feminist trailblazer,” Stephanie Coontz recognizes that her claims were somewhat contradictory (Coontz 2011, 137). Brown asserts “the good life” was complete and utter enjoyment of singlehood, but in reality, she furthers the notion that a woman’s identity was defined and secured through men throughout her book. One such example would be when she says, “It really is important to surround yourself with men every day to keep up your morale” (Brown 1962, 42). The implication being that women’s happiness was contingent on male affection and attention, without which, a woman would fall into a depression.

please *them*? [...] Why is it assumed just because a man is a man he knows what *you* should wear? [...] The *expert*, it seems to me, is the woman who has spent years (*most* working women) shopping for and buying women's clothes, perusing fashion magazines and getting acquainted with her figure and what it looks nice in" (Brown 1962, 190 [emphasis Brown's]).

In knowing one's self, one's body, a woman would be able to properly dress it. It was this know-how that would make women dress themselves in a way that would be pleasing to men. In fact, Brown repeats the idea that if a woman dressed for herself, she would inevitably be appealing to men. In essence, she is attempting to give women confidence in their taste, style, and self-awareness at the same time that she positions all of this for the male gaze.

Brown believed that a woman should put everything to work in order to create a larger physical persona that would make the woman beautiful and enticing. She felt that physical adornment was mutually-reinforcing, that is: once beautified, they became beautiful, inside and out. Again, the rhetoric seems liberating on the surface, but the end goal returned to one object: securing a man. "[...T]o sink *into* a man you must at least create the illusion of beauty by *acting* beautiful. [...Y]ou must love yourself enough to employ every device ... voice, words, clothes, figure, make-up ... to become [a beauty]" (ibid., 208). The way that one could reach this ideal then was through acting the part. One was meant to evaluate every aspect of the self and enlist it to the cause of beauty and desirability. Brown very much believed that her readers, and women in general, could use their natural talents combined with a little elbow-grease to become the woman that magazines and films promised. She thought if one worked on their voice and demeanor, watched their diet and exercised, in addition to catering to the usual suspects—hair, face, and clothes—any woman could be beautiful, or convince at least one man that she was.

Pervasive mid-century beauty norms did more than simply stipulate how women could make themselves attractive, they were also reflections on the ethno-racial and economic orders that predominated at that time. The media tended to insist on how women could alter themselves to achieve beauty. There was a kind of taken-for-grantedness in the notion that beauty could be obtained. All of this was based on the premise that one already possessed the "right" unalterable features, like skin and eye color, hair texture and type. What was left unsaid, though thoroughly

represented, was the American prejudice that white women were the only ones who were beautiful, desirable, and glamorous. In fact, Wini Breines insists that class and race were major factors of inclusion and exclusion. “Being middle-class and white were the indispensable building blocks, but a certain kind of body, complexion, hair, and face were required too. It helped to be fair in all ways: skin, hair, eyes, and disposition” (Breines 1992, 96). We are reminded here of the importance of race and class as precursors to everything then. Breines nuances these categories by adding the dimension of scale: this was a time when whiteness ranged from the ideal (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) to the less desirable (Italian, Irish, Catholic, or Jewish). Achieving the standard required one to already be white enough, which necessarily excluded women of color from the norm. Consequently, in addition to reflecting sexual norms within marriage, beauty standards also replicated the ethno-racial hierarchy that shaped America at that time. Thus far, physical appearance has been my focus on the interplay of gender, sexuality, and beauty, however, women were not only expected to make themselves physically appealing, and this was especially true for girls.

Given the fact that a sexualized housewife posed no threat to social order because she embodied the promise of a fulfilling marriage, a sexualized, unmarried girl did. Hence, many of the social prescriptions offered to young women focused on their capacity to hone their personality, rather than their bodies, to the liking of young men. Just as their older female counterparts were disproportionately affected by beauty norms because the pursuit of beauty was one of the few acceptable outlets for feminine expression, personality scripts for young women were seen as an ideal way for young women to prepare themselves for adulthood. “Teenage girls received more intensive and extensive personality and popularity instructions than teenage boys. Certain qualities ensured girls’ status among their female associates and potential male suitors” (Rhea 2008, 195). When young girls were concerned the media accentuated their juvenility and behavior, giving particular attention to the appropriate path to adulthood, dating (Banner 1983, 283-284). The idea being that young women tapped into their potential through the process and finalization of mate selection. In order to become truly desirable, girls needed to construct their

personality so they would be interesting to boys and become popular. This became apparent as a budding youth culture defined itself between the 1920s and 1950s. As book and magazine editors took notice of their growing young readers, etiquette books and advice columns began to specifically address their concerns. The *Ladies' Home Journal*, starting in the late 1920s, realized many young women were reading their mother's magazines and decided thus to create the column "The Sub-Deb" (Schrum 2001, 334). As early as 1931, the column began to concentrate on boys and relationships (ibid.). There was enough interest in girls' issues that the magazine market debuted its first general interest magazines targeting teenage girls in the 1940s, *Calling All Girls* (1941) and *Seventeen* (1944) (ibid., 335). Girls' columns and magazines appealed to the masses when they treated their readers and their concerns with respect. In the 1950s, the recurrent themes tended to be fashion, dating, and marriage (ibid., 336). When Maureen Daly<sup>94</sup> was responding to letters for "The Sub-Deb," one young woman wrote in to ask how a girl could best mold her personality so as to be appealing to boys. The girl asked, "Is it true that boys like only girls with good personalities?" (as cited in Daly 1950 28). Not only does this question indicate the importance of boys' perceptions on shaping girls' personalities, it presents an acute awareness on the girl's behalf that she should try to fit within that box. The response that Daly provides allows her to very carefully avoid taking a strong position on what "a good personality" was precisely. She uses a reference book to give an idea to her readers of what might be expected of them:

A quick look in the dictionary will tell you that 'personality' means 'quality or state of being a person' and 'good' means 'sufficient or satisfactory for its purpose.' Rearrange these words, add a little common sense and you come up with this answer: If you are warmhearted and friendly, boys will like you whether your personality is quiet, gay, temperamental or any other variety (Daly 1950, 28).

Though she approaches the question with caution, Daly does give an indication of a basis for personality: niceness, described here as "warmhearted" and "friendly." In *Teen Obsession* (2008), Regan Rhea demonstrates that being nice was a major part of the recipe if a young woman wanted to be appealing to her female peers and boys,

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<sup>94</sup> The acclaimed young-adult fiction writer of *Seventeenth Summer* (1942).

saying, “As innocuous and simple as the label ‘nice’ sounded, in practice the term encapsulated an almost cult-like maintenance of a set of manufactured rigid behaviors and attitudes” (166). So, even though Daly seems to be giving a lot of leeway for different personality types—“quiet,” “gay,” and “temperamental”—, the recommendation that a girl be kind had great symbolic importance. Rhea explains a “Girl under the influence of the ‘nice’ syndrome controlled her emotions, showed a courteous consideration for others [*sic*] feelings, acted with enthusiasm and vigor, smiled and laughed often yet naturally, proved a sparkling conversationalist and displayed impeccable manners and common sense” (2008, 166-167). This description seems to be in direct conflict with the temperamental personality type provided by Daly, but moodiness could be culled. The real attractive female personality was self-sacrificing, socially adept, and happy. What is so telling about this question and Daly’s response is its very premise: boys only liked certain kinds of girls and girls should try to conform accordingly.

In a later edition of “The Sub-Deb,” edited by Ruth Imler, there is clear connection between the time a girl spent honing her personality and attaining her larger role in life. Imler insists on the fact that it is both process and performance, “Are you *becoming* that girl? She doesn’t spend much time brooding or daydreaming—she *does!*” (1956, 24). Her use of italics is meant to emphasize “becoming” and “does” to give her readers the sense that they must be proactive in their ultimate pursuit of happiness. There are multiple goals that the girl should be working towards “get[ting] a date off to a good start,” “concentrat[ing] on having a good time with your date,” and “mak[ing] some progress toward developing your personality and interests” in order to “mak[e] the most of her life” by “saving and spending her time for the purchase of important dreams” (Imler 1956, 24). Imler equates the young woman’s role in dating with her eventual investment in marriage. Going through the appropriate pleasantries would require time and skill. Practicing putting her date at ease would only take fifteen minutes and be as simple as controlling the interaction between the young man and her parents through polite conversation. Focusing on the actual date should lead to another date. To ensure this, the girl needed to reassure the young man by complimenting the company he kept

and letting him know she was having fun. This would only require three hours. Working at her personality and interests for one year would guarantee that she was pleasant to be around and that boys would want to take her out. The pay-off for all this hard work: she would become perfect marriageable material. The references to time were ways to insist on the need and process for refinement. Positioning this as investment in “important dreams” was a means to tell young women the sum of their parts culminated in their ability to land a husband and that this was their ultimate goal.

The consequences for not trying meant that a young woman was an outsider. This frequently delayed or precluded her from becoming a housewife/mother. One of the women I interviewed ruminated on this, rather than seeing it as problematic, time and experience made her grateful because it afforded her an experience that would have been closer to that of a man’s. Kathleen, born in 1946 and raised in Boise, Idaho, said, “In retrospect, I believe that saved me from getting married right away and having kids because I didn’t exactly fit the mold of what the boys were looking for. And so, I could really concentrate on academics and going on to college. Not that I didn’t pine away for a boyfriend” (2013). This woman certainly was not alone in seeking out opportunities that seemed less evident for girls. In spite of the pressures placed on young women to seek out wifedom and motherhood, women’s presence and participation in the public sphere continued to shift dramatically, leading eventually to a complete reshaping of the postwar landscape.

### **3. Conflicting Scripts: Professional and Academic Opportunities for Women**

The normative image of the stay-at-home wife and mother that dominated the postwar era had actually been in a sort of tug-of-war with the expanding opportunities offered to women throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Prior to the United States entrance into World War II, 14.6 million women were in paid employment (or 22 percent of American women) (Le Dantec-Lowry 2016, 5; U.S. Census Bureau 1999, 868). 27 percent of them were blue-collar workers and

15.6 percent were married (Le Dantec-Lowry 2016, 5).<sup>95</sup> In spite of these numbers, World War II is often portrayed as a breaking point for women when it comes to work. The most popular statistics seem to favor women's public roles over their private ones. They lay claim to a 60 percent increase in the female labor force, three-fourths of whom were married women (Coontz 2011, 47). Additionally, they tout the Senior Scholastic poll as evidence that women were leaving behind their aprons for a paycheck.<sup>96</sup> "Nevertheless, national polls found that fewer than 20 percent of American women as a whole thought the ideal life should combine marriage and a career. Despite patriotic approval of women who worked in the war industry, strong hostility was directed at wives who worked for any other reason" (Coontz 2011, 47). As such, there has been quite extensive questioning of women returning to the home after having joined the workforce in such significant numbers. In « Naturaliser la race, effacer le 'genre' » (2016), H el ene Le Dantec-Lowry explains that women's presence in the workplace has been presented by scholars in two distinct ways. On the one hand, there are those who study women's activities in the public sector, whether it was paid or unpaid, in order to examine the evolution of women's growing numbers in paid employment, and thus trace the budding feminist movement that came to a head in the late 1960s. On the other hand, there are those who look at the continuation of a restrictive and traditional gender discourse that culminated in the 1950s ideal: the white, middle-class, suburban housewife (ibid., 11). The tension presented in scholarly focus merely highlights the tenuous roles for women at mid-century and the barriers they had to overcome to define themselves. Like Le Dantec-Lowry, I believe these competing frameworks is the perfect site in which to position my discussion of education and work and normative gender roles in the postwar era

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<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that one of the overarching points of « Naturaliser la 'race', effacer le genre » is the insistence on the white, middle-class image in propaganda during the War, which inevitably led to a white-washing of women's work, that is, a complete abnegation of the contributions of women of color. First in that, many of them had always worked and, second, because this was not an exceptional endeavor, they were adding little, if nothing, to the war effort. This was especially powerful at the time because the image of the white, middle-class, suburban-dwelling housewife came to represent the American Dream, concurrently excluding women of color and the lower classes from it (Le Dantec-Lowry 2016, 6; 10-11)

<sup>96</sup> The Senior Scholastic poll surveyed 33,000 female high school students in 1943, 88 percent of whom said they would like to have a career outside of housewifery for at least some portion of their lives (Coontz 2011, 47).

as these can be seen as locus points around which the private and public lives of men and women reinforced the dominant values of the breadwinner/father and housewife/mother.

Initially women's employment fell after the War as women adhered to popular prescriptions and propaganda efforts that asserted wartime paid work was simply "for the duration;" "true" women's work was found in the home (Coontz 2011, 59; Le Dantec-Lowry 2016, 9). Throughout the 1950s though, married and single women were working in larger numbers than they had previously (Coontz 1992, 160). "In fact, their employment rate grew four times faster than men's during the 1950s. The employment of wives tripled and the employment of mothers increased fourfold" (Coontz, 2011: 59). Part of this was due to the changing perception of women's roles in society. "[...A] growing consciousness assumed that it was normal and even proper for a middle-class white girl to earn a college degree and then to earn her own living—at least until she became a full-time wife and mother" (Nash 2006, 183). In a very real sense, this shifted white, middle-class women's normal trajectory from working before marriage to working before marriage *and* once their kids were older. Kim England and Kate Boyer in their article on the feminization of clerical work cite Veronica Stron-Boag's argument that "this return, or the second stage of marital paid employment, was a major development of the 1950s" (2009, 324). I would like to present two examples of this trend from the interviews I conducted in Portland, Oregon. They illustrate the different reasons why women sought employment after having spent years raising their children. James, born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1931 and having moved to Oregon in 1968, described his wife's work trajectory as fitting the prescribed model of the time:

She worked part of the time. She had worked when she'd got out of high school until after she was married. She worked for a transportation airline, which flew flights to and from Korea. And she was a flight scheduler and just loved it 'because she'd get to be out around the airplanes and she'd get to work with all of the guys—my wife gets along better with guys and men than women. She doesn't really want to talk about toilet training, diapers, and cooking. She'd cook, and she cooked very well, but I'm the cook in the family. So she worked and after the family got their engraved numbers, she worked up at Sears part-time. And that was more to get extra money, to do traveling, and that sort of thing. By that time, you know, I'm making good money" (2013).



Initially, James describes the work his wife did prior to their marriage as tremendously fulfilling, part of the reason for which was because it removed her from the private sphere not only in deed, but also in thought. She worked in a male-dominated sector and was able to talk about subjects that women did not commonly discuss as a rule. It is quite telling that almost nothing is said about her returning to the home when they had children. Rather it is just taken for granted. However, once all six of their children were big enough to go to school, she went back to work in the retail sector. James makes an interesting comment about her return to work: it was to add more disposable income to their household, so the family could consume in more elaborate ways. As mass-consumer society grew, households would have a hard time “keeping up” with the consumption expectations that one’s class imposed on them on only one salary (Boyer and England 2009, 323). It is clear that James’s work provided more than enough funds for the basics as he describes himself as “making good money.” His wife’s contribution, however, allowed them to provide their family with experiences in addition to things. Michael, for his part, spoke about his mother working after a ten-year interruption. He positions her return to work similarly to James in that her income was meant to render life more affordable, but in Michael’s case it was to help provide him with an education:

She took a ten-year hiatus after she married her second husband in 1955 and didn’t work until soon after my brother went to college in 1964-65. But my mom had a real working life. She went back into public health nursing. My stepfather’s contribution was not going to take care of my education, she wanted to augment that and of course I was expected to work too. So that’s when she went back to work and she continued for fifteen years” (2013).

Unlike James’s wife, Michael’s mother was professionally experienced. She pursued one line of work throughout her life and Michael made a point to say she “had a real working life.” The implications abound with such a comment, but it seems that he was trying to show respect for the fact that his mom had a career, not a job. He still noted that she was able to be at home with him and his brother between his sixth and sixteenth years, but returned to work in order to ensure her son’s educational future. His mother’s career in many ways was set in motion because of the needs of her family: prior to his sixth birthday, it was because she was the only income earner, and after his sixteenth, it was to ensure his economic future. The importance of this

should not be downplayed. Lizabeth Cohen explains the growing link between education and income at the time. “Education in the postwar period, more than in any previous time, became tightly linked to economic and social status. A high school degree, and particularly a college education—which requires adequate secondary school training—substantially raised household income and net worth” (2003, 240). Michael’s mother certainly conveyed to him the importance of education and providing for one’s family in resuming her career as she attempted to provide him with the most opportunities her career could afford him.

Incidentally, the drop in the age of marriage and the rising birth rate negatively affected the presence of young married women in the workforce (May 1988, 67). Single women’s presence declined in part because they were not that numerous in the first place, having been born during the Depression when the birth rate was on the decline (Boyer and England 2009, 320). Another reason was because single women were staying in high school longer and enrolling in college at higher rates (*ibid.*). The principal consequence of this phenomenon was that older, professionally inexperienced women found jobs once they no longer had small children in their charge (May 1988, 67). In fact, older, married women were seen as a less costly alternative to younger women (Boyer and England 2009, 322). “As a result, their large number contributed to the increasing segregation of women into low-level ‘female’ jobs” (May 1988, 67). This gave rise to the “pink collar” professional category characterized as having less prestige and lower wages than other forms of “white collar” work because it happened to be composed predominantly of women. Additionally, shifts in the economy, from manufacturing to service, created more demands for female employees in clerical, sales, and service jobs (Boyer and England 2009, 325). Women were seen as an “untapped” and “attractive” labor source for positions that could be done in tandem with their domestic responsibilities (Coontz 2011, 60; England 1993, 226). When it came to paid work then, the housewife/mother persona loomed large in every woman’s mind. Coontz explains that a married woman’s paid work was not to compete with her work in the home, which meant that, first, she needed her husband’s approval and, second, her job was not to provide too much satisfaction (2011, 61). Not only

OREGON STATE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
102 Public Service Building  
Salem, Oregon

November 5, 1956

Memo to: Portland Department Heads

From: Genevieve M. Lind, Recruitment and Training Officer

Recently, the president of Montana State College, talking on the labor market of the future, suggested that employers begin to give thought to the recruiting of homemakers who possess skills which could be utilized during the hours in the day when their children are in school. Dr. Renne points to factors which contribute to an acute shortage in a number of areas in which women are employed, and indicates that the shortage may be still more acute in the next fifteen to twenty years.

If it can be worked out with departments in the Portland area, we are prepared to experiment with Dr. Renne's suggestion as it might be applied to the stenographic shortage. Our recruiting would be aimed at homemakers who are skilled stenographers, providing them with an opportunity to work for the state government from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with possibly a half-hour lunch period. This schedule would permit the homemaker to send her youngsters to school and be home when they return. She would work approximately five hours daily.

We are reasonably certain that we could recruit, on this basis, some highly skilled stenographers. We could not, of course, proceed in this direction without knowing whether it would be practical and workable in your department. We know that it would, in some instances, require shifting and possible reassignment of the work of your regular full-time staff.

We will bring up this proposal at the Personnel Officers' Meeting this month. In the meantime, we would appreciate your reaction to an experiment of this kind in the Portland area, and any suggestions you might have regarding it.

GML:gle

cc: Personnel Officers, Portland

Figure 9 Memo from Oregon State Civil Service Commission (Lind 1956).

would this keep women in low-level positions, it would ensure that their focus remained where it should. The rising rates of female employment, however, tended to highlight the double discourse that encouraged women to find fulfillment in the home while participating in the lower echelons of the paid labor force. As this became increasingly the norm during the 1950s, it left a strong impression on girls growing up in that period. More than one woman I interviewed felt quite restrained by the opportunities available to women. Carol, an artist, born in 1945 in New Jersey, explained the limitations placed on women's career opportunities, "Frankly, there were four things open to you: you could be a teacher; you could be a nurse; you could be a secretary; you could work in a store" (2012). In fact, a memo issued from the Oregon State Civil Service Commission, the initial arm of the state government that dealt with organizing and collective bargaining for state employees, acknowledged the potential of employing housewives (see Figure 9). In it, Genevieve M. Lind reminds her readers that they are already facing shortages for "stenographers," one of the "areas in which women are employed" (Lind 1956). This problem could be remedied by the proposed experiment: "recruiting homemakers," "providing them with an opportunity to work for the state government" with a schedule that would not keep them from their familial obligations and thus "permit[ting] the homemaker to send her youngsters to school and be home when they return" (ibid.). This vision of feminine employment is predicated on the fact that there necessarily was a breadwinning husband in the home and that the woman's primary responsibility was to her home and family (England 1993, 226). Most of the recipients of this memo at Portland State University responded favorably. Five comments, all in the affirmative, were included on the front of the memo's cover sheet: "Sounds good," "Look [*sic*] ok," "Seems sensible," "A good suggestion," "We could use such a person." Such positive comments indicate that the experiment might be "practical" and "workable," just as the memo suggests. On the back of the cover sheet, however, one administrator commented, "We have tried some of these in the past—it didn't work very well. Kids were sick, husband's work hours changes [*sic*], wife had extra shopping to do, etc." In spite of the expressed need for women workers, the very

conditions of most women's existence—being available for their husbands and children, following through on their domestic tasks—entered into direct conflict with the needs of the workplace and made them non-ideal employees.

This type of prejudice in the workplace was not uncommon, and certainly not illegal. Stephanie Coontz outlines many of the limitations placed on female employment in the postwar era in her book *A Strange Stirring* (2011). As men were seen as the true earners for the family, women's paid employment was restricted, trivialized, and precarious. Employers actively asked women about their plans to have families, let them go when they got married, became pregnant, or were no longer attractive to their employer; some of them refused outright to hire women (Coontz 2011, 8; 10). Patricia, speaking in Portland, Oregon in 2012, expressed the banality of such questions when she was a single, young woman looking for work, "At job interviews it was typical to be asked, "Why should I hire you?—you're just going to get married and have kids." (2012). This type of questioning illustrates the restrictions placed on women's employment expressed through the attitudes of potential employers who simply saw women workers as temporary. Again from the perspective of the employer, women, single or married, did not fulfill the employer's image of what a good employee was. These stereotyped expectations were reflected in the 1958 National Manpower Council's volume on women workers, entitled *Womanpower*. In a review of *Womanpower*, H. Silcock attributes the reluctance of employers to hire women to what the National Manpower Council refers to as "wastage." It is described thus, "In the United States the average interval between school and marriage is now about two years, and participation in the labour force declines rapidly after marriage. Faced with a high level of wastage, employers are often unwilling to recruit women for jobs which require expensive training" (1958, 274). The memo sent to Portland State University attempts to anticipate the question of "wastage" by stipulating that they would be seeking "highly skilled stenographers," that is women who have already had training and perhaps experience, and would thus demand very little investment in terms of training. Interestingly, Silcock points out that the papers presented in the second volume of *Manpower*, having identified the difficulties in successfully exploiting the untapped female labor

force, had yet to establish for certain whether employer's hesitations were merely reflections of their expectations that women would put their families before their jobs or that they were actually doing so (ibid.). This conclusion would support Silcock's assessment that this volume had properly identified the "deeply rooted tradition which divides [...] men and women's work [...] to be governed more by social norms than by considerations of economic efficiency or physiological differences" (ibid.). The negative response on the memo's cover sheet claims to go beyond an expectation. The author indicates that in his professional experience, married women were unreliable. It is hard to believe that in the 1950s the secretarial functions of the university were for the most part fulfilled by men, given the feminization of such work. In looking at *The Viking*, Portland State University's yearbook, from 1953, 1956, and 1959, the majority of university employees were in fact men, which might justify the assertion that women were undependable employees. In 1953, the yearbook pictured 51 men and forty women; in 1956, it pictured eighty men and 14 women; in 1959, *The Viking* pictured 142 men and 57 women. However, if these numbers are broken down by function, the picture shifts dramatically: women far outstripped men in clerical employment in two out of three yearbooks. In 1953, 26 pictures identify people working in the university's administration, 23 of the individuals shown were women, so 88 percent of the office staff. The 1956 *Viking* does not appear to fully represent their administration and staff, picturing six in total—compared to 39 and 53 pictured in 1953 and 1959 respectively—five of whom, however, were men, meaning women only held 20 percent of these positions. The administrative staff in 1959 was represented by 46 employees, 34 of whom were women, or 74 percent.<sup>97</sup> Despite, the claim that married women were easily distracted from their paid employment, it seems doubtful that it was based on actual experience as much as it was based on a stereotypical vision, given the amount of women

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<sup>97</sup> The only level where women were shown in smaller numbers was amongst the faculty. The differences between men and women faculty members were as striking as the discrepancies between men and women administrative employees. Women composed 21 percent (11 out of 52), 14.7 percent (13 out of 88), and 15 percent (22 of 146) of the faculty in 1953, 1956, and 1959 respectively. The predominance of women in the administration rather than the faculty is yet another manifestation of the segmentation of women into low-paying, low-status work. See Appendix 3 for more details.

represented in the yearbook as being employed by the university. Juxtaposing employers' expectations then with the needs of the service, clerical, and retail industries for female employees and the larger doctrine that asserted women's place was in the home, muddies the messages aimed at women, imposing contradictory expectations on them and hostile working environments stoked by preconceived notions of female workers. In spite of this, the looming threat that the USSR's efforts in science might surpass those of the United States made women's employment "a matter of national interest" (Harrison 1988, 48).

One of the largest contentions that had to be addressed in order to attract women into the labor market was pay. When women were employed, their wages were staggeringly less than men's. In fact, the Department of Labor reported that between the years of 1955 and 1960 women working full-time earned "less than two thirds as much as men" ("Equal Pay Act," 1963). Notwithstanding, "Public opinion polls consistently supported equal pay for equal work for women" (Harrison 1988, 48). The Federal government was aware of the constraints this placed on housewives when they considered employment outside the home and on those women who worked, and had always worked, out of necessity. Not to mention the challenge this posed to a nation trying to ramp up its competitive advantage in mathematics and science. In his 1956 "State of the Union Address," President Dwight Eisenhower indicated as much when he tried to appeal to Congress to see equal pay as an issue of fairness. "Legislation to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work without discrimination because of sex is a matter of simple justice." In addition, President Eisenhower made this part of his 1956 presidential platform, "The Eisenhower Administration will continue to fight for dynamic and progressive programs which, among other things, will [...] [a]ssure equal pay for equal work regardless of Sex [...]." Eisenhower followed through on this issue in adding "equal pay recommendations in all his budget messages and four of his economic reports to Congress during the rest of his term" (Harrison 1988, 49). The legislative branch failed to act (*ibid.*, 50). Labor unions could have played a formidable role in tipping the balance towards equal pay. "The Department of Labor said there are 24.5 million women in the current U.S. labor force, but that more than 21 million are unorganized

and therefore not protected by collective bargaining (“Equal Pay Act,” 1963). Instead of taking on the task of representing women’s collective bargaining power, they showed their support for keeping equal pay disputes under the purview of the secretary of labor (Harrison 1988, 49). This was an act of self-preservation: unlike the secretary of labor, a judge would be less understanding of a labor union that was simultaneously adopting provisions which stipulated different pay scales for the sexes and representing their mutual interests in collective bargaining (ibid.). Additionally, Stephanie Coontz noted that “There was no recourse against what we now call sexual harassment” (2011, 10). A remedy for sexual harassment would have been a long shot in an environment where women could not even have redress for more publically discussed issues like equal pay. Sandra, born in 1930 in Cincinnati Ohio, moved to Portland, Oregon in the late 1950s, described the sheer impossibility of expecting equal pay for equal work. The very idea of it seemed not only preposterous, but unthinkable. She said:

I had a degree in Physics and Mathematics, which had nothing to do with what I was going to do [...], which was to be in the Arts, which was always my interest anyway. And something very interesting that I have had occasion to remember recently: is that when I got that job, there were, I believe, five of us in the department. And I was the only woman. I made exactly one half the salary that the men made. For no reason, other than the fact that I was a woman. These men of course had working wives, which meant they had double salaries. I was divorced, had two children, had two hundred dollars a month support money—one hundred per child—, my mother was living with me—my father's final illness wiped her out; she had nothing but Social Security. So here I am supporting four people on sixty-five hundred dollars a year and the men are making thirteen thousand. It took quite a while to sort itself out; ultimately it did, as all those things do. It came out in the wash. There were class action suits, and we got equitable pay finally. But there wasn't anybody you could complain about that to. Nobody would understand what you were complaining about. Women are worth half of what men are worth, you know, clearly. I don't think a lot of people realize why feminism was important. They see other things; they think it was frivolous. It wasn't. This is what it was about” (2012).

Here we have an educated woman, doing comparable work to men in the 1960s. Like her male colleagues, she had a family to support. Unlike them though, she did not have the social, cultural, and political framing that cast her as the breadwinner of her family. She was aware that they were being paid different salaries, aware that they



were fulfilling the same functions in work and at home, and aware that there was very little she could do about it. At first it seems like she is talking about the process of pay disparity balancing out as an inevitability. It is as though both situations were perfectly normal. I would conjecture that this is the leisure of having 82 years of perspective, especially because she then joked about women's value being half of men's and then briefly explained the purpose of the feminist movement. For women like Sandra, the stigmatization of women's work as being less valuable, serious, and consequential had a real effect on her life. But as she says, at that time there was very little institutional understanding of women who worked out of necessity. The casting of the breadwinner/homemaker family unit had so dominated the American vision of domestic economics and the gender division of labor, that there was very little room for those who did not fit the norm, even though, as demonstrated here, the relatively high rate of divorce throughout the postwar era meant that an increasing number of women essentially became the main breadwinners in their families.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, women who sought careers on an equal standing with men were seen as having failed in some fundamental way to attain their true calling in life. From this perspective then, women should not be rewarded for trying to take the place of men by earning the same pay.

One of the dominant, and perhaps most problematic, impediments to women gaining more clout in the public sphere was socialization itself, or the process by which men and women came to believe that they should content themselves with their gender appropriate roles and that boys and girls should aspire to them. For women, private roles were prioritized over public ones, not only in terms of work, but also in education. Magazines frequently emphasized the need for young women to find a means of public achievement, while maintaining their femininity. "Girls' magazines of the early 1960s presented articles on both professional preparation and domesticity, encouraging girls to plan their educations and careers, even while the

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<sup>98</sup> The divorce rate hit an all-time high after the War reaching 4.3 per 1,000 in 1946. Ten years before that number was 1.8 per 1,000. In fact, between 1900 and 1939, on average 1.27 Americans per 1,000 were divorced, while between 1940 and 1967 that number doubled to 2.55 per 1,000 (National Center for Health Statistics 1973, 22).

traditional emphasis on fashion, beauty, and dating remained dominant” (Nash 2006, 183). Public and private successes were not necessarily at odds: the cultural prescription simply demanded that girls and women remember that true fulfillment came from one and not the other. Betty Friedan was alarmed at the blatancy with which this campaign was undertaken in universities and colleges throughout the United States in the postwar era. She lamented, “The one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning, if she went to college between 1945 and 1960, was *not* to get interested, seriously interested, in anything besides getting married and having children, if she wanted to be normal, happy, adjusted, feminine, have a successful husband, successful children, and a normal, feminine, adjusted, successful sex life” (1963, 137). The operative words for Friedan were “adjusted” and “successful,” indicators that attaining the right amount of gendered and familial satisfaction were achievements, worked at over and over. The extent of the socialization process had wide sweeping consequences as it presented femininity as an accomplishment validated through wifehood and motherhood.

When it came to continuing on into higher education, young women had to contend with a cultural script that cast them as less likely to use their educations. They had to convince their parents that they were indeed deserving of an education and that it would not be a wasted investment. Three of the sixteen women whom I interviewed talked about the process of trying to make higher education available to themselves regardless of the roadblocks they had to face. Donna and Patricia, born in 1939 and 1936 respectively, spent a good part of their younger lives pursuing their education. Though their families never opposed their desire to attend college, education was something they had to secure on their own. Donna was always a high-achiever academically. In spite of this, she said it never even occurred to her mother to encourage her to pursue her education. After doing all the research on her own, she found financing for her first round of higher education through a National Methodist Scholarship. After the birth of her daughter, the dissolution of her first marriage, and taking charge of her second husband’s two sons, Donna went back to university in 1969, eventually completing her doctoral degree at the age of 37. When Patricia told her father she wanted to go to college, her father asked her why. In the end, he agreed

to pay for one year of interior design at the Art Institute of Chicago because this would “help her become a proper wife and mother” (2012). It would take Patricia nine years to apply this education to its intended purpose. In the meantime, she had to contend with the pressure of getting into her mid- and then late-twenties without having secured a husband. Over the course of her life, Patricia studied at seven different higher educational institutions, attending classes whenever possible, just to secure the education she had always wanted. One might think that the experiences of these women were unique to their circumstances, but their ultimate educational goals were hindered, albeit through difference circumstances, because of the expectation that a young woman should be preparing herself for her career in the home. The other factors that shape one’s life trajectory were surely at play, though they seem to have had a mitigated effect. The biggest difference between Donna and Patricia was where they were from: one was from rural Montana, the other from urban Chicago. Donna, a long-time resident of one of the sparsely populated and scattered plains states, moved to Boise, Idaho, while Patricia, an urbanite from birth, ping-ponged from Chicago, the major urban center of the Midwest, to other cities: first, San Francisco then Portland, then northern California and back to Portland, Oregon. Their locations and the population distribution in their hometowns seem to have influenced where they might move to obtain their educations, rather than rewriting the expectations of what they would accomplish. Donna and Patricia had two factors in common that would impact their life trajectories: their age and their socio-economic class. They belonged to the same age cohort and their father’s both held white-collar jobs—Donna’s father was a union organizer, Patricia’s a businessman. Neither of them were explicitly barred from higher education by their locations, families, or financial circumstances. For their generation, education for a white, middle-class woman was simply considered a secondary achievement, perhaps even a luxury.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> This is a problematic assertion in this particular context as both of these women did not fit the mold of respectable whiteness at this time. Donna is of Native American descent and Patricia is Jewish. In some ways, their stories might be looked at as part of the 1950s push to “whiten” those immigrants who could “pass.” By belonging to the same class and living in the same suburbs, many ethnic-whites—Jewish-, Italian-, Irish-Americans came to be identified—up to a point at least—with the white group. It is also important to keep in mind that middle-class conventions defined a norm that

As the postwar ethos around the breadwinner/homemaker duo became more salient, some young women faced an ever-greater expectation to align themselves with their appropriate role. This is evident in Carol's experience of trying to find funding for her education. By the time Carol was preparing to go off to college in 1963, the image of the nuclear family had been waxing strong for more than two decades. Her father believed that the woman's place was in the home and the man's was to be a provider. Knowing that her father would never consent, Carol and her mother had to be secretive with her scholarship application. She remembers it like this, "My father didn't want me to go to school. And I probably shouldn't say this in public, but my mother and I forged my father's signature on the scholarship application. 'Because girls get married and have babies. Why waste an education on a girl?'" (Carol, 2012). Carol believed her largest obstacle to education was her father. Her mother seems to have concurred and together, they thwarted the structural constraints of needing her father's permission by keeping him in the dark. His ignorance of the process allowed her to find the financial resources to pay her tuition. She gave voice to a larger societal perspective, though, in expressing her father's hesitation about girls continuing their schooling. Many people believed educating a girl had no utilitarian purpose when she was meant to become a mother and wife. For those young women concerned by this paternal objection to their continued education, they had to demonstrate that it had a practical purpose.

Though yearbooks do not allow a glimpse into the personal choices behind a student's major, the way that many of them document areas of study gives an outsider an idea of how many of these young people envisioned their future prospects. In looking at twenty yearbooks from Boise State University (BSU) and Portland State University (PSU), spanning 28 years, I was able to glean an image of the role gender played in young men and women's choices of major between 1947 and 1974 in these two cities.

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many, even those kept from it, saw as the standard. For some marginalized communities, attaining the trappings of middle-class status became a means to securing their rights as citizens (Cohen 2003, 84-99; 308; 325; and chapters 4 and 5).

Field Study <sup>100</sup>	of	Total	Total Men	Total Women	White Men	White Women	Black Men	Black Women	Asian Men	Asian Women
Agriculture		5	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Art		10	6	4	6	4	-	-	-	-
Business and Tech.		12	12	-	12	-	-	-	-	-
Business Ad.		98	90	8	89	8	1	-	-	-
Elementary Ed.		71	13	58	13	55	-	2	-	1
Engineering		86	85	1	85	1	-	-	-	-
Forestry		13	13	-	13	-	-	-	-	-
General Studies <sup>101</sup>		9	6	3	6	3	-	-	-	-
Home Economics		4	-	4	-	3	-	1	-	-
Journalism		9	5	4	5	4	-	-	-	-
Law Enforcement		5	5	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Liberal Arts		86	45	41	42	41	3	-	-	-
Math		3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Music		6	5	1	5	1	-	-	-	-
Physical Ed.		36	29	7	28	7	1	-	-	-
Psychology		4	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
Science		77	60	17	58	17	2	-	-	-
Secondary Ed.		12	8	4	8	4	-	-	-	-
Secretarial Sci.		33	1	32	1	29	-	2	-	1
Sociology		6	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 10 PSU Freshmen and Sophomore students pictured according to field of study, sex, and race in the 1953 *Viking***

<sup>100</sup> Not all fields of study indicated in the yearbook are listed here. Majors with less than two students were subsumed into their larger discipline (Science or Liberal Arts). See Appendix 3 for a complete breakdown.

<sup>101</sup> Though grouped under general studies, each of these students' photos also had a discipline indicated. See Appendix 3 for specifics.

Towards the earlier part of my study period, Portland State's *The Viking* pictured students' portraits by academic discipline. The earlier yearbooks demonstrate trends towards gender exclusion in certain stereotypically male-dominated or female-dominated fields. Taking the 1953 yearbook, which is broken down into schools (see Table 10), as an example, we can see how many fields of study become conspicuous indicators for sex-segregated specialties.

Majors that resonated with men tended to be intellectual, physically active, and/or oriented toward educational training for white-collar professions. The most popular male-dominated disciplines were Business Administration, Engineering, Physical Education, and Science. In comparing the majors available, these four encompass some of the most professionalized fields of study, the most direct paths toward a specific vocation, and a career that would be prestigious and well-paid. Each of these fields also attracted women and all but one, engineering, appealed to African American men as well. For men, these fields conveyed a clear message: after graduation, students in these disciplines would be able to enter the work force and begin receiving a white-collar salary. Having completed a degree in one of these fields would be a boon for one's financial future, making any man with one of these degrees a fit breadwinner for his family. Additionally, they would provide men with careers in fields that would give them opportunities to challenge themselves and grow. Five of the majors listed in the 1953 *Viking* had only male students: Agriculture, Business and Technology, Forestry, Law Enforcement, and Math. Three of these male-only disciplines—Agriculture, Forestry, and Law Enforcement—would require some degree of physical exertion. The fact that these areas of study were exclusively represented by men speaks to the larger societal belief that men were better fit to do physically demanding work. Business and Technology and Math also fit within the parameters of white-collar or intellectual work, like the more popular male-dominated fields.

Women tended to be focused in areas of study that would allow them to work in fields that were seen as extensions of their femininity—nurturing—or would not compete with their roles in the home—low-rung office work. The most popular female-dominated disciplines were Elementary Education and Secretarial Science.

Both of these fields would provide female students with reputable, gender-appropriate career choices that would not be high-earning, but would allow them to contribute to their family's income, if they were so inclined. Incidentally, these are the two fields where we see that women of color were the most heavily concentrated (87 percent, albeit their overall numbers were quite low). This coincides with Stephanie Coontz's assertion that African American and Latina women had to work out of necessity (2011, 64). The fact that these women of color were choosing more professionalized training signals their desire for white-collar work knowing that they could anticipate working out of necessity. Two majors in the 1953 *Viking* were occupied uniquely by women: Home Economics and Sociology.<sup>102</sup> Home Economics seems to be the ultimate embodiment of a higher education that directs itself toward training women for their roles in the home. Though present in four of the eight yearbooks that listed major choice throughout my study period, Home Economics was never one of the most popular fields of study. Despite its promise of providing women with the education that would serve them in their ideal career, it seems that very few women in the student populations of Boise State and Portland State attended school to prepare for domesticity. This might speak to the types of students these colleges attracted. Boise State and Portland State were both created as commuter schools, meant to bring higher education to urban populations that could not, for various reasons, attend the states' campus-based schools.<sup>103</sup> As such, Boise and Portland's institutions were more likely to attract students who could only devote so much time to college life, providing working and lower-income students with the opportunity to continue their educations. The fact that so few women studied Home Economics indicates the types of female students at these schools were not pursuing their education to obtain "affluent domesticity," as Elaine Tyler May concludes of many college-aged women during the postwar era in *Homeward Bound* (1988, 78).

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<sup>102</sup> Home Economics courses professionalized home management. It was a professional path for women to pursue in college and university while still maintaining their feminine place. Cornell University has a large digital archive dedicated to home economics called HEARTH (<http://hearth.library.cornell.edu/>).

<sup>103</sup> In Oregon the state institutions I am referring to are Oregon State University located in Corvallis and the University of Oregon in Eugene. In Idaho the public, state-funded universities are Idaho State University and the University of Idaho, located in Pocatello and Moscow respectively.

They were instead pursuing utilitarian educations that would later help their job prospects. The other exclusively-female major, sociology, seems like a discipline that would have attracted more men as it is a field that incorporates statistics, does large cohort studies, and applies rigorous scientific analysis—all of which seem to fit better with the male-profile majors. The exclusivity of women in this field demonstrates that the scripts presented to men and women were not necessarily the only options available. Women had options if they wanted to pursue more intellectual domains and these options did not require them to sacrifice their femininity. It is worth noting, however, that only 3 percent of the female students studied sociology. If we look at other academic disciplines where women were present but that were not preparing women to obtain pink-collar work or become professionalized homemakers, we see 8 percent of women in science, 2 percent in journalism and art, and 1 percent in psychology. In all, 17 percent of Portland State’s female population were studying in fields that could prepare for them white-collar, professionalized careers.

The second most popular major choice for women and fourth most popular for men, though not dominated by either gender, merits mentioning: liberal arts. Majoring in liberal arts would demand further specialization in order to become employable. I believe it is in this number—as opposed to Home Economics—where one might make the argument that even female commuter-students were going to college to bide their time before marriage. The reason for such a conclusion would be that women were encouraged to have their own personal achievements. Stephanie Coontz explains that women were frequently admonished and celebrated for public success (2011, 74). Majoring in liberal arts would provide a woman with well-rounded education that would be useful to her in her private and public life. The implication would be then that female students in the liberal arts were then expanding their educations before assuming their “real” careers as homemakers and interested, educated wives. Another argument that could be made about the popularity of this discipline is that it was non-descript enough that it would allow students if, and when, they transferred to four-year institutions—at the time Portland State was still a junior college—to have a better idea of their true academic interests and then they



could specialize in something more specific. In this scenario, both men and women would have been biding their time trying to figure out what to do next. The high percentage of students specialized in liberal arts, 44 percent, might finally be explained by the prospect of continued higher education, that is to say attaining Master's or Doctoral degrees. To become employable in the liberal arts further specialization would have been necessary. In 1953 it would have been more likely for a male student to plan to go on to do graduate work and thus, complete his training for the workforce.



Among the projects for home economics is sewing, which Nancy Gibbons is performing.

**Figure 10 Nancy Gibbons sewing, featured in the 1958 *Les Bois*, 109**

Rather than placing student portraits according to major, Boise State's *Les Bois* pictured students according to their class—freshman and sophomore—until 1966. As early as 1949, *Les Bois* featured pictures of students “in action” in class. Showing students at work in class seems like a relatively difficult thing to capture in a photograph, it makes sense then that the images presented in the yearbooks tended to take place in vocational classes, where students were physically using tools, leaning over their works in progress. Vocational classes also tend to present a world by gender as carpentry, drafting, and welding were typically masculine pursuits, while sewing and baking archetypally belonged to the domain of women. Figures 10, 11, and 12 show students in different vocational classes. Figure 10, taken from the 1958 *Les Bois*, is of a female student sewing in home economics. Nancy Gibbons, the

student pictured, is involved in stereotypical female behavior as she demonstrates for the camera her sewing prowess. Sewing was a useful skill for a housewife to possess. Taking classes in sewing would give a young woman the opportunity to practice and master basic and advanced sewing techniques, which she could then utilize in the home.

Figure 11, from the 1961 *Les Bois*, shows two male students working in a carpentry class. This image presents conventional masculine behavior and potentially divergent racial behavior. Carpentry can be seen as a male prerogative because it provided students with the skillset that would allow them to become tradesmen, thus ensuring them respectable blue-collar work, which provided carpenters with decent wages with which they could support their families. This image supports the idea that a man would eventually become the future breadwinner for his family. Additionally, carpentry is a physical profession, demanding a stronger physique to transport and support heavy wood, and also mechanical knowhow to wield power tools. One of the students pictured is Pacific-Islander. As a minority, a working-class profession stereotypically fits the expectation that he would be involved in manual rather than intellectual work. However, this is one of the only photographs of a minority in these sections and the caption indicates that he is the one giving instruction and is therefore more knowledgeable than his white counterpart.



Frank Kaa, left, and a fellow student are demonstrating the finer arts of carpentering.

**Figure 11 Frank Kaa and anonymous student shown in carpentry class in the 1961 *Les Bois*, 120**

Finally, Figure 12 depicts a female student working with her instructor. This photograph is from the 1964 *Les Bois*. The caption indicates that this female student, Dixie Leston, is the only woman in the vocational technical department, a field

typically dominated by men. In spite of her gender-breaking behavior, this photograph presents this female student in tandem with her instructor. It appears that he is looking over her shoulder, providing her with approval or advice on her work. The presence of the instructor could simply be read as a teacher helping his student; it could also be seen as showing the only female student needing extra-help in a male-dominated world; or it could even be viewed as shoring up the place of men and women in the professional sphere where men held positions of authority and women were their subordinates. Interestingly, Leston is also shown doing a less physical



(ABOVE): Only coed in Vocational is Dixie Leston, with Drafting instructor Mr. Wayne Van Liew.

Figure 12 Dixie Leston at a drafting table in the 1964 *Les Bois*, 98

task, drafting. This is probably the result of convenience: the photographer attended a drafting class to get pictures, saw Leston, and took her picture to show that women were also studying the trades. It might also be an indicator that the only woman in the vocational technical department was interested in the more professionalized careers that drafting could lead to, like architecture or graphic design. The fact that she is studying in the vocational technical department implies that she is learning a special trade that will demand some form of physical labor or knowledge of construction. Showing Leston at a drafting table might connote that she is not strong enough or she plans to take a more office-based role in her future career. The latter would have been seen as more befitting of a woman at that time.

Portraying students by field of study or through candid photos indicates a lot  
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about their expected roles for the future. Adhering to proper gender roles, through academic interest or professional training, allowed students to position themselves in their future professional and private roles. It was, of course, not the prerogative of the college or university to assign students their majors, but the fact that the retelling of the academic year via the yearbook represents for all intents and purposes what one would have considered normal gendered behavior, certainly reinforces the standards by which young men and women conceived themselves as adults and how well they felt their roles played a part in their ability to fit the expectations of who they would be in their public and private roles.

In discussing the power of normative gender in the postwar era, I have insisted at length in this chapter on the ways that gender scripts convinced men and women to conform to their appropriate place. When possible, I have tried to leave my interpretations open to individual choice and to describe what gender prescriptions might have also said about a person's options. Agency plays an important role when it comes to looking at something as necessarily confining as gender. Of the 24 individuals I interviewed, eight of them did not find the dualism of the housewife/breadwinner inherently problematic. Despite the critical tone that this chapter might have assumed at times in discussing the restrictions that gender placed on individuals in the postwar era, it would be misleading to put the question of agency to the wayside. In talking about "the problem that had no name," Betty Friedan proclaimed with much exasperation, "In the last analysis, millions of able women in this free land chose, themselves, not to use the door education could have opened for them. The choice—and the responsibility—for the race back home was finally their own" (Friedan 1963, 159). For Friedan, the fact that women chose to resume their roles as wives and mothers was a source of great frustration. However, I think this outrage necessarily overlooks the pleasure that many women took from this role. To illustrate this, I would like to introduce Susan, who was born in Seattle, Washington in 1940 and lived in Portland, Oregon most of her life, as the archetype for the many women whose stories remain untold as they embarked on the un-incredible journey of motherhood and wifery with joy. When I asked her if she

tried to be like her own mother when it came to assuming her role as a wife and mother she responded in the affirmative. “Uh-huh. Stay at home, do the cooking, cleaning. I never resented it at all, I mean, it was just kind of a natural thing. And then, when you have four children, that's just what you do” (2013). This description of her role as a wife and mother does not really bestow Susan with a large amount of agency, but she was not the only woman who talked about the responsibilities in life as something “you just did.” The eight individuals who did not rue the masculine and feminine roles they lived frequently related their lives in similar terms. When it was necessary, the wife worked to contribute to her family’s income; when they owned a small business or farm, she juggled domestic responsibilities with running the family business; when their families did not need the extra income, she devoted herself to her family. These individuals spoke about their lives as, I imagine, most Americans saw themselves: doing their best to get by, doing what had to be done. For these women, there was much more agency in being a housewife than there was for the men in being the provider. The role of the breadwinner was virtually unassailable. Biological essentialism, androcentrism, and gender polarization might be furthered in this context, but institutions have staying power because they resonate with societal actors. The limitations and harm they might impose on a society does not mean that all individuals suffer under their domain or that they deprive them of their ability to choose.

#### **IV. Heteronormativity**

Up until this point, I have treated heterosexuality as a normative basis for gender, marriage, and the family during the postwar era. Heterosexuality was anything but taken for granted at that time, however. Modern marriage became the means by which sexuality could be “appropriately” expressed, thus becoming essential to the gender, familial, and sexual social order. The binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality has existed in a dialectical relationship since these categories were first used at the end of the nineteenth century in medical writing (Katz 1990, 9; 15). Their coinage was revolutionary for sexual norms precisely because it moved intercourse away from an exclusively procreative act to a pleasurable one (*ibid.*, 15). Additionally, such labeling allowed for an elaboration of sexual identity that had formerly been inseparable from gender (Chauncey 1995, 43-44). “Biological sex, masculinity or femininity, and the pleasure of actors” were brought together in these writings (Katz 1990, 15). In spite of the debate taking place between medical experts and their categorizations of sexual behavior, the dichotomous framework of heterosexuality as different-sex and homosexuality as same-sex sexual desire proliferated, thus establishing “normative” sexuality and its “abnormal” counterpart (*ibid.*, 16).

According to historian Jonathan Ned Katz in “The Invention of Heterosexuality” (1990), heterosexuality normalized sexual practices through its insistence on a gender binary and biological essentialism as well as an affirmation of sexual pleasure (*ibid.*). Creating a strong opposition between the genders and sexes was a means to deal with social anxieties that resulted from the changing positions of men and women in work and public life as well as their shifting power dynamics at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (*ibid.*, 17). Meanwhile, a positive repositioning of sexuality was part and parcel of transformations in society and the economy that encouraged “fun morality” and hedonism. This had a particularly strong effect on women, as they were encouraged

to enjoy sex, which was a direct assault on the Victorian era's cult of female purity (ibid).<sup>104</sup> The first half of the twentieth century saw a normalization of heterosexuality as cultural producers, (magazines, films, etiquette books, etc.) and academic experts fought to bring frank discussions on sexuality into the mainstream and the public adopted the lingo (ibid., 18-20). During the postwar era, the boundaries of "normal" heterosexual intercourse were extended around non procreative, premarital, and extra-marital relations (ibid., 20). The more conservative tendency towards procreation was a direct result of the increased familialism of the period, while the liberal drives for change were results of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' economic and social transformations and their push for greater individuation through a growing emphasis placed on satisfaction and fulfillment.

As heterosexuality was morphing into its modern incarnation of a "stable" sexual identity, homosexuality was doing the same. The pleasure premise that united biological sex and masculinity or femininity in heterosexuality, did not preclude homosexuality from having a place. From the mid- to late-nineteenth century, homosexual acts were considered "inversions" of gender-appropriate behavior (Chauncey 1995, 43-44). The presumption was that one's masculinity or femininity dictated erotic behavior; same-sex desire was seen then as a cognitive split from one's gender and sex. Engaging in same-sex intercourse did not firmly place an individual in the homosexual category, however. A reconfiguration of one's entire gender performance—largely through mannerisms and dress—was necessary for inversion to be considered homosexuality (ibid.). Historian John D'Emilio describes how this label superseded exterior tweaks to the body and behavior as one's very "nature—acts, feelings, personality, even body traits—was distinguishable from the majority of 'normal' heterosexuals" (D'Emilio 1983, 4). With clear limits between heterosexual and homosexual persons in place by the end of the nineteenth century, some men and women had effectively become "homosexuals" (ibid.).

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<sup>104</sup> Stephanie Coontz explains that, until the end of the Victorian era, both men and women were expected to remain passionless when it came to intercourse and only complete the act for procreative purposes (2005, 189-190). Likewise, Jonathan Ned Katz contends that early Victorian true love founded on True Womanhood and True Manhood was entrenched in a discourse emphasizing "freedom from sensuality" (1990, 9).

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less of a habitual sin than as a singular nature” (Foucault 1980, 43).

As philosopher Michel Foucault explains here, a “peripheral sexuality,” like homosexuality, became consumptive of the individual. It developed a story. It was not only in one’s acts; it was inscribed on the body. Rather than being repressed or prohibited, homosexuality was given a name and form. For Foucault this was an integral part of controlling, watching, and eventually persecuting “peripheral sexualities” (ibid., 41-42). But it was also the occasion for homosexuality to form a “‘reverse’ discourse” in which it might gain a voice, assert its legitimacy and naturalness (ibid., 101). Thus from its inception, homosexuality created distinguishable homosexual and lesbian identities and communities that existed in addition to the heterosexual norm.

During the late Victorian era, gender inversion played a fundamental role in the formation of such identities and communities. As a result, lesbians and gay men had different strategies for their elaboration. This was linked to prescriptive gender roles that limited women’s access and ability to define themselves in relation to the public sphere in the nineteenth century (D’Emilio 1983, 93). Lesbianism was particularly transgressive of Victorian gender norms, because, as women, lesbians had to, on the one hand, be able to survive without financial support from husbands and, on the other, affirm that they possessed sexual desires (ibid., 93). As such, D’Emilio postulates that commitment to lesbianism manifested itself differently for middle-class and working-class women (ibid., 94). The doctrine of separate spheres that enclosed upper- and middle-class women in the private sphere afforded them the opportunity to explore homosexual proclivities through intimate female friendships, an acceptable form of same-sex companionship, even after marriage (ibid.). While, in the working classes, adopting a masculine persona might have improved a woman’s economic prospects and kept her from poverty thanks to an increase in employment



opportunities, regardless of her sexual orientation. Therefore, women attempting to “pass” helped shield lesbians who had taken up masculine dress codes and mannerisms (*ibid.*, 96-98). It was not until the 1920s, that working-class lesbians were able to create a more public identity in gay bars for women (*ibid.* 97). It was within these spaces that a collective lesbian identity was able to come into being (*ibid.*, 99). Homosexual men were able to claim a public space much earlier. Historian George Chauncey’s work on the Bowery in New York City reveals that by the late nineteenth century a subculture had developed around what was perceived as “male degeneracy” (1994).<sup>105</sup> As the city’s presumed epicenter of vice, the Bowery attracted many moral reformers that hoped to “investigate and eradicate prostitution and other illicit sexual activities” (Chauncey 1995, 40). One of them described the “effeminate” behavior of those found in Paresis Hall, “[...] most of them are painted and powdered; they are called Princess this and Lady So and So and the Duchess of Marlboro, and get up and sing as women, and dance; ape the female character; call each other sisters and take people out for immoral purposes” (as cited in Chauncey 1994, 33).<sup>106</sup> Having better access to the public sphere made it easier for gay men to establish social cohesion and group identity in working-class saloons and dancehalls and to eventually branch out and claim their own spaces (Chauncey 1995, 43).

The New Deal helped to facilitate an ambiance that was more conducive to gay men and lesbians as same-sex environments – also referred to as homosocial—emerged as a result of increased urban migration throughout the country and as young homosexuals moved to large cities looking for work.<sup>107</sup> Economic motivations were not the only reasons to leave behind one’s home and family and many young gay men

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<sup>105</sup> The Bowery is a boulevard in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was where the city’s working classes convened for legal—theaters, dime museums, saloons, and dance halls—and illegal entertainment (1994, 34-35).

<sup>106</sup> Chauncey identifies Paresis Hall as the preeminent resort for homosexual men at that time (1994, 33).

<sup>107</sup> Michael Bronski uses the expression homosocial to talk about the development not only of separate spheres but different cultural spaces. He defines a homosocial environment as, “The clearly defined separate social spheres for women and men—both the public and the private for men, and most often the domestic for women—give rise to clearly defined same-sex cultures, usually referred to as ‘homosocial.’ This term does not necessarily imply an erotic or sexual component—although those could, and often do, exist—but rather designates a social construct that emerged in specific ways during the eighteenth century” (2011, 32).

and lesbians set out to find “a new way of life” in the city associated with better opportunities for different practices than in rural areas (Johnson 2004, 42). World War II accelerated this process by demanding nation-wide participation in the war effort. The military needed young men in the Army, Navy, and Air Force; factories geared up to produce material goods for the front lines; and governmental infrastructure grew to accommodate the demands of war. “[...] World War II [...] provided opportunities for men and women to leave home, live and work in same-sex environments, and discover other people like themselves [...]” (ibid., 51). Migration as well as job opportunities contributed to the proliferation of homosocial spaces, which provided self-acknowledged homosexuals the chance to meet others like themselves and those with same-sex desires the opportunity to act on them (D’Emilio 1983, 24). Homosexuals were able to create communities and networks that were carried over into their postwar lives as well as provide collective expressions of gay life (ibid., 31-32). As their social spaces expanded, homosexuality’s expression as a “gender role reversal” was able to reposition itself in relation to dominant gender and sexual prescriptions, especially for gay men (Chauncey 1994, 358). The dichotomization that positioned homosexuality as a transgression of one’s gender shifted focus to one’s sexual object “choice” (ibid.). Thus “gay” began to signify members of the male homosexual community—as opposed to fairy—and accompanied a “masculinization of that culture” (ibid.).<sup>108</sup> “Increasing numbers of conventionally masculine men identified themselves as gay, in part, because doing so no longer seemed to require the renunciation of their masculine identities” (ibid.).

In spite of the amenable migratory and economic conditions that encouraged gay life to thrive during the Depression and War, these were also times when homosexuality was seen as a negative result of flourishing consumerist and illicit desires (Chauncey 1994, 331). George Chauncey argues in *Gay New York* (1994) that the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 was a way to sanitize nighttime entertainment and draw boundaries around acceptable and unacceptable behavior,

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<sup>108</sup> In the early incarnations of the gay subculture, working-class homosexual men were frequently referred to as fairies, which indicated that they inversed “normative” masculine roles with feminine ones. This reversal was an indicator that they were homosexuals (Chauncey 1995).

which was largely carried out through vague laws that prohibited disorderly conduct (ibid., 337). This not only served to isolate homosexual communities, it also legitimated normative gender behavior (ibid., 346). “It codified the proper dress, speech patterns, modes of carrying one's body, and subjects of intellectual and sexual interest for any man or woman who wished to socialize in public” (ibid.). In such a context, gay men and lesbians began to be seen as increasingly threatening to the dominant gender and sexual orders (ibid., 354). Historian Michael Bronski contends in *A Queer History of the United States* (2011) that the body—especially the strong, white, male body—was a pivotal access point for the debate over the survival of American civilization (137). Moral degeneration, race suicide, and homosexuality menaced the very foundations of society (ibid.). The fact that attempts to root out “seedy” nightlife coincided with a rhetoric that portrayed white, heterosexual masculinity at risk indicates that the normative sexual and gender orders were seen as fragile and in need of protection (Chauncey 1994, 354). Even though homosexual communities flourished and became increasingly visible during the 1930s and 1940s, the counter rhetoric isolated and demonized them, making them particularly vulnerable to persecution during the postwar era (ibid., 334-335). Additionally, the Cold War consensus that insisted the family acted to bulwark the nation against the threats of Communism created a hostile climate for those who “deviated” from the norm. The recurrent image of the nuclear family as the natural ideal and bastion of civilization accentuated the importance of adhering to convention, lest one want to be labeled a communist, fellow traveler, or security risk. As such, the dominant culture’s reaction to the “reverse discourse” of homosexual communities in the 1930s and 1940s created a homosexual specter that would haunt the heteronormativity of the postwar era.

In classifying sexuality in a binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality, it was given intelligibility, a framework, a fixedness. It not only lent itself easily to establishing normal and abnormal sexual behaviors, it also standardized a social order that was based on the inseparability of sexuality and gender. As Jonathan Ned Katz tells us, “The historical study of the heterosexual experience can help us understand the erotic relationships of women and men in terms of their changing

modes of social organization” (1990, 30). In looking at the couple during this era, it seems impossible to not look at heterosexuality and homosexuality in tandem in order to better understand what sexuality represented at that time and the place it occupied within the Cold War consensus. I shall contend that the heterosexual couple became part of the hegemonic discourse meant to bolster postwar discourse. Hegemonic heterosexuality was elaborated primarily through the social and economic emphasis on gender difference that “naturalized” the family, the cultural debate around sexuality at mid-century, and the larger discourse of political containment that acted to shore up sexuality into “acceptable” forms of expression.

### **1. “Compulsive Heterosexuality”**

The institution of marriage has historically been constructed on the coming together of a man and woman. The assumption that this union must necessarily be representative of the heterosexual relationship has masked the existence of other partnerships and established heterosexual unions as normative, while alternative expressions of sexuality have been demonized and denied a legitimate existence. This is but one component of what Adrienne Rich calls “compulsive heterosexuality” in her 1980 article “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” Rich’s concept is submerged within the larger power matrix of gender difference, gender privileging, and heterosexuality, which uses women’s sexuality to ensure men’s economic, emotional, and physical access to women (1980, 647). She contends that the assumption that “most women are innately heterosexual” fails to look at the various means through which heterosexuality asserts its systemic power (*ibid.*, 648). For her part, Judith Butler explains that heterosexuality is not simply an expression of sexuality. In fact, through its institutionalized expressions, heterosexuality acts to create “coherent” links between one’s gender, sex, and sexuality that support a hegemonic order. She writes:

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine,’ where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female.’ The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’—that is, those in which

gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender. ‘Follow’ in this context is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality (Butler 1990, 24).

Sexuality articulates itself in relation to the other points of one’s identity in an attempt to create a coherent subject position (Corber 1993, 5). The development of a hegemonic form of sexuality, i.e. heterosexuality, interacts then with an individual’s other constituent parts to foster an entire matrix that reinforces the seeming naturalness and “logical” articulation between sex, gender, and sexuality. As such, the social, economic, and political system have depended on the heterosexual couple as the ultimate representation of normality and the marker against which other expressions of gender, sex, and sexuality are cast as deviant and menacing to the social order’s continuation. During the postwar era, this becomes most evident in the cultural preoccupation with marriage and the family.

To better understand how the institution of marriage promoted a particular sexual order, while simultaneously discouraging any alternatives to it, it seems necessary to discuss what normalcy entailed precisely. If we take for example Stephanie Coontz’s description of the 1950s as “a pro-family period,” a norm asserts itself, but the articulation around sexuality remains unclear. Coontz elaborates what this meant, “[...M]arriage was almost universally praised; the family was everywhere hailed as the most basic institution in society; and a massive baby boom, among all classes and ethnic groups, made America a ‘child-centered’ society” (1992, 24). We can deduce from the description Coontz provides that in many ways marriage and family were synonymous. Marriage marked the beginning of the establishment of the familial unit. After one couple married, children were expected. Because of the association between marriage and family, the married couple became inseparable from the family. This might indicate that the couple’s sexual relationship was largely based on reproduction, but takes for granted that this entails a sort of compulsive heterosexuality. “Pro-family” “family” and “marriage” necessarily refer to a heteronormative order that precludes homosexuals from consideration. “Normal” heterosexual couples were able to embody the familialism of the era where “abnormal” homosexuals were not. This was accomplished through marriage—an

institution kept from same-sex couples until 2015 in the United States—, which was the way for “mature” men and women to express their willingness to conform to gender norms. For men, “normal” heterosexual behavior led to marriage, as it was a demonstration of their desire to provide economically and physically for their families. For women, “normal” heterosexual behavior led to marriage because it was in this milieu where they might realize their true purpose as a mother and wife. Those who chose not to marry were demonized as “perverts,” “unpatriotic,” and/or “pathological” (May 1988, 92). “In 1957, 80 percent of Americans polled said that people who chose not to marry were 'sick,' 'neurotic,' and 'immoral'” (Coontz 1992, 186). Such descriptors were also commonly used as euphemisms to describe homosexuals. In the context of the Cold War, reneging on one’s culturally and politically ascribed masculinity or femininity meant one’s sexuality was suspect. As such, homosexuals were believed to pose a risk to national security because they were seen as morally weak, irresponsible, and immature, which supposedly made them easy targets for communists to seduce, manipulate, and blackmail (May 1988, 91-92). Heterosexuality and homosexuality were thus juxtaposed along the lines of familial, marital, and gender norms. “Moral degeneracy” threatened the very foundations of the State—capitalism, marriage, the family, and democracy. When we talk about the 1950s as a pro-family era, then, it is important to understand the homogenizing power that (hetero)sexuality exerted.

One of the driving forces of heteronormativity in an increasingly sexualized society was casting it within an “appropriate” realm of expression. This was largely done through the growing emphasis placed on sexual relations within marriage. As such, the heterosexual couple became the major site where changing sexual mores could be accounted for without posing a threat to the larger power dynamics that shaped the gender order. Differentiated gender roles could be maintained, while men and women looked for more sexually and emotionally fulfilling relationships within marriage. Marital success came to mean successfully navigating prescriptive gender roles while providing both parties with more intimacy. This would not disrupt the commonly held belief that one’s sexuality was a mere extension of one’s gender, which was also seen as the logical manifestation of one’s sex. It was, in fact, the

modern incorporation of the tenants of earlier “companionate marriage” (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 265). In recognizing women’s sexual desires, the couple’s need for birth control, and the healthiness of sexual expression within the bonds of marriage, companionate marriage encouraged the institution to take on a more egalitarian character without necessarily placing men and women on an equal footing (ibid.). These changes diminished the hierarchical separation between husband and wife on an intimate level and imbued non procreative sex with much more importance than before. “With marriage seen as more companionate, more flexibly defined, less hierarchically structured than in the past, sexual fulfillment was an acknowledged reason *to* marry, even apart from having children” (Cott 2000, 181). As is evidenced from Nancy Cott’s assessment of companionate marriage in the postwar era, sexual intimacy began to replace some of the other functions that marriage had previously occupied. This transformed to some extent the very nature of the institution. The sexually satisfied couple was seen as providing greater security to the family as a healthy marriage was obtained through the expression and satisfaction of sexual desire. As Elaine Tyler May remarked, “Sex was expected to strengthen the marriage, enhance the home, and contribute to each partner’s sense of happiness and well-being. Healthy families were built upon the bedrock of good sex” (1988, 127). Positioning sex as an integral part of healthy family life propagated the idea that these two things were inseparable. The couple’s sexual awakening was meant then to bolster the family, while it simultaneously asserted a dominant gender and sexual order.

Concomitantly, the increasing sexualization of popular culture starting in the 1920s furthered the heteronormative mandate while also extolling the pleasures of consumerism. Men’s magazines played an important role in developing a sexualized masculinity. From its inaugural issue in 1933 *Esquire* championed a new masculine norm that combined leisure, intellectualism, and style with a penchant for bucking conformity (Pendergast 2000, 206).<sup>109</sup> It also positioned heterosexual masculinity and the male gaze as part and parcel of its “aggressive masculinity” (ibid., 213). Visually,

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<sup>109</sup> *Playboy* did the same during the 1950s.

*Esquire* encouraged its male readers to look upon women as “the natural object of male desire,” which was most clearly captured in the magazine’s illustrations and cartoons (ibid., 213-214). The sexualization of the female body for male consumption can be seen as a flagrant example of heteronormativity. Furthermore, in his study on World War II pin-ups, Robert Westbrook points out the pictorial elements meant to draw the male viewer’s attention to certain parts of the body: tight sweaters, swimsuits, high heels (1990, 605-606). These were accompanied by suggestive gestures: glancing over the shoulder, sitting with knees bent, a seemingly inviting, yet, falsely timid smile (ibid.). The uniform and bearing of the pin-up suggested what *Esquire* had begun a decade before: these models existed to give men pleasure (Pendergast 2000, 214). These accessories and poses were much more than parts of an iconography that defined sexuality, they announced ways in which the female body could be objectified and defined as an object of male desire. The preoccupation with the hypersexualized woman represented a masculine leisure at the same time that it validated hyper-virility as part of the “true” man whose sexual appetites could never be satisfied (ibid., 213-214).

Men were not the only ones encouraged to see feminine bodies as canvases of sexual desire during the long 1950s. Much of Helen Gurley Brown’s argument in her advice book *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) turns around the idea that the single woman was better off when she understood how to make herself into a sexual commodity. She identifies three categories that make a woman sexy: flirting, charm, and femininity. Brown believed the most effective flirting was done through the eyes. A woman could flirt with many men in a waiting room simply by making eye contact, breaking it, and then reestablishing it (1962, 91). She could show a man how interesting he was by staring deeply into his eyes while he spoke (ibid.). Reacting was seen as a way to reinforce the game started with the eyes and to boost the man’s prowess. Brown warned her readers never to interrupt a man because it would spoil his image of himself, rather the flirtatious woman, “laughs at the jokes, clucks at the sad parts, applauds bravely” (ibid., 92). Charm meant awareness of one’s environment and sensitivity to what others wanted to hear. A person who was charming was not someone who necessarily flattered and complimented but someone



who listened, one who put herself aside for others. It was about demonstrating one's affection and compassion, while planning ahead on how to respond to the others' needs (ibid., 92-93). The final component of being a sexy woman was femininity, or "accepting yourself as a woman," putting petty envies for men's "superior advantages" aside (ibid., 93). For those women who worried they might be lacking in the femininity department, Brown encouraged them to go on a "helpless campaign": "Let a man push open every door. Stand pat. He'll do it and love it" (ibid., 94). She also reminded her readers that part of being feminine was being flattered by sexual attention. "Get this straight in your head that anyone who wants to kiss you or sleep with you isn't handing you a mortal insult but paying you a compliment" (ibid.). For Brown, then, sexiness was about creating allure and projecting openness. In some situations, a woman should behave as she always had, that is, enticing and encouraging the man as well as expecting him to rise to the occasion of treating her like a *woman*. These old-hat habits would ensure that they both felt secure in their roles as men and women as defined in popular culture then. While in other situations, especially those of a sexual nature, Brown encourages a laxer approach. When a man tried to kiss a woman or was perhaps a little "aggressive," Brown chided excessive prudery or chastity. A sexy woman maintained her allure and openness by letting him know the request was at least being considered (ibid.). In perfecting the trifecta of sexiness, women would embody the titillating appeal that the sexual object was meant to emanate. Similar advice was reiterated again and again in advice and etiquette books, in women's magazines, on radio and TV shows, and even by peers.

The importance of normative sexuality influenced more than the performance of feminine sexuality, sexual conventions attempted to fix sexual desire and seduction as the very premise of feminine identity. Elaine Tyler May posits that women's sexuality and its subordination, or not, could lead to a man's happiness or ruin, to a family's success or failure (May 1988, 62-63). The idea being that sexuality was integral role to the woman's identity and character (ibid.). May uses the example of the dichotomous portrayal of the "good" and "bad" woman in popular culture. A devoted and wholesome wife usually represented the former, while the latter was characterized by the unattached and seductive temptress. The good wife acquiesced

to the desires of her husband while the temptress used her sensuality to acquire power and money and sometimes the former's husband! (ibid.). As a foundational element of a woman's identity, sexuality was more than a moral compass; it exposed the very nature of her character. In spite of this cultural reduction of women to their sexuality, transgressive representations of feminine sexuality were projected through a double standard that problematized a woman's inability to define herself outside of her sexuality. Even women who conformed to the "good" wife image needed to mind the way they expressed their sexuality. The appropriate manifestation was in showering one's husband with sexual affection while maintaining a deferential attitude toward him in the larger domestic sphere (ibid., 93). Failure on either front would result in usurping the "natural" masculine authority of the home and/or an overinvestment in one's children—especially boys—that would impair mature sexual development in children (ibid.). As feminine identity was interwoven with sexuality, understanding how this related to her roles as wife and mother was meant to help her obtain true satisfaction as a woman. In *the Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan demonstrates how this interplay was inherently problematic because it was reductive. "For the woman who lives according to the feminine mystique there is no road to achievement, or status, or identity, except the sexual one: the achievement of sexual conquest, status as a desirable sex object, identity as a sexually successful wife and mother" (Friedan 1962, 232-33).

Though much attention could be paid to masculine sexuality via the masculine gaze and the subordination of feminine sexuality to masculine pleasure as part of compulsive heterosexuality, masculinity as an object of sexual desire also arose at that time, expressing thus discrete alternatives to the norm. The exposure of the muscular male body in physique magazines, which coincided with the body-building movement of the postwar era, made the male body the target of a sexualized gaze (Bronski 2011, 138; Loftin 2007, 585). As literary scholar Maria Wyke claims in her article "Herculean Muscle!" (1997), "the classicized body of the physique magazines and film shorts which were circulated privately in 1950s America and Europe became largely an expression of sexual identity" (59). Gay men were able to take advantage of an increasingly sexualized popular culture and movement towards masculinity

being represented through “toughness, confidence, and lack of fear of challenge” to create legitimate publications that cleverly hid overt homoeroticism (Pendergast 2000, 212; Wyke 1997, 60). This was the perfect avenue for homosexual men to learn about masculine mannerisms that would help them “pass” in the volatile times of the Cold War (Loftin 2007, 585). According to Historian Craig Loftin, the rise in masculinism amongst gay men was a way for middle-class homosexuals to become less visible and therefore more easily avoid detection when the penalties—losing one’s job, being ostracized from one’s community—for being found out were so severe (ibid., 582). As sexuality was widely circulated in popular culture and as strength as well as aggression became central to masculinity, middle-class gay men were able to co-opt “gender conformity as a ‘front’ for their sexual nonconformity” (ibid., 578). An increasingly sexualized visual culture facilitated a turn in the male gaze towards men as sexual objects. While consuming sexuality became a pleasure for parts of the larger public, homosexual men also found means to create a masculine iconography for themselves. They were necessarily couched in the gender norms of the era and hidden in plain sight so as to remain just below the surface and avoid detection, though.

## **2. Sexual Containment: Keeping Homosexuality in the Shadows**

The politics of the Cold War gave birth to the term “containment.” In its original usage, it referred to the American government’s attempts to limit the expansion of communism and the Soviet Bloc. The origins of containment can be traced back to President Harry Truman’s March 12, 1947 speech, commonly referred to as the “Truman Doctrine.” The president used this speech to reinforce the idea that the United States’ role was to ensure the continuation of democracy in the world.

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this Nation. (Truman, 1947).

The president invokes the classical American trope of the “city upon a hill” with the

“eyes of all people” turned to the United States as an example. Truman also warns the nation: if it cannot measure up to its most fundamental principles the world and the United States would be in great peril. Walter Hixson asserts that the Federal government’s use of containment went beyond military defense; integral to its mission was a strong political offense (1997, 12). And Elaine Tyler May, along with other scholars, pushes this ideology even further in *Homeward Bound* when she employs containment to speak about the societal drive to preserve American values in terms of sexual morality during the postwar era. The supposed weakening of sexual mores at that time led many to believe the country was potentially at risk of being exposed to corrupt values that would easily drive the country towards communism. Domesticity could be used as a safeguard to uphold both political and sexual standards (ibid., 13).

American norms found much of their strength in the family and the nation at that time. A heterosexual couple that supported one another in their respective roles represented the former while the latter was upheld by the democratic values of “life,” “liberty,” and “the pursuit of happiness.” During the Cold War, sexual containment was seen as a protective measure for the two bases of American identity that had come under threat. On the one hand, changing gender and sexual norms seemed to menace the family. On the other, the United States was facing off against Communist enemies who supported a totalitarian regime, i.e., the absolute antithesis of the nation’s founding values. Any action that might possibly be construed as running counter to true-blue Americanness was at the mercy of containment rhetoric. The growing visibility of homosexual communities prior to the 1950s brought awareness to the heterosexual public that sexuality might not necessarily follow gender (Corber 1993, 61; Johnson 2004, 162-163). The increasing awareness of sexuality and gender as constructed and circumstantial primed these two social identities for re-indoctrination. Furthermore, the lurking specter of Communism haunting America seemed to open the nation up to further subversion. The alleged weakening of sexual morality became a site where the nation needed bolstering when, “To some observers, sexual containment was necessary for the containment of Communism. [...] Liberal permissiveness and moral relativism,

seemed, invited the subversion and perversion of all that was normal and sacred (Cuordileone 2000, 537-38).

The containment effort was a reaction not only to communism but also to the changes that had begun to reshape the modern landscape at the end of the previous century. Using containment to manage changing sexual mores was a way to preserve values as they were, despite social, political, economic, and cultural transformations. Kyle Cuordileone explains, “[...A]nticommunism was more than a defense against Communism [...] it was a defense against America itself—its self-indulgence, its godlessness, its laxity and apathy, its lack of boundaries, its creeping sexual modernism—which is why it could be so readily wedded to family values and sexual containment” (ibid., 538). The counterattack to Communism took many forms—the Red Scare, the Lavender Scare, sexual containment—, all represented a reaction against feelings of insecurity that lingered in the aftermath of the Great Depression, the chaos of the War, and the terror that nuclear annihilation engendered.

Perhaps, the effectiveness of the containment doctrine can be seen in the way that it has shaped dominant memory and the image it has preserved of the 1950s as a sexually conservative time. When Americans think back retrospectively to the 1950s, some of them imagine morality as a bastion of American society; they see a pure and innocent, perhaps even naïve, society in terms of sexuality and its expressions. This image is the work of “the historical apparatus”—or the public stage and public audience where historical dramas have been enacted to create a unified history—in its interaction with “the social [political, and ideological] production of memory”—or the knowledge of the past and present as it is produced through everyday life (Popular Memory Group 1982, 44-45). Dominant memory seems to lack an awareness of the immense amount of change that was taking place during the postwar era and an ignorance of the growing presence of sexuality in the most mundane, everyday conversations. Even some endeavors to chart the history of “the sexual revolution” of the mid-twentieth century perpetuate the image of the 1950s as an era of sexual stasis, while they document contradictions to this premise. For example, journalist John Heidenry divides his book *What Wild Ecstasy* (1997) into four chronological parts—1965-1971, 1971-1978, 1975-1983, 1979-1984—that essentially

negate any sexual transformations before the 1960s. Additionally, Heidenry returns again and again to the 1950s as a time of sexual conformity. Despite the publication of sexologist Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, he claims the scientific community and public were hostile to the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1954 because of "an extraordinary conformity to the country's cultural life, and nowhere more so than in sexual conduct" (Heidenry 1997, 22). This fits perfectly within the dominant memory of containment as it erases the sexual modifications that were held up as incredibly problematic. It overlooks the double standard applied to men's and women's sexuality via containment, which might explain the opposition Kinsey's later work faced. In de-historicizing the era, Heidenry can confidently make the claim that "Any display of sexual individualism, much less any explicit exploration of sexual issues in either a public or professional forum, was strongly discouraged, if not prosecuted" (ibid.). I intend to follow in the footsteps of many scholars of sexuality who have challenged the homogenizing influence of containment in its relation to dominant memory, first by tracing modern sexuality back to its inception in the nineteenth century, then by looking at the social reform movement that hoped to keep sexuality in the shadows.

Changes in sexual mores were a long time in the making. Beginning around the 1860s, eroticisms, which would eventually be labeled heterosexuality and homosexuality, began to take conceptual form (Katz 1990, 11). Over the next forty years, sexologists, psychologists, marital experts, and medical professionals described what these eroticisms entailed (ibid., 11-13). Between 1900 and 1930, heterosexuality became the dominant sexual orthodoxy, largely due to the work of English physician Havelock Ellis and Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (ibid., 18). During this time, Ellis's and Freud's work were slowly disseminated to the public. Gaining ground after World War I, Freudianism was largely accepted in popular culture as an explanation for sexual development and maturity as well as the inherent link between one's sex and gender by the beginning of the 1950s (Bailey 1988, 102). The popularization of Freud's theory meant that the public discourse was increasingly open to and discussing sexuality (D'Emilio 1983, 19). According to John D'Emilio, the 1920s were "heralded" as a revolutionary time for manners and morals

as they applied to heterosexuals (ibid.). Between 1930 and 1945, the term “heterosexual” gained prominence in news print media and became a “cited aspect of middle-class life” (Katz 1990, 19-20). By the postwar era, sexuality was fully incorporated into dominant discourse, even if accounts tended to convey it as something to worry about rather than celebrate (Bailey 1999, 46).

Were the 1950s an unadulterated and wholesome era, there would have been no need for a continuation of the social reform crusades undertaken at the end of the nineteenth century. It was precisely the frankness about sexual matters at mid-century that moved some to come out in defense of an increased sense of morality (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 280). The postwar era’s “runaway hedonism” compromised the moral fiber of the nation, making it vulnerable to subversion from communists, pornographers, delinquents, and homosexuals (ibid.). Many of these problems were interchangeable: pornography was associated with delinquency, communism with homosexuality, and delinquency also with homosexuality (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 280; Cuordileone 2000, 530; Robertson 2001, 29). Historian Geoffrey S. Smith explains that juvenile delinquency, as it was understood during the early 1950s, was in some ways the result of a flourishing consumer and national culture that made young people more susceptible to the opinions of their peers while downplaying the role of the parent (1992, 324). Communism and homosexuality fit together well in the theory of containment as they were both spread through “recruitment” (Robertson 2001, 29). In some ways akin to peer pressure, recruitment for homosexuality and communism entailed a sort of indoctrination that would “poison the mind” (ibid.). Family togetherness and stability were the pillars that would right the ship. There were attempts to establish new boundaries of acceptability in the media and amongst experts. In spite of this, society at large seemed quite preoccupied with “unsanctioned” sexual acts. “Through literature, movies, magazines, popular fiction, and pornography, sex unconstrained by marriage was put on display” (D’Emilio & Freedman 1988, 277). The diffusion of pin-ups by the Army during the war unofficially sanctioned sexual practices (Westbrook 1990, 595-596). The continued presence of pin-ups in magazines like *Esquire* during and after the War seemed to contribute to the development of magazines that would take it just a bit further, like

*Playboy*, first appearing in 1953. The widespread existence of sexual themes in the media aggravated the division between popular culture and the objectives of the purity crusaders. This opposition juxtaposed heightened forms of sexuality with the archetypical nuclear family (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 282).

Sexuality was not always seen as complex and problematic though. Definitions that were more narrowly conceived in terms of acceptability and unacceptability bore this distinction. “Some forms of behavior, such as homosexuality, remained beyond the pale; other forms, such as the mores of black urban communities, became symbols of social pathology. The sexual liberalism of midcentury perpetuated notions of good and bad, and drew a sharp line between what was judged acceptable and what was labeled deviant” (ibid., 277). Alongside the proliferating discussions on heterosexuality, homosexuality was categorized and defined. As Beth Bailey notes, “On the basis of clinical research, both experts and popular wisdom rejected the idea that homosexuality and certain other sexual ‘abnormalities’ were the immoral or depraved acts of ‘normal’ individuals. Instead, they were symptoms of mental illness” (Bailey 1999, 61). The “crusaders” did not hope to eliminate all forms of sexuality; their most basic aim was to contain behavior so that it would correspond to the dominant order that underwrote the nuclear family norm.

Alfred Kinsey’s publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* had a huge influence on the debate around morality and sexuality. His books indicated that there were significant differences between dominant sexual values and actual sexual practices (Johnson 2004, 53; May 1988, 110). His results transformed perceptions of sexuality in the United States by questioning established norms of men’s and women’s behavior (Corber 1993, 63). His work echoed across the country precisely because he described and explained sexuality in great detail. Though, Kinsey found no new “outlets”—or expressions of sexual behavior, i.e. ones that fell outside of known “heterosexual intercourse” “petting,” “masturbation,” “nocturnal emissions,” “homosexual activity,” “or sexual activity with animals”—, he found that the American population had become increasingly preoccupied with sex and sexual fantasy (Friedan 1963, 229). Kinsey’s



findings were shocking to the American public: a reviewer of the male edition, Howard A. Rusk, posited that it was “sure to create an explosion and to be bitterly controversial” (1948); while another reviewer, for the female volume, Fowler V. Harper, attested that his results “have been viewed with surprise and alarm, with respect and disdain” (1954, 898). Both agreed that these tomes attested to how little human sexual behavior was understood. Though many people had a hard time wrapping their heads around the diversity of sexual practices presented in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, the later female edition generated the most controversy and was flat out attacked for being “un-American” (Heidenry 1997, 20-21; 221). Perhaps Kinsey’s most problematic approach was his desire to exhaustively categorize the diversity of sexual expressions, which inevitably led him away from exclusively describing what were considered normal behaviors (ibid., 22).

In this vein, Kinsey informed the public that the number of homosexuals was not quite as negligible as some might have wished. He announced that 37 percent of men had had at least one homosexual experience while only “4% exclusively practiced homosexuality” (Kinsey 1948, 623; 651). Incidences of homosexuality amongst women were less clearly established: having had one homosexual encounter ranged from six percent for married women to fourteen percent for single women, while exclusive homosexuality represented approximately one to three percent of his sample (Chaperon 2001, 108). Though these statistics were incredibly controversial, the incidence of homosexual acts among heterosexual men caused the most commotion (Heidenry 1997, 37). Paul Gebhard, Kinsey’s colleague and successor, explained later in the face of resistance to accept such a high incidence of homosexuality amongst the male population that these included acts of a heterosexual impulse, like adolescent boys masturbating together because they did not have a female partner (ibid.). Though Kinsey attempted to favor tolerance towards homosexuals and homosexuality from a biological perspective—seeing its regular rate of occurrence as an indicator that it was indeed a natural manifestation of sexuality—, these numbers brought homosexuality into the public eye (D’Emilio 1983, 37). Many consequently felt that homosexuality was a genuine threat to the “natural” order (ibid.). The public’s reaction to such statistics can be seen as an

example of the growth of homophobia towards the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. Sexuality was acceptable as long as it was contained within the “limits of intelligibility.” The fact that more than one third of the nation’s men had engaged in some type of homosexual encounter, no matter how it was defined, made people wonder if the nation’s morals had been breached, especially as preservation was written onto the masculine body, according to May. While masculinity represented sexual potency, its strength was demonstrated through moral restraint (May 1988, 94-95). “By 1948, with all the changes brought about by the New Deal and World War II, many Americans had a growing sense that the country’s moral codes were loosening and that homosexuality was becoming more prevalent, or at least more visible” (Johnson 2004, 53). In bringing homosexuality into the limelight, many felt heterosexuality needed to assert itself in the sexual order.

The purity movement—those who sought to keep sex out of public discussion and within the bonds of marriage—and the Kinsey studies acted at the same time as contributors to and results of transforming sexual mores. The attempt to contain sexuality by reasserting older sexual norms that reserved its expression for the most intimate spheres presented alongside the Kinsey findings suggests an inherent contradiction at the heart of the postwar sexual order. Together they attest to the hegemonic presence of heterosexuality and society’s desire to keep all other possibilities at bay. Attention paid to conservative and liberal attitudes encouraged a sort of hysteria to grow around sexuality, which further disrupted the shifting sexual landscape.

The United States government played an active role in ensuring that homosexuality was kept on the margins of society. American studies scholar Michèle Gibault argues that the U.S. military was the first governmental body to adopt homophobic policies in recruiting troops for combat during World War II (1995, 145). Gibault notes that of the sixteen million men drafted, 4,000 to 5,000 of them were excluded from combat because of “homosexual proclivities” (ibid., 142). Historian Allan Bérubé explains that although the psychiatrists’ intentions behind this screening process were not meant to target or even exclude homosexuals—but rather to reduce the cost of caring for psychiatric casualties by preventing those who were

vulnerable to them from serving—, high-ranking officials added their own prejudices as the plans for psychiatric screening were passed up the chain of command (1990, 10-11). This was only the first step towards systematizing homophobia in governmental agencies. In 1943, the Army and Navy began to actively root out homosexuals who had made it into their ranks through the issuance of blue discharges (Canaday 2003, 941). During World War II, the Army eliminated 5,000 soldiers on the grounds of homosexuality while the Navy discharged 4,000 on the same pretext (*ibid.*, 942). The government further institutionalized its homophobia when the Veterans Administration ruled in 1945 that soldiers discharged “because of homosexual acts or tendencies” would be denied GI Bill benefits (*ibid.*, 935). This created an access barrier that granted or denied benefits on the basis of a soldier’s sexuality and a man’s ability to demonstrate his masculinity (*ibid.*, 956). The erasure of these soldiers and their contributions during the War associated heterosexuality with a hyper masculine soldier that would become the epitome of “true” manhood at that time.

There was a bit more tolerance for lesbianism within the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) at the very same time. In a sex hygiene lecture series prepared for officer candidates, “consciousness of sex and difficulties concerning it” were explained as inevitable responses to wartime conditions (Bérubé & D’Emilio 1984, 761). These lectures emphasized understanding, stating that lesbians “are exactly as you and I, except that they participate in sexual gratification with members of their own sex” (*ibid.*). Additionally, they took a stand against witch-hunting and set up treatment for any woman who had engaged in homosexuality (*ibid.*). Only as a last resort was a woman dismissed from the Army for such a misstep (*ibid.*). It appears, however, that this approach was short lived and contingent on the exceptional circumstances of war. In 1952, the Navy’s women recruits, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), were given lectures on homosexuality that charged “first-timers” as guilty of “practicing homosexuality” and subject for immediate discharge (*ibid.*, 762). These lectures focused on how sexuality was an integral part of “true” womanhood, and thus an expression of women’s social, economic, and sexual place in life. On the most superficial level, this is conveyed

through two of the titles of the sections dealing with homosexuality: “Homosexuality Destroys a Woman's Social Status and Her Social Future” and “Homosexuality Destroys a Woman's Spiritual Values and Spiritual Life” (as cited in Bérubé & D'Emilio 1984, 768-769). Compulsive heterosexuality, as it was expressed in these lectures, insisted on the importance of a woman understanding the impact her gender and sexuality had on other parts of her life. Failure to conform would have dire consequences. In the first lecture, women were told, “By her conduct a Navy woman may ruin her chances for a happy marriage” (ibid). When taken in conjunction with the title, this warning intimates that any homosexual act while in the service would prevent a woman from marrying once discharged, which is all the more insidious as the title suggests a woman’s future was contingent on the status she acquired through marriage at that time. The second title goes as far as to declare that any sexual indiscretion had the power to compromise one’s soul. In moving to the realm of religion, the Navy declared that homosexuality could thwart a woman’s earthly purpose. “The Creator has endowed the bodies of women with the noble mission of motherhood and the bringing of human life into the world. Any woman who violates this great trust by participating in homosexuality not only degrades herself socially but also destroys the purpose for which God created her” (ibid., 769). It was not uncommon at that time to see the sexual role of the woman as being inherently linked to the procreative functions of her body. In order to control feminine sexuality and encourage reproduction, it seemed necessary to remind women that their sexual nature followed a divine order. “True” feminine sexuality would find its place within marriage. “Sex was created for the married state and true happiness can best be found through marriage and a home” (ibid., 770). These two lectures are quite emblematic of the argument for “true” womanhood at that time: a woman’s sexuality was a mere extension of her acceptance of her place in life as a wife and mother. Any sexual expression that would prevent the attainment of these two roles would undermine her purpose and place.

The Federal government’s homophobia was not limited to the armed services. The United States’ preoccupation with Communism and the supposed threat it posed to American democracy was the basis for a homosexual purge amongst federal

employees. The Russian Revolution of 1917 spurred the first and second American Red Scares, the first was relatively brief lasting from April 1919 to the late summer of 1920, the second, however, spanned decades beginning with the formation of the House on Un-American Activities Committee in 1938 and lasting through the 1950s. Both Red Scares were periods when various American institutions worried about the government being overthrown and felt that Communism would corrupt the nation's founding values. The government attempted to root Communists and communist propaganda out of the American body politic. To garner support among the public for their actions, the government and media insisted that "pro-marriage and pro-family sentiments" were at the heart of democracy (Bronski 2011, 144). Perhaps one of the most explicit campaigns to bolster heteronormativity was the Federal witch-hunt of homosexuals in the State's employ.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9835 created a Federal Employees Loyalty Program, which defined the difference between those who were disloyal and those who posed a risk to the state (Johnson 2004, 7-8). Disloyalty meant an individual was willing to betray secrets, while being a security risk intimated behaviors that might be used against the individual to coerce them into betraying secrets (ibid.). The behaviors that made one a potential security risk included "alcoholism, loquaciousness, and perversion" (ibid., 8). All three were commonly associated with same-sex desire (ibid.). The insecurity of the State Department was put on the national stage in February 1950 when Senator Joseph McCarthy began his anti-communist crusade (ibid., 16). From its inception, homosexuality was in its cross hairs: "'Homosexuality,' McCarthy asserted, 'was the psychological maladjustment that led people toward communism'" (ibid.). The supposed reasoning behind these measures was not the protection of the sanctity of marriage as much as it was that homosexuals were susceptible to be recruited or blackmailed by communists, even though they never really explained exactly why. A column printed in *Newsweek* stated this much: "Morality isn't the primary motivation behind the State Department's recently announced drive to rid itself of homosexuals. Officials consider sex deviates bad security risks because they are so vulnerable to blackmail" ("The Periscope" 1950, 11). In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's

issuance of Executive Order 10450 reflected growing concerns about homosexuality, as it broadened political loyalty to include “character and suitability” (Johnson 2004, 123). This presidential decree gave power to each agency’s head to investigate their personnel in order to determine that each civilian officer and employee was “reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete unswerving loyalty to the United States” (Executive Order 10450, 1953). Section 8 details the particularities that would disqualify one from federal employment, most of which entail treason, sabotage, and advocating overthrowing the government. Three subsections point specifically to violations of proper conduct, encapsulating the entire discourse on homosexuality of that time. Section 8.1.iii asserts that “Any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, sexual perversion” would disqualify one from employment (ibid.). Many of these qualifications were used to describe homosexual acts, the most obvious perhaps would have been “infamous” crimes against nature, i.e. sodomy, and “sexual perversion.” The next section attempts to contend with the psychiatric community’s belief that homosexuality was a mental illness that should be “handled by psychiatrists” (Bérubé 1990, 11). Both Harry Stack Sullivan and Winfred Overholser, the most influential psychiatrists in the creation of the Armed Services’ psychiatric screening procedures, believed homosexuality “should not be punished, discriminated against, or morally condemned” (ibid.). Nonetheless, when Section 8.1.iv states “Any illness, including any medical condition, of a nature which in the opinion of competent medical authority may cause significant defect in the judgment or reliability of the employee [...]” (ibid.), it clearly points to the potentially compromising position that homosexuality put one in. As a mental illness, it certainly was seen to impair one’s judgment. Finally, Section 8.1.v brings to the forefront that homosexuality made one susceptible to Communist pressures, declaring “Any facts which furnish reason to believe that the individual may be subjected to coercion, influence, or pressure which may cause him to act contrary to the best interests of the national security” (ibid). Executive Order 10450 created an infrastructure for the surveillance and interrogation of federal employees. The State Department had all male employees interviewed to detect “sex deviates”

(Johnson 2004, 128). The creation of a loyalty and later security program was the means the Federal government adopted to implement homophobic policies and push homosexual employees into the shadows. The attempt to root out the presence of homosexual men and women in the Armed Services and later the State Department attests to the fact that the government saw homosexuality as a genuine threat to its social, economic, and political purposes. Within the larger framework of the Cold War, any non-normative expression of sexuality countered all that Americans held sacred, i.e., “freedom, God, private property, the family, and sex polarity” (Cuordileone 2000, 537-38). The government ensured that was the case by creating a polarized discourse on nearly every level of society. Historian Kyle Cuordielone explains, “Communism [...] overturned all ‘natural’ hierarchies and relations—free man and the state, God and man, the individual and the collective, and at a most basic level, man and woman” (ibid.). Compulsive heterosexuality was part of the “natural” hierarchy in need of protecting. On a cultural level, homophobia spread through a sex crime panic.

The United States experienced two sex crime waves in the mid-twentieth century; the first took place prior to World War II and the second in its immediate aftermath (Freedman 1987, 83-84). Public attention increasingly focused on sex crimes as media outlets printed sensational stories about sexual deviance, law enforcement agencies cracked down on sexual misconduct, and private citizens’ groups began to generate hype around the “sexual psychopath” in America’s midst (Freedman 1987, 84; Robertson 2001, 3-4). As arrest rates rose for sexual offenses between 1935 and 1965, growing fears of male sexual aberrance resulted in the passage of laws that also persecuted homosexuals under the pretext that they were sexual deviants, arrested in their psychosexual development (Robertson 2001, 16; Sutherland 1950, 549). Homosexuals were presented as a different type of “sexual psychopath” as their “uncontrollable desires” were allegedly focused on seducing boys. The laws passed at that time attempting to address sex crimes targeted “sexual psychopaths”—“persons with criminal propensities to the commission of sex offenses”—and “perverts”—a pejorative euphemism frequently designating

homosexuals (Borrie 2007, 24; Sutherland 1950, 543).<sup>110</sup> These labels could be quite misleading as they were assigned to a variety of acts and situations: from “adults who engaged in same-sex consensual relationships” to “violent criminals who raped and murdered children” (May 1988, 91). Historian David K. Johnson explains that “‘Sexual psychopath’ was an ambiguous term, but one that frequently was conflated with ‘homosexual,’ since most observers assumed that homosexuals were sick, could not control themselves, and needed to recruit new members to their ranks” (2004, 56-57). Johnson asserts that confusing these terms at such a sensitive moment in American history reflected the larger fear of homosexuality as a threat to the gender and sexual social order.

In the winter of 1955-1956, Boise, Idaho was brought into the national limelight as a sexual scandal and homosexual witch-hunt unfolded (U.S. Census Bureau 1952a and 1961a). The shame and shock surrounding this event have contributed to a sort of collective amnesia that has for the most part left the scandal in the shadows. There have been a couple attempts to uncover the events of that winter and explain the ferocity with which Boiseans responded.<sup>111</sup> The most notorious publication on this topic is journalist John Gerassi’s *The Boys of Boise: Furor, Vice, and Folly in an American City* (1966). In the introduction Gerassi explains his intrigue when he first read about the “homosexual underworld” in Boise that *Time* published in 1955 (Gerassi 1966, ix-xii). A decade later he set out for Boise in order to get answers about what really took place.<sup>112</sup> His account of the events, though “stilted, arrogant, self-assured in tone and approach, and critical of the mores of the locality,” presents the audience with copious amounts of unanalyzed primary sources (Mackey 2002). Consequently, the following case study will contextualize

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<sup>110</sup> Some examples of states that enacted sexual psychopath laws during the pre-War period: California (Welfare and Inst. Code, §§5500-5516, 1939), Illinois (Rev. Stats. ch. 38, §§820-825, 1938), Michigan (Stats. ann., ch. 25, §28.967, 1939); during the War: Minnesota (Stats., §§52609-52611, 1945); and after the War: Massachusetts (Laws ann., ch. 123A, §§1-6, 1947) (Sutherland 1950, 543).

<sup>111</sup> See Seth Randal’s documentary *The Fall of '55* and Jen Schneider’s article “Queer Wordplay” (2008) for Boisean’s reactions.

<sup>112</sup> During his investigation Gerassi concludes that this homosexual purge was a means for Boise’s power-elite to maintain their economic and political dominance by smoking out one individual, referred to as the “Queen.” The explanation for this one-man witch-hunt was that he was “a man so wealthy that it was felt he was untouchable in any other way” (21; See Ch. 3, 5, and 19).



Boiseans reaction within the larger discussion taking place in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s using Gerassi's reprinted first-hand accounts in an attempt to demonstrate how the general population conflated homosexuality with sexual perversion and deviance and how this was then presented as a threat to the American nuclear family and to American democracy within the context of the Cold War.<sup>113</sup>

In November 1955, *The Idaho Statesman*, Boise's only daily newspaper, reported on the arrest of three men, two of whom were being charged with "lewd conduct with a minor" and the third with "infamous crimes against nature." A local Probation Officer claimed that these men were part of a larger sexual crime ring and *The Idaho Statesman* incited public indignation through the publication of "incendiary editorials" (Schneider 2008, 468). The scandal hit the national stage on December 12 when *Time* published an article entitled "Crime: Idaho Underworld" in which the magazine claimed, "Recently, Boiseans were shocked to learn that their city had sheltered a widespread sexual underworld that involved some of Boise's most prominent men and had preyed on hundreds of teen-age boys for the past decade" (1955, 25). Over the next two months, thirteen others were charged. In the end, 65 boys were thought to be involved; 32 were interviewed by a psychiatrist; only four or five were considered "deeply involved;" local police compiled a morals file of 130 known "perverts;" and 500 men's names were added to a private investigator's list (Gerassi 1966, 22; 30-31; 34; 288). All of which resulted in only fifteen convictions: three for "lewd conduct with a minor," one for "lewd and lascivious conduct," and eight for "infamous crimes against nature." The morals files, private

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<sup>113</sup> Though a distinction should be made between the sexual politics of the time when the scandal took place and the time the book was published, by his own admission Gerassi states that the United States as a whole had not come to accept all sexual acts within the limits of acceptability. "There seems to me little doubt that most people in the United States today think a sex offender is a criminal in much the same way that they think a robber is a criminal. This is not true in New York or San Francisco or other major cities, where most people are constantly in contact with deviates. [...] But in Boise, Idaho, both in 1955 and 1965, the vast majority of the population considered these offenders criminals [...]. And America is full of Boises. I think it is fair to say that most Americans, brought up as they are on a more or less rigid sexual standard (which they violate in secret), would want homosexuals jailed" (1966, 83). Also see "The Homosexual in America" published in *Time* (21 Jan., 1966) as an example of how the dominant discourse continued to perpetuate a vision of homosexuality as "deviant" throughout most of the postwar era.

investigator's list, and public indignation attest to a communal panic about the possibility that any type of sexual deviance was taking place in the community. Moreover, Boiseans' reactions can be seen as an example of the countrywide concern about the threat that "effeminate," "weak" and "perverted" homosexuals posed to American masculinity, and the nation at large.

As a religious and conservative community, most Boiseans were completely unaware that Boise had any homosexual presence and were appalled by the revelation that "sex crimes" were being committed under their noses (Schneider 2008, 467). Like most Americans living away from the larger coastal cities, Boiseans saw their hometown as a "model city, relatively free of crime" and "juvenile delinquency" (Gerassi 1966, 65). The arrests and the media's allusions to a much larger problem generated a frenzy. In its first article, *Time* not only reported on how widespread the homosexual underworld's reach was, but also alluded to the idea that the boys involved were exercising some degree of consent. "In the course of their investigation, police talked with 125 youths who had been involved. All were between the ages of 13 and 20. Usually the motive—and the lure—was money" ("National Affairs. Crime: Idaho Underworld" 1955, 25). Three weeks after picking the story up, *Time* stated "scores of boys were involved" ("National Affairs. Crime: Adult Responsibility 1956, 14). Two themes seem to pervade the magazine's treatment of the scandal: first, the lives' of Boise's youth were at stake—teenage delinquency was a buzz phrase at that time as "a wave of juvenile delinquency hysteria engulfed America [...] from around 1953 until the late 1950s" (Borrie 2007, 4)—and second, homosexuality was synonymous with pedophilia. Both ideas problematize homosexuality. Furthermore, Gerassi's book reveals a recurrent association between homosexuality and pedophilia from the perspective of the local media and the townsfolk. *The Idaho Statesman* in its November 16, 1955 coverage of the scandal drew such a link:

The decent foundations of the Boise community were jolted beyond description recently with the arrest of three local men on morals charges involving young boys. It did not seem possible that this community ever harbored homosexuals to ravage our youth. Yet it was true as confessions of both men and young boys made disgustingly clear ("This Mess Must Be Removed", 4).

This newspaper article appears to take for granted that homosexual desire would necessarily be focused on minors, quite unapologetically rendering homosexuality tantamount to the psychosexual disorder of pedophilia. From the *Statesman's* perspective, it seems that homosexuality was violent and predatory as there is an insistence on the age of the teenagers involved. Yet, the newspaper fails to mention the possibility that these boys were engaging in these acts of their own free will—a fact on which Gerassi insists throughout his book and the basis of one of his larger arguments that supports the decriminalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults—and, thus, evades the issue of teen delinquency and, at the same time, paints those involved as vulnerable young victims. This is problematic because all of the accusers were over the age of 16 and all of them gave permission and/or initiated the encounter, although technically the age of consent in Idaho was 18 (Schneider 2008, 473). Though the media focused on the involvement of minors, in interviewing the prosecuting attorney, Blaine Evans, on these sex crime cases, Gerassi uncovered how public opinion also reduced homosexuality to pedophilia, regardless of the evidence that many of the names in the morals files and on the private investigator's list were exclusively involved in consensual same-sex adult relations. Evans said:

[...W]hen it's going on in the basement of the Public Library, and in the hotels, and these guys are soliciting business all over town, you've got to do something about it, don't you? We limited ourselves to adults who were involved with minors. [...] But you've got to get these guys because they strike at the core of society. I mean the family and the family unit. And when you get these guys crawling around the streets, you've got to prosecute to save the family (as cited in Gerassi 1966, 25).

Like many people at that time, Evans conveyed here an urgency to protect the family, which in turn would safeguard society. The author, however, did point out that his portrayal of the situation was not entirely accurate as, in fact, non-pedophiles were also caught up in the scandal to which Evans responded, “Well, it's the law, and we've got to prosecute, because it's on the books” (Gerassi 1966, 24). The prosecuting attorney had likewise stated in 1955 that he would “rid the community of this scourge” (ibid., 12). It is significant that Evans held a position of authority because his opinion represents an institutional perspective on how this type of behavior was perceived. His characterization of homosexuality, as not only menacing

*the founding* social unit, but subverting its very purpose of stabilizing society, situated homosexuality well outside the margins of recoverability. Prosecuting homosexuals was the means to keep their “infection” from spreading to children, disrupting the family, and turning society on its head. Persecution was deemed necessary.

In addition to seeing homosexuals necessarily as pedophiles, public perception seemed to be that exposure meant “contamination” and “infection”. This is present in *The Idaho Statesman*’s treatment of the scandal. On multiple occasions in its coverage, the paper attempts to relate homosexuality to the larger model that presents it as a static psychological state. In fact, in “This Mess Must Be Removed” published on November 16, 1955, the paper states that the real tragedy is not that so many young men had been abused, but that because they had had such encounters as young men, they were doomed to become homosexuals themselves. This attitude positions these young men as incapable of attaining “true” male adulthood. They would indeed be stunted by this experience, making them unfit to demonstrate their sexual prowess as heterosexual men in the future because they had been infected by perversion. Four days later, the newspaper repeats this sentiment, this time focusing on the accused.

Confessions by homosexuals invariably bring out the stark fact that these victims of a puzzling physical or mental quirk were themselves infected as young boys. There the die was cast. They grew into manhood to infect other boys who, in turn, unless effective intervention follows, will travel the same path and carry the identical threat to the next generation of youth (as cited in Gerassi 1966, 15).

The pervading themes here are corruption upon exposure and the need for purification. This type of thinking was typical for the time as it continued in the vein that homosexuality was a sickness, or something that could be spread, caught, treated, and cured. In fact, the first medical model that American doctors used alleged that homosexuality was hereditary, presenting it as a corrupted lineage (D’Emilio 1983, 15; 21). After the First World War, scientific perspectives on homosexuality moved away from the body towards the psyche, placing homosexuality within the realm of the psychopathological (ibid., 16). Perceptions of homosexuality did not however necessarily lose their physicality. The disease model persisted in the medical community until the 1970s (ibid.). The idea that “homosexual infection” was

simply a question of exposure suggests that any boy “subjected” to homosexual behavior would immediately be arrested in his psychosexual development, placing him within a vicious circle from which he would be incapable of freeing himself and thus would be unable to evolve into a man, unless, of course, he underwent treatment.

Reaching one’s full gender potential was an important part of the ethos during the post-War era. The cultural preoccupation with the masculine crisis during the Great Depression, World War II, and the postwar era demonstrates a societal desire to find a well-defined place for men at mid-century. Though the “democratic family” was heralded as a modern expression of intimacy and renewed familial positions, it also presented many challenges to adjusting gender roles. The transformations required in order to implement this new model positioned men and women as vying for domestic control. When one or both parents did not assume their “appropriate position” in regards to their children they were blamed for creating “homosexuals.” Women were frequently the targets of such accusations because they were often said to be playing a castrating role within their homes, usurping the manly roles of their husbands by assuming the authoritative role. Boys who became homosexuals as adults were thus seen as the product of failed parenting—an overbearing mother and/or a nonassertive father.<sup>114</sup> This perspective is conveyed in *The Boys of Boise*, once during the trial of one of the men accused of sodomy when a “Dr. Dale Cornell took the stand and said that an isolated homosexual experience did not cause the person to become homosexual nearly as much as a ‘disturbed child-parent relationship early in life’” (Gerassi 1966, 69). This vision was also present later in a case that did not involve any minor. Then, the sexual “perversion” of the individual was attributed to the dominating influence of his mother and grandmother throughout his childhood. There was also implication of the father and his lack of interest and influence in the man's boyhood. The report by the district probation and parole agent, gave the following as a description:

The subject relates that [...] he grew up to be very much a Sissy, the way his Mother and Grand Mother wished. [...] He was a very sickly child and this

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<sup>114</sup> See for example Philip Wylie’s discussion on “momism” in chapter ten of *Generation of Vipers* (1942).

caused him to be very much under the domination of the Women folk of the home. [...] He related that he thot [*sic*] there was nothing wrong with his thinking but was ignorant of what was right as he and his father did not discuss life. In fact he did not go with his Father to any of the Sporting functions that usually a father and son enjoy [*sic*] together. Because of this the subject relates that he grew to where he was not interested in Women or girls but became attracted to Men (as cited in Gerassi 1966, 164-165 [capitals in original]).

It was believed that the way in which a family was organized greatly influenced the sexuality of the child. If the mother took on the primary role of influence in a boy's life, in essence becoming the masculine role-model, the boy was seen as never having had the chance to develop properly. His sexual object choice would be based on this "misguidance." Medical professionals as well as representatives of the state cast homosexuality as a failure in the socialization process of the child, blaming the parents and rendering the byproduct "maladjusted" and "abhorrent."

From the hysteria around sexual crimes to the pursuit and arrest of homosexuals, the simple evocation of homosexuality provoked a strong reaction during the post-World War Two era as is made manifest in John Gerassi's *The Boys of Boise*. This was the case because recurrent themes surfaced in popular discourse that depicted homosexuals as "weak" and vulnerable to communist recruitment, in essence linking male sexuality to masculine norms. "Real" men were supposed to be strong and able to fend off Communists. Furthermore, the sex crime panic gave credence to the idea that homosexuality was a contagious illness because popular and psychological literature as well as public opinion perpetuated the notion that homosexual acts corrupted both body and mind. Events like the scandal in Boise, Idaho were not atypical for the time. Indeed, "Anti-vice campaigns of one kind or another occasionally swept through small- and medium-size towns and even large cities regularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Mackey 2002). What is quite significant about these homosexual witch-hunts is how they were fabricated as being threatening not only to the dominant sexual and gender orders but also to societal institutions like the family, the community, and even the system of government. In postwar America, gender and sexual norms were so thoroughly fused with one's larger social roles that they played a significant role in ascribing meaning and direction to the nuclear family. By extension, and because the nuclear family was

seen as the backbone and the stabilizing element of American society in opposition to the collectivist family system in the USSR, homosexuality was seen as a threat to American values and something that would prevent American victory against communism.

The development of opposing sexual identities furthered the homogenizing power of “normal” sexual behavior during the postwar era. The attempt to maintain a strong coherency between one’s gender, sex, and erotic expression acted, on the one hand, to hold up a standard contingent on normative gender and sexual expression. On the other, the essentializing discourse surrounding heteronormativity was undermined by the growing presence and acknowledgement of people who had same-sex desires. As such, the dichotomization of sexuality became all the more important to maintaining systemic influence over “sanctioned” and “unsanctioned” sex. In creating a link between internal subversion and “inappropriate” sexual expressions, the married, white, middle-class, heterosexual couple could be extolled as the ultimate representation of the American way of life.

## **Part 3: Young People Recreating Tradition?**





## V. **Playing at Marriage**

Before the twentieth-century practice of dating, young people met one another through another elaborate ritual called courting. Courtship operated as a regulatory framework for young men and women's interactions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It revolved around the practice of "calling," that is, a young man would receive an invitation to "call" on, or visit, a young woman at home. According to historian Beth Bailey, calling manifested itself differently according to one's class and geographical location, but was part of a larger national culture that was spread through general-interest and women's magazines as well as popular books of etiquette. As she notes, "The young man from the neighboring farm who spent the evening sitting on the front porch with the farmer's daughter was paying a call, and so was the 'society' man who could judge his prospects by whether or not the card he presented at the front door found the lady of his choice 'at home'" (Bailey 1988, 15). Although courting might have looked different depending on where one lived and to which socio-economic class one belonged, it was a system largely controlled by women and centered around the home. First, it was an extension of the larger social-status ritual in which women engaged, known as "society calling." Upper-class women arranged their social calendars according to which days they would "receive" visitors and "return" calls. Second, older women inducted their younger counterparts into the romantic potential of these social encounters. When a young woman reached the age at which she might have male callers—usually signified by a "debut"—hence the word "debutante"—, her mother would for that first season invite suitors to the home. Once past this introductory season, a young woman could extend invitations to men with whom she had been properly introduced. A young man could only take the initiative to call on a woman without invitation if he had attended an event hosted by the same woman, in which case he called on her to express his appreciation. He could also accompany friends or relatives to call on a young woman, as long as her permission was granted beforehand. Women's control also extended to the decorum of the interaction itself. The most pertinent to potentially romantic calls was the extent to which the couple was chaperoned—though calling on a young woman and her mother at first was customary, an ever-present, hawkish chaperon would indicate

a suitor's undesirability to the family. As the basics of making a call suggest, courting was a heavily codified system. An important aspect of the courtship system hinged on the implications of chaperonage: respectability. As such, courting, especially its more elaborate forms, speaks more to the conventional behaviors of the middle and upper classes than it does to the working and poorer ones (Bailey 1988, 14-16; Coontz 2005, 199).

Many lower-class, urban youngsters did not have access to front parlors or porches in which calling could take place. Opportunities to socialize in mixed company increased tremendously in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first couple of decades of the twentieth as dance halls, cabarets, resorts, and amusement parks provided a place for young people to meet. The largest marker that maintained a distinction between the classes was the extent to which these public places were chaperoned and a woman's respectability depended on this (Bailey 1988, 18 and Coontz 2005, 198-199). As historian Kathy Peiss remarks, "The popular middle-class resorts, cabarets, and cafes tended to mediate promiscuous contact by imposing elaborate rules on their clientele" (1994, 285). She adds that where patrons of lower-class venues tended to pair off on site, middle-class youths were encouraged to attend as a couple "on a date", which was seen as a way to regulate promiscuous dancing and behavior (*ibid.*). For middle- and upper-class observers the lower-class places and amusements were fraught with potentials for impropriety. As social reformer Belle Israels Moskowitz lamented in 1909, working girls who frequented such places threatened the social, gender, and sexual orders. In describing the differences between the "working girl" and her "sister of the less driven class," Moskowitz is both paternalistic and sympathetic to her plight, saying she lacks in "standards, opportunities, and a chaperon," likely due to the fact that she lives in an overcrowded tenement (1909, 267). In spite of Moskowitz's concern for lower-class women, her larger apprehension revolves around the working girl's potential for moral degeneracy. Seeking entertainment in the public sphere placed her in a particularly precarious situation because access to it required money and, at the time, few working girls had much disposable income, if any. As Moskowitz describes it, they relied on the men they "picked up" to "treat" them to ... (*ibid.*) This would

require a great deal of social maneuvering by the end of the day, however, if a working girl hoped to avoid “one of her partners of the evening” “exact[ing] tribute for 'standing treat'” (ibid.). In her study on New York dance halls at the beginning of the twentieth century, Peiss also talks about the practice of “treating” and its centrality to the culture of working-class entertainment venues. Peiss explains it thus:

For these women, treating was not always a one-way proposition, but entailed an exchange relationship. In the male subculture of the saloon, treating rounds of beer asserted workingmen's independent status while affirming common ties among a group of equals. Women, however, were financially unable to reciprocate in kind and instead offered sexual favors of varying degrees. Most commonly, capitalizing on their attractiveness and personality, women volunteered only flirtatious companionship (1994, 287).

Peiss concedes that in its more extreme forms some working-class women engaged in the type of behavior that Moskowitz condemns as pandemic to working-class culture, that is trading sexual intimacies for drinks, gifts, and the like. “Other women fully bought into the culture of treating, trading sexual favors of varying degrees for male attention, gifts, and a good time. These young women were known in underworld slang as 'charity girls,' a term that differentiated them from prostitutes because they would not accept money in their sexual encounters with men” (ibid., 288). Like Peiss, Stephanie Coontz explains this as part of the independence afforded young, working-class women as they gained more access to the public sphere and, along with it, more agency to define social prescriptions regulating the ways they expressed their gender and sexuality (2005, 192).<sup>115</sup> Reformers, like Moskowitz, believed they were intervening to safeguard the “respectability” of these working-class youths, only to later find out that this behavior had little effect on a woman’s marriage prospects within their own class (ibid.). Such contrasting perspectives over what “reputable” and “promiscuous” behavior entailed demonstrates one of the tensions with which lower-class and upper-class Americans contended at that time when it came to dating. This was exacerbated by upper-class youths’ rebellious inclination to frequent working-class establishments, not only to observe, but to participate in the sexual

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<sup>115</sup> It should be noted, here, that independence should not be looked at as inherently positive. The trade-off for working-class women necessarily meant that, often, they were not deemed respectable, which would have made them more susceptible to be taken advantage of by men (Bailey 1988, 18).

expressiveness of the dancing styles and the unsupervised “free zones” in the balconies where young men and women could get a little closer (Bailey 1988, 18; Peiss 1994, 284; 286). Socializing among men and women was thus largely defined by class and space.

The tension between lower-class and upper-class standards of behavior gave way to the system that afforded the most freedom and possibilities. One of the large distinctions between working-class dating and middle-class courting systems was the location in which they were pursued. Courtship usually began and ended in the intimacy of the young woman's home, under the direct or indirect supervision of a relative. Dating, however, moved the young couple out of the home, into the modern world of entertainment, and out from under the prying eyes of chaperones. In a way then, dating came about as public entertainment and urban life afforded young people the opportunity to exercise greater freedom in choosing with whom and how they socialized. Young people were primed for greater control over their social lives as more of them came into contact with the burgeoning youth culture of the 1920s, at a time when adolescence increasingly came to be seen as a transitional stage towards adulthood—a phase that necessitated monitoring and guidance—and when high school enrollments climbed. Young people's increasing contact with peer groups of the same age helped to inculcate dating as part of the youth culture. The commodities that accompanied that culture also reinforced this time as one when young people would look for more independence and freedom in their heterosocial interactions, as is illustrated by rising rates of automobile ownership amongst teenagers (Bailey 1988, 19).

Accompanying the shift from the private sphere to the public one was also a transfer of control. Where calling took place in the woman's private residence and refreshments or entertainment were provided by the hostess in earlier decades, going out in the 1910s and 1920s moved the couple into the men's public sphere, making men responsible for providing the entertainment. “An invitation to go out on a date [...] was an invitation into man's world—not simply because dating took place in the public sphere, [...] but because dating moved courtship into the world of the economy” (Bailey 1988, 21). With this shift in control, men became responsible for

taking the initiative for such encounters. As such, dating seemed to become an economic exchange—like marriage, but a temporary arrangement—wherein men would pay for entertainment, companionship, and power. As Bailey notes, “The dating system required men always to assume control, and women to act as men’s dependents” (ibid., 24).

As was the case with courting, when dating emerged as the dominant forum for interacting with the opposite sex, it became increasingly codified (ibid., 20-24). The ways to practice dating followed a well-defined and relatively complex code that seems to really insist on the necessity for each member to perform their gender well. Bailey indicates that the performative nature of this codification was seen as a fundamental aspect of the equilibrium between the sexes: “The whole catalog of rules governing relations between the sexes, was, of course, a charade. [...] But maintaining the norms, acting ‘as if’ the men were dominant and therefore masculine and the women were submissive and therefore feminine, remained the crucial message—a message American men and women accepted” (ibid., 113-114).

As many social factors came together, dating rapidly outstripped the practice of courting and became the predominant system by the mid-1920s. Beth Bailey remarks on the ubiquity of this transition by mid-century, “By the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists who studied American courtship found it necessary to remind the American public that dating was a ‘recent American innovation and not a traditional or universal custom’” (1988, 14). Dating, then, came to be the middle-class convention for both the lower and upper classes. Lower-class couples “went out” because they lacked access to the space necessary to receive callers and they mingled unsupervised in public spaces where they were seemingly anonymous. Middle-class couples, on the other hand, also wanted more anonymity, privacy, and freedom in their interactions—something they found more easily in the public sphere—and thus, they rebelled against the ever-present gaze of the chaperone by frequenting lower-class establishments outside of their usual social environment (Bailey 1988, 14-19; Peiss 1994, 285).

Many researchers interested in courtship and dating believe that both served the larger purpose of marriage. Though that is true to some degree, reducing

courtship and dating to a formula removes them from the youth culture that produced them and favors the outsider's vision—adults, experts, parents—over those who were actually engaging in such behavior. Since it first appeared, the social purpose of dating has evolved. During the Interwar period, popularity seemed to be the reason why one would date—the greater the number of dates and partners, the better. At that time, when a couple decided they were ready to become more serious about one another, they would “go steady,” which was considered the first step towards marriage. After the Second World War, the nature of dating changed and young people started to have a string of “steady” relationships before marriage. As this became the norm, the meaning of “steady dating” evolved. At first, it carried the connotations of the interwar period, that it to say that a couple became exclusive to show the seriousness of their relationship. With time, steady dating became less serious and more about having fun. Young people's dating practices transitioned from dating many people causally to having a series of exclusive, but in all likelihood relatively unserious, relationships. As such, the evolution of dating can be looked at as a microcosm of changing social norms in marriage, sexuality, and gender during the postwar era.

In tracing the evolution of dating practices in conjunction with the social explanations for this practice, this part will begin to lay the foundations for the idea that the entirety of postwar youth culture played an instrumental role in deconstructing the rigidity with which marriage, sexuality, and gender were defined. As steady dating became more informal, less marriage-oriented, gender and sexual decorum lost some of their power. Etiquette books, advice columns, and educational films would attempt to maintain the status quo, but individual acts and beliefs would slowly rewrite it.

## **1. The Rise of Steady Dating**

In its earliest incarnation, casual dating was a popularity contest. Through dating, young men and women could prove their worth and popularity to their peers. It was a competitive system that sociologist Willard Waller called “the campus rating complex” (1937). Men were “rated” based on their material and social

demonstrations of success. Nice cars and clothing, fraternity membership, and disposable income, all signified that a man had the right goods for exchange on the dating market. The more monetary value and social status a man had, the more he was able to further his popularity. Women, for their part, were “rated” on their desirability. Their beauty, clothing, friends, and even their other dates drove their value up or down. A woman demonstrated her popularity by being in high demand, commanding the most expensive dates, and being seen with the highest status men. The constant circulation and exchange of the rating-dating complex was the premise for the popularity contest: “you had to rate in order to date, to date in order to rate” (Bailey 1988, 30). As such, Bailey explains, this form of dating did not purport to help young people “select a mate,” as it is commonly presumed to do; rating-and-dating had other aims.

Dating was not about marriage and families. It wasn't even about love—which is not to say that American youth didn't continue to fall in love, marry, and raise families. [...] In the public realm, in the shared culture that defined the conventions of dating and gave meaning and coherence to individual experience, dating was not about marriage. Dating was about competition (ibid., 25).

A popularity contest understood in economic terms—scarcity, abundance, and competition—allowed young people to demonstrate their competitive prowess in 1920s and 1930s America, though the economic difference between the two decades caused a change in the underlying purpose of the game—preparing youth for the real world and allaying uncertainties about a depressed economy. Dating was the battleground where one could define their social standing in their peer culture (Bailey 1988, 25-32).

In its postwar manifestation, the rules of the game changed. Dating lost some of its competitive edge as young people started “steady dating”—going out exclusively with one person, also referred to as “going steady;” the couple itself could be called “steadies.” Before the Second World War, steady dating was understood categorically: if a person was not going “steady”, he or she was either unable to compete (unpopular) or out of the competition entirely (engaged, married). However, the emergence of steady dating in the wake of WWII reflected a larger cultural shift towards security, dependability, and comfort found in the couple.



Young people were, of course, participating in the larger context of the Cold War and materialistic rhetorics of that time. Popularity still figured into the dating scene, but now, being popular meant going steady. This was the way for a young person to ensure that he or she would have a date for every social function. After having done a study on the dating habits of high school students, John R. Crist (1953) concluded that the “steady dating” norm allowed young people to feel emotionally and psychologically reassured by the fact that they had a person of the opposite sex with whom they could attend all the social functions (26). The amount and quality of one’s dates was no longer the guiding criteria for one’s popularity. Instead, an individual’s social standing depended on having a “steady,” which created a system of prestige around the adolescent couple (*ibid.*). Having a consistent boyfriend or girlfriend gave social status to both parties while providing each member with the comfort that their peer group approved of them and that they could participate in all the social activities.

Whether dating took the form of rating-and-dating or steady dating, competition and security played similar functions in the larger adolescent and young adult scenes: they were the parameters by which young people could determine whether or not they belonged and adjusted their behavior according to where they wanted to be. The desire to belong to a group is part of the gregarious nature of being human and this certainly played a role in young people’s participation in the ritual of dating. Researchers, experts, and adults, then and now, tend to emphasize that the very nature of dating is goal oriented. It is the first step in a series towards marriage. As such, the end goal can be seen constantly looming on the horizon. The very important business of selecting a husband or wife pervades discussions of dating. In his study, Crist begins from this assumption to build the case that dating for mid-century high school students was, in fact, part of the socialization of the adolescent, or an introduction in how to interact with people of the opposite sex. Though the skills and maturity acquired through such interactions were necessary for the eventual selection of “a marriage companion,” this was not the express purpose of dating (Crist 1953, 25-26). Crist comes to this conclusion because many of the adolescents he interviewed expressed the opinion that when they began dating they were more

interested in belonging and having status in their group than they were in the custom, or even their date (*ibid.*, 26) Even though dating could eventually serve the ends of marriage, its undertaking, according to Crist, was more about fitting in and finding a place amongst their peer group, which was the true source of their emotional and social security. Such a conclusion sheds light on the social functions of dating outside its marital function. When security is used to talk about this era's youth in flocking to marriage and steady relationships, its social function is frequently explained away as a desire to conform, but can it not also reflect group identification and belonging?

Take, for example, the ambivalence—expressed by one of the women I interviewed—towards dating as a heavily codified and rigid form of girl-boy interaction. Rather than seeing it within a neatly defined progression of courtship to marriage, she explained it as part of her general social experience, important to the socialization process, defining belonging and a growing of her circle of friends. When I asked Deborah if she felt like everyone around her was dating when she was a young woman, she pointed out that dating has a very specific connotation and what stood out to her more than a strict codification of appropriate male-female behavior was an underlying desire to be around one another. She said, “The term is a little specific, compared to how I would describe it. Did girls want to be around boys? Did boys want to be around girls? Of course, absolutely. [It was a h]uge driver in how you woke up and sort of envisioned you would have your day be a combination of certain things: your obligations and fun (Deborah, 2013). Though Deborah acknowledges that heterosocial interaction was an important part of her life and the people she spent time with as a teen, she takes issue with the implications of the word dating, which perhaps in her mind too heavily signified marriage. This might be due to the fact that her first interactions with the opposite sex took place in a group. Crist called this a heterosexual “gang” or “clique” and explained that having a mixed-sex group of friends helped to limit “anxieties, fears, frustration and shyness” when one-on-one dating began (1953, 25). As such, dating in her social environment might have been built along a more informal pairing off that was seen as a natural extension of the larger group, rather than an abrupt departure from homosocial interactions. When I asked Deborah—a resident of Portland who identified herself as Jewish—

about how she met new men, she described it more as a larger network of social interactions and expanding one's network:

You dated people from a pretty large geographic area that did not necessarily just include your school because there were many ways you knew people. A lot of relationships started at camp. Now that person with whom you would have a relationship with at camp could be from Detroit; could be from Toronto; could be from Buffalo. If that person was from Detroit and they were at a different school, then you and all your friends got to meet a whole other group of kids. If you went to Sunday school, which most kids did, you didn't pick that geographically, you picked that by your level of engagement in Jewish life: reform, conservative, whatever. And so you knew a whole group of people from that and so then, if those people became your friends and you invited them to something, others of your friends became friends with them. And if there was a bond that developed then the whole thing mushroomed (Deborah, 2013).

This group-oriented vision of dating and its importance in allowing one greater access to the larger social scene seemed to carry over to the types of things many of my interviewees said they would do on a date. When I asked them what a typical date would have been like in junior high, high school, and college, many of them referred to school-sponsored events or campus spots as an integral part of the dating experience. Michael, Karen, Margaret, Richard, and Diane reported that dances were typical date activities (2013). Because she was at a private parochial college, Linda mentioned her college planned banquets instead of dances, "Because dancing was forbidden by the Church, there were dinners with special speakers and music. We had Sadie Hawkins Day where the girls could invite the boys" (2013).<sup>116</sup> Linda, Diane, James, and Karen said that sporting events were also a nice place for a date. Karen even had the opportunity to attend a few dates at the players' sports' banquets. Speaking about her eventual husband, she said, "When he was playing football and basketball, they won the championship and he took me to the two banquets that year. They had dates to go" (2013). Barbara explained that many of her dates combined

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<sup>116</sup> In referring to the Sadie Hawkins banquet—a dance in other schools—, Linda alludes to the way that asking for a date usually was done: young men invited young women out. I will discuss the norms of asking for a date in the following section. Sadie Hawkins Day or the idea for the Sadie Hawkins Dance came into the mainstream via the *L'il Abner* comic strip in 1937, created by Al Capp. In which, a hunt is organized for Sadie Hawkins—the least attractive woman in town who is verging on spinsterhood as she remains unmarried at 35—to catch a husband (Arnold 1990, 268).

both dances and sports because she was a cheerleader going steady with an athlete, which meant they attended the games in their respective roles, then went to the school-sponsored dance as a couple, and ended the night elsewhere (2013). Linda described a date spot on campus, “We had a coffee shop called the Bean, the Coffee Bean, and it was common to just meet somebody there for coffee, or study in the Bean” (2013). Though dating continued to be a social event, it was not reserved to school-sponsored activities. Michael and John remember attending private house parties when they were in junior high school. John described them as “make-out parties” (2013). Linda and Diane both said church functions or attending church together was common (2013). Diane and David explained that when the county fair would come to town, it was a place to go on a date (2013). Other outdoor activities described by Thomas included boating, inner-tubing, and picnicking as a group (2013). Diane, David, James, as well as Karen and William said the movie theater was another common spot (2013). Thomas explained the drive-in movies were where his friends would take their dates to be together as a group (2013). Karen also said that her husband would take her hunting as an activity to do on a date (2013). Despite what many of the people whom I interviewed said, going on group dates was not very common and steady dating was more of the norm, as evidenced from actual accounts and general perceptions of dating. Thirteen of my interviewees described dating as part of the larger youth-centered activities that made up their social lives. Many of these activities could be attended by couples, but they took place within a larger social environment where one’s peers would congregate.

Not all of my interviewees can be said to have expressed a uniquely social vision of dating. For some of the older people I interviewed, dating did seem to have a more strictly causal relationship with marriage. Of the nine individuals born before 1940, six of them fit the prescriptions for early marriage that became characteristic of that time. Of these six, five of them had known each other for most of their lives or met in high school and married shortly after the younger of the two graduated. Their accounts of dating and engagement indicate that they were on the cusp of the rating-dating and steady dating generations, though steady dating had not yet completely materialized into serial monogamy. Of these six, some of them held on to behaviors

typical of older generations—like having as many dance partners as possible at a dance or waiting until the man was able to financially provide before getting married—, nearly all of them adopted to a certain extent the Wartime and postwar rhetoric that extolled marriage and the family as young people’s *raison d’être*, but only two of them really fit the mold of the 1950s young couple marrying straight out of high school.

One of the ways that these individuals represent a transition between rating and dating on the one hand, and steady dating on the other, is that the older connotations of steady dating still lingered while the promiscuous pursuit of popularity was absent. Both Brenda and James explicitly linked “steady dating” to marriage. In her private papers, Brenda equated “going steady” with commitment to marriage, when she wrote, “Charles and I were ‘going steady’ after our first date. [...] We were certain of our love” (Brenda, 2013). The way that Brenda uses “going steady” to talk about her relationship with Charles in 1941 differs from how young people would use the term a decade later in the 1950s to describe a temporary boyfriend. Here, she intends to say that they were serious and looking towards marriage. In describing his courtship with his future wife, James also made a distinction between dating and steady dating, associating the latter with an increased intensity in their relationship. He described their first interactions as becoming progressively more intimate over a seven-game baseball series one summer. The culminating moment was when he walked his future wife home after the final game and held her hand. This gesture in tandem with their budding relationship inspired her to proclaim to a friend that he would be the man she married. Her friend replied she had never even had a date, a comment meant to reveal her own naivety. James said, “I think it was a year, at least, before we went steady. We got married in ’53, met later in ’48, we didn't get married for nearly five years. I just simply was not in the financial position. I knew I was going to marry her. I think I had the idea I didn't have any choice. I didn't give a damn; I liked the idea by then. (James, 2013). Even at the end of the 1940s, James used “going steady” to imply that their relationship had intensified and become marriage-bound. There is no remark about him and his wife existing outside of their peer group because they were going steady. In both

accounts, Brenda and James suggest that their relationships did not require much time for it to become obvious that they were going to stay together. Nevertheless, something changed rapidly in the way this term was used. In 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt describes it as a generational rift between what “grandparents called ‘keeping steady company,’ which meant that the couple was obviously on the road toward marriage, whether or not there was a formal engagement” and “a couple who merely seemed to prefer each other's company on a virtually exclusive basis, without any prospect for marriage” (438).

The oldest couple I interviewed, Richard and Margaret, born in 1922 and 1928 respectively, were the right age to articulate the coming together of two moments: rating and dating, and early marriage. Richard said that when he returned from World War II in 1946, Margaret asked him to the prom.<sup>117</sup> He described his own dating experience as sparse: since he was scared of girls, he had not dated much while he was in high school or even in the service. As a dating novice then, he had never experienced the thrill of the “dizzying popularity that was enacted on the dance floor” via the dance card (Bailey 1988, 31). He reminisced, “You had a dance card and you’d have all the girls sign it. So, I think I danced with Margaret twice. All the rest with other girls, because I had my uniform on. They’d sign it before: dance number two you danced with Betty and dance number three with Joan” (Richard, 2013). Given what we know about the dating-rating system, there might be some credence to Richard’s claim that it was his uniform that made his dance card so popular. As an older man and a returning veteran, he probably “rated” very well. Dancing with him undoubtedly would have reflected positively on his partner, which in turn would have made him popular. In addition to being part of that last wave to still engage in competitive dating, Margaret and Richard were riding on that first wave of youthful marriages. He returned from the War with marriage on his mind. He took Margaret to her senior prom and attended her graduation with an engagement ring in his pocket. Not more than six months later, they were married. When one “went steady” at that

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<sup>117</sup> As will be discussed shortly, it was quite uncommon and considered uncouth for a young woman to extend an invitation to any event that would require a man to pay. Richard justified her forwardness by explaining that she had first asked her mother’s permission to invite him to prom.

time, matrimony was on the immediate horizon for most couples. Following on the heels of those first couples who married at the beginning of the War, Margaret and Richard settled down into a secure life right after it ended.

Karen and William's story also embodied the quintessential combination of the initial postwar trend of serious steady dating and early marriage. They met when she was a freshman and he a junior in high school. They dated through his sophomore year of college, though he dated other girls until she was a senior because of the sexual expectations that going steady entailed.<sup>118</sup> During her senior year, her parents moved to Washington State. She convinced them to let her stay with her older, married sisters to finish high school in Utah. After graduation she was to go live with them. The winter of that year, Karen and William got engaged. This was a big date for a big event. In order to give the evening the magnificence it needed, William pulled out all the stops and gave Karen what they came to remember as the "ideal" date: he took her to a nice restaurant in a hotel that had a dance hall; he gave her an orchid corsage;<sup>119</sup> after they dined and danced, they drove up into the canyons to watch the deer in the snow under a full moon. This is where he gave her a diamond ring. They were married three days after she graduated: she was eighteen, he was twenty. "From then on, we stayed together," Karen said (2013). Although they did not explicitly say this is what drove them to marriage, Karen's final statement—marriage is what kept them together—demonstrates just how much they fit into the "classic wartime desire for something stable in an unstable world" (Bailey 1988, 49). The examples of James, Brenda, Margaret and Richard, as well as Karen and William show how these individuals' lives conformed, to some extent, to prevalent images surrounding the couple during this era. One of them illustrates the social aspect of dating, its importance in the popularity contest. All of them embody the larger prescription that dating was preparation for choosing a mate. When asked about

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<sup>118</sup> A degree of sexual exploration—necking and petting—became quite standard in the steady dating complex. I will discuss this in the following chapter.

<sup>119</sup> Not only did a corsage indicate that this was a "big date," but the fact that it was an orchid did too. Beth Bailey explains the importance that flowers played as "public symbols" to indicate how much a young man could afford and how much a young woman was worth. The type of flower is of particular significance because the orchid was the most expensive, and thus, the most highly prized (Bailey 1988, 65).

dating, every one of them talked almost exclusively about finding their spouse. Perhaps this was due to the continued influence their spouse had: none of them were divorced, the one who was widowed had never remarried. They are examples of what Beth Bailey argues was the changing convention among older teens, getting married between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, which paved the way for serial steady dating to emerge (*ibid.*).

By 1950, the meaning of going steady had changed. Rather than indicating that a couple was nearing marriage, this custom acted as a sign of popularity and the beginnings of mixed-sex socializing. In terms of providing stability, having a “steady” reassured young people about two things: first, they would always have a date and, second, having many steady relationships would help them choose a marital companion. As such, those involved in steady dating began to think of their relationships as practice for marriage. Bailey describes it as, “a sort-of play marriage, a mimicry of the actual marriage of their slightly older peers” (*ibid.*). The conception of steady relationships as practice-runs for marriage encouraged young people to have many “mini marriages,” thus rewriting past meanings and protocols.

This can be seen in the symbolic exchange of a token that designated two people were going steady. In the past, “pinning”—when a college-going male offered his fraternity or dormitory pin to his steady girlfriend signified a couple was thinking about engagement and marriage—was seen as a way for a middle- and upper-class couple to publicly announce their intentions (Rogers and Havens 1960, 57). This practice was incorporated into serial steady dating as a simple means to signify that two people were together. Sometimes it was the young man who offered something up as a symbol of the couple's temporary monogamy; there could also be the reciprocal exchange of a love trinket, including in lower classes. The exact practice varied by location. Beth Bailey notes that in Portland, Oregon rings were the preferred symbol, while in Birmingham, Michigan the girl wore the boy's ID bracelet, and in Iowa couples had matching corduroy “steady jackets” (1988, 50-51). If the boy offered a present, it was often a high school ring or a varsity jacket. If there was a reciprocal exchange it was frequently a friendship bracelet (*ibid.*, 50). Two of the men I interviewed, both from Boise, talked about the token of affection



exchanged to indicate that a relationship was steady. David said, “In those days you would wear what was called a Saint Christopher’s medallion and you would give it to your girlfriend and she would wear it. And so, then you were going steady because she had your Saint Christopher around her neck (2013). Thomas explained:

Giving them a ring was cool. You gave them a ring. Your ring, not their ring, so they would wear your ring. And it could be like your class ring or some other kind of ring. And they never fit the girl. So what they would do is they would take colored yarn and they would wrap the underside of the ring to a size where it would eventually fit them. And then the really enterprising girls would take clear finger nail polish and polish the outside of it so it’d have multiple layers of polish on it. And it was kind of spiffy looking. So if your chic was really cool and groovy, she’d have a lot of shine on that. When you broke up, a sign of breaking up was you asked for your ring back. That was the culminating event to breaking up (Thomas, 2013).

Both Thomas and David talk about the symbolic importance of this token as something being limited to the idea of casually going steady. It was an exchange with a public purpose, but it was not necessarily an announcement of a serious relationship. There was no implication in their descriptions that these gifts were indicators of their intentions to marry. Thomas’s explanation of the “cool and groovy” girlfriend speaks to the accessory nature of the trinket. It was something to be individualized by the current holder, but not a symbol of permanence. According to Bailey, this present carried with it rules of mutual commitment that set up the parameters for how the couple was to proceed when they were going steady. The young man was the pursuer: he was to call the girl and take her out so many times a week. He was the expected escort for any social occasion that might come up. As a couple, they were supposed to be exclusive, seeing only one another, which included refraining from paying anyone of the opposite sex too much attention. They were also supposed to keep tabs on one another, always knowing what their girlfriend or boyfriend was doing and where she or he was. The dictates of how steadies should interact went beyond appearances. Going steady was the justification that young couples could use for their sexual explorations as well (Bailey 1988, 51).

As steady dating began to take hold as the normative way to date during the postwar era, young people had to be shown what this transformation meant in order to displace any past lingering understandings of the practice. This seems to be the

purpose of *Going Steady* (1951) and *How Do You Know Its Love?* (1950), two educational films produced by Coronet Instructional Films. As was commonly the case, Coronet relied on the expertise of well-established marriage and family researchers to inform their educational films: Judson T. Landis was the educational collaborator for *Going Steady* and Reuben Hill was for *How Do You Know Its Love?*<sup>120</sup> *Going Steady* sets out to explain to America's youth how steady dating had changed and what its new meaning entailed. It follows Marie and Jeff, who are told by their social circle, in different situations, that they are, in fact, going steady. Unaware that they have undertaken such a venture both consider what it means exactly to go steady.

Marie is told by her mother that she has been going steady with Jeff for some time since she no longer dates other boys and seems disinterested in the prospect of doing so. To which, Marie explains that she likes Jeff a lot, but complains that he does not always respect her. "I'd rather go out with Jeff, but I wish the others wouldn't ignore me so. Oh Mother, that's the whole trouble! Jeff doesn't ask me; he just shows up. He knows I'll be waiting for him, so he doesn't call and neither does anyone else" (*Going Steady* 1951). Marie appears to struggle with the idea that she and Jeff are in a steady relationship for several reasons. Some of the tangible elements of a steady relationship discussed above are missing. There has been no exchange of a love trinket that shows the couple's intentions to be together and Jeff does not respect the mandates that a steady boyfriend should: he does not call her and he does not invite her on dates. He "just shows up" at his convenience. Though it makes sense that Marie might not see their relationship as "steady," her mother's point is that "steadies" are exclusive, which has been exemplified in Jeff and Marie's actual dating practices. Marie makes the mistake of conflating exclusivity and seriousness, which her mother also corrects. Steady dating does not necessarily imply that the couple is all that serious about one another. Marie's mother shows concern about some of the other implications of steady dating, like sexual activity. Marie's mother alludes to this when she says she hopes that Jeff knows he has no "right to

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<sup>120</sup> Hill co-edited, with Howard Becker, *Marriage, Family, and Parenthood* (1948), a textbook designed for marriage preparation courses.

take liberties” (ibid.). Evidently for Marie, their relationship was far from this point as she just brushes off the possibility with an “Oh Mother” (ibid.).

Jeff seems equally clueless about the status of his relationship with Marie. He learns he is in a steady relationship when he calls and asks one of Marie’s friends, Diane, on a date. In turning him down she says that he must know she is in a steady relationship and so is he, for that matter. Taken aback, Jeff spends the night in with his parents, distracted by the revelation that he was not really on the dating market anymore. Eventually, he confides in them, who, like Marie’s mother, confirm that he is in a steady relationship because of the frequency and the exclusivity of his dating pattern. They serve a different purpose than Marie’s mother, who simply poses the basis for defining steady dating. Jeff’s parents articulate the stages of dating as part of the maturation of the individual. Jeff, having circulated for a couple of years, is old enough and experienced enough to begin looking for a more stable relationship, one that includes more responsibilities and will give him the opportunity to learn about his obligations towards a woman. However, this stage does not imply that the steady couple should make commitments to each other or have high expectations of one another that would be more befitting of a couple on the road to marriage.

The seriousness of a steady relationship is a recurring theme in *Going Steady*. One of the goals of the film seems to be to inform viewers that steady dating was not as momentous as it used to be. Not only did Marie seem uncomfortable about the implications of these two being steadies, Jeff did, too. His parents reassure him though that steady dating, especially one’s first steady, is not permanent and that he will have the chance to go steady with many young women before he marries. Despite Jeff’s concerns about the meaning of going steady, he reacts strongly to the suggestion that steady dating would one day lead to marriage. Because this leap in intensity seems natural for the adults, they have to explain to Jeff that he should not be naïve about the larger purpose of dating. Jeff’s father insists with quite a bit of concern that this is the path where steady dating ended. “A lot of young people do actually drift into marriage without first finding out how they get along with more than just one person” (*Going Steady* 1951). Another point being made here is that young people might make the mistake of using the exclusivity of steady dating as a

buffer for new experiences, depriving themselves of the opportunity to get to know what they are really looking for in a relationship because they have been lulled into complacency by the security of the steady dating system. Just as Marie's conversation with her mother, Jeff's discussion with his parents helps make the parameters of steady dating clearer. Consistently going out with the same person and not dating others in between meant that one was looking for a more secure, albeit short-term, relationship. A series of these would help the young person learn about love and companionship, which would prepare them for their final steady relationship, marriage.

Both Marie and Jeff's parents play a guiding role in helping their children understand what steady dating is and what it demands. This could be seen as an attempt by the marriage expert, in this case Landis, to instruct parents and teens that the adults' role was to help prepare them "for the important business of selecting a mate" (Bailey 1988, 48). Parents could not be the only source of information though. Steady dating, like this, was new. Adults might have understood how this system operated, but most would not have agreed with the values behind it (ibid., 51). For this reason, then, the rationale behind steady dating is explained to Marie by her friend Diane. As they chat, Marie wonders why Diane prefers to date one person rather than to "circulate a little." Diane explains, "Oh, you don't know how wonderful it is. Hal and I can depend on each other. I never have to worry whether I'll have a date. And it's so good to know that you belong to somebody. You don't have to make an effort to be at your best all the time" (*Going Steady*, 1951). Though Marie sees the logic in this, she still worries about the intimacy that steady dating might comprise. To which Diane replies, "Some boys feel like they can take advantage of you if you date them more than a couple of times. It's natural when a couple goes steady that they're closer together, but you have to know when to stop" (ibid.). Such a response sheds light on the sexual nature of these "mini marriages." From Diane's perspective a little intimacy was par for the course, but it too was codified: petting should only occur between a couple that was going steady and it

should stop short of certain thresholds.<sup>121</sup>

Like *Going Steady*, *How Do You Know Its Love?* tries to give some perspective on what it means to go steady. In both cases, these films insist on the casual and temporary nature of these relationships. Though its message is consistent with *Going Steady* in terms of defining a steady couple, *How Do You Know Its Love?* focuses on the depth and intensity of these relationships and what they should mean to those involved in them. The conflict revolves around the distinction between “mature love,” i.e. the love that an engaged couple or husband and wife share, and the love that steadies have. There are several “instructors” in this film: for the young woman, Nora, her mother largely fills this role and for the young man, Jack, his brother, Bob, does. In a less overt way, Bob and Jean (Bob’s fiancé) also provide an example against which Jack and Nora can assess their own relationship.

Nora’s mother helps her understand the different capacities for love that come with age and experience. This is clearly rooted in the evolutionary models applied to psychological development at that time that saw a delay between physical and psychological maturity (Robertson 2001, 7-8). In showing Nora photos of herself throughout her life, her mother explains the different kinds of love that come about through the lifecycle. She begins with a photo of Nora as a baby and says her first love object was her parents, which is only a natural reflection of the protection and care they provide. Then, she shows a photograph of a neighbor boy holding a teddy bear and describes how small children begin to love objects. This is a materialistic and possessive love. Next, we see an image of Nora helping around the house as an older child; her mother says that doing things for others is a demonstration of love for them. Nora’s mother turns the page to a picture of a big group of girls and talks about how young adolescents feel platonic love for their playmates. This is the age, she says, that they hang around in single-sex gangs and have mixed feelings about the opposite sex. Then she asks Nora if she remembers her first crush and shows a photograph of a football player. Nora’s mother explains that it is normal for

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<sup>121</sup> The next chapter will take an in-depth look at premarital sexual interactions and their implications for young people. For the purposes of this discussion petting should be understood as a generic description of sexual intimacy that was more intense than kissing, but feel short of sexual intercourse.

adolescents to direct their affections at the opposite sex, but usually towards individuals who are unlikely to reciprocate their feelings (e.g. teachers, sports stars, or movie stars). This eventually is translated into relationships that she calls puppy love. When Nora sees a picture of herself with an old beau, she admits she had nearly forgotten about him. Nora's mother takes this as the opportunity to ask, "Remember how important he seemed at the time? And it really was important as a part of learning how to love and be love" (*How Do You Know Its Love?* 1950). The next page of the photo album has a picture of a couple in a car kissing with "Whoops caught you!!!!" written beneath it. Nora's mother seems nonplussed by this scenario, but explains that physical love might confuse a young person into believing they have reached mature love because of the intensity of the feelings that accompany this stage. Finally, Nora's mother arrives at mature love which she explains as a combination of all the preceding stages of love, plus something deeper. "It's tender, unselfish, cooperative" (ibid.). Though Nora professes that this has helped her understand better what she should be looking for when she says she loves someone, her mother encourages her still to ask herself four questions to verify that she *really* is in love: do they have shared interests? Are they proud of each other? Do they feel at ease together? And do they agree on the basics, like religion? These are nearly the same questions asked in *Are You Ready for Marriage?* They are the gage by which one could see if they were prepared for marriage. The fact that such questions are introduced suggests that the parents' role in their children's steady dating was to help their child recognize the difference between one of the many serial steadies they might have and their marital companion. In fact, the entire discussion on the stages of love and development further that end.

While Nora's mother takes a theoretical approach to explaining the different phases of love, Bob takes a more direct approach. Exasperated by Jack going on about how much he loves Nora, Bob tells his little brother that he does not know the first thing about "real love." When Jack asks if he felt this way when he fell in love with Jean, Bob responds, "Oh look, I felt that way lots of times. The trouble with you is that you don't seem to understand what love is really about. You young punks go to the movies a couple of times, do a little necking, and you think you're in love. I've

never seen anything like it" (*How Do You Know Its Love?* 1950). Bob decides to show Jack and Nora what mature love should look like by asking them to join him and Jean on a double date. This scene is an important contrast to the discussion that takes place between Nora and her mother. It allows for similar advice to come from a variety of sources: parents explain the structural or philosophical implications of steady dating and love from the stance of an outsider, while older or experienced youths answer questions through their personal example, providing the insider's vision of steady dating and love.

At dinner, Nora watches Bob and Jean and asks herself whether or not their love would qualify as "mature love." As she slowly ticks the boxes on the ways that this engaged couple's relationship fits the standards her mother told her about, she compares it to her relationship with Jack. She sees a real difference. Not only is she unable to answer any of the important questions necessary for mature love, she does not feel prepared to have such an intimate relationship, now that she knows what it entails. Her hesitation from the beginning at the idea that Jack *really* loved her seems to find its source. When Jack walks Nora to the door at the end of the night, she confesses having seen "real, mature love" in action which has brought her to one conclusion, "We're not ready for that kind of attachment, are we?" (ibid.). Without skipping a beat, she light-heartedly returns to the purpose of their relationship: to just have fun.

In both *Going Steady* and *How Do You Know Its Love?* the overriding theme is that steady dating is meant to be preparation for the bigger choice down the road. Before that crucial moment, steady dating is perceived as a way for young people to have a good time, socialize, and learn about the nature of love. These films are good examples of the seemingly contradictory nature of the steady dating of this era described by Bailey. On the one hand, steady dating produced serious relationships amongst young people and contributed to young people getting married early (Bailey 1988, 47). While on the other, this practice created relationships that were temporary and immature (ibid., 49). It is this inconsistency with which Eleanor Roosevelt takes issue in her *Book of Common Sense Etiquette*. In contrasting a young adolescent's description of what this new custom meant with the supposed overarching purpose of

steady dating, Roosevelt fails to understand how short-term monogamy could ready an adolescent for the demands of marriage. She quoted a thirteen-year-old saying going steady “[...] means that you're engaged to be engaged. Or sometimes only that you're engaged to be engaged to be engaged” (Roosevelt 1962, 438). Roosevelt takes this convoluted account as proof that these relationships were not serious or even proper preparation for marriage when she says, “I think it is easy to see that such youngsters have very little idea of the real meaning of being engaged, or what responsibilities are involved in making a permanent human relationship” (ibid.). Taken together, the young woman’s understanding and Roosevelt’s misapprehension of the newer form of steady dating—though by 1962 one might not consider this system new anymore—, demonstrate that there had been a transformation in the underlying purpose of steady dating. The young woman had no contention with the idea that her mini relationships would prepare her for marriage, but it is very clear from her response that she had no expectation that any one of them would directly lead to marriage. Roosevelt takes issue with her use of going steady then, because Roosevelt saw this terminology as implying seriousness and permanency in a relationship, two ideas that seem lacking in the girl’s response. Regardless of this discussion in the chapter dedicated specifically to “teen-agers,” Roosevelt maintained that “going steady” meant that a relationship had increased in intensity, hence its inclusion in her chapter on engagements, where she “assumes” those who are “going steady” “are beyond their teens” (ibid., 266). This nearly one-sided development of the “true” nature of going steady indicates the problems that this transformation raised between those who dated within “the rating complex” before the War and those who did within the “going steady complex” during the postwar era. Bailey explains that premarital sex and popularity were the crux issues. In the dating-rating system, adults believed, young women were more easily able to say no to all sorts of sexual encounters because they dated a series of men, which prevented serious bonds of attachment from clouding a young woman’s judgment.<sup>122</sup> They also had different values when it came to the pursuit of popularity. Where the former generation prized

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<sup>122</sup> In the next chapter, I will talk about the burden placed on young women to maintain their respectability in the face of pressure to do otherwise.



competition in the form of variety, the contemporary one relied on having a dependable companion, a fact that was itself a manifestation of whether or not one was popular. This did not mean that variety was no longer part of the mix, but it did imply that one would settle down with one person for a time.

I would argue that this perception of steady dating might not be entirely generational and does not fully account for the shifting perceptions of marriage, sexuality, and gender at that time. Opinions on the significance of steady dating could have also depended on one's geographical location, class, or simply the social environment of one's high school. In my oral history accounts, I noticed that people of the same generation expressed differing positions on the meaning of going steady. When I asked David, who came of age in Boise, Idaho, if he had a steady girlfriend in junior high or high school, he said, "Always. It changed. Sometimes I'd have three the same year. They were your steady girlfriend until you asked for your Christopher back to give it to somebody else. It's kind of how that worked" (David, 2013).<sup>123</sup> From this description, it appears that serial monogamous dating was part of the larger youth culture of David's public high school. Steady dating sounds like a string of short-term liaisons. He does not mention the intensity of these relationships, but their frequency. This is not to say that all youth saw steady dating as such. Nancy, who came of age in a suburb of Chicago, suggested that, for her, having a steady boyfriend conveyed having a more serious relationship. This might be due to the fact that she attended an all-girls parochial high school, where going steady would not have been anchored in the day-to-day activities of student life. She said she went to school dances and frequented a teen night club, but she did not really have a boyfriend. She explained, "I'd see a guy for a couple of weeks and that was kind of it" (Nancy, 2013). She was a senior, when she had her first boyfriend. He was older and had dropped out of college. When she went to university, she broke up with him. In hopes of continuing their relationship, he enrolled at the same state school. She had to explain to him, though, that she was not interested in remaining in a relationship with him whether they were at the same institution or not. Nancy's

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<sup>123</sup> Here David is referring to a Saint Christopher's medallion mentioned previously as the love token exchanged to signify a couple was going steady.

experience might be skewed by the fact that she was nearly an adult when she started to steady date or it might be a result of the moralistic environment in which she was raised. If steady dating necessarily implied some sort of sexual activity, she may have abstained from taking part in this practice because of her own or her family's values, or even the moral imperatives of her school setting. Though both David and Nancy speak about the temporariness of dating while young, the way they perceived steady dating differs significantly (Bailey 1988, 47-49). The increasing informality in the meaning of going steady seems to reflect the changes wrought by youth culture. The shift towards a vision of dating that accepted the casual pursuit of love interests as a means to socialize young men and women undermines the purpose of dating more commonly insisted upon: marriage. Furthermore, serial, monogamous dating weakened the rigidity of the established married couple because sexual activity was no longer exclusively pursued in the marital bed and gendered behaviors lost some of their intentionality in the creation of masculine and feminine behaviors defined through one becoming a husband or a wife.

## **2. The Codification of Dating**

Given the potential for a revised vision of steady dating to rewrite larger social norms, a codification of behavior emerged to define and control each member of the couple, place sexual limits on their relationship, and more generally impose a gender standard that each member should attempt to emulate. The elaboration of dating norms acted to maintain middle-class "respectability" in the face of changing expectations for sexual activity in teen dating. As such, young people's dating habits generated a proliferation of advice literature. Defining appropriate conduct for young men and women ranged from basic hygiene, to polite ways to refuse a date, to either vague or overt references to sexual activity among young people. All of these rules assigned specific roles, behaviors, and positions to the young man and woman according to their gender. Advice books, magazine articles, and educational films played an integral role in instructing young men and women of their appropriate roles

*via-à-vis* one another in an attempt to shore up the larger institution that they were meant to support.<sup>124</sup> They specified a gendered decorum that placed men and women within a hierarchical framework. Despite the cultural amalgamation of gender and sex at that time, the insistence on specific gender behavior might be an indicator that people were aware of the constructed nature of masculinity and femininity. Gender scripts would thus have to be recast to fit into the changing postwar order. Though etiquette books and manuals were written for both girls/women and boys/men, sometimes targeted in the same volume, they tended to insist that appropriate gendered attributes were performed, necessitating a great deal of attention and care. The codification of dating, then, accentuated differences between men and women, a differentiation that was not innate, but acquired. This shows that masculinity and femininity were potential sites of disruption. In maintaining gender as relational and dependent on its counterpart, the normative couple could be protected from internal subversion.

Given the frequency and thoroughness of their advice, it makes sense that advice givers would open their discussions on dating protocols by asking when it was appropriate for an adolescent to begin dating, before launching into the necessity of considering the treatment of boys and girls differently even in regards to this most basic question. Amy Vanderbilt's *Complete Book of Etiquette* asked and answered, "When does dating begin? Earlier and earlier, it seems" (1957, 537). Unlike the other sources on which I have drawn before this point, Vanderbilt's advice targets an older audience. She was not preparing teens for dating; she was setting up the rules their parents might adopt. Though the formatting does not suggest that Vanderbilt set out to delineate different codes for the ways that one could parent a boy or a girl, her specific treatment of boys makes the information that precedes it—the stricter dos and don'ts of dating—seem by default geared towards girls' parents. This argument can further be made when Vanderbilt goes from the generic question of when dating should begin to critiquing the "misguided or overpressured" mother who allows her young daughter to wear make-up and dress like an older teen. She reminds this parent

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<sup>124</sup> There were other ways to instruct young men and women about these things, even they are not mentioned in this discussion—songs, movies, radio programs, and advertising—, all played a role.

that psychological maturity does not necessarily follow physical maturity (ibid.). Again, at first glance, it does not appear that Vanderbilt is focusing on rules for girls when she specifies that “boy-and-girl dating” should not be done before fourteen and should be highly regimented. She lists some appropriate activities—movies, nights in, sporting events, outdoor excursions and activities—all of which, should finish before dark. At this age, Vanderbilt says, “steady dating should be firmly discouraged [...] because tastes are formed through a variety of contacts” (ibid.). In the 1978 volume of the same book edited by Letitia Baldrige, this explanation is modified slightly to open up the discussion to the “many reasons” why young teenagers should be instructed not to steady date, though the focus remains on helping the young person diversify their acquaintances so they can learn which characteristics would please them in a marital partner (Baldrige and Vanderbilt 1978, 42). This slight modification follows in the vein of how Vanderbilt originally approached the question of sexual activity, through inference. Baldrige alludes to other reasons without specifying them, just as Vanderbilt sets out rules that should help a young woman’s parents keep her from being in a situation where the couple might have the occasion to engage in sexual activity. Interpreting this advice as directed at the parents’ of young women becomes clearer in the following sentences when Vanderbilt—Baldrige would do the same later—launches into a discussion of teen puppy love and how this should not be a source of consternation for a *young woman’s* parents. She reassures them that it is in all likelihood temporary. It appears as though Vanderbilt’s concerns about when and with what frequency a young person dates are focused on girls. If each one of these directives is analyzed to see what their underlying message might be saying about young women, the potential for sexual intimacy unites them. Though Vanderbilt never specifically addresses sexuality, she is referring to it throughout her discussion on general rules for dating. Whether it is through the way girls dress, or the hours they are out of the house, or even the steady company they keep: sexual promiscuity looms in the background. In three short rules about dating for young women—critiques actually—a lot is said about what needed to be controlled when it came to adolescent girls. There are specifications about what a young woman should not wear, when she could date, what she could do on a date,

when she should be home, how many times she could go out with the same person, and when she could see one person exclusively. All of which point to a fear that a young woman might find herself in a sexually precarious situation out of which she is too immature to navigate her way safely. The best advice for parents, then, is to avoid any situation where this might arise. The first two pieces of advice encourage parents to provide their daughters with some autonomy in dating, but not so much that the young woman might get into trouble. The third piece is directed at the parents of an older teen. Rather than providing restrictions on sexuality, it offers reassurance to parents who fear that a steady relationship might lead to more intense intimacy. Vanderbilt encourages them to be respectful of their daughter's choice in a steady boyfriend. A level-headed parent would not inadvertently drive their daughter closer to a young man because of their disapproval. It is telling that her advice to parents of young women is never directly stated as such. She finds the occasion to talk about some of the issues that these parents might come across as she discusses the basic parameters of dating. This is indicative of the sexual double standard which affected girls to a much greater extent than boys. If young women's dating habits could be controlled as part of the larger dating system, perhaps their sexuality could be maintained within the confines of "respectability," that is, waiting until marriage to have sex. In placing the responsibility on girls and their parents, young men would also benefit from this restraint (Vanderbilt 1957, 537; Baldrige and Vanderbilt 1978, 42).

Vanderbilt is more circumstantially specific and lenient in her approach to the young man dating. She encourages parents to watch their sons in order to prepare for the moment when they show they are ready. Vanderbilt suggests that this is more obviously perceptible in boys because their behaviors and mannerisms change. Suddenly, they are aware of themselves, they take more care with their appearances, from grooming to dressing; they are more interested in earning some extra money; and they start asking if others have noticed a change in their voices. Then they begin attending more social events "stag"—on their own—which will give them the occasion to be around girls and the opportunity once it presents itself to ask a girl to a future event. Dating is then talked about in terms of the financial obligations that

boys carry. “While a certain amount of Dutch treating goes on, especially in group entertainment, a boy usually does pay for the entertainment of his special date” (Vanderbilt 1957, 538).<sup>125</sup> She explains that if a boy’s allowance does not cover the costs of his high school’s social events and his parents cannot afford to raise it, then it falls to him to earn money in order to date as he pleases. The more direct discussion of boys in Vanderbilt’s book seems to place them on a different level than girls. In some ways, it sounds like the author sees this is a rite of passage for the boy on his way to manhood. On a physical level, he recognizes the changes in his body and responds by grooming and dressing the part. On a social one, he starts to position himself closer to women, to watch and learn, and finally to act. And on an economic level, he begins to take responsibility for his financial role in life. There are no specific rules outlined for young men because the author sees this process as part of the natural development of a boy becoming a man. It should not be hindered; it should be allowed to take its course (Vanderbilt 1957, 537-538). Vanderbilt’s book clearly delineates a gendered vision of dating, one in which male behavior will naturally evolve with little interference from adults, but also one that stresses the controlling of girls through a moralizing tone.

Although Eleanor Roosevelt takes a different approach in the *Book of Common Sense Etiquette*, some of the themes present in Vanderbilt’s advice resurface. Roosevelt’s suggestions differ in two ways. First, she devotes an entire section to teenagers, which indicates that her intended audience was indeed young people. Second, she specifically tailors her advice to boys and girls and their mutual obligations to one another. Rather than looking at dating as distinctive for the sexes, Roosevelt believes that it is the path towards young adulthood for boys and girls, the acceptance of one’s role as a lady or a gentleman. For both sexes, she talks about dating as a privilege and a responsibility.

She explains that the girl is ready to date when she has assumed the roles of a woman. First and foremost, this means that a young woman knows how to recognize her obligations and prioritizes home and school above her social engagements.

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<sup>125</sup> “Dutch treating,” “Dutch dating,” or “going Dutch” are all colloquial terms in dating culture that indicate that the party will be splitting the check.

Second, she knows how to behave like a lady and treats the young man as a gentleman. Third, she needs to be aware of her date's financial position and capable of adjusting their dating activities accordingly. There are three reasons for this: it gives the young woman a sense of responsibility in spending money; it provides her with the opportunity to learn about consuming within the means available; and it puts the young man at ease and makes him aware of what he can afford to provide for her. The first two skills would help the young woman in her preparation for becoming a home manager, while the latter is a gender expectation and a social courtesy. The final measure that indicates a girl has become mature enough to date is based on her ability to respond appropriately to any circumstance. This indicates that she knows how to assess a man's character and choose her escorts wisely. The implication being that the young lady should know what kind of man is taking her out so as to avoid any possibly jeopardizing situations (Roosevelt 1962, 430-431).

Roosevelt approaches her discussion to young men similarly: dating is a responsibility that entails gendered obligations and is demonstration that one has reached a certain degree of maturity. Much of this fits into the larger prescriptions for assuming one's masculine roles in life. A young man is ready for dating when he has accepted that these very responsibilities are what make him dependable. Just like a young woman, a young man must understand that school and home come before fun. He also needs to assume responsibility for the young woman. Roosevelt very resolutely states, "he is responsible for her welfare" (ibid., 429). Just as a man takes care of his wife, a young man on a date must show respect for the girl's family by abiding by her curfew and behaving in such a way that will not cause hard feelings to develop between the two. Roosevelt is adding, it seems, a moral dimension, which comprises not just a man, but a gentleman. In that she suggests that the "good man" is the man who protects the innocence of the woman (ibid., 429-30). Roosevelt's discussion of when dating should begin is based then not so much on a specific age, but when young people have proven that they can accept the responsibilities of engaging in adult-like behavior. There is an undertone to her advice that speaks to the potential complications of intimacy. However, Roosevelt maintains a great deal of distance from this issue, falling back on the decorum of the codes that underwrote

what being a lady or gentleman comprised.

The question of when to start dating seemed to be an important one amongst my interviewees. In many cases, when I asked if they dated in junior high or high school, if their parents had regulations about dating, one necessarily stipulated when they were allowed to start dating. Diane felt particularly disadvantaged by this age limit because she was younger than the other kids in her grade. “My parents wouldn’t allow me to date until I was 16 years old. I was 16 years old when I started my senior year of high school because I started when I was very young. They allowed me, to go to my junior prom” (2013). Though her parents made an exception for her to attend junior prom, Diane remembers the minimum age limit as a barrier to her dating experience. When both Sharon and Mary talked about at what age they were allowed to start dating, it was not just conditional on their age, the means of transportation also factored into the equation. Mary said, “I wasn’t allowed to have an actual car date till after I turned 16” (2013). When I then asked if they knew why their parents had imposed an age limit, and especially why a car would make a difference, Diane and Mary explained that “It was the rule.” Diane believed it was an extension of their overarching conservatism. She explained, “They didn’t believe in dancing or movies” (Diane, 2013). So regulating when she could begin dating and the extent to which she could participate in the kinds of activities that young people did was part of her parents’ larger value system. Like Diane, Sharon believed that her father’s rules were an extension of his stringent overall parenting style. She said, “I really didn’t date until I was a junior. My father was very strict, I was not allowed to ride in a car with a boy until I was a senior and then it was supervised” (2013). Sharon introduces another element into the equation that Mary and Diane’s parents were probably trying to keep out of it: intimacy. Cars were potential sites of promiscuity. They afforded the couple privacy. As one man I interviewed so comically put it, “The backseat of the car was the fun zone” (David, 2013). As is evident from these women’s recollections, one of the ways that parents controlled their children’s sexual experience was by limiting the amount of privacy they had in the car. Beth Bailey seems to be describing any one of their parents when she writes, “Parents of high schoolers (usually the girls’ parents) circumscribed the private time available to their



children on dates by requiring dates be to verifiable destinations or supervised events and by controlling curfews” (1988, 84). Though parents wanted to help their children have an experience that was in conjunction with their value system and the larger sexual mores of American society at the time, Mary made a very good point when trying to explain why parents would finally let their children date in spite of their own reservations. Initially, she simplified her parents reasoning to “because I said so,” but as she thought about it, her response echoes the larger ethos of the era and the necessity that parents recognize the potential for early marriage. She said, “I suspect that some of it had to do with the driver’s licenses being available at 16, so then the boys had licenses. You were typically in high school at that time. People are getting married at 18, so [it was] probably a good idea to let them date for a couple of years (Mary, 2016). Though it seems like common sense, given the rate at which young people were marrying at that time, many parents and advice givers struggled against the more intense physical relationships that developed as a result of steady dating, but eventually relented so their children might have the chance to diversify their acquaintances.

As Roosevelt and Vanderbilt suggest, the underlying motivation for parents to impose rules had a lot to do with the potential for sexual intimacy before marriage. Amongst my interviewees, there were a couple of parents who came up with other rules in hopes of deterring their children from getting too close to a steady. From the two individuals who talked about the restrictive measures their parents employed to keep steady dating from becoming too serious or too intimate, it appears that the larger goal was to keep their kids from participating in the “going steady complex.” Sharon recalled, “I had this one boyfriend in junior high school that I liked a lot and my father thought we spent too much time together so he said, ‘You’re going to have to date a few other boys. You’re not going to be able to date him.’ He was *always* putting roadblocks in the way. And he did it from love, but it pissed me off” (2013). While Thomas remembered:

My mom and dad had really strict rules. We couldn’t date till we were 16 and then if you got a serious girlfriend that wasn’t an acceptable practice. So they came up with this rule, if you had a girlfriend that you wanted to date all the time, you had to at least date another girl between the dates. That wasn’t too cool. So you’d manage a way to kind of manipulate it. I remember it being

frustrating, but as I got older, I could see everything they were trying to help me with (2013).

The approaches devised by both Sharon and Thomas's parents involved introducing other people into the mix, essentially preventing either one from having a steady boyfriend or girlfriend.

Another way that parents could keep privacy, and by association sexual intimacy, to a minimum was requiring their children to group date. Like Vanderbilt, Eleanor Roosevelt explains that this should be the first way in which young men and women begin dating. "During the early years of dating, both boys and girls should be restricted to group dates, gatherings at the home of one of the young people or at the school dance or at an athletic event or similar group activity. Gradually, from this stage, the young man will call the girl for a movie date" (Roosevelt 1962, 431-432). This seems like a reasonable, if not natural, progression for pairing off. It is important to note that in neither situation—group dating or one-on-one dating—did Roosevelt think that the young couple ought to be alone. First, they meet as a group. Then, they go out in public. Another idea here is that the couple should not form as such before they have developed a friendship. In the process of everyone getting to know everyone else, a couple slowly pairs off but continues to go out in public. She explains that double dating or group dating is in fact "a sort of built-in chaperonage" (ibid., 435). Though Roosevelt welcomes the group date as a good way to begin dating, Vanderbilt doubts the prospect that a group of young people together would chaperon itself. She tells parents that relying on "built-in chaperonage" is faulty logic and warns, "[...] once out of sight of parents, [the group] may break up into twosomes immediately, with the rules of behavior determined by the boldest" (Vanderbilt 1957, 537). As a demonstration of what Bailey said about asking teens to provide destinations and curfews, Vanderbilt tells parents to only allow group dating in the event that the "group is going to a specific, approved place and will return at an exact, agreed-upon time" (ibid.). The worst-case scenario imagined by Vanderbilt was parents not knowing where their children were and if they were perhaps off "junketing around the countryside in some boy's car" (ibid). The assumption behind this seems to be based on the idea if teenagers are left unsupervised, they will inevitably get up to no good. Whether we look at the advice of Roosevelt or that of

Vanderbilt, it becomes clear that teenagers should not be left to their own devices. Given the choice, they would opt for the intimacy and privacy of the car.

In spite of all the concern and attempted limits to regulate steady dating and privacy, most of the people I interviewed said they did not group date and did not date casually, even though most “typical dates” were in the company of others. For them the norm was steady dating or no dating. John’s experience resonates with most of my other interviewees, “In high school, most of the time, I sort of had somebody who I went out with or nobody at all. Though I didn’t go around with lots of different people” (2013).

Educational and etiquette films also participated in giving advice to young people. The two on which I would like to focus laid out in detail what was acceptable gendered behavior. These films are of interest because they go beyond treating dating in the abstract. Instead, they offer very specific advice on the more mundane aspects of dating. The educational film, *Dating: Do’s and Don’ts* (1949), produced by Coronet Instructional films, provides the basics for starting to date. It looks at what a boy should consider in choosing a girl to take out, how to ask for a date, the more minute expectations of dating—for girls, the activity for the date; for boys, what they should provide; and for both, punctuality and dress—, and how to end a date. It is an excellent example of how detailed-oriented advice was for postwar teens. When it came to actually going on a date, many of the strict rules were directed at the proper behavior of the young man because he was the one initiating the interaction. The second film, *How to Succeed with Brunettes* (1967), was produced by the U.S. Navy. It shows various dating situations with a “do” and a “don’t” scenario for each one. The contrasting scenarios allow for the Navy to address different levels of what they must have considered disrespectful behavior amongst young recruits and draftees. Though there is a twenty-year difference between the two films, on a superficial level, the advice they give does not seem to vary much. However, if one looks at the presentation of mannered versus unmannered behavior in the 1967 film, a resounding critique of the looseness of young people’s perceptions of polite conduct can be found.

*Dating: Do’s and Don’ts* follows Woody’s first venture into the tricky

business of dating. The opening scene shows him reading a letter from a friend who has broken his ankle and who consequently sent Woody a ticket to the Hi-Teen Carnival that he will not be able to attend. Via a voiceover, viewers hear Woody's thoughts on the ticket, "One couple. That means a date, not like just going around with a crowd. Just me and a girl. Well, that's all right" (*Dating: Do's and Don'ts*, 1949). The way that Woody comes upon his ticket to the Hi-Teen Carnival demonstrates the social component that was inherent in the dating system. Participating in youth-centered social activities could require a date. Based on the way that the main character considers the ticket, it appears that up until this point he had never thought of dating. Previously, he had relied on his interactions with girls to take place in a group. Woody does not hesitate to join his peers in dating—if anything, he seems pleased—but he does wonder how he is supposed to go about it. The first question he asks himself is who he would like to take to this event. At the same moment another voice replaces the voiceover and inquires "How do you choose a date?" and this question appears on the screen. Three possibilities are presented. The first is based on appearance and popularity, but this option is quickly cast aside because the young woman of choice always behaves "superior" and "bored," which would make Woody feel "awkward" and "inferior" (*ibid.*). The second is also dismissed; this time because the potential girl is not very dynamic or enthusiastic. She and Woody are shown sitting off to the side talking. This image is meant to show how this might not be a very agreeable scenario to find oneself at a carnival; the voiceover actually announces that she would not be much fun. Finally, a good-looking, smiling, and energetic girl appears. The voiceover describes her as knowing "how to have a good time" and "how to make the fellow with her relax" (*ibid.*). This is the ideal date for a boy as she would make the young man feel "appreciated", at which time the voiceover states again that she would be fun. The choice is obvious, girl number three, Anne, would be the one Woody would ask.

Now that his options have been reviewed and the decision made, Woody has to call and invite her. As he wonders about the way to go about such a task and worries about the possibility of rejection, his older brother, Ed, comes in and promptly makes a phone call to his date for that evening. As Ed waits for his date to

pick up the receiver, their mother comes in the room and Woody asks permission to go on a date and tells his mother who he would like to ask. Though hesitant because of his age, she agrees if he does not “overdo it,” meaning he dates only on the weekends and respects the curfew (*Dating: Do's and Don'ts*, 1949). Ed then sets the example for his little brother on how to treat a young woman over the phone. He asks politely to speak with her and then informs her that he is available earlier in the evening than previously planned. This shows how good-mannered Ed is: he calls his date to let her know he was free earlier in the evening, so they could spend more time together. Woody admires the ease with which Ed handled the call and then asks his brother how to call and ask for a date. To which Ed tells him that it takes “practice” and “experience”. Woody worries about what he should say. His brother reassures him that being “himself” will suffice. As Woody makes that call, the viewer is again presented with a question, “How do you ask for a date?” and three scenarios follow. The first demonstrates that being too nervous and too direct can give the wrong impression. Woody musters, “Well, Anne, how about a date?” (ibid.). Anne is offended and politely declines. In the second, Woody is too confident. When Anne explains that she is busy, Woody asks her to give the other guy “the push off” for him. Again Anne is offended, but this time she hangs up on him (ibid.). In the final call, Woody follows the proper protocol: he introduces himself, tells her what his plans are, and then invites her to join him. Anne accepts, but repeats twice that she will have to check with her parents before it is set in stone. Throughout this scene, the codification of asking for a date is laid out. On one level, both adolescents are shown respecting their parents’ rules about dating. This indicates that a young person requires their parents’ permission to date. Woody’s mother states her and his father’s expectations that he will not let dating take priority in his life, will reserve dating for weekends and respect a curfew. Woody’s mother acts as an authority figure in this scene as she provides the rules by which he must abide, while Ed acts as an older, trustworthy model to emulate. The question of where one can offer advice about dating is presented here through these two familial figures, showing the importance of someone’s kin network.

The following scene takes place the night of the Hi-Teen Carnival. Anne is in

her bedroom getting ready when her little sister, Judy, comes in and starts asking her about her big date. “A date, huh? What’ll you do? Go to some fancy place for dinner?” (ibid.). When Anne explains their plans, Judy sounds disappointed, “Oh, that doesn’t sound like much” (ibid.). But Anne explains that a carnival would be fun for the two of them to attend, so “Woody and I are going to have fun in just that way. I think the important thing about a date is to have a good time. You don’t need to spend a lot of money to do that. You just enjoy whatever you’re doing [...]. And you leave your boyfriend enough money so he’ll ask you again” (*Dating: Do’s and Don’ts*, 1949). When her sister suggests she will be out late, Anne corrects her, saying she and her parents have agreed on a curfew. In this scenario, Anne is acting as the mentor to her younger sister and also to her female viewers. She explains that boy-and-girl dating does not necessarily have to be different from what girls or boys would do in a single-sex group. She equates the fun that she and Woody would have to that she would have with her sister, demonstrating that dating did not necessarily have to comprise a romantic component. Additionally, Anne acts as an instructor about what a date should be. A school carnival was not a fancy affair, but a date did not have to be expensive or swanky for one to have a good time. For Anne, and also for the viewers, the appeal of dating should be that it was an opportunity to go out and have a nice time. Additionally, the expense of a date might prohibit a boy for asking a girl for more dates. Anne points out that in accepting to go out on a date that will not cost Woody much money, she is actually preparing for future dates. Woody will know that Anne likes to do all sorts of things and this will allow them to see each other more regularly. This scene ends on the role that parents play in the dating process. Anne does not see her curfew as problematic. Instead, she presents it as something upon which she and her parents have agreed. Her parents have allowed her to participate in the regulatory side of things, which makes her feel like she has some autonomy and control over how she spends her time.

In the next scene, viewers see Woody getting ready for his date—cleaning his blazer and tying his tie—but the real significance of this part of the film lies in his interaction with his parents. Thrilled about the evening, Woody asks his dad if he was excited about his first date. His dad responds in the affirmative and his mom launches

into a story about her own first date. She talks about how seriously she took it and how it fell short of her expectations, largely due to the fact that her date had car troubles, did not call her, and showed up late. Woody's dad makes a negative comment on this sort of behavior make it obvious that this young man did not know how to treat a woman properly. Here is the evidence: when Woody's dad met his mom, she left the previous—allegedly unsatisfactory—gentleman. The implication being that Woody's father knew how to treat her. Not missing a beat, Woody announces that he understood “the moral” and that he will be on time. His parents take this as an opportunity to tell him that this standard does not just apply to the young man and that the young woman should also be ready on time. A seemingly random bit of information, but an important one is presented at the end of this scene: when was it expected that a young man would bring flowers? As Woody rushes to finish getting ready, he sees his brother is taking his date flowers. All of a sudden, he worries that flowers will be expected of him too. Ed reassures him, “Flowers for a prom or a very special party, otherwise you don't need to” (*Dating: Do's and Don'ts*, 1949). The interplay of where the advice on dating comes from is meant to demonstrate that the oldest people can be relied on to provide guidance when needed. In this scenario, Woody—and the viewers with him—has learned that you need to be respectful to one's date through punctuality and dress and to show that you know the codes for the occasion. Where Woody's parents provide the more serious advice, his brother gives him a tip on general practices.

The date itself is the shortest scene in the film. Woody and Anne are shown at the Hi-Teen Carnival, going from booth to booth, having a great time. Such a scene demonstrates that, given proper preparation and etiquette, a date should go off without any problems.

There is one last opportunity to make a misstep before the evening ends, however. The question of what is the appropriate etiquette for saying goodnight at the very end of the evening? It goes without being said that the young man is expected to walk the young woman to the door, which the viewers see Woody doing. Once at the door, the situation seems less clear and so the voiceover asks the final question, which also appears on the screen, “How do you say goodnight?” The viewers are

again presented with three options. In the first one, Woody lunges at Anne trying to kiss her. She rebuffs him and goes inside her house. In the second, Woody walks her to the door and without much ado says goodbye and leaves. The third option is clearly the preferred one: Woody walks her to the door, they engage in small talk about what a nice time they had, and they make plans to go out again, with Woody promising to call. This scene requires no outside assistance as it is based on the overarching purpose of etiquette: respect. The first scenario makes Woody seem like a boor and the second shows a great deal of inconsideration for Anne and their evening together. If the young couple takes a moment to talk at the end of the evening, they are able to express their appreciation for one another, agree on whether or not they would like to see each other again, and conclude the evening on a high note.

The other example of proper dating etiquette on which I would like to draw comes nearly two decades later, *How to Succeed with Brunettes* (1967), an etiquette film made by the U.S. Navy. It is a good example of how many believed etiquette is a time-honored tradition no matter the changes in social, economic, or political norms. The fact that it was issued by the Navy speaks to the importance that institutions continued to place on decorum. Furthermore, its insistence on the importance of good manners is an attempt to describe to an increasingly informal America that etiquette springs from a desire to be respectful to others and that its absence can signify disrespect. Like *Dating: Do's and Don'ts*, *How to Succeed with Brunettes* contrasts behavioral options in order to demonstrate appropriate conduct. It differs from the previous film, though, in a very important way. The overriding purpose of this film seems to be to critique changing forms of behavior, especially those of young people. Six scenarios are presented: picking a date up, taking her to dinner, going to the movies, attending a small gathering, going through a receiving line, and going to a formal dance. The inappropriate way of doing things is presented first and then the good-mannered model shows how these mistakes can be fixed.

The film provides several opportunities for the viewers to read that this is a critique of contemporary behaviors. One can be found in the comments made by the voiceover and his overall tone towards the less courteous gentleman. In the first scene,



the man is shown arriving late to pick up his date. The voiceover notes that he does not think an apology is necessary and then comments, “Oh come on. Don’t be a square!” (*How to Succeed with Brunettes*, 1967). The use of slang and the glib description of this encounter are meant to situate this young man in the late 1960s youth culture, perhaps even the counterculture. The young man’s disrespectful and lackadaisical attitude are emphasized: he is late; he does not think to apologize; he thinks it is funny to trick his date by holding her coat too high; he does not hold the door open for her; he precedes her into the restaurant; he takes the best seat at the table for himself; and he does not rise when a senior officer comes to the table to say hello. This is only the first two scenarios of impolite behavior. The point comes through loud and clear: young people who lack manners demonstrate that they are undisciplined, disrespectful, and self-aggrandizing.

The dating theme is meant to show that this extends beyond a basic recognition of authority to affect the most intimate realms of one’s life. This is further insisted upon by the many gender courtesies that are not observed throughout the film. The boorish young man never lets the lady go first. He never holds her door, or even a door for her to follow him through. He does not give her the pleasure of sitting in the best seat in a restaurant or choosing their spots in the cinema. When he meets women, he extends his hand, forcing the woman to shake hands, regardless of her preference. He dances too close to his date on the dancefloor, thus undermining her reputation. The one instance in which he provides a “chivalrous escort,” he grabs his date’s arm and brutishly leads her to the car. All of these examples—and their rapid succession in the film—are meant to show that the young man lacks basic consideration for his date. Not being chivalrous is portrayed as a supposed justification for gender equality. In the opening scene when the young man fails to hold the young woman’s car door for her, the voiceover ironically comments, “Sure treat her as an equal. Women like that” (ibid.). Still, in equating the young man’s discourteous behavior with the idea of gender equality, the film writes off the possibility that chivalry and the reasoning behind it might be perceived as sexist. Furthermore, it undermines the larger mission of the women’s rights movement by reducing equality to an excuse for men to behave like miscreants. The sarcasm

employed in moments like these is meant to serve as a critique of the young man's ignorance of etiquette and his potential rationale for justifying his boorishness. In the contrasting sketches, the narrator insists that all these little gestures are meant to make things easier for the woman, something which the narrator explains in the following way: "It makes sense, just as most gentlemanly traditions do" (*How to Succeed with Brunettes* 1967). According to *How to Succeed with Brunettes* showing gendered courtesies demonstrates that a young man respects a woman, just as abiding by military decorum would show respect for senior officers.

Throughout the film, male viewers—men in the Navy were the obvious target of this movie—learn the manners expected of them for a variety of situations. When picking a woman up, the film tells men to be on time, apologize if they are late, help a woman with her coat, offer their arm to escort her if she needs help or wants it, and open and hold the door for her. When entering a restaurant, a mild-mannered man should let the woman go first, give her the best seat, stand when a woman or senior officer comes to the table, discuss the menu with his date, let her decide, and then order for the couple. When in the street, walk on the street-side of the woman and elsewhere on her left. When taking a taxi, the man opens the door for the woman and helps her in. When they get out, the man exits first so he can help the woman. At a small gathering, when meeting a woman, a gentleman waits till she extends her hand to see that she would like to shake hands; if it is extended, he is to shake it briefly. When introducing men to women, even when they are higher ranking, he is expected to introduce the men to the women. In a receiving line, the film explains, let the woman go first, shake hands with each offered hand, and make short friendly greetings to everyone. At a dance, a gentleman takes care of his date, which means he introduces her to other people, makes sure that other men dance with her, and when she is not dancing, he stays by her side. If he notices another woman's escort is absent, he should stay by her side until her date returns. On the dancefloor, he should allow enough space between himself and his date. This is "good taste" and shows "respect for your date and her reputation" (ibid.). The underlying message, in case it was unclear, is reiterated at the very end of the film: "Be a gentleman!" (ibid.).

Though this film appears to be another version of the "dos and don'ts" of

dating, it seems to serve a larger purpose as well. The situations when a young man must interact with officers and women besides his date, the comments and tone of the voiceover, even the music—up beat and energetic in the inappropriate scenarios, while soft and subdued in the proper ones—indicate that the Navy saw young men as behaving disrespectfully when left to draw on the larger cultural manners of their civilian counterparts. The voiceover introduces nearly every correct demonstration of behavior with a comment or question relating to a young man's desire to be with an attractive woman and his overall success in life. "Because you want to be successful with brunettes, right?" frequently adding that such decorum would aid the young man in his professional life as well (*How to Succeed with Brunettes* 1967). Though it is subtle, the amalgamation of correct gender behavior, respecting the military chain of command, and general polite behavior serves as a chastisement of the contemporary youth culture, substantiating the fear that the generation of adults to come had been spoiled by the decadence and moral degeneration that accompanied the abundance and commercialism of the postwar era, and the concomitant youth rebellion. The Navy used dating as an avenue to disrupt the decay of American manners and morals. Interestingly, many of the references to polite behavior date further back than the immediate postwar era. The issues under discussion during the dancing situation seem to be the most blatantly out-of-date: ensuring that one's date has someone to dance with during each song is emblematic of the interwar period when one hoped to dance with many partners throughout the evening; maintaining physical distance between oneself and the person with whom you are dancing as a sign of respect for her reputation harkens back to the nineteenth and early twentieth century upper- and middle-class belief that a young woman's respectability was tantamount to her prospects for marriage. Such examples demonstrate that there was a section of American society, in this case a governmental body, that saw the changing roles for men and women and the shifting perspectives on sexuality as problematic enough that they were incited to act. This film is an example of an attempt to redraw the lines around acceptable masculine and feminine behaviors in order to reassert the status quo, which was in reality an amalgamation that furthered one goal: the naturalness of the heterosexual couple defined by feminine women and masculine men.

Young men were not the only ones who were targeted with very specific prescriptions for their behavior. Delineating the boundaries of “appropriate” masculine and feminine behavior seems to have been a relatively common task in advice literature. As was seen with *Dating Do's and Don'ts*, young men were supposed to initiate and women were supposed to be good company, ensuring that the couple would have a nice time. The rules for appropriate conduct for women, then, dealt more with their patience to let young men assume their roles as the ones who pursue a date. The *Ladies' Home Journal* column, “Pick a Problem: The Sub-deb” by Maureen Daly illustrates the diametrically opposed behavior of initiating male-female interactions. One young reader asked in 1950, “Should a girl go halfway in chasing a boy if she knows he likes her?” (28). This question epitomizes the dilemma that gender codification imposed: up until what point is a young woman behaving in a feminine way, if she takes it upon herself to encourage a young man's attentions? The fact that this reader is uncertain about what she can do indicates that she feared upsetting the agreed-upon dynamic between herself and this boy. Daly responded:

Probably the best way to catch up with a boy is to start off at a slow walk—'just happening' to turn up round the drugstore or basketball game when he is there, 'just happening' to remember a new joke when you meet him in the halls, and 'just happening' to be more friendly to him than to other boys. An invitation to a turnabout party, a bid for Sub-Deb dance, arrangements to join another couple at your house some evening are good 'halfway' tactics. But no phone calls 'just to talk,' no writing love-lorn notes in history class, and no hanging around the drugstore if he happens to work there. If a boy likes you, the best way to get him is just to be 'available' and let him do the rest (Daly 1950, 28).

In her response, Daly first makes suggestions on the appropriate ways a girl might take a little initiative in the dating game, but she insists on the fact that the girl must maintain the position that any encounter she might have with the young man was a chance occurrence, rather than her attempting to pursue him. This ensures the young man's prerogative to pursue a woman or not. Then she gives the girl examples of situations in which it would be entirely proper for her to invite the young man that would not undermine her femininity or the boy's masculinity. Next she describes what might be considered aggressive behavior, which in every circumstance would be a frank admission of the young woman's interest. Daly concludes on a note that

positions the girl and boy in drastically different positions: she should appear inactive in the “hunt,” patient, and, most importantly, available only when he is ready. It was up to the young man to take any further initiative.

Though this advice was given at the beginning of the postwar era, the notion that women could take a little initiative in dating resurfaces in Roosevelt’s *Book of Common Sense Etiquette*. In contrast to Daly, she seems to take the position that women playing an inactive role in the pursuit of love is nonsense and might eventually be to their detriment. However, when the language and the specificity of the discussion are looked at closely, Roosevelt does not appear to be saying anything in opposition to Daly’s advice. Perhaps the difference between the two can be found in their target audience. Daly was writing to teenagers, while Roosevelt in this particular situation is speaking to adults. Where Roosevelt gives more circumstances in which a woman can chase a man, she is careful to articulate that in “seeking the company of a man” the woman is “finding a way to increase his interest in her” which is a subtle way of expressing the same sentiment as Daly: women create situations in which they can show interest without their efforts being evident so a man can pick up the hunt from there (Roosevelt 1962, 269). The situations that Roosevelt describes, like Daly, are ones in which the social situation justifies her presence and the extension of an invitation to a future event might be read simply as the woman being friendly. When a woman meets a man at a party whose company she has enjoyed, she can invite him to her next party as long as she invites the hosts of the event where they met. If he does not request a follow-up meeting, she should not pursue him any further so as to avoid giving him the wrong idea. The second social situation in which a woman can try to get the ball rolling towards a relationship is by initiating a conversation and friendship with men with whom she frequently crosses paths (in her building, at her office, and in her neighborhood, e.g.). The third situation in which a woman can take the initiative is when she is at a social function or a member of a special interest group. In these circumstances, she is able to freely introduce herself to other members or other guests at parties (ibid., 103). Roosevelt specifies that the reason for which a woman is justified in taking such initiative is that her “feminine instinct” senses “potential compatibility” (ibid.,

269).<sup>126</sup> She insists, however, that the woman is restricted in how she can do this because she might be seen as pushy, aggressive, or overly frank. The guidelines that Roosevelt thinks need to be employed in such a case maintain the outward appearance that a woman remains a lady and a man a gentleman. This means she should not force a man who is not interested; she should let the man be the “pursuer;” she can invite a man to call her, though should not call him; she can invite him to her parents’ house if she lives with them; she can ask him to her home if she has also invited others; she can ask him to join her at events for which she has tickets; and she can bring him as a plus one to a party (*ibid.*, 270-271). The chief difference for Roosevelt in stipulating such rules, she claims, is based on “traditional” behaviors. Once more she resorts to purportedly innate differences between men and women. She claims that men, as the more aggressive and competitive sex, experience rejection often. They are, therefore, less sensitive to having a woman decline their invitations. Women, on the other hand, are sensitive to rejection. For this reason, a gentleman has a hard time refusing a woman’s attentions. A woman is respectful of a man by paying him the courtesy of giving him a choice to politely refuse her when she tries to show interest, without making him be completely forthright. Roosevelt tries to a greater extent than the other sources upon which I have drawn to justify the reasons for why things are inherently different between men and women. As discussed in the previous part, however, the foundation for her reasoning is based in the trifecta that perpetuates a patriarchal vision of the world—androcentrism, biological essentialism, and a gender binary.

Roosevelt recognized that the gender codes of dating were in flux at the time she wrote her etiquette manual. Therefore, when she speaks specifically about teenage girls, she allows for local custom to dictate. She attributes this transformation in gender behavior to the changing status and behavior pattern of women in American society. Though she sees nothing inherently wrong or untoward with the young girl calling and asking a young man for a date, she still puts limits on when it would be

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<sup>126</sup> This is based on the belief that women supposedly have innate qualities for “matchmaking” and the realm of love. Such thinking, reinforces a natural hierarchy between gender and attributes different qualities to each sex.

appropriate for a young woman to take such initiative. The most important issue for Roosevelt in such a scenario is how the young woman might be perceived by the young man, by her peers, and by her community at large. Thus, she stipulates that a young woman should only ask a young man for a date when she knows him well. She also suggests that such a practice should not be seen as antithetical to her socializing with her peer group or community. If others question her reputation or intentions, she should refrain. Though this might be an opportunity for a young woman to let a young man know that she was interested, it remained very important that she should not always be the pursuer. As Roosevelt advises, “the reputation of the young lady in her own social circle is also important and she should not make a practice of this; particularly since it may lead other potential dates to arrive at an entirely mistaken notion of what she may be like” (Roosevelt 1962, 433). Roosevelt acknowledges that women’s roles in society were changing, which could be seen in youth culture as the mandates of gender no longer seemed to be quite so fixed then. In spite of this, Roosevelt cautions prudence. Changing expectations of gendered behavior did not necessarily signify that the older notions of respectability had fallen to the wayside. In a way, Roosevelt expresses her reservations in the face of societal transformations and a willingness to embrace them. The most important, then, is that behavioral codes are clearly defined and approved by the community as a whole.

In this chapter, I have tried to trace the evolution of courtship and dating. I have concentrated on steady dating because it is the practice which has historically been associated with marital readiness and/or preparation for marriage. However, when steady dating is looked at closely, it is not fixed. Its meanings and implications for the couple, for young people, and society change over time, mirroring transformations in the norms that stipulate marriage, gender, and sexuality. In the first part, I looked to some of the social explanations for steady dating to demonstrate that as a cultural practice steady dating should not be reduced to marriage. It played an important social role in the youth culture of the postwar era. Despite the insistence that steady dating was a preparatory step on the road to marriage, in the short-term it was also a way for young people to socialize within their own social, and even ethno-

racial, group. Understanding the difference between going steady for the purpose of socializing the sexes and for marriage were major incentives for the advice literature at mid-century and, more generally, for the discourse on gender roles and norms. The normalization of sexual activity to some degree in the young couple fostered change in the meaning of the couple itself. In the following chapter, I would like to discuss what was considered normative sexual activity for the young couple and what the stakes were for those who went beyond the limits of “respectability.”





## VI. Going too Far

Steady dating and the sexual intimacy that it included were ways in which teenagers and young adults helped redefine the postwar-era couple and everything it entailed: masculinity and femininity, marriage, the family, and even compulsive heterosexuality. Steady dating allowed for more intense and intimate young relationships and became an outlet for sexual expression. In the context of going steady, a couple had more freedom to express intimacy without as much stigmatization. As Bailey argues, “‘Going steady’ became a mechanism for sexual exploration in the context of intimacy and an accepted means for women to engage in behavior that would have previously damaged their reputations” (Bailey 1988, 121). Dating and sexual activity then developed in tandem as young people's behavior defined youth culture and was articulated through it. Bailey adds that, “Sex was accepted by youth, male and female. Necking and petting were public conventions, expected elements in any romantic relationship between a boy and a girl” (ibid., 80-81). Though many of the attempts by experts in adolescent development, marriage and family studies, as well as self-appointed lifestyle commentators to contain and control sexuality might be seen as a desire to perpetuate the status quo, the fact that it needed to be expressed within certain parameters suggests that young people were pushing the boundaries of permissibility. As a result, these experts played a part in redefining what these institutions and social identities would mean, creating conventions of acceptable and unacceptable sexual behavior. In the previous chapter nearly every etiquette book, advice column, and educational film discussed the question of premarital sexuality as it related to steady dating. This can be looked at as evidence of how thoroughly intertwined steady dating and sexual activity had become by the end of the postwar era. In avoiding direct references to sexuality while discussing dating, commentators like Roosevelt and Vanderbilt can be said to have taken the position that all sexual contact belonged within the bonds of matrimony, at the same time, an educational film like *Going Steady* accepted that some degree of sexual activity was a normal and natural result of a loving relationship. Such varying perspectives might be explained by the source from which they came: Roosevelt, a former First Lady, and Vanderbilt, a renowned socialite, were beacons of

respectability and members of two of America's most prestigious families; *Going Steady* was an educational film created for American classrooms. The former advice givers were participating in the tradition of spreading upper-class etiquette to the masses, whereas the latter was attempting to educate America's youth. Accepting some degree of sexual contact made the film's message seem in tune with young people's actual experience and, thus, helped it fulfill its larger mission. Whether references were oblique or forthright, these examples can be said to have been participating in the larger national discussion about the nonmarital sexual behavior that seized American discourse in the postwar era (May 1988, 91).

In spite of the youthful expectation that some sexual activity should be a part of a romantic relationship, the cultural ethos of postwar America was concentrated on bolstering the nuclear family. The home and family were meant to provide a buffer against the fears of the age: atomic warfare, communism, "racial strife, emancipated women, class conflict, and familial disruption" (ibid., 9; 26). In embracing domesticity, Americans were demonstrating their commitment to ensuring personal, familial, and national security (ibid., 29). Sexual relations outside of marriage were seen as a threat to this goal. Premarital—or nonmarital, intercourse without the expectation of marriage—sexual activity was seen as a direct affront to the nuclear family norm and the image of family togetherness because, on the one hand, it did not guarantee the security and stability of family life in the event of pregnancy, and on the other, it was a clear transgression of the gender and sexual norms that dictated femininity as alluring, but submissive and chaste (ibid., 70). A woman's full sexual expression was to be reserved for her husband. Some even believed that a woman's sexual pleasure was only completed through pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.<sup>127</sup> In spite of the homogenizing force of the postwar consensus, many young adults and teenagers were pushing the limits of acceptable sexual behavior by "parking," "necking," "petting," and, for some, even "going all the way." Domestic containment, then, manifested itself differently in word and deed amongst America's youth. Adult morality and convention provided guidelines for behavior and a

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<sup>127</sup> See for example Betsy Marvin McKinney's article in *Ladies' Home Journal* "Is the Double Standard Out of Date?" (1961).

framework through which heterosexual sexuality could be discussed, but contended with the conventions of youth culture that normalized some forms of premarital sexual contact (Bailey 1988, 96).

The growing attention accorded to sexual exploits in dating in all likelihood inadvertently reproduced them. As private transgressive practices became more common, and perhaps, expected, they acted to undermine the prohibition on sex before marriage. Still, perceived as a threat to the sexual and gender orders, loosening sexual norms needed buttressing. Controlling the sexual behavior of young women through the mandates of femininity was one way to reinforce the security of the nuclear family model. Setting women up as either the beneficiaries of sexual restraint or the ones who would have to bear the consequences of sexual indulgence, young women were told that their sexual appetites were thankfully more subdued than men's because their social and economic interests depended on this (Bailey 1988, 87; Coontz 1992, 39-40). Young men, on the other hand, were both directly and indirectly encouraged to see where a young woman would draw the line (Bailey 1988, 92). John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman agree, "Boys pushed, while girls set the limits" (1988, 262). Any sexual situation getting out of control was thus blamed on the girl because she either did not behave virtuously enough or was subtly asking for it beneath her demure demeanor (Bailey 1988, 87-91). It is precisely this reasoning that defined the sexual double standard: some exploratory sexual activity was normal, but vaginal penetration impugned the young woman's reputation (Cott 2000, 160). If social pressure was not enough to keep young women from willingly engaging in premarital intercourse or they failed to fend off a young man's advances, they had one generally acceptable safety net, marriage. Early marriage was one way to bolster the family and hide the prevalence with which young people were engaging in more intimate behaviors. "Heavy petting' became a norm of dating in this period, while the proportion of white brides who were pregnant at marriage more than doubled" (Coontz 1992, 39). The apparent degeneracy of the sexual and gender order could be resolved by legitimating the couple through marriage. Coontz argues that, "The main reason that teenage sexual behavior did not result in many more illegitimate births during this period was that the age of marriage dropped sharply.

Young people were not taught how to 'say no'—they were simply handed wedding rings” (ibid.). Elaine Tyler May, for her part, writes that the advice of experts from a variety of fields—psychology, medicine, journalism, education—helped to normalize the inequality of the sexual status of girls and women as marriage was imposed on young women in order to recast their sexual behavior within the limits of respectability (1988, 97).

The elaboration of proper behavior in advice literature can be seen as a means to define, control, and limit adolescent sexual activity. Public interest in sexuality and its presence in popular culture, however, gave it enough credence that sexual practices could not be completely condemned or entirely celebrated in the wider public discourse. Rhetoric on youth sexuality seems to have been constantly oscillating between the inevitability of necking and petting on the one hand, and the need to prohibit premarital sexual intercourse, on the other. The larger message espoused a vision of sexuality that was natural and healthy, laying great emphasis on the importance of sex in the life of the married couple. As such, sexual conduct existed in a sort of gray area: some sexual activity was fine within limits, but sexual intercourse was the ultimate expression of a couple’s love and, thus, could only be sanctioned within marriage.

Looking at sexual controllability and its failure in this part will allow me to build into my larger argument that youth culture, even in its most codified forms, was a source of possibility, deviation, and change. Elaine Tyler May argues in *Homeward Bound* (1988) that the explosion of sexual interactions between young people during World War II opened Pandora’s box for the following generations. Rather than naively taking the position that youth would suddenly stop engaging in sexual experimentation, experts, along with parents, set out to show young people how to navigate the fine line between appropriate behavior when one was going steady and when one was married. In focusing their attentions on containing women’s sexuality, the emancipatory strides that women had made in the public sphere throughout the first half of the century could be redirected towards the family (97-105). Beth Bailey argues in *From Front Porch to Back Seat* (1988) that the economy of dating positioned men and women in an inherently unequal relationship in which sexual

favors became the common currency for women to repay the debts they incurred when a young man would take them out (81). Drawing a similar conclusion to May, Bailey adds that this sexual exchange allowed women to control their own sexuality—granted men had to let them have that power and when this arrangement broke down it could have violent consequences (ibid., 87). I intend to build on both of these historians' work in looking at the expectation that sexual encounters would exist between teenagers within an increasingly sexualized culture. I will also examine the rhetoric aimed at limiting such contact, and how young women were supposed to be the arbiters of sex and the social ramifications when this did not happen, as a step towards the loosening of gender and sexual norms rather than their ultimate containment.

### **1. Getting Intimate: Parking, Necking, and Petting**

It is, perhaps, no coincidence that dating and companionate marriage began to define the conventions surrounding men's and women's relationships around the same period of time, the 1920s through the 1950s. Dating was the opportunity for young people to exert control over their mixed-sex interactions, while companionate marriage was the framework through which gender and sex were being redefined on an institutional level. As the dialogue on marital happiness turned more towards sexual fulfillment as one of its fundamental tenets, sexual experimentation and openness would become part of dating culture. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman draw such a link in *Intimate Matters* (1988), in which they explain that, starting in the 1920s, changing sexual mores in dating behavior allowed young couples to embark on the path towards sexual satisfaction in marriage: "Dating, necking, and petting among peers became part and parcel of the experience of American youth, providing an initiatory stage, uncommon for their elders, leading to the coital experience of adulthood and marriage" (256). They note that adolescent sexual behavior continued in this vein during the postwar period (ibid., 261). However, since dating was widespread when the postwar generation's parents were young, there was less opposition to sexual experimentation while dating (ibid.). D'Emilio and Freedman explain that by the 1950s going steady was a means to

demonstrate that a relationship was intensifying in seriousness, which “granted youth the permission to explore the erotic” (ibid.). Young people were not simply saying that they were going steady to justify having sex, there were group-defined boundaries that established acceptability at different levels: parents, adults, and peers might all have varying expectations of what was permissible; while certain acts were seemingly allowed as long as they remained private (Bailey 1999, 76). For most of the postwar period and for large sections of the American population, the one line never to be crossed held strong: sexual intercourse remained taboo (ibid.).

Despite strong societal pressure to maintain one's virginity, especially for girls, the complexity of sexual intimacy can be seen in the expansion of a vocabulary to describe it. As sexual activity became an integral part of the steady dating system, the words used to explain different sexual acts became ubiquitous in youth culture (Bailey 1988, 80). The most common—parking, necking, and petting—described not only the acts but the physical space in which they would take place. “To park”—in all its verbal forms—referred to the general practice of getting intimate, but included also the means and location. The car provided mobility and privacy to young couples. In it, they could seek out remote areas where they could “park” to be alone. Interestingly, the settings where “parking” commonly took place were not necessarily isolated. Many couples would park at a look out point or other out-of-the-way place at the same time. Parking was, thus, both a private and public act, through which one would go for privacy amongst one's peers. Just as Bailey explains that the popularity of dating was established through the publicness of the date, “parking” was a physical demonstration of one's participation in the private aspects of steady dating, and dependent on being seen (ibid., 59). Necking and petting were the more detailed descriptions of what took place in the car. They were used to describe sexual acts that stopped short of “going all the way.” Necking comprised caressing and kissing the neck or around the neck. According to Bailey, some experts even defined it as touching above the clothes and caressing below the neck. The more generalized definition of petting encompassed any and all caressing and kissing below the neck, though the more specific advice givers stipulated that this was skin-to-skin contact. Necking would be considered the less intimate of the two acts as it focused around

the head of both parties and excluded direct contact with the sexual organs.

Petting took parking to another level as it implied stimulation of the sexual organs, but stopped short of vaginal penetration. The nuancing of a vocabulary that made distinctions between zones of the body and the degree of fondling contributed to normalizing sexual activity in the dating schema (Bailey 1988, 80-81; 87). Furthermore, the progression from kissing to necking, necking to petting, and petting to sexual intercourse follows what Brent C. Miller and Kristin A. Moore label the “normative development pattern in the sequence of adolescent heterosexual behaviors” up to the 1990s (1990, 1025). Though the outermost limit on behavior acted to exclude intercourse, the detailed articulation of the first two phases suggests that going all the way would enter the schema as soon as it was given cause.

As discussed in the previous chapter, going steady as an indicator of a couple’s seriousness about one another varied quite a lot. Among my interviewees experiences, that of David and Nancy of going steady come to mind: whereas David—born in 1954 and raised in Boise—saw going steady as part of a short-term “dalliance” (Herman 1955; Waller 1937, 72),<sup>128</sup> Nancy—born in 1950 in Chicago—saw it as an expression of seriousness, and therefore, intimacy, but not necessarily marriage orientation. Another of my interviewees drew an explicit connection between the intensity of the relationship and sexual activity, but did not necessarily feel like “going steady” had to include either. “It wasn’t somebody that I knew was going to be serious. I wasn’t sleeping with him so...” (Barbara, 2013). For Barbara, the barometer of seriousness was sexual intercourse. Even though she was going steady with one person, the way she demonstrated to herself, and perhaps her peers, that their relationship was not serious was by not having sex. It appears that she held off going steady until she was in her last year of high school because of the emotional and sexual commitments this practice entailed. David, on the other hand, went steady frequently, but did not engage in sexual intercourse until he was out of high school for fear that his ignorance would reveal that he was a novice:

I was a virgin all through high school mostly because I didn’t want the girls to

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<sup>128</sup> By a dalliance, I mean a noncommitted or temporary relationship that was meant to be fun.



know that I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't want that. So it wasn't till I got out of high school that I finally had some experience with women and figured out how to go about things. And that made a huge change in my attitude because now I had some self-confidence, I wasn't so afraid of making a fool out of myself (2013).

We can see through the examples of my interviewees that sexual intimacy as it related to going steady meant different things. The stakes for these women and this man were different: women thought of sexual intimacy as a revelation of their commitment to the relationship, while David thought about how it might reflect on his reputation. This different outlook on the meaning of sexual intimacy corresponds with John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman's findings. They note that the degree to which women were willing to engage in sexual activity was dependent on the intensity of their feelings and a demonstration of their commitment to their partner (1988, 262-263). Men's perceptions of the connection between intimacy and commitment fluctuated, however (ibid.).

Amongst men, it seems that the social rewards of dating, popularity and a sense of belonging were also linked to bragging rights about one's sexual prowess. Being "a man," then, meant that they were sexually experienced, which granted them social status amongst their male peers. One of my interviewees actually spoke about how this expectation provided him with an opportunity to make money. Robert remembered:

I had a racket going in high school. I realized you hang out with a bunch of guys and they tell lies about girls, I assume mostly lies. And I realized this was an exploitable market. I had a friend who worked at the Ace Drug Store and he could score these tins, three prophylactics to a tin, and he could get them to me for 50 cents a tin, because he'd steal them, I think. And, I could resell them for 2 bucks a tin. Anyway, so a bunch of guys, one or two who I might have vaguely known, would be standing around and they were talking about how they were going to screw this girl and I would say, "Well, you got some protection?" "No." "You don't want to get a girl pregnant. I can sell you a tin of these, unused, obviously, brand new for 2 or 3 bucks." A guy would get a tin of three of these and I'd say "That's all you need!" And they'd say "Oh no" (2013).

Through this anecdote, we can see that Robert correctly gauged that some of his male peers saw intercourse as an indicator of their social status as "men." Any hope that they might have had about having sexual intercourse, whether it was happening or

not, was overshadowed by their desire to prove to their male classmates that they were sexually active. In the interviews he conducted with some of the boys involved in the sex scandal in Boise, Idaho in 1955,<sup>129</sup> John Gerassi relates a similar sentiment from one of his interviewees. This young man, ten years after the incident, explained his involvement in trading sexual favors for pay to adult men as part of the pressure he felt to be “one of the guys.” He is quoted as saying, “[...A]ll the other guys said they did it, and all the other guys said that they had slept with girls and that it's just about the same feeling. I didn't know they were lying. I thought I was just being left out of the fun” (as cited in Gerassi 1966, 32). Between David’s fear of not wanting to be found out, Robert’s exploitation of locker room talk, and Gerassi’s interviewee, it seems that young men had a socially complicated relationship with sex, one very much related to peer socializing. If dating could be framed as an extension of teenagers’ desire to belong, then the accompanying expectation that dating should include some sexual activity seems to have put pressure on some boys to show their worth by how far they were able to get their date to let them go. In this form, it appears that the expectation for sexual activity, especially sexual intercourse, was reinforced through peer pressure. David’s comment reveals that there was an expectation amongst the girls he dated that he was more knowledgeable about sex. Out of fear of being discovered that he, in fact, did not know what to do when it came to copulating, he opted to wait until he was outside the limited social sphere of high school. Robert’s story about making money off of some young men’s pride indicates that in single-sex company men talked about sex to rank one another. Any doubt about their actual participation—“That’s all you need!”—pushed them to go to greater lengths to prove themselves. Gerassi’s interviewee’s involvement in turning tricks for homosexual men speaks to the extremes that some young men were willing to go in order to belong and say with certainty that they were sexually active. All of these examples demonstrate the role that peer pressure played in pushing young men to be sexually active. Though not all the men with whom I spoke felt that they had to conform to such expectations, these accounts might be seen as further explanation for

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<sup>129</sup> See pages 220-227.

men's sexual aggression. Beth Bailey explores the top-down side of young men's sexual behavior by looking at the structural vilification and blaming of women who were sexually coerced or assaulted—by college administrators, the police, and the legal system—as well as the cultural justification for sexual aggression—expert advice present in magazine articles, etiquette books for young men *and* women, and advertisements (1988, 89-94). All of which laid the responsibility at women's feet. Because youth culture was not just influenced by outsiders, there had to be some youth-sanctioned justification for pushing young women to go further than what they were comfortable with. It seems that the impulse to belong and the expectation that dating included physical intimacy played that role. The larger context of these examples suggests that these situations were not taking place between two young lovers who were planning on getting married, which, in a way, speaks to the hesitation that young women felt when it came to being intimate. Becoming a “notch in someone's belt” reflected poorly on them as they became the subject of public ridicule and a topic of conversation in the locker room.

When dating was less serious, the expectation that a girl would necessarily trade sexual favors for being taken out existed what could be described as a gray area. One of my interviewees, Thomas, did not think that this was the overarching reason why young men took women out, but acknowledged that it was “somewhat” present in high school. He maintained that the real reason for dating was the social opportunity it offered (2013). Karen, on the other hand, was asked out by a boy in high school and she “didn't like his ideas about dating,” so she never saw him socially again (2013). Karen's experience fits into Bailey's description of the requirements of the dating system. According to her, “Necking and petting were integral parts of the dating system, and to participate in the system, one had to meet its requirements. Furthermore, the dating system promoted sexual experimentation not only through the privacy it offered but also through the sense of obligation it fostered” (1988, 81). Because Karen was “conscious” of her “good bringing up,” she had to self-elect out of dating—the young man she mentions was the only other boy who would ask her out besides her future husband—because she refused to be beholden to a system that demanded sexual payment for a date. Again there is a

divergence in how men and women perceived the sexual component of dating. Where Thomas did not see it as the primary motivator for dating, Karen saw it as a reason not to date. Granted Thomas and Karen came of age nearly two decades apart, 1955 and 1933 respectively, so their opposing perspectives might also be a reflection of the increasing acceptability of sexual activity over time. However, they belonged to the same religious group—both were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—and had similar moral reservations about premarital sex. So, it seems logical to conclude that they represent another divide between young men and women and the weight of gender expectations on their behavior.

Thus far, I have looked exclusively at the perceived expectation for sexual activity amongst young people who were dating for fun. There appears to be no doubt that many saw dating, steady or otherwise, as the opportunity for sexual experimentation. If we return to the more feminine perception that sexual intimacy and its degree was a direct reflection of the intensity of the relationship, then it seems safe to presume that those who were on the path to marriage would find this as sufficient justification for intercourse. One of my interviewees related how this assumption resulted in him winning a bet. James, who was going steady with his future wife for four years before they married, laughingly remembered that someone wagered him two bales of diapers that he and his wife were getting married to cover up a pregnancy. Even though he won the bet, the way he described it made it sound like more of a fluke of circumstance, than them waiting until their wedding night. “We started raising a family in ’54. I won a bet from somebody... We managed not to have any children until we'd been married for nine months and I actually won two bales of diapers from somebody that had no faith in our self-control” (2013). The very premise of this wager is based on the expectation that couples who were going steady or soon to be married were having sex, even without a specific date in mind. Though James gently admonishes the person who suggested the bet by saying he (or she) did not trust that they were following the prescription against premarital sex, the vocabulary James uses leaves room for interpretation. “Managing not to have children” during the first nine months and “actually” winning might suggest that he and his date were sexually intimate but did not go all the way, or that they used birth

control, or even that they were fortunate that she did not get pregnant earlier. Of course, this could also mean that they did wait until they were married. The fact that someone felt comfortable enough to make a wager on this subject, though, indicates that there was some expectation for couples in their situation not to toe the line.

As can be seen by the above discussion, the confluence of dating and expectations for sexual intimacy acted to recast the limits of acceptable sexual behavior. A couple's vision of how serious their relationship was became the justification for getting close, rather than going steady. As intimacy increased with the intensification of the relationship, the bar for sexual permissibility was lowered. Ann Fessler explains in her study of relinquishment during the 1950s and 1960s, *The Girls Who Went Away* (2006), that sexual intercourse was initially reserved for engaged couples; with time those who were pinned or going steady could safely go all the way without having to worry that the young woman's reputation would be questioned; then being in love was sufficient justification; in the later years of the postwar era, attraction was grounds for having sex (32). Fessler substantiates this by comparing the age at which white, unmarried, young women turning eighteen between 1956 and 1958 and between 1971 and 1973 had sex. The percentage of fifteen-year-old girls who had had intercourse rose from 1.3 to 5.6 percent during this time, while the number of young women who had had premarital sex before the age of twenty nearly doubled from 33.3 to 65.5 percent (*ibid.*). Although expectations of sexual involvement while dating varied, the rapid change to which Fessler points indicates that sexual mores were in flux during the entire postwar period. The growing discourse on the importance of sexuality for the satisfaction and fulfillment of the couple blurred the line between marital and premarital sex as researchers attempted to describe all sexual behavior, not just appropriate sexual behavior.

The most noteworthy contributor to this discussion was sexologist Alfred Kinsey. In his works, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), Kinsey revealed the discrepancy between what many people considered normal and appropriate and what they actually did (May 1988, 110). Men were revealed to engage nearly universally in masturbation and heterosexual petting, ninety percent of them had premarital sex, and fifty percent

had extramarital sex (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 286). Nearly sixty percent of women masturbated, ninety percent petted, fifty percent had sex before marriage, and twenty-five percent had extramarital affairs (ibid.). John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman explain that these numbers shocked America because they ran counter to what most people expected was taking place. Additionally, they argue that the presentation of his findings endeavored so explicitly to be neutral and matter-of-fact that it seemed like Kinsey was criticizing the moralizing discourse that surrounded sexual behavior and calling for people to adjust their expectations to what was actually taking place (ibid.). Kinsey was not alone in revealing a huge discrepancy between word and deed to the American public. Beth Bailey explores the influence of mass media on the dissemination of changing sexual norms in *From Front Porch to Back Seat*. Not only were hundreds of articles written about sexual mores, polls and questionnaires allowed for young people’s sexual attitudes to be documented and expressed in the public forum. Magazines told high schoolers in 1949 that 81 percent of them believed necking or petting was permissible; in 1950, 51 percent of boys believed in kissing on the first date; in 1966, 45 percent believed “living together” without the benefit of matrimony was acceptable if the couple loved one another (Bailey 1988, 82). It is interesting that from the outset of the postwar era young people thought sexual activity before marriage was acceptable, and thus not surprising as time wore on that partnerships would be able to take on more, less institutionalized, meanings. College youth tended to get their information from textbooks used in marriage and family planning courses (ibid.). Such a book, *Anticipating Your Marriage* (1955), told college students that 93 percent of them thought necking was appropriate when going steady and another, *Modern Marriage* (1957), reported that 87 percent of junior and senior women believed sexual intercourse was justified when a couple was in love as early as 1946 (ibid.). Bailey explains that these statistics helped reassure young people that what they were doing was within bounds and helped to normalize premarital sexual behavior. Between the reports on sexual behavior being released by the scientific community and the publication of social attitudes about sexual conduct, young people were able to assess where they fit in or varied from the norm (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 287).

Studies, polls, and public discussions on sexuality were not the only means through which sexuality became increasingly normalized as part of young people's behavior. New popular culture outlets began portraying themes that had heretofore been taboo to discuss in the open (ibid., 277). D'Emilio and Freedman argue that "the first major challenge" to the marriage-directed sexual ethos of the time came from the free market and is most typically embodied in the publication of the men's magazine, *Playboy* (ibid., 302). From its first issue in December 1953, *Playboy* and the man behind it, Hugh Hefner, extolled uninhibited sexuality as a masculine prerogative. Hefner built on the efforts undertaken by men's magazines since the beginning of the century to bring masculinity and consumerism together in espousing a philosophy for the "playboy."<sup>130</sup> Through high-brow literature (essays and commentaries), soft-core depictions of nude women (the *Playboy* centerfold), and sophisticated advertising, *Playboy* encouraged men to actively reconceive their identities outside the socially

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<sup>130</sup> Men's relationship with consumption via magazines really began in the 1910s as the American economy became increasingly dependent on purchasing. The fact that for a long time women had been synonymous with consumption, seems to have posed a historical stumbling block to men's participation in consumerism. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, men's magazines attempted to convert their readers to consumerism without alienating them. Any whiff that these magazines were attempting to feminize men resulted in a lively critique of their editorial philosophy. Over the following decades, men's magazines were able to slowly bring masculinity and consumption together by promoting the purchasing of items that were already linked to masculine pursuits, like electronics. Masculine consumer goods were thus differentiated from the internal sphere of the home, which belonged to women, by focusing on manly hobbies. "While women took pride in their appliances, men indulged their consumer desires and demonstrated their process with their cars" (Blaszczyk 2009, 205). Magazines after the War were some of the most active participants in trying to erase the privileged relationship between consumerism and femininity. In his study on men's magazines, Tom Pendergast demonstrates how this was accomplished. In using a masculine tone in their editorials, publishing works of fiction, and portraying women as sexual objects, available for male consumption, men's magazines synchronized typical masculine characteristics with consumerism. In featuring advertisements that promoted a masculine way of life and articles that described it, men's magazines attacked the idea that consumption was necessarily a feminine pursuit. Pendergast gives *True* magazine (1937-1974) as an example of one men's magazine actively trying to reverse this trend. In responding to a letter to the editor, the editor-in-chief explains that the wife represents the household's consumption as part of her domestic role but that, however, the home itself was maintained by the husband. As such, for every purchase the wife made was on her husband's behest, she was an intermediary, not the representative (Pendergast 2000, 234-236). Another important link between consumerism and masculinity can be found in the way that these two were paired in advertisements. Men were being told that they, like any consumer, could buy their masculinity. This led to the development of a masculine lifestyle that included not only clothes, but accessories for men's hobbies: hunting, cooking, alcohol, tobacco, etc. (ibid., 224). This push in men's magazines helped to define a masculine universe in consumer society. See chapter 3 of Tom Pendergast's *Creating the Modern Man* (2000) for a detailed discussion of how men's magazine's joined consumerism and masculinity.

acceptable framework of the “mature male.” One of *Playboy*’s unique contributions to the discussion was its celebration of an emerging masculinity that tried to separate itself from the family and home. Masculinity still meant work, but it also meant play and pleasure (Ehrenreich 1988, 46). As *Playboy*’s popularity increased, it came to represent the new program for masculinity: “a critique of marriage” through its promotion of bachelorhood and philandering; “a strategy for liberation (reclaiming the indoors as a realm for masculine pleasure)”;

“and a utopian vision (of men’s ability to create a uniquely masculine environment, appearance and persona through consumption)” (ibid., 50). *Playboy* was immune from the critique that frequently accompanied the male refusal to accept his adult responsibilities—homosexuality—because it promoted a masculinity that gave men a position in consumer culture. Following in the footsteps of *Esquire*, *Playboy* successfully brought masculinity and consumerism together.<sup>131</sup> Together these magazines successfully created a market that sold masculinity. Prior to this, women were assumed to be the primary consumers in their households.<sup>132</sup> *Playboy* told its readers to assume these tasks in

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<sup>131</sup> Tom Pendergast notes that *Esquire* was the first men’s magazine to fully embrace the new masculine norms of the twentieth century. Starting with their very first issue, published in 1933, *Esquire* combined sophistication and intellectualism with high-brow consumer tastes in clothing, food, and leisurely activities. *Esquire* was the first mainstream publication to grant heterosexual masculine sexuality a central place in its pages (2000, 206). In fact, Maria Elena Buszek explains that the development of the contemporary pin-up took place in the pages of *Esquire* during World War II. The painter, Alberto Vargas y Chavez, brought “cinematic” beauty norms and the “ordinary woman” together in the “Varga Girl,” *Esquire*’s notorious pin-up (2006, 185). As a former employee, Hugh Hefner was, in all likelihood, inspired by *Esquire*’s celebration of a distinguished and sexualized masculinity and thus reinvented the pin-up in terms more reflective of the loosening sexual mores during the postwar era, the “playmate” (ibid., 237).

<sup>132</sup> Women, or wives, played a very important role in household consumption. Between the 1920s and 1940s, advertisers aimed the vast majority of their advertisements at women because they were considered to be the principal consumers in their homes (Marchand 1985, 66-69). During the Second World War, women’s consumption patterns were given patriotic purpose. Military demands not only required women to manage their households in accordance with rationing, the U.S. government depended on the American public to invest in war bonds to support the War. Thus, much of the literature giving advice on financial management and consumption was aimed at making women into “cautious consumers” (May 1988, 72). Even after the War, this perspective of the wife’s financial role continued: her consumption habits were continuously cast as a means to protect her family. She was made responsible for ensuring that her family would be ready in the event of a nuclear attack. This meant that she was supposed to store food and stock her family’s bomb shelter, if they had one. The necessary provisions were designated as “cooking equipment, medical supplies, a battery-powered radio, a flashlight, a can opener, sanitary napkins (which could also double as bandages), toothache pills, deodorant, books games for the kids, and tranquilizers” (Lichtman 2006, 49). Infusing consumerism with patriotic purpose gave the wife a more significant role in household management



order to demonstrate their taste as “men” and to assert their independence from women. The magazine encouraged men to expand their interests, develop themselves intellectually, and take care of their personal presentation. It also promoted a strong sense of masculine heteronormativity. As Ehrenreich note, “The playboy didn't avoid marriage because he was a little bit 'queer,' but, on the contrary, because he was so ebulliently, even compulsively heterosexual” (Ehrenreich 1988, 50). The “playboy” was not someone avoiding fatherhood and marriage, i.e. adult responsibility, he was asserting himself as an independent, sexually voracious “Man.”

Magazines like *Playboy* were not only subversive in defining masculinity; they also encouraged women to rethink their femininity. The content portrayed women as sexually suggestive—no longer coy—and in control of their sexuality. Women were now considered as sexual actors as much as men were, and so these magazines encouraged women to assert their own sexuality. Despite the possibilities for female agency, magazine's like *Playboy* were not intended to represent women's interests, though. They often portrayed feminine sexuality with frankness, but undermined female sexual self-determination by couching it in “casual misogyny” (Buszek 2006, 244).

The push towards sexual liberation was not only geared towards men. In 1962, Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* carved out an alternative to domesticity for women; it took the country by storm. According to D’Emilio and Freedman, the basic tenets of the book were similar to *Playboy*’s aims in that Brown promoted “sexual libertinism” along with an “ethic of success, prosperity, and consumption” (1988, 304). While magazines like *Playboy* and *Esquire* were reclaiming American manhood as sophisticated, cultured, and sexual in an attempt to define masculinity outside the context of marriage, promoting taste, hard-work, and sexual prowess as the essence of masculinity, Brown's book could be seen as an attempt to position women within a similar, but distinct, framework. *Sex and the*

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and helped to join the ideals of civic responsibility with consumerism. See also Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry “To Speed Our Boys Home... Produce and Conserve. Share and Play Square. Home Front Propaganda and Food during World War II: Rewriting Gender?” (*Transatlantica*, forthcoming, 2017) and Lizabeth Cohen’s *A Consumer’s Republic* (2003).

*Single Girl* pushed women towards self-determination, careerism, and sexual empowerment. Brown's work was radical in that it encouraged women to engage in casual nonmarital sex with multiple partners, to use their sexuality for their own personal advancement, and to be passionate about their work. In some ways, it was ahead of its time: the "sexual revolution" had not yet happened when it was printed and it implored single, working women to embrace their independence and ambitions—all of which were antagonist ideas to mainstream / dominant postwar feminine domesticity. In other ways, Brown perpetuated the status quo: singlehood was not meant to be a permanent state, women were still supposed to be appealing to eligible men, stylish, polite and other-directed, sexy, taken care of and trim, and also to cook well (Brown 1962, 16-19). These qualities combined with independence and a genuine interest in one's jobs would help single women live the good life, while preparing for marriage. Despite her libertine attitude towards sex and her desire to mold working girls into career women, Brown tells her readers that this book is meant to provide them with the tools to demonstrate that they refuse "to take singleness lying down" (ibid., 17), implying that the objective for women would always be a husband and home.

In spite of this, Brown provides an alternative vision to marriage: happiness in singlehood. She writes, "[...] marriage is insurance for the *worst* years of your life" (1962, 12). Unlike much of the cultural discourse extolling the virtues of housewifery and motherhood, Brown argues that marriage should be the backup plan, not the end goal. For her, it is not a means to an end (the good life), but an eventuality that should come once one has lived and experienced life to its fullest. Brown emphasizes the importance that a career can play in a woman's life, insisting on the perks of economic independence and the personal satisfaction that come with being a working woman. On several occasions, she reminds her readers that they need to be interested in their jobs in order to maintain their ambition. Her reasons for attempting to redefine what women wanted were based on the seemingly radical assertion that women crave similar intellectual, professional, and sexual stimulation just as men do, and that they therefore should assert themselves more. She does not intend to say that women need to become men, rather they need to maintain their feminine charm and

play by men's rules. Brown defines this new woman as "engaging," financially independent, curious, and with a manicured appearance (ibid., 13). She emphasizes her own financial independence and suggests that this made her more attractive because she was not financially dependent on a man. Like any eligible bachelor, Brown was independent, hard-working, resourceful, and a producer.

Additionally, Brown tries to convince her young, working-class female readers that having a man was, of course, a necessity, but having a husband was not. The implication being that a man provided sexual intimacy and fun, but did not need to subsume her identity by becoming her husband (ibid., 97). The single, working girl should be sexually adventurous, according to Brown. She would be universally appealing because sex with her was a choice. She was empowered in her public and private lives, which made her dalliances exciting and liberating. In glorifying sex while single, Brown disparages the sexual obligations that she thinks marriage imposes on husband and wife. "She has a better sex life than most of her married friends. [...] Her choice of partners is endless and they seek *her*. They never come to bed duty-bound" (ibid., 15). Without the vows of marriage crushing the spontaneity, variety, and passion of sex, intimate encounters abounded for the single woman. However, it was not enough that Brown pled with her readers to take their sexual prowess into their own hands, she had to cast off the moralizing impulse that stipulated women were to remain chaste. In a section that is meant to provide solace to the young woman when she was feeling down, under the heading "Put your guilt away," Brown naturalizes women's desire and attempts to divorce it from any value judgement:

Perhaps you will reconsider the idea that sex without marriage is dirty. This is not a plea to get you into bed—your moral code is *your* business—but if you are already involved, you might remember that sex was here a long time before marriage. You inherited your proclivity for it. It isn't some random piece of mischief you dreamed up because you are a bad, wicked girl" (1962, 260-61).

Here, Brown does not look to convince women who already believe sexual relations should be reserved for marriage; instead, she speaks to women who were sexually active and reassures them that nonmarital sex does not make them "bad girls." Elsewhere, when she talks about women's sexual nature, she applies men's rules for

success as the bar against which women should judge themselves. Sexual activity should not reflect poorly on a woman's character if she is successful in her work, behaves like a "lady," and is respected by her peers (ibid., 16). Brown directly confronts the sexual double standard, which she believes is irrelevant to women who live in a man's world and play by the rules that govern their success.

Public acknowledgements of changing sexual behaviors, especially in terms of premarital sex along with the development of media outlets that turned towards creating a dialogue for nonmarital sex, indicate that the discourse on sexuality at mid-century was inconsistent. Though the Kinsey reports, *Playboy*, and *Sex and the Single Girl* were attempting to understand adult sexuality, it seems likely that the morphing nature of sexuality was not just taking place amongst adults. Elaine Tyler May suggests as much when she writes, "With such a highly charged youth culture and sex permeating the media, it is no wonder that so many Americans broke the rules and engaged in sexual intercourse before marriage" (1988, 114). Many of my interviewees saw the period during which they came of age as an era when premarital, nonmarital, extramarital, and homosexual sexuality were talked about, many of them had experiences that speak to the prevalence of sexuality in their lives.

Linda, who went to college in Caldwell, Idaho at a faith-based institution, talked about how she was responsible for patrolling potentially sexual behavior as one of the girls' dormitories representatives in the early 1960s. One of the tasks of the dormitory leadership was to enforce the residence hall rules. She indicated that the most common violation was a missed curfew or a girl being caught sneaking out. However, in one instance something happened that took her so much by surprise that she was uncertain about how to handle it. She explained that "something trashy" was found in the dormitory's communal living room—though she never said what exactly. She hoped that the dorm mother would take care of the issue.<sup>133</sup> As Linda described it, the dorm mother was so embarrassed and shocked by what was left in the living room that she refused to deal with it. Not knowing what to do, Linda turned

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<sup>133</sup> A dorm mother was a college or university employee who was hired to live on-site and to handle the administrative affairs of the dormitories as well as act as an authority figure and chaperon for those living there.

to the women's counselor who offered her support and advice. They never uncovered who had left this "trashy" item in the living room, so no punishment was ever exacted. This story is interesting on many levels as it speaks the appearance of young people's autonomy on college campuses, but it also shows how highly organized their private living space was in order to limit the inappropriate behavior that too much independence, freedom, and privacy might lead to. This is most notably represented by the live-in older woman who was there to look constantly after the young women in the residence. The fact that she was referred to as "the dorm mother" says even more about the role that university officials assumed in controlling the private lives of the students attending the college. Having a full-time chaperon in one's living space embodies perfectly the philosophy of *in loco parentis*. By installing a permanent figure of authority in the dormitories and labeling her the dorm mother, this person acted as a stand-in parent, a potential disciplinarian for private indiscretions that would have public consequences, and a representative of the administration in the private lives of the hall's residents. Linda also represented the authority that college administrators exerted over the private lives of their students. In a way, she acted on behalf of the administration to enforce rules and require the other young women to abide by the principles of the college. In *Sex in the Heartland*, Beth Bailey describes that college officials believed student-led disciplinary bodies were a means for students to assume responsibility and maturity (1999, 90). This was precisely how Linda framed her participation. She saw it as a leadership position amongst her peers and was happy to have had the opportunity.

The increasing presence of sex in public discourse also made young people increasingly aware of the fact that they were changing, that they were becoming sexual beings, and that with these changes came an expectation for sex. Michael explained that in his hometown of Miami in the 1960s, sexual awareness took place at a young age which led him and his peers towards a sexual awakening earlier than he presumed most youths experienced during his era. He explained:

The onset of sexual awareness started when you were in probably late sixth grade in those years. That's when girls started developing and you noticed that. And then in junior high school, it became a predominant fact on everybody's mind. Having said that hormones developed equally across the country, it's just that there was more body awareness. Everybody wore tight

clothes. It was hot. You didn't walk around with jackets on. Miami Beach was the sub-capital of superficiality. Most people were aspiring to [sex], and were frustrated that they weren't there. It was something that was always in front of you, but it wasn't like everybody was having sex. It was much more tight. The whole break down of the mores with sex ended about in high school, but didn't happen on the college campus until 1969 or '70 (2013).

For Michael, the onset of puberty combined with fashion that was adapted to hot weather brought sexuality to the forefront of every young person's mind. The body consciousness that teenagers experienced there made sex into something that was always just below the surface. Because of this, by the time he reached high school, reservations about sexual intercourse were left to the wayside. One might argue that along with the hormonal and physical changes that accompany puberty, the increasing presence of sexuality in popular discourse and culture brought sexual intercourse to the minds of many young people across America. In fact, *As Boys Grow* (1957), a 16-minute black-and-white educational film produced by Medical Arts Productions and meant to explain puberty to a group of young adolescents, demonstrates that a growing awareness of one's body naturally led to a desire to learn about sex.

*As Boys Grow* (1957) takes a pedagogical and uninhibited approach to discussing the onset of hormonal and physical changes that accompany puberty. The film short features a track coach, who in the course of doing his job as an educator, mentor, and confidante, finds the occasion to explain the changes the young men that he coaches are experiencing. From the opening scenes, he makes casual comments to his players about how puberty affects each of them differently. In doing so, he is demonstrating that even though he is an authority figure, he is open to discussing what some might consider embarrassing or socially taboo topics like puberty and sex. This openness corresponds with the film's overarching message that sexual development and sexual interest are normal and natural, and should thus be explained in frank and unabashed terms. Additionally, the film seems to take the view that a forward approach to discussing puberty and sexuality by adults showed respect for the adolescent, while it provided the authority figure the framework to impart correct and normative information about the body, reproduction, and social relationships. There are three situations in which the young men are shown discussing issues

dealing with puberty: shaving, nocturnal emissions, and menstruation. Before the first of these scenes appears, the coach looks at the camera and tells the viewers that a lot of the information about these matters was spread word-of-mouth, from one adolescent to another. Though he says this matter-of-factly before the scenes during which boys share information about shaving and wet dreams, his voice is heard before the boys' discussion of menstruation and indicates that sometimes this type of talk misinforms more than it informs. In the former two examples, one young man explains to another that he has begun shaving or having nocturnal emissions. The other boy, who clearly has not reached that stage of development yet, is able to ask questions and become more aware of what to expect in the coming months and years. The latter example shows four young men talking. One is telling a story of a female friend who was pushed into some water by a boy and was angry. In his ignorance, the boy tries to explain her anger by saying that she must have been menstruating and thus did not want to get wet, which was a common assumption about menstruation at the time. Another young man interjects, however, that a girl's period does not necessarily keep her from swimming because his sister swims when she has hers. The other two boys are clueless onlookers. One of them asks what a period is. The boy who told the story begins to tease them both, but fails to provide a coherent response. This interaction demonstrates how unaware young people were of the changes that the opposite sex was experiencing and that though friends with experience might be able to give pertinent advice and good explanations in some situations, their knowledge was limited. This is where the knowledge and openness of the track coach becomes incredibly important: he can provide the foundation for those who have little to no experience with puberty, answer questions for those who have started it but do not have it all figured out, correct wrong information that might have been disseminated through the grapevine, and provide information on the "mysteries" of the opposite sex.

The entirety of the plot and dialogue revolves around scenarios in which the coach can weigh in in these ways. The first scene shows the coach wrapping a young man's injured ankle in the locker room. The boy is complaining about his propensity for injury and tells the coach he does not understand why he seems more accident-

prone than some of his teammates. The coach explains that the boys are at different stages of development, which allows for greater strength and agility in those whose puberty has already begun. After the boy indicates that he is frustrated at his difference and mocked by one of his teammates for his “Mickey Mouse” voice, the coach tries to reassure him that development is different for every individual. “Normal” is what is regular for him, not what is happening to the other boys. The next scenario takes place during a practice, the coach happens upon three young men discussing why men and women are different. One young man recalls that the coach had told them sexual differentiation was due to glands, while another said the biology teacher told his class that it was because of one’s parents. The coach assures them that both are correct, but specifies that he was referring to physical development, or puberty. The coach admits that it would take quite of bit of explaining, but at the boys’ insistence, promises to discuss it after practice.

The following scene opens with the coach’s voice explaining that he was “answering some of the boys’ questions” (*As Boys Grow* 1957). The informality of such a description does not translate to the set up: the coach is standing in front of a white board and cork board beside a table and the boys are seated on benches looking at him. Though this is supposed to be a casual discussion, the setting resembles a classroom. The coach, then, launches into an explanation of physical and sexual development. He explains the fundamental difference between each person and how it is contingent on individual genetics and hormones, which allows him to naturally segue into a discussion about glandular secretions and the beginning of puberty, touching on primary and secondary sex characteristics, ejaculation, erections, nocturnal emissions, and masturbation. He verifies that the boys know what sperm is which is identified by one young man as “the guy’s part of the baby” (*ibid.*). It is significant that sperm is described as such, because it implies an inherent connection between the man’s sexual release during sex and the onset of pregnancy and childbirth. Though not explicitly stated as such, this might be a way for the medically-oriented producers to create a continuous connection between cause and effect. This is particularly important in the postwar context because there was some debate about the willingness of authority figures—parents and teachers—to draw this



link. In *The Girls Who Went Away* (2006), Ann Fessler argues that the sex education programs used in schools were not comprehensive enough and tended to divorce the sex act from reproduction. This was further compounded by parents' unwillingness to talk about sex, according to Fessler. She contends that this made young people themselves also to be reluctant to talk about sex. Fessler believes that when sex was discussed, it almost always dealt with puberty and menstruation, serving more as a how-to-guide for using feminine hygiene products (37-38). The purpose of Fessler's critique of a hush-hush approach to sexuality was to condemn the larger culture that was responsible for young women's obliviousness, but still victimized them when their sexual transgressions became public knowledge through an unwed pregnancy.<sup>134</sup> Though many of my interviewees reflected similar sentiments, *As Boys Grow* presents a contrasting piece of evidence to this presumption about mid-century sexual reserve.

Two other educational objectives present in *As Boys Grow* were providing supplemental explanatory information about the body and discrediting falsehoods that were spread in peer culture. The first one has to do with erections. The coach explains that erections are a result of sexual stimulation or thoughts, but can also be a reaction to other biological stimulation or physical activity (e.g. a full bladder and horse-back riding). The first objective is combined with the second when the coach talks about erections, ejaculations, and masturbating. He describes the difference between involuntary ejaculations, nocturnal emissions, and voluntary ones, i.e. masturbating. "You can cause an ejaculation by yourself, too, by masturbating, rubbing the penis. Sometimes you hear that masturbating effects your mind or your manhood, it isn't true. For kids your age, it's just something normal (*As Boys Grow* 1957). Seriously and unashamedly, the coach tells the boys that erections can be made to go away through masturbation; he defines what the word means, which might be read as a how-to-guide for doing it, though for boys this might seem redundant; and he debunks the long-lasting myth that masturbating might cause mental illness or undermine one's masculinity. This frankness is meant to normalize

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<sup>134</sup> This is an issue that will be taken up in the following section when I look at the sexual double standard.

sexuality and sexual play and put the adolescents at ease, which is apparent at the end of the scene when the boys ask if they can continue their discussion the following day.

The next scene serves as an introduction for that day's discussion topic: puberty in females. This is when the viewers see the group of young men talking about menstruation. As the conversation turns tense, the coach walks in carrying a diagram of the female sexual organs. Given most of the boys' general ignorance, he first explains the physical anatomy of the female body as it relates to menstruation. One boy asks when menstruation begins and if this is an indicator that the young woman can then have a baby. The coach responds, "Yes that's right," and adds, "just as you can become fathers as soon as your testes start making sperm" (*As Boys Grow* 1957). Again, there is a direct correlation made by and for the boys between physical maturity and reproduction, which leads to an explanation of the process of fertilization. The explanations thus far were too abstract for all the boys to fully understand how sperm and ovum meet and so one of the boys explicitly asks, "Yeah, but how's it get there? You know, not just the sperm and egg stuff, I mean, well, what really happens?" (*ibid.*). Unabashedly the coach responds, "Oh, what you want to know about is sexual intercourse" (*ibid.*). Switching to another diagram of the female reproductive system he explains the mechanics of sexual intercourse. His description is brief and has a pedagogical focus by insisting on reproduction—stimulation, ejaculation, and fertilization—, not the pleasure of the act or the experience of two lovers. Such treatment maintains medical neutrality and avoids the pitfalls of morality if greater discussion were permitted. And yet, several of the boys are curious about the social side of mixed-sex interactions. One asks, "Yeah, but babies and all that, that's not all you go out with a girl for, is it?" (*ibid.*). The possibility that the boys might understand this discussion to mean that men and women spend time together just to reproduce causes the coach to expand on the social reasons for mixed-sex interaction. He says, "Going out with girls is fun. When you get older you probably want to get married and start a family (*ibid.*). This is the only point in the film where the viewer will see an explicit link being made between sexual intercourse and marriage. On the one hand, dating is entertaining, while on the

other, with sex comes marriage, which implies serious responsibilities. This discussion about the social aspects of sexual intercourse lead another young man to ask about the time when dating should start. The coach has no predefined age at which he thinks it should begin. He believes it depends on the individual and when the occasion arises. The last minute of *As Boys Grow* shows two of the young athletes asking two girls on a double date: swimming and a picnic. The fact that the film closes on such a context reinforces the naturalness of the evolution that one undergoes during puberty as the two boys shown asking are the two in the film who are more mature than their peers.

## **2. Premarital Sex: The Double Standard Defining “Good” and “Bad” Girls**

Kinsey’s research revealed that American postwar society seemed to be experiencing a sexual awakening. High incidences of heterosexual petting and premarital intercourse for young men and women attested to this fact. Later researchers confirmed that Kinsey’s numbers held steady throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and began to climb in the mid-1970s, with slightly higher levels of sexual activity within the African American population throughout this period (Hofferth, Kahn, and Baldwin 1987, 46). Despite a clear shift in premarital sexual behavior, public attitudes tended to be divided on the acceptability of teenage sexuality. “Mass-circulation magazines and professional journals [...revealed...] that significant and relevant portions of the U.S. population, in the mid-to-late 1960s, still strongly disapproved of premarital sex” (Bailey 1999, 119). And yet, younger people in the mid-to-late 1960s affirmed changing behavioral patterns, “In 1969 [...a] Gallup Poll showed that a historically high 55 percent of college females did not think premarital sex was wrong” (Heidenry 1997, 67). Such contrasting visions might be seen as examples of what Beth Bailey calls the “conflicting conventions” that appeared between “age/authority” and American youth culture (1988, 96). Opposing behavioral and value systems set up “official conventions” that asserted petting was immoral on the one hand, while “peer conventions” contended sexual activity was normal, on the other (ibid.). Both sets were ubiquitous enough to hold decisive, albeit somewhat convoluted, sway over the sexual practices of many American youth. The

former might be identified as those Americans who felt the increasing presence of sex in public discourse threatened the nation's morals and therefore sought to maintain existing sexual mores through their involvement in the purity movements taking place between the mid-1930s and the end of the 1950s (D'Emilio & Freedman 1988, 280). One example of this can be found in *How to Say No: Moral Maturity* (1951), a ten minute short produced by Coronet Instructional Films in collaboration with Evelyn M. Duvall.<sup>135</sup> *How to Say No* features five adolescents discussing some of the typical situations that test the limits of adolescent morality and how to deal with peer pressure.

It begins with a young man, Bill, on a stage, who presents the potential problems that might stem from saying "no." He wonders how young people might refuse to participate in something without being too direct, without hurting others' feelings, without potentially losing one's friends, and without giving their friends the impression that they think they are superior to them. The viewers then see a series of short clips that feature the awkward moment when one feels it would be inconsiderate to say no: a young boy selling magazine subscriptions to earn money for a bicycle, a husband watching his wife display her new wardrobe, a couple of young men calling a friend chicken and then inviting a third young man to join them in some rabble rousing. All of these scenarios make the person who should say no visibly uncomfortable. He asks the viewers to join him in his living room where four of his friends, Marty, Lucy, Nora, and Howie, are already seated to discuss potential ways to say "no" without causing hard feelings. Each situation builds on the previous one, providing the viewers with plenty of tools to resist peer pressure, no matter the context. The first two scenarios present what one should do when one's friends decide to consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes. When there is not much insistence by one's peers, a polite solution might be to refuse to participate without making a fuss. When one's friends are quite insistent that one also partake, then, one might change

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<sup>135</sup> Dr. Duvall was the executive director for the National Council for Family Relations from 1945-1951. She published a book in collaboration with Sylvania M. Duvall in 1961 entitled *Sex Ways—In Fact and Faith*. A review for which describes this work as having the purpose of "determining the bases for Christian family policy [...] in light of the facts, changing traditions, and the Christian faith" (Owen 1961, 409).

the subject to distract them from the behavior. The last situation is perhaps the trickiest because of its sensitive nature: petting.

“Not making a fuss” or “changing the subject” might be good solutions when pressured to do something with one’s friends, but when in mixed company these ideas might not be enough. This is evident in Lucy’s reaction. She stands up on the verge of indignation and says, “It takes more than changing the subject to...well, well what about the problem of boys? Their, well, their hands you know?” (*How to Say No: Moral Maturity* 1951). To which Howie jokingly proclaims, “Lucy, you promised not to tell” (ibid.). Though Lucy lightly brushes him off, saying she had not named any culprits, and the others laugh, this playful interjection speaks to the secretiveness of petting if it were taking place and the guilt that should be associated to it, for both boys and girls. Additionally, it demonstrates a gender divide on how problematic this issue was. Lucy feels young women need help learning how to say “no,” while the young Howie makes light of it and the others go along with him by laughing. She insists that this is a serious situation for young women and launches into the typical scenario a teen might encounter: arriving home from a date with time to spare before curfew, the young couple decides to sit on the porch “to talk.” Lucy laments that despite the fact this young fellow has probably been an agreeable companion all evening, once the couple is alone he will not take no for an answer. Nora believes there is an easy answer, “Don’t spend time alone with him, simply don’t get into a situation like that” (ibid.). Bill says it is not quite that simple given that the boy is the one picking the girl up and taking her home. Plus, convention then demanded that the young man accompany the young woman to the door. The couple will necessarily be alone in the car and the moments before saying goodnight. Nora does not skip a beat; she suggests that he is asked in. The girl’s parents will be around, they can have something to eat, and then say goodnight with the girl’s parents acting as the buffer. Though Lucy agrees that this is a good remedy for that particular situation, she contends that these situations are an inevitability of dating: whether one is at a look out point on a double date, at the movies, or in front of the TV at home, the occasion presents itself for a little necking or petting. Howie perks up at the suggestion that intimacy might take place in the home, puts his arm around

Lucy, and says, “Hmm, you know, I never thought of that before” (ibid.). She rebuffs him by pushing him away. Again humor is used to undermine the girl’s seriousness, though not given much thought. The film then shows different scenarios with a young couple finding themselves alone. The first one takes place on the front porch, on an evening when the young woman did not “plan ahead,” and so had not thought to immediately invite her date inside. When the young man tries to make his move, she asks him a specific question about himself, causing his focus to be averted. Then, the viewers see two couples sitting in a car; they could be at a look-out point or watching a movie at a drive-in. The couple up front appears to be having a nice intimate moment, the young woman’s head is resting on the young man’s shoulder. The young man in the back moves to put his arm around his date who says she is hungry and suggests they all go get something to eat. The man in the front seat looks at her with disdain. When the scene cuts back to the group in the living room, Bill says the last one was not a very good example because the guy in the front seat was obviously upset and begins to say why this is unfair to the other young man, but Nora interrupts him. She explains that it is one of many in the “bag full of tricks” to help a young woman avoid such situations (*How to Say No: Moral Maturity* 1951). Bill is not only presenting how young men might perceive the problem of petting differently from women, he is returning to the discomfort of saying no when it makes one stand out from their peers. In spite of Bill’s position, Howie agrees with Nora. He notes that young men are not the only ones who start things down that path. Lucy seems thunderstruck, but Nora concurs. She explains that “Sometimes we’re partly to blame. We invite a little attention. It goes on and then it’s hard to stop” (ibid.). Howie admits that there are moments when the boy could say no, while Marty interjects, that some boys think petting is “well, the thing to do” (ibid.). Lucy adds, “Some girls think they have to permit it for date insurance. Well, each of us has to set his own standards, I guess” (ibid.). To which Nora argues that standards vary. If one is very attached to the person they are seeing, the desire to be close is present. She suggests there is no problem with hand holding or even a goodnight kiss, but the intimacy that has time to unfold might put one in a moral bind. As Howie, Marty, Nora, and Lucy discuss the expectations for petting while dating it becomes clear that

some boys feel reticence about saying no, like girls, while others believe it is integral to the system. Lucy suggests that it is not so different for girls: where some feel like they should pet in order to have a future date, others do not want to be beholden to such expectations. Given the whole gray area, Lucy summarizes what the viewer should take away from the discussion, “I think the important thing is to know yourself and know your standards: know when and how you’re going to say no, but in advance” (*How to Say No: Moral Maturity* 1951). To conclude, Bill transforms all of the scenarios into a step-by-step process in resisting peer pressure, going from the basics to the increasingly complex and tense moments. One step is listed by each member of the group: Lucy’s is “try to avoid difficult situations,” Howie’s is “distraction, change the subject,” Nora’s is “know exactly when you want to say no and be definite,” Marty’s is “then say no, friendly as possible, but still no,” and Bill’s is “but don’t be too preachy” (ibid.). We can see the importance placed on petting in *How to Say No* as it took up the greatest length of time, was presented with the most potential scenarios and means for excusing oneself, and was the culminating step in the process of resisting peer pressure. The fact that finding a way to say no was designated by the subtitle of the film as “moral maturity” indicates that the film’s larger vision of adolescence not only saw it as a transitory state between childhood and adulthood, but one during which a teen began to come to terms with morality. According to the overarching message of this short, being moral meant that one must draw a line. It was never precisely defined, but the forms of affection that were presented as not existing in an ambiguous zone were hand holding, goodnight kisses, and being close. The “so-ons,” as Nora refers to what comes after being close, are “troublesome” (ibid., 9:24-9:26). The distance between what is explicitly named and implied is meant to tell the audience that the moral line should be somewhere around light necking.

A purely moralistic discourse on premarital sexual activity became increasingly problematic at mid-century as it was commonly understood to be predicated on Judeo-Christian sexual morality. As can be seen in *How to Say No*, there is no explanation for why youth felt uncomfortable when their friends drank or smoked or when their dates wanted to get intimate. It is assumed, because each of

these scenarios counters the mandates of religious morality that young people should resist participating in them. However, this justification would not hold up well in the postwar era. Beth Bailey contends, “While many Americans continued to believe in absolute moral sanctions grounded in religious teachings, religion could not serve as the ultimate justification for public rules and laws governing sex in a society that proclaimed individual freedom of religion” (1999, 48). As such, experts in medicine, psychology, and sociology attempted to develop “scientific systems” that justified these morals in the language of science (ibid.). The next educational film, I would like to analyze does precisely this. *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* (1953) uses psychology to explain the process of growing up for a young man and woman and subtly inserts a moralizing vision of adolescent sexual behavior.<sup>136</sup>

The twenty-two-minute film opens by presenting the idea that teenagers’ social-sex attitudes differ from others because of many factors, noting the varying communities to which the young person belongs as a primary shaper in attitude differences—parents, friends, and locality. The main characters’ parents expose their children to sex education from childhood. In the “Film Discussion Guide,” a document prepared by McGraw-Hill Text Films to help teachers use the film, this emphasis is identified as one of the film’s primary objectives: stressing “the value of early sex education by parents” (1955, 63). Undergirding the difference in attitudes, however, is one’s sex. This is made clear in that the film finds it necessary to follow the psycho-sexual development of both a boy and girl, Bob and Mary. Though the main characters have similar experiences—both are taught about reproduction as young children by their mothers and both resent their parents’ attempts to know more about their dating activities as teenagers—, they have contrasting experiences when it comes to sexual activity while dating. It is uncertain in the film if this is meant to

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<sup>136</sup> *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* (1953) was produced by Crawley Films, Ltd., under contract of the National Film Board of Canada for McGraw-Hill Text Films as part of the Adolescent Development Series, and derives its base material from psychologist Elizabeth B. Hurlock’s text *Adolescent Development* (1949). Gladys K. Phelan notes in her review of the second edition that this book’s target audience are lower-division undergraduate students studying adolescent development and psychology (1974, 208). This production house played a significant role in the industrial education film market, producing 23 percent of those films made in Canada by 1952 (Alexander 2010, 79-82).



validate a gender-dependent vision of psycho-sexual development, especially as there is a note at the beginning of the film that explains the forthcoming examples as normal, but not necessarily “typical of all adolescents” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). The discussion guide, however, does seem to question whether or not one’s sex determines their sexual experience by encouraging discussion leaders to ask groups who watch the film, “Does a boy have to go through ‘the desperate rush to find out all about sex’ as Bob did? Is Bob’s experience typical, desirable, and/or necessary? Does the film imply that boys must ‘sow their wild oats?’” (1955, 64). Though these questions draw attention to the different gender experiences of Bob and Mary, their underlying query is whether one’s sex justifies their sexual activity and opens the door for the discussion to take a moral tone. Though *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* appears to be a value-free, scientific discussion of how young people come to perceive dating, sexual activity, and marriage, it also takes every opportunity to reinforce the ethos that sexual intercourse is special and reserved for the married couple.

The film follows Bob and Mary through time, showing them first at their wedding and then flashing back to how they developed their social-sex attitudes during their childhood, adolescence, and finally young adult years. This sequence is important because it shows from the beginning that normal psycho-sexual development culminates in marriage. It also allows for the reasons in favor of marriage to be extolled from its outset. The voiceover tells viewers that Bob and Mary’s marriage is likely to succeed because it is based on many different factors: mutual interests, companionship, ambitions, and love. From there, the viewers are taken back in time to see how “good sex adjustment” develops.

For Mary, this began when she was a small child. She showed interest in pregnancy and demonstrated a natural inclination to nurture by asking her mother if she could help take care of her future sibling when it arrived. The voiceover stresses that from an early age Mary was shown that childbirth was a natural and happy affair. This also began during childhood for Bob, but his mother waited for him to ask questions. She arranged situations for him to become aware of reproduction so they could discuss it. Both Mary and Bob are shown having “normal” childhoods, which

meant that they played with children of both sexes until about the age of ten and then naturally segregated into single-sex playgroups.

Mary's parents are good examples of how parents might educate their children about reproduction and puberty. As menstruation approached, Mary's mother took it upon herself to explain the changes that were taking place in her body to avoid her picking up "odd bits of startling and inaccurate information" at school (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). Her parents also served as an ideal example of what a happy marriage might resemble. They occasionally quarreled but for the most part got along well, providing her with a home life that was "pleasant, natural, and secure" (ibid.). In spite of this, Mary began to distance herself from her parents when puberty began. She started daydreaming and spending more time alone. Her mother believed it was necessary to give her space and privacy, but when it came to sex, Mary's mother continued to shape her daughter's education. The voiceover describes these efforts approvingly, "Mary's mother tried to discuss sex without embarrassment and tried to give Mary facts without any suggestion of fear or shame" (ibid.). Taken together, Mary's experiences are meant to show the important role that parents play, not only in providing her children with information about reproduction and sex, but also in shaping the child's perspective of the couple and family.

Because of her parents' efforts, when Mary first encountered discussions about sex with her friends, she was ready, had the correct information, and a mature attitude to her role as a future mother. This is important because during their discussion it became clear that many of these girls' parents were not providing them with a sex education. Some of the information shared came from jokes that many of them did not really understand, some learned from books, but there were also many topics about which they did not know much at all (e.g. Would marrying a first cousin cause one's children to be deformed? Could kissing lead to having a baby?). When her friends asked her if she was afraid of having a baby, Mary very maturely responded "No, I am not. Because after all, people have been having babies for thousands of years and nowadays doctors have so many ways of making us safe" (ibid.). Again the voiceover reinforces the laudable behavior of Mary's parents in preparing her to have an appropriate attitude towards sex. "For Mary, the fulfillment

of a healthy sex life held no fears. Sex was not sinister and something to be whispered about but it was a natural function which would contribute to the ultimate happiness of home and a family” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). In taking a seemingly moral-free position on sex, Mary’s mother was able to prepare her for her larger mission in life: motherhood and wifehood. Though Mary’s sex education is framed in moral-free terms, it becomes clear through this discussion that the purpose of this was not so much to free her from the societal expectation to remain a virgin until marriage as much as it was to prepare her for a happy and fulfilling sex life in marriage, to help her see her “sex-role” as natural, desirable, and perhaps, inevitable.

Like *How Do You Know It’s Love*, Mary is then shown going from the stage of same-sex fascination to opposite-sex crushes. The voiceover explains that this is a normal transitory stage between the “antagonism towards boys just before puberty” to “falling in love with a boy” (ibid.). It is significant that the film portrays single-sex play and single-sex “crushes” as a natural part of psycho-sexual development. On the one hand, it dismisses any suspicion that these intense, same-sex relationships were homosexual in nature. The voiceover criticizes Mary’s mother for being so disturbed that her daughter seems so fascinated by a girl and chastises her lack of empathy and negligence of the fact that she too had a girlfriend by whom she was mesmerized around Mary’s age. On the other hand, the insistence on the “transition” from mixed-sex play to single-sex play, to single-sex relationships and then to mixed-sex relationships reinforces the idea that psycho-sexual development was a progressive series of stages through which one became aware of sex difference and sexuality. Homosexuality, from this perspective, was the result of an individual being arrested in one stage, incapable of refocusing their sexual desires on the “appropriate” sex. As the therapeutic model normalized the heterosocial to homosocial/homosexual to heterosexual stages, “abnormal” behavior was seen as the result of “abnormal” development and should be treated to produce “normal” behavior, if not “normal” development (Bailey 1999, 68).

Bob’s experience with puberty was less social than Mary’s, more focused on his body, and how he might respond to the changes he was experiencing. In a

roundabout way, the voiceover acknowledges the onset of erections because Bob had experienced nocturnal emissions. Continuing with a great deal of distance from the subject of erections, the film mentions masturbating, but reassures the viewer that this is purely academic as Bob had *read* about masturbation and learned that it was “a problem” that was “more mental than physical” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). Without further ado on the topic, the film tells viewers that a young man’s health was best kept if he got plenty of exercise and fresh air. Though *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* recommends that adults talk about sex and reproduction in a frank and unashamed manner, the film does not discuss puberty in any detail. It says “period,” “nocturnal emission,” and “masturbation,” but provides no explanation for any of these words. Masturbation is reduced to mental weakness and young men are told they can avoid such “a problem” if they engage in vigorous exercise and spend enough time outside, rendering it less than acceptable behavior. Such a discussion is more reflective of Fessler’s argument that sexual education, from parents and schools, could be vague and ineffectual because it provided very little useful information about the sex act and reproduction (2006, 37-38).

To be fair, the focus of the film was not puberty or reproduction, it was aimed at explaining how young men and women developed social-sex attitudes, and how they became men and women. The encouragement for boys to get exercise and fresh air is followed by a scene in which Bob is able to find a male role-model in his football coach, a man who he admires and wants to emulate, which is all the more important for Bob since his father had passed away. The voiceover explains, Bob’s “normal” development as “His interests were mainly masculine and his success at sports made him sure of himself. He could take girls in his stride, just as he did games” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953).

Around the age of sixteen, Bob’s “mainly masculine interests” turned increasingly towards sex. This is first shown when his mom finds a drawing in his room featuring a naked Bob and a naked woman lying on his lap with “Bob + Betty WOW!” scrolled across the top. Then, she hears Bob on the phone rating women based on their attractiveness. The discussion guide summarizes this behavior along with his serial dating, late nights, and wild partying, as intimating that Bob was

probably exploiting girls sexually (1955, 63). Although Bob's mother looks exasperated at all this behavior, she seems incapable of making any headway on the topic. The division between the two of them is another example of how the film's producers are subtly commenting on morality: Bob thinks it is his right to behave as he pleases, whereas his mother objects but does not seem to have the tools necessary to substantiate her morals as being based on respect rather than outdated prudery (ibid.).

Mary is also shown at odds with her parents. After spending some time going around with a mixed-sex gang, she begins to pair off more and more, to her parents' dismay. As she is being escorted to her front door after a date, the viewers see a private conversation between her parents. Her mother worries she is getting too close to one boy, while her father worries that she goes dancing at "juke joints" and only has "boys, boys, boys" on the brain (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). Her mother believes that getting too close to one boy might result in her making a "little fool out of herself" (ibid.). The allusion here is that Mary would transgress some sexual limit that is not explicitly defined. Despite their concern about her priorities and for her reputation, Mary's parents feel like they are in a parenting bind. Mary's mother cannot always say "don't" and her father says there is no point to only saying "no." They wonder if there is a positive approach to raising an adolescent and instilling an appropriate respect for the troubles that might result from sex. Her mother mentions that Mary is aware of the physical side of sex, but that this is not sufficient to prepare her for having a healthy attitude towards boys. She subsequently announces that she will talk more with Mary about "having fun without being silly" (ibid.). Her father says she will "just have to learn by experience how to look after herself" (ibid.). Another gender divide presents itself here between Mary's parents. Mary's mother wants to give specific, though unspecified, advice about dating without ruining her reputation, while Mary's father believes that the only thing that would influence Mary is a potentially troublesome situation in which she would have to handle herself.

After having serially dated for a while, discovered what kind of boy interested her, and having two steadies, Mary finds "romance with a capital R" (ibid.). As might

be expected, because this is the most intense relationship Mary has had and this is the first time the viewers see her in the situation that her parents feared. Mary and her beau are kissing in the car. Mary pulls away and says, “Jack, please, don’t do that” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). To which he responds “Don’t act like an iceberg all your life. Look, we love each other don’t we?” (ibid.). She tries to object again, but he persists. Just as her father anticipated, she would have to learn through experience. However, because she had received an early education about sex and kept her mother as a confidante, Mary behaves exactly as she should by resolutely pushing him away and demanding to be taken home. Beth Bailey describes this tug-of-war between men pushing and women resisting as a proving ground for women to show their dates that they commanded respect (1988, 93). Being offended and reacting with violence were the tools women had at their disposal to assert their virtue and marriageability (ibid.). Thanks to this encounter, Mary begins to see from where her mother’s worries stem and begins to think about love instead of lust. Though the film does not condemn Jack’s actions, it does reframe his behavior in terms that might be appealing to teens: does his conduct indicate that he loves Mary? The obvious answer is no, so continuing a relationship with him would only cause problems for Mary. Recasting the conversation in such terms implies that necking, petting, or sexual intercourse without love were morally wrong.

Meanwhile, Bob was maturing, taking his responsibilities more seriously, diversifying his interests, and looking to further himself in the world. He became less interested in the “fast” life he had been living with his friends, which did not mean his social life evaporated; he simply adjusted everything to be more in line with what he wanted out of life.

Now that Bob and Mary had reached maturity, outgrown the torrent that accompanies adolescents’ discovery of the opposite sex, dating, and petting, they both had a good idea of what kind of person they liked, which primed them to fall in love.<sup>137</sup> They met and as they spent more time together over a few weeks, they

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<sup>137</sup> It is also worth mentioning that this type of narrative gives the man more leeway to acquire some form of sexual experience compared to the woman, thus indicating that the man is to be the woman’s “mentor” in these things upon marriage.

realized this was a different kind of relationship. The voiceover explains with this change came a new meaning to physical intimacy. “Petting was not just a form of entertainment or an experiment. There was real affection and mutual respect” (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). Additionally, this meant they found pleasure in being together that they had never experienced with anyone else. Like any strong couple, they quarreled, but knew it did not jeopardize their relationship. Just as *How Do You Know It's Love* and *Are You Ready for Marriage*, *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* tells its viewers that a relationship is a mature one when the couple find they share a similar sense of humor and hobbies, have comparable families and educational backgrounds, and a collective vision of the world. In a scene where Mary and Bob are shown embracing each other intensely, kissing, lying down, the voiceover announces that a couple who is truly in love understands the importance of chastity. “They were so sure that their love was deep and spiritual that at times a marriage ceremony seemed just to be a formality, [...] but each of them knew deep down they wanted their marriage vows to have real meaning” (ibid.). The film sympathizes with viewers who know they are marriage-bound and the intensity of their desire to consummate their love, but it attempts to provide them with this perspective: marriage gives sex legitimacy and sex gives marriage legitimacy. Without this formality, the couple is not truly bound. The psycho-sexual development culminates then in heterosexual, marital love. The final stage seems just as inevitable as those one passes through in order to get there, but just as one transitions from homosexual crushes to heterosexual love, one also must evolve away from lust and physical passion towards a cooperative and lasting love. If the focus is maintained on psycho-sexual development throughout the film, which is the second objective of the film according to the discussion guide, then all the moralizing arguments get lost in the background, but they abound (1955, 63). Normal “social-sex attitudes” demonstrate that a man or woman accepts, even revels in, their gender role just as Mary did as a young teen in discussing having children and Bob does when he begins focusing on his future and leaving the social distractions to the weekends. Normal “social sex-attitudes” properly direct their affections on the opposite sex, which is what Mary does when she begins fawning over young men with her intimate

girlfriends rather than over her friends. Normal “social-sex attitudes” result in different sexual experiences for adolescent boys and girls: Bob experienced a “desperate rush to find out about sex” while Mary learned about social niceties, played the popularity game, and learned the hard way about how to assert her virtue (*Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence* 1953). Normal “social-sex attitudes” mean that when a young couple is in love they understand that their marriage has more meaning when they wait to have sex.

Given the competing discourses between adult-directed popular culture, youth culture, “authority conventions,” “peer conventions,” and pseudo-scientific, but moralizing, advice, it is no surprise that a Victorian-esque sexual double standard reemerged during the twentieth century, one that was predicated on women’s virginal chastity and men’s uninhibited sexual virility. It was dubbed a sexual double standard because men and women, boys and girls were seen as having fundamentally different sexual natures that put more pressure on women and girls to maintain their “virtue” (Nash 2006, 137). “American males were told that if they were healthy they should hunger for sex, while young women were advised to resist forcefully and demand a ring” (Allyn 2000, 14). Contrasting discourses of appropriateness created tension between young men and women: marriage was presented as a trap for men and premarital sex was seen as a problem for women, though the social consequences were potentially more volatile for the girl (*ibid.*, 15). Like many conventions of that period, even this one was unclearly defined. In the 1920s and 1930s, necking and light petting were considered taboo, but by the 1950s the line had been pushed back to premarital sexual intercourse (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 262). What all of this generated was a perpetuation of the gender dichotomies that ended up shaping divergent masculine and feminine perceptions of the meaning and purpose of sex, resulting in different behaviors when it came to dating (*ibid.*, 262-263). John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman describe how this manifested itself. College men preferred dates that were more sexually active and thus had more sexual encounters. The more they went out, the more they had sex. While women dated more frequently, they favored dates who did not impose sexual demands. The more steadily a woman saw a man, the more likely she was to be sexually active with him. Men and women



also expressed different concerns when it came to dating. In groups, men would become preoccupied with sex and share information on how to be successful in pushing a woman to go further. At the same time, women were worried about sexual aggression and having their sexual indiscretions exposed. They talked about the remorse they felt for “going too far” and how sex meant love for their partner (ibid). Such contrasting behaviors, perceptions, and values when it came to dating, necking, petting, and intercourse resulted in divergent statuses for men and women who failed to toe the line: publicly men gained status, while women lost it (Fessler 2006, 34). Women were put in a double-bind as they were being told to assume conflicting scripts: be sexually titillating, but stay chaste (May 1988, 117).

Beth Bailey explains that middle-class values of sexual respectability reigned when it came to defining sexual permissibility at mid-century, therefore, premarital intercourse remained out of bounds and those who were sexually active attempted to be discreet about it (1999, 78). If one happened to succumb to the intensity of the moment, the different stakes for men and women became glaringly obvious. In splitting the interests of men and women, the value of the dating market carried over to sex. This was based on the larger cultural perception that men and women were diametric opposites, motivated to act based on their divergent interests—women needed providers for themselves and their offspring, while men looked for sex (Bailey 1999, 76).<sup>138</sup> This was part of the ideological controls that attempted to limit unacceptable sexual behavior, according to Bailey. She contends that these controls were more effective than biological ones—sexually transmitted infections and illegitimate children—because they were based on the communal perception that evaluated women who had “gone too far” as “second-hand goods,” thus endangering their prospects for marriage (ibid., 77). Middle-class norms defined the line that determined a woman’s “value”/ “virtue” and marriageability. As was discussed in the first and second chapters, at mid-century marriage was women’s gateway to a middle-class marriage and “affluent domesticity,” therefore their sexual behavior could have consequences on their ability to access the good life for which most

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<sup>138</sup> See also Stephanie Coontz’s discussion of the protective theory (explained on page 93 here) in *Marriage, A History* (2005, 34-36).

Americans yearned. Taking advantage of the different value systems that dictated women's sexual behavior in the middle class, D'Emilio and Freedman note yet another gender hypocrisy of the double standard, one that is class-related: middle-class men pursued sexual relationships with working-class women, and maintained the expectation that middle-class women remained virginal and pure (1988, 263). Continuing in the vein of differing sexual boundaries between the classes in the early twentieth century, some middle-class men exploited the idea that middle-class respectability was reserved for middle-class women (Bailey 1988, 18). In spite of the "*felt* conventions" that dictated that middle-class couples did not have sexual intercourse, some still did. The double standard gave birth to a categorization for women who were "unadulterated" and those who were "fallen."

Two of the most ominous labels for women at that time evoke the tremendous weight of the double standard. When speaking about sexuality during this era, people commonly refer to "nice girls" and "bad girls" and the implication is that one understands that these labels refer to a young woman's sexual promiscuity.<sup>139</sup> A "nice girl" was someone who followed the gender and sexual norms of her time: morally, she was intact, and intent on remaining a virgin until marriage; physically, she was responsible, refusing any sexual advances that might get her into trouble; and socially, she was becoming a "good woman," learning the traits of wifedom and motherhood. By contrast, a "bad girl" was a young woman who rebelled against or transgressed gender and sexual norms, most notably, violating codes around sexual activity by having sex outside of wedlock, having multiple sexual partners, and/or finding herself "with child." Many of my interviewees employed this terminology, but one in particular used it in a way that demonstrates its import. She said, "I

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<sup>139</sup> The "bad girl" was not a new idea. We have already explored the mid-century label, "charity girl," which indicated a young woman traded sexual favors for money while on the town. During World War II, a similar label developed for the young women who dated soldiers and perhaps had sexual intercourse with them, "'victory girls, v-girls,' or 'khaki-wackies'" (Nash 2006, 137). Not only were these women blamed for eroding national morals, they were accused of spreading venereal disease amongst the troops (ibid.). However, what was fundamentally misunderstood by those in the press and adults of the era who decried such behavior was that many of these young women felt helpless in making a significant contribution to the war effort and thus saw it as a "patriotic right and duty to entertain lonesome soldiers" (ibid.). Ilana Nash explains how much these women subverted public conventions and perceptions of femininity and sexuality because they were sexually aggressive and a little rowdy (ibid.).

remember a couple of girls in my senior class who became pregnant and we all thought they were bad girls. It just wasn't done" (Linda, 2013). Many of the women presented in Anne Fessler's *The Girls Who Went Away* and Patricia Miller's *The Worst of Times* (1993) discuss the power of these labels and what type of behavior was permitted, or not, through the dictates of social stigmatization. Several women talked about how sex was out-of-bounds for "nice girls" (e.g. Miriam and Kate as cited in Miller 1993, 65; 242-43); one woman—after having had an illegal abortion that required medical attention—hoped to escape the shame of admitting to the abortion, but was tested for venereal disease, an experience she identified as equally unbecoming of the "nice girl" (Marie as cited in Miller 1993, 154); another said that "nice girls" simply did not get pregnant (Cathy II as cited in Fessler 2006, 10); while another remembered that speaking about birth control was something that "nice girls" did not do (Carole I as cited in Fessler 2006, 29). The mere idea of being invested in one's reproductive health was considered beyond the pale for the "nice girl," which would have placed even greater shame on any young woman who had to deal with any of the potential results of sexual intercourse, like sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. What seems to become clear about the "nice girl" archetype, from these descriptions, is that it could only be preserved if a young woman maintained complete innocence of her sexuality and body, whether that manifested itself as ignorance of the sexual act or obliviousness of how to prevent pregnancy. Moreover, if it were revealed that a young woman was pregnant, her peers as well as her elders would shun her. These social reactions were frequently devastating for the young woman: her family worried about *their* reputation in the community, other young women would avoid her so as not to be associated with or condoning her immorality, and many high schools and colleges required unwed pregnant women to withdraw or simply expelled them (Fessler 2006, 71-72). Ultimately, the social stigma attached to premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy resulted in a young woman and her family hoping that her secret would not be revealed and her "nice girl" status maintained.

In discussing their lives during high school, Michael and Nancy, whom I interviewed in Portland, who grew up half a continent apart, one in Chicago, the

other in Miami Beach, shared a similar vision of what these labels meant. As a young Catholic girl the division between being a “bad girl” and a “good girl” mattered tremendously. Nancy reminisced about being a rebel:

For a girl going to Catholic high school I had a pretty—I don’t want to make it sound more dramatic than it is—but I was a little bit of a wild girl, not a full wild girl. I was a good girl, but I mean, I cut school a lot and the nuns pretty much let you do it because you’re a smart kid. They weren’t going to discipline you. My best friend had a car. I didn’t shoplift. I wasn’t mean to people, but the rules I didn’t agree with I broke (2013).

When I asked her what it meant to be a “good girl,” to not be a “full wild girl,” she explained, “Among Catholic girls, even in those days [the mid- to late-1960s] as in the fifties, at least when I was in high school there tended to be the Madonna/Whore dichotomy. And the girls that discovered sex for the most part, they were pretty promiscuous” (ibid.). Her husband tried to expand on the difference between the ones who toed the line and those who did not, but seemed insistent that the “good girl” “bad girl” dichotomy was particularly present among Catholic women. Michael explained:

I mean there used to be a dichotomy with the Catholic girls. A lot of the Catholic girls were very good girls, weren’t promiscuous, were not in trouble, were very straight-laced and then some of the girls that became the bad girls, they went to the dark side big time. Once they got over the barrier, they realized wait a second “Why was I listening to those bells and whistles at all?” I mean listen, my brother’s close pal was a guy named Furio Rossi<sup>140</sup> who kind of introduced him to sex, because he was an Italian guy going to Catholic church. Furio had all the bad girls broken down. He knew who the bad girls were. I remember their names. So that was my brother’s kind of introduction to sex because Furio knew the bad girls (2013).

From Nancy’s explanation of herself as a rebel, the distance she puts between breaking rules and traversing the line of respectability is significant. The weight of the convention as a stark opposition between good and bad, virtuous and promiscuous, the Madonna and the whore, demonstrates that in the public domain there was very little room for a young woman to maneuver. She was one or the other. From Michael’s description of the “bad girls” he knew about, it seems that if one boy thought a young woman fell into the latter category, she was a target for sexual

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<sup>140</sup> This is a pseudonym.

exploitation. This is not to erase young women's agency from the equation. Certainly there were women who wanted to have sex and bucked convention or had sex with someone they loved believing there was nothing immoral about it, but the stigmatization might also have been a reason for the supposed sexual awakening and extreme promiscuity described by Nancy and Michael. In *The Girls Who Went Away*, Ann Fessler includes the account of a woman, Marge, who was sent by her parents to a home for unwed mothers, where she was to give birth and relinquish her baby. In spite of her family's best efforts to keep their daughter's situation a secret, when she returned, Marge realized everyone knew and it had a real effect on her social life. She is recorded as saying:

I went back to school and acted like nothing was wrong, nothing had happened. The spirit of the town was nobody ever said, 'Where have you been? Why are you coming to school two months late?' But everybody knew. Friends that I had weren't my friends anymore. Then all the boys wanted to go out with me because, 'Oh yeah, she's had sex—she's loose, she's a tramp, she's a whore.' I ended up in some weird situations. I mean, one guy had a gun and tried to make me have sex with him. I guess I had shown that I would have sex, so boys decided they could take advantage of me. I guess they thought I didn't have any sense" (Marge as cited in Fessler 2006, 82).

Between Nancy and Michael's explanations of what a "bad girl" was and Marge's description of what it meant in her hometown to be labeled one, it becomes evident that the tug-of-war between the sexes—men pushing and women resisting—over where the line of permissibility was could be a watershed moment rewarding men's sexual prowess and virility and tarnishing women's innocence and reputation.

The "bad girl," embodied in the unmarried pregnant woman, was seen as a transgressor of sexual morals, despite the fact that many of her peers were engaging in similar behavior. Getting pregnant was seen as a manifestation of how bad she was and a form of punishment. In *Women and Their Bodies*, The Boston Women's Health Collective admonishes the shame heaped on women in the event of an out of wedlock pregnancy. The idea that pregnancy was as a woman's "punishment for pleasure," a humiliation that her community and doctor thought she deserved, and a lesson for other young women, was the height of the hypocrisy inherent in the sexual double standard (1970, 90). Women were ostracized from their peers, while men were praised by theirs. In one context, it was the embodiment of a woman's shame and

disgrace, and in another, it was her central purpose in life. Though the “age/authority” conventions established the immorality of petting, youths also rallied against any girl who found herself in “a family way” as a means to displace any sort of suspicion from being cast their way (Fessler 2006, 36). Fessler argues that the rise in premarital pregnancies during the postwar era was a natural consequence of rising premarital sex rates, adolescents lacking basic sex education, and contraceptives being difficult to obtain (ibid., 29-30). She notes, “In the mid-1950s, about 40 percent of first births to girls age fifteen to nineteen were conceived out of wedlock. Thereafter, the numbers rose sharply. By 1971-1974, the number of first births conceived outside of marriage to teenage girls had reached 60 percent” (ibid.). The question then becomes: did the fear of pregnancy and the resulting label keep young women from having sexual intercourse? Some postwar researchers set out to understand whether or not pregnancy was a motivating factor for many young people to avoid going all the way. The prevailing assumption about premarital sexual intercourse being on the rise concerned the increased availability of contraceptives. Yet, one study completed at that time indicated that the majority of young women—who had engaged in premarital sex and feared getting pregnant—took no precautions against getting pregnant, nor did they believe their sexual partners had made any effort to prevent pregnancy. This led the researchers to conclude “While such figures are no guarantee that the increased dissemination of contraception will not increase frequencies of premarital intercourse, they do show that a *lack* of contraception and/or fear of pregnancy will not necessarily prevent premarital intercourse” (Pohlman 1969, 189). The looming threat of being exposed as a “bad girl” or the fear of pregnancy did not necessarily prevent young women from going “all the way.” Because sexual activity was an expectation of steady dating, there was less scrutiny of the young woman and her reputation when petting or intercourse took place within a relationship (Bailey 1988, 49-51; D’Emilio and Freedman 1988, 261; Fessler 2006, 31; May 1988, 121). Many of the oral histories in *The Girls Who Went Away*, *Back Rooms*, and *The Worst of Times* reveal that steady relationships were intimate and intense enough that if the worst happened, the couple expected they would just get married, in essence bypassing the stigmatization for the young woman of being

labeled a “bad girl” by opting for the respectable title of “Mrs.”

With these conflicting behaviors and attitudes in mind, it is not surprising that the data that I collected seem to corroborate a divide in people’s acceptance of sexual activity before marriage, which very much fits in within the national narrative of the time. The majority of the twenty-four people I interviewed did not refer to sex before marriage and when specifically asked, several of them maintained that premarital sexual activity “was just not something you did.” Yet seven of my interviewees addressed the incidence of premarital sex and interestingly enough the majority of them were amongst the older respondents. They were young adults during the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of them being born in the 1930s (2) and 1940s (4), while the seventh was born in the 1950s. This is quite revealing because it demonstrates that this “older generation” was indeed aware of changing dating norms that involved sexual activity and the consequences of these changes, especially the attached stigma if one’s private choice became public knowledge. Furthermore, all seven of these interviewees acknowledged a gap between private behavior and public attitudes, which supports the idea that the norm was in the process of being rewritten.

### **3. Pregnancies Outside of Wedlock: Abortion, Adoption, Marriage**

In analyzing the findings of Alfred Kinsey and E. Lowell Kelly,<sup>141</sup> Elaine Tyler May concludes that the high incidence of premarital sexual intercourse was not only indicative of loosening sexual morals, but also a reason for early marriage, especially for women (ibid., 116). She explains that the fear of discovery was a primary motivator for women to rush into marriage (ibid., 117).<sup>142</sup> Women who went beyond the limits of acceptable sexual conduct and were found out—either because of the rumor mill or because they got pregnant—were indeed punished. Ultimately, the social sanctions that would befall them were an attempt by the larger community

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<sup>141</sup> Kinsey’s work attempted to catalogue the sexual practices of Americans, while Kelly was interested in marital compatibility.

<sup>142</sup> The rise in premarital sex and early marriage is further substantiated by Stephanie Coontz (1992) and Beth Bailey (1988). In the following section, I will discuss how premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancies also contributed to the rise in early marriage.

to restore the “fallen” woman’s respectability, but the punishments did not leave these women unscathed. The normalization of sexual acts in the steadily dating couple’s relationship brought many young people right up to the brink of transgression, while the societal weight of propriety was supposed to walk them back.

A good example of this can be seen in the educational film *How Much Affection?* (1958).<sup>143</sup> The film features a young high school couple, Mary and Jeff, who, the viewers learn over the course of the film, care about each other deeply. In spite of their feelings, it is apparent from the opening scene that the young couple is struggling to not let their feelings for one another dictate their physical relationship. As Mary and Jeff worry about the implications of their private behavior, they are confronted with the ominous example of Eileen and Fred, two former classmates, who went all the way and are paying the price for it.

The first scene shows a car driving up to a colonial-style home, a young woman jumping from the car and running to the door, as a young man chases after her calling her name and telling her he is sorry. She looks at him, shakes her head, and rushes inside. As she closes the door, she looks dejected. With her head hanging in shame, she moves slowly up the stairs to her bedroom. Outside we see the young man who drove her home, with his head down, kicking rocks on his way to his car. Once in her room, Mary looks shaken and disturbed. Her mother comes in and asks her about her evening. Mary is curt in her reply, which indicates to her mother something is amiss. She cries and hugs her mother. Then pulls away dramatically and asks “Do you remember when you told me that I might, I might have such strong feelings about a boy that it might be hard for me to decide what’s right to do?” (*How Much Affection?* 1958). Her mother playing dumb says she remembers but asks Mary why she’s asking. Mary with disgust says,

Well, it was something like that tonight with Jeff. You know I like him an awful lot and we, we have fun in dances, but tonight the feeling between us kept getting stronger and stronger. On the way home we stopped and parked

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<sup>143</sup> *How Much Affection?* was produced by Crawley Films Ltd., in conjunction with the National Film Board for Canada, for McGraw Hill Text-Films. This was part of the Marriage and Family Living Series based on the work of Paul H. Landis and Helen Judy Bond in *Your Marriage and Family Living* (1946).



and then things seemed to happen till we nearly...we were so close. Suddenly I realized what we were about to do. I asked Jeff to take me home (*How Much Affection?* 1958).

Mary's mother tries to restrain her reaction. Mary reassures her mother it was unintentional for her and for Jeff. He also felt bad about how far things had gone and had apologized in the car, saying it was all his fault. Mary's nearly hysterical at the prospect of what nearly happened, she can hardly make sense of how she and Jeff got to that point. Her mother tries to relate to her, by putting into words the competing interests of reason and physical desire. She explains that when two people meet it is all fun and excitement. Naturally, the affection involved in liking someone leads to a desire to be close. However, the physical desires can overpower one's more prudent interests, which can "twist" the wholesomeness of the love and affection that they feel (*ibid.*). Mary asks if love and affection are wrong. To which, her mother emphatically replies no, saying these are the basis for lasting love and marriage. Outside of marriage, though, acting on the physical impulses can lead to guilt and frustration, which Mary's mother warns can prevent her from finding true love. Her mother tells her it is not easy to distinguish between the two, especially in the heat of the moment, so she needs to slow down a little to let her faculties for reasoning catch up, which will help her know when her behavior is "wrong." According to her mother, the marker that Mary is "really grown up" is when her judgement rather than her emotions dictates her actions. In this scene, Mary's mother sums up the problematic nature of going steady, parking, necking, and petting from the perspective of "age/authority." In having relationships that were emotionally intense and physically involved, young people were making it difficult to determine whether or not their feelings were truly based in love or were the result of lust. Mary's mother plainly states that intense physical activity mars the purity of the feelings two people share and can prevent them from finding true happiness in marriage. As was seen in *Social-Sex Attitudes in Adolescence*, a young couple who truly cares and loves one another should be level-minded enough to recognize the significance in waiting until marriage. *How Much Affection?* does not imply that adolescents come to this realization on their own, hence the presence of her mother, or that it is easy, thus Mary's confusion about her feelings for Jeff and sense of guilt about what took place

when they parked. Her mother leaves the ultimate decision making to her, telling Mary she is there to provide advice, but putting the responsibility on Mary to learn how to manage her emotions and control herself.

In the following scene, Mary and Jeff have the occasion to discuss what happened at school. Jeff says, “Mary, I, I’d just like to say I’m sorry for what happened last Saturday. It wasn’t because, because I think of you as *that* kind of girl or anything like that. It, it’s just that...I don’t know. You’re so terrific and we’d been together all evening. I just don’t know what happened to me” (*How Much Affection?* 1958). Jeff appears to be a respectable and respectful young man. He takes the blame for the situation getting “out of hand” and reassures Mary that it was not because he had a low opinion of her. Although Jeff is attempting to pay Mary a compliment by telling her he does not see her as “*that* kind of girl,” a value judgment seems to be expressed by the filmmakers: “*that* kind of girl” would not deserve an apology, she would have been asking for it. Because Mary is a “nice girl,” Jeff feels compelled to tell her that his feelings for her are true and his intentions pure. Between this scene and the previous one, the viewers have a good idea of how both boys and girls are supposed to feel when they are involved in a sexual encounter that goes too far, even when they care deeply for the other person. Both characters feel ashamed and confused. They are trying to reconcile the immorality of their actions with the purity of their feelings. The film does not give them a way out of their guilt, which becomes more portentous as other young kids come into the room for a newspaper staff meeting.

As the editor goes about verifying that the different sections are ready for publication, the art editor comments on how much the absence of one former contributor is being felt. In order to explain to the viewers why this person is no longer there, one of the girls says, “Poor Eileen. She’s probably so busy looking after the baby she’s forgotten she could ever draw,” which begins a discussion amongst all those present, except Jeff and Mary, about what happens when a couple goes too far (*ibid.*). One boy’s question “What? Have they had the baby already?” is answered with the quip, “Sure, five months after the wedding. How’s that for a shotgun affair, eh?” (*ibid.*). The camera pans to Jeff, whose head is hanging and his eyes are

fastened on the ground. Eileen had already received pity from a girl and so it is time that someone expresses regret for the young man. “I feel kind of sorry for Fred. He always wanted to be a lawyer.” (*How Much Affection?* 1958). While another adds that taking responsibility for their decisions entails a great deal of sacrifice, “Yeah, now I guess he’s got to keep any job just so he can look after Eileen and the baby” (ibid.). Despite their “unfortunate” situation, Eileen and Fred had taken on their expected roles as adults: he was supposed to be the provider and she was to take care of her house and children. In this short discussion, the viewers hear that both Eileen and Fred’s talents, dreams, and choices in life have gone up in smoke because of their inability to let reason guide them. As though all of these messages were not justification enough to dissuade the audience, more social pressure is added. The girl who expressed remorse for Eileen says they *were* good friends. Another adds, “Imagine marrying someone who has to marry you” (ibid.). Mary is shown looking from one to the other, her expressions becoming increasingly desperate. The conversation ends and so does the meeting. As the others leave, Jeff hangs back and invites Mary to go to a party, as a couple, the following weekend. She agrees, but suggests they double date. Jeff agrees and offers to walk her home.

As Jeff walks Mary home, they cross paths with the infamous Eileen and her baby. Eileen’s voice is heard, as the voiceover, wondering if they will greet her or if they will cross the street to avoid saying hello. The fact that Eileen comments to herself about the two options is meant to be an indicator to viewers that this is the type of treatment they could expect if they were in the same situation. Mary and Jeff greet Eileen with enthusiasm and ask all sorts of questions about the baby and married life. As Eileen talks about their married life in the positive, the viewer sees the harsh reality on the screen. When she says it is hard to have a baby but easier when her husband helps, the audience sees her changing the baby’s diaper while Fred broods and smokes on a chair across the room. When she says Fred is getting along just fine, that he enjoys his job at the steel mill, the viewers see her going to him in bed, telling him to get up, but he rolls over to sleep longer. Mary asks why they do not see her anymore. When Eileen explains they do not get out much, that they are busy with their apartment, and enjoy spending a quiet evening in, the viewers see her

cross-stitching while watching Fred sleep on the couch. When Jeff happily summarizes that things are going just fine for them, Eileen agrees that they get along, but she wishes they “had more time to work things out” (*How Much Affection?* 1958). Because Eileen leans forward when this is heard, it is not clear if she is actually saying it or if it is her voiceover. If she spoke it, it would contradict the image she is trying to convey. As a thought inside her head, it would make the sadness about their relationship all the more resonant with the viewers. The final layer of Eileen’s misery is shown when Mary begins telling her about what is going on at the newspaper. Though she seems to be indirectly inviting Eileen to the end of year party, it is evident that Eileen knows she cannot go. The scene ends with Eileen walking away with her baby and the audience hearing the isolation and sadness at the thought that she is no longer part of “the gang.”

The next scene takes place at the party. It is a couple’s affair, as nearly everyone in attendance at one point begins slow dancing. The lights are turned low and the young lovers hold each other tight. This is also a special occasion for Mary and Jeff. Jeff asks Mary to go outside and talk. He begins to show his intentions by complimenting Mary, telling her how wonderful and nice she is. He acknowledges that they had been dating steady for a while and then gets up the nerve to ask her, “Mary, will you wear my school ring?” (ibid.). She very happily agrees. He puts it on her ring finger and they look at one another passionately and kiss deeply, after which there is a pregnant pause about where such a gesture and passionate appeal might lead. Jeff suggests that they return inside to dance. The ambiance inside is getting steamy as well. Slow music is playing, couples are holding on tight to one another, lights are being turned off, and some couples begin kissing. Though the gathering appears to be turning into a “make-out party,” the real threat to Mary and Jeff’s self-control seems to be when they find themselves alone. In spite of the sexual turn of the party, in a group Mary and Jeff are able to contain their uncontrollable desires.

Temptation for Mary and Jeff does not end with the party. It is also present on the way home. Jeff and Mary and the couple they are double dating with, Stew and Marge, pull up in front of Marge’s house. Stew and Marge are in the backseat kissing passionately. Jeff politely tells them they have arrived. Stew suggests that they drive

up to the point and “park” awhile. Jeff and Mary look towards each other uncomfortably without actually making eye contact. Jeff politely says no. Stew pushes saying, “What’s the matter? Half the kids’ll be up there” (*How Much Affection?* 1958). Another uncomfortable demi-exchange takes place between Mary and Jeff, with Jeff declining again. Stew says, “Boy, did you turn out to be a pill” (ibid.). Jeff keeps his gaze in Mary’s direction, she looks down. Stew leans forward noticing the exchange between the two of them and asks, “Well, what’s the matter? Well, can’t you go along with everyone else? Don’t you and Mary like each other anymore or something?” (ibid.). As Stew presses, both Jeff and Mary look down and shift uncomfortably in their seats. Jeff holds his ground and Stew finally cedes. Stew leans back in the car as he gets out to walk Marge to the door and says, “And don’t wait for me!” (ibid.). This awkward, seemingly inexplicable exchange between Jeff and Stew demonstrates the type of peer pressure the young viewer might anticipate if they refuse to go along with what everyone else is doing. To make the situation even more uncomfortable for Mary, Jeff makes it sound like the whole thing is her fault when he adds, “I must be pretty popular with them” (ibid.). This is an interesting addition to the end of a very awkward encounter. Up until this point, Jeff has appeared as a gallant gentleman, but this one remark reveals that he has allowed Mary to set the limits on their sexual relationship; he is willing to respect her wishes; but he does not have to like it.

As they pull up to Mary’s house, she notices the lights are on, using one of the techniques to avoid being alone explained in *How to Say No*, Mary quickly invites Jeff in for a sandwich. For a brief second when they get inside all of their efforts seem to be jeopardized when Mary reads a note from her parents in which it is written that they will not be home before 2 a.m. However, Mary behaves naturally. She asks Jeff what he would like on his sandwich and goes to turn on the radio. They begin dancing. All the while they are staring intently into one another’s eyes. They pause to kiss. Jeff, the gentleman that he is, pulls away and hugs her deeply and they continue dancing. They look at each other again and Mary hears her mother’s voice reminding her to slow things down just a little so she can reason through the situation. Jeff hears his own voice in his head telling Mary, “We have so much fun

together I'd sure hate to ruin everything" (*How Much Affection?* 1958). The threat of promiscuity seems to dissipate with these mental reminders and the couple goes on dancing. The film thus concludes on its overarching message: Mary and Jeff are able to control themselves because they truly care about one another; they want to see where their relationship is heading, which appears only to be possible if they stop parking. Taking a similar stance to *How to Say No*, *How Much Affection?* seems to indicate that kissing, handholding, and dancing are appropriate forms of affection, any other intimate act though might lead down the path to early marriage and unhappiness.

*How Much Affection?* seems like an appropriate opening to a discussion about what would take place in the event that a young couple did not restrain themselves, most notably because it gives an example of how costly this kind of a mistake could be. Rather than substantiating the young couple's beliefs expressed in the previous section that if the worst happened they could always get married, this film implies that even this option would be an unhappy one. This short, like many of its kind, takes the position that the only way to avoid having to consider such a choice was to not have sex. This strict morality seemed to ring true with many of the people I interviewed, who insisted the pressure was too strong, the stakes too high, and thus they and their peers toed that line. When I asked Sandra if it seemed like her friends were engaging in sexual intercourse before marriage, she very definitively explained the taboo:

Oh, oh no, my dear. Rarely. Oh, I wouldn't say not at all. Occasionally somebody got knocked up. Occasionally somebody got married at 18, but I mean when a girl at our high school got pregnant, my god, *quel scandale!* This was a big high school. You know, absolutely jaw-dropping. Um, some may have been, but there was, there were no pills then and people were too smart to want to wreck their lives that early. I would guess that the answer is not much. Some obviously, clearly, but it was certainly kept hidden and never talked about, never admitted at all, at all, at all (Sandra, 2012).

Sandra's insistence on the scandalous nature of engaging in premarital sex comes through quite clearly. She insists on the social stigma that a young woman would face if she were pregnant before marriage and one of the options available to those women, marriage. She believes that the major motivations in restraining behavior were fear of pregnancy and fear of social repercussions. Perceptively, she

acknowledges that if this sort of behavior were to take place it would not be discussed. When I asked her why she thought that was, she had two different ideas: religious morality, but even more so peer pressure. “It wasn’t done. It was not. You were probably considered a little bit of a slut if you did that. It wasn’t the right thing to do. That’s all. It just wasn’t done. It wasn’t done in the circles that we ran in. That’s all” (ibid.).

I noticed that several of my interview subjects alluded to the “options” available to women if they found themselves pregnant outside of wedlock. They referred to shotgun weddings, “serious illness” that required a young woman “to go away” for a time, and “taking care of it”. Many of my interviewees stated the general belief that by the late 1960s premarital sex had become ubiquitous, which might lead one to conclude that it had lost much of its stigmatization, and yet other oral history accounts convey the idea that there was a persisting taint when a sexual norm was transgressed. Drawing from the oral histories that I conducted, as well as works that have collected accounts on abortion and adoption—Patricia Miller’s *The Worst of Times*, Ellen Messer’s and Kathryn May’s *Back Rooms*, and Ann Fessler’s *The Girls Who Went Away*<sup>144</sup>—, this last section will discuss the breach that sexual relations posed to postwar American society, the options young women had if they found themselves pregnant before marriage, and the pressures they encountered in trying to assert their choices. This analysis will circle back to the nuclear family norm and the ways in which it was able to reassert itself. The weight of this convention was such that an unmarried young woman could find a way to obtain the archetypical marriage and family no matter her transgression. But society would forever be changed by the fact that so many young people began engaging in such transgressive behaviors. Though the women discussed in this part suffered immensely from the stigmatization they experienced because they got pregnant before marriage, as premarital sex became more common over the postwar period, women were pushed to find ways to look out for their own interests without the double standard dictating their behavior. This led to an increase in the use of birth control, the eventual legalization of

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<sup>144</sup> Miller’s work focuses exclusively on illegal abortion stories, while Fessler’s concentrates uniquely on relinquishment stories, and Messer and May’s explores both.

abortion, and women demanding that the personal was political in order to take control of their bodies, their sexuality, and their rights.

Prior to the War, when a young woman found herself in “a family way,” social theorists and psychologists postulated that this was a result of abnormality, of deviance, and of an “unusual social environment” (Butts and Sporakowski 1974, 110). In response to the high incidence of premarital pregnancy, postwar researchers attempted to disseminate the idea that the only exceptional quality about the never-married-pregnant girl was precisely that she was pregnant. Still, many believed that the young woman was lacking in moral fortitude (Fessler 2006, 36; Butts and Sporakowski 1974, 110).

The seemingly ideal solution to the predicament of premarital pregnancy at the time was marriage. In an article on out-of-wedlock childbearing, the authors explain that, “Until the early 1970s it was the norm in premarital sexual relations that the partners would marry in the event of pregnancy” (Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz 1996, 278).<sup>145</sup> In asking my interviewees about the incidence of marriage right out of high school, three of the seven who talked about premarital sex and pregnancy, associated marriage after high school with pregnancy. Mary said:

A lot of kids started getting married right out of high school. Let’s see, one I guess actually got married in high school. That was sort of determined by the pregnancy. A lot got married right out of school. They had got jobs. They worked in the area. But my, my closest friends got married, pretty much [at] 18, 19. I can say of the people that I ran around, my very best friend got pregnant right out of high school. I think kids were sexually active, I think people just didn’t talk about it. I can remember when my friend came to tell me when she was pregnant. I mean it was a very big deal. She was very upset (2013).

In fact, in their study Allan Parnell, Gray Swicegood, and Gillian Stevens claim that by the end of the 1950s, more than 50 percent of the women who conceived out of wedlock were married before the birth of the child (1994, 263).<sup>146</sup> This type of

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<sup>145</sup> Studies stressed average rates for the whole population, that did not take necessarily into account variables due to social class, region, and ethno-racial identity. Rates were higher for black girls in the South for example.

<sup>146</sup> They explain though that proportionately, white and black women were not marrying at the same rates: two-thirds of white women and one-quarter of black women married before the birth of the child (Parnell, Swicegood, and Stevens 1994, 269). While Philips Cutright says that if we look at the



arrangement was frequently referred to as a “shotgun marriage or wedding” and its usage tends to connote two elements about the marriage: first, that it is a solution to the problem of pregnancy and, second, that it has to take place rather quickly to avoid the revelation that the young woman was pregnant before her wedding night. In fact, ethnographic studies conducted during the 1960s that broached the subject of “shotgun marriages” frequently found that the length of time a couple spent together was relatively short and the relationship usually involved sexual activity. If pregnancy was a result of those sexual encounters, the man felt it was his responsibility to marry the woman (Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz 1996, 279). The social pressure to preserve the appearance of decency for both the young man and the young woman was very powerful. The fact that the median age at first marriage for women remained below 21 until 1972 could be explained by high frequencies of premarital sex, a general unawareness of birth control methods, or perhaps a certain reluctance to use them, and a social pressure to make the woman “respectable” in the event of pregnancy (Fessler 2006, 67).

It is unclear to what point men and women felt they were given any degree of choice in this matter, partially because of the immense social pressure to take this option. The quantitative data that can be gleaned from vital statistics leaves a lot to

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increase in the proportion of young women marrying through time, we see a rise in the association of marriage and pregnancy, for both white and black women. Cutright shows that in 1940, pregnant white brides represented 11 percent of all married women 21 and under, while in the 1960s, they represented 26 percent of all married white women 21 and under. For African American women this number was higher in 1940, at 33 percent, and remained above the white level into the 1960s, at 40 percent (Cutright 1972, 25). There appears to be some contradiction in the numbers. Some researchers, like Parnell, Swicegood, and Stevens, tend to speculate that the initial difference between marital rates between white and black women ( $\frac{2}{3}$  white women and  $\frac{1}{4}$  black women) are a result of a smaller selection of marriageable black men. Others, however, like Cutright, seem to portray a proportionately higher expectation for marriage in communities that faced out-of-wedlock pregnancies at a greater rate. I believe Cutright’s numbers allow us to see part of the source for these discrepancies: the sheer frequency with which women under the age of 21 were marrying in both the black and white communities. Before 1950, African American women were marrying at younger ages than white women. In 1940, black women on average married before the age of 22, which may account for their relatively higher percentage of African American pregnant brides at and under the age of 21, while white women were marrying around the age of 23. In 1950, the average for both African American and white women dropped to nearly 20 years of age. While in 1960, African American women’s age at marriage rose to nearly 22, white women’s was lower, 21 (Elliott, Krivickas, Brault, and Kreider 2012, 20). This indicates that the sheer percentage difference between 1940 and 1960 from 11 to 26 percent would have been much more significant amongst the white population than the 7 percent climb amongst African American brides.

conjecture, whether we look at the marriage or the divorce rates. Additionally, the very usage of the term “shotgun marriage” designates a degree of coercion in the arrangement, because it is a motivated act and there is a desire to keep this reason from becoming public knowledge, in essence, casting doubt on any genuine desire for marriage by the bride and groom. To my knowledge, there is no substantial descriptive explanation on whether or not men and women felt they had any alternatives or how these men and women fared in making this choice.<sup>147</sup> From the oral histories available on adoption, it seems that marriage might have seemed like the natural next step for some of these young women. Further fieldwork could add valuable insights into the interplay of the social norm and its violation and whether marriage was seen as a happy result or a means to hide a moral failing as well as how this played out according to one’s socio-economic position.

Despite the fact that the normative social response to pregnancy outside of wedlock tended to be marriage, at least for white middle-class women, some women who wanted to marry and even some who were planning their weddings were told by their families that marriage was not a possibility. Of the potential options available, relinquishment was fairly common in the 1960s: unmarried white women gave their babies up 40 percent of the time, while unmarried African American women only did 1.5 percent of the time (Fessler 2006, 100). This difference may be accounted for in part with the higher frequency of informal adoptions amongst African Americans (Stolley 1993, 29). Perhaps because of the sheer amount of relinquishments among the unmarried, the image of the girl “going away” marked many people who grew up during this era. When asking one of my older interviewees about the acceptability of sexual activity while he was in high school he said, “I know that it was certainly easier and more socially acceptable to be sexually active by the time my kids were in high school. If a girl got pregnant in high school, first place we probably wouldn't know about it because she'd have ‘gone to visit her aunt,’ or something, and would,

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<sup>147</sup> None of my interviewees were in this situation and the few leads I had on people who had had such an experience were unwilling to participate in my study. This might indicate that reliving what motivated a “shotgun marriage” or even the reactions of one’s family, peers, and community to an unplanned pregnancy have had lasting effects on the people who went this route.

of course, not come back with the baby” (James, 2013).

The issue of choice does not seem to be quite as speculative when it comes to adoption. The ability to choose varied greatly from woman to woman in the accounts I found. Some felt they had no options because they were told to give the baby up for adoption by their parents, by their community leaders, by their social workers, and by those running the homes for unwed mothers where they stayed. This group of women seemed to have had the most positive vision of marriage and expected to marry when they found out they were with child but were forbidden or prevented from doing so. As a result, these women frequently felt powerless and were completely unaware that they had any legal rights to keep the baby. They tended to portray their experiences as shameful and as a moment in their lives that permanently changed them. No matter their hesitation about this option, they were regularly told that going away and then giving up the child were the only means by which they could avoid a lifetime of shame for themselves and their children (Fessler 2006, 9). Still other women seemed slightly more aware that there was an alternative to both marriage and adoption, making choice a larger factor in their decisions. These women opted to give their children up for adoption by comparing it to abortion. They settled on adoption largely for two different reasons: abortion was either too dangerous or morally reprehensible. They believed that the risks of abortion far-outweighed the benefits (e.g. Dee as cited in Messer and May 1988, 32), while others could not even conceive of going through with an abortion, usually for religious or moral reasons (e.g. Carole II and Claudia as cited in Fessler 2006, 108; 56).

The research on adoption and relinquishment seems to conclude that a certain type of woman was more likely to give her child up for adoption than another. First, she tended to be from a higher socioeconomic background. Second, she possessed greater educational aspirations. And third she had parents that were “supportive of the placement decision” (Fessler 2006, 102; Stolley 1993, 32; Bachrach, Stolley, and London 1992, 28). Though not corroborated to the same point, some studies indicate that women who relinquished their children were more likely to attend church regularly (Bachrach, Stolley, and London 1992, 29). In further nuancing this profile, some studies have concluded that these women came from less cohesive families,

who showed less support of the woman during her pregnancy, and were likely to have had a sister who had also placed a child for adoption (ibid.). At first glance, these are seemingly contradictory characteristics. The first four criteria indicate that the typical birth mother came from a seemingly wholesome family environment, while the latter three imply a less “desirable” one. However, it is important to point out that all of these phenomena could occur simultaneously and could be indicators that the young woman’s parents, family, and/or community leaders engaged to some degree in coercion in order to ensure that this would be the option she “chose.” Many of the oral histories from which I have drawn demonstrate that these young women came from the middle and upper-middle classes, expected to attend university or were already at university, and that they regularly attended church. Most of these young women also had parents who were “supportive of the placement decision.” Despite its positive phrasing, this could also mean that these parents were against their daughters keeping the baby in any form—perhaps out of fear that they too would feel the wrath of the community—, which would denote a lack of family unity and “less support of the woman during her pregnancy.” From the oral histories that I have come across, it seems necessary to really read between the lines when it comes to adoption and whether or not a young woman felt supported in or coerced into making her decision. In any case, her background may have been one of the largest contributing factors in setting her on this path. Marriage and adoption were not the only options available to women, though they did tend to be the most accessible. There was a third alternative, abortion. Yet, for most women, seeking one out was difficult, costly, potentially life threatening, not to mention illegal.

It is quite difficult to estimate the number of abortions performed in the United States before the passage of *Roe v. Wade* and its legalization in 1973, though many have conducted studies and tried to draw conclusions. In 1955, Alfred Kinsey believed that one in four women in the United States had had an abortion before the age of 45 (Miller 1993, 1). Also at a national conference in 1955, Planned Parenthood concluded that anywhere from 200,000 to 1,200,000 illegal abortions were performed every year. They were drawing their numbers from hospital admissions that indicated post-abortion complications (Miller 1993, 322; Cates and RoCHAT 1976, 92). Many of

the physicians and health-care professionals in attendance believed that the upper part of the scale was probably the best reflection of reality (Miller 1993, 1). Today, these numbers are believed to be fairly accurate, when considering that the annual average for abortion since its legalization has been around 1,000,000 (ibid.).

One significant difference I came across in the accounts of the women who had had abortions compared to those who had given their child up was that the vast majority felt that abortion was a choice. Albeit many of them seemed to express this as the only possibility available to them, they tended to frame it as a choice. In Miller's *The Worst of Times* and Messer and May's *Back Rooms*, many of the women saw abortion as the only "life-affirming choice" available to them, as Messer and May put it. This was the only way by which they could continue their educations, they could control the number of children they had, they could avoid abject poverty, and so on. It remains to be verified whether abortion could be qualified as "life-affirming" by these women, or if it has become a tendency amongst pro-Choice advocates in more recent decades to view it as such. It seems more prudent to talk about these choices as a way out of what these women considered impossible situations, especially as a few of them expressed regret at having had an abortion, while others said this act was one of desperation, and nearly all of these women put their lives in jeopardy because very few of them were able to obtain legal, safe abortions. Only one of the women I interviewed spoke about actually having had an illegal abortion. She did not talk about the experience, but rather the devastation that it left in its wake: leaving her infertile and forcing her and her husband later in life to adopt (Patricia, 2012). She was unable to refer to this experience and its effects without becoming emotional, which has reinforced my belief that in most circumstances this "choice" was a difficult one to make and that the women who opted for abortion in the end weighed it in conjunction with the rest of their lives, which often left them feeling as though it was the only option they had. As a result of her experience, Patricia later was an escort at a Portland clinic that provided safe abortions.

Access to abortion was a particularly important question when it came to one's racial and socioeconomic background. One African American woman believed

that it was much easier for black women to get an abortion because whomever performed abortions lived in the black community (Estelle as cited in Miller 1993, 82), while another African American woman felt that precisely because the abortionists lived in her community, she had access to first-hand knowledge that made her acutely aware of how unsafe they were, thus preventing her from seeking one out (Lila as cited in Messer and May 1988, 23). The consensus seems to be that the biggest barrier to obtaining an abortion, legal or illegal, was class. Many doctors in *The Worst of Times* substantiate this, saying that in their own communities, in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Denver, the women they saw suffering in the septic wards in the hospitals—where women with abortion complications were placed—were often from poor communities and from ethno-racial minority groups. In fact, the biggest advantage for any woman during that time about obtaining a safe abortion seems to be whether or not she belonged to the middle or upper-middle class. Women from higher socio-economic backgrounds tended to be able to use their personal and/or health networks in such a way that they were placed in the care of trained professionals. Plus, they could usually afford the cost of an illegal abortion.

Though getting married, going away, or getting a backstreet abortion in order to hide an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy were clear transgressions of the sexual norm—sexual intimacy was to be expressed between a husband and wife only—each of these choices, in their own way, helped to reinforce the importance of the nuclear family. Steady dating, as previously noted, was commonly perceived as a preparatory step for marriage. This can be seen even as late as 1972—after the pill had been on the market for a decade and after years of active feminist militancy—in terms of sexual practice and perception of what sex meant to each couple. At that time the rate for premarital sex had climbed all the way up to 73 percent for both men and women, showing that it had become more acceptable. Still, the majority of these sexually active heterosexual women only had one partner and believed he would eventually become their husband (Heidenry 1997, 245). As such, it appears that despite the societal taboo surrounding premarital sex, young people during the postwar era saw sexual activity as a way to begin practicing for their married lives. Elaine Tyler May explains in her book *Homeward Bound* that “an eroticized marriage” was an integral

part of the marriage's strength and was meant to "enhance the home," and bring each partner a sense of "happiness and well-being" (1988, 127).<sup>148</sup> It seems appropriate then that so many young couples who found themselves unexpectedly expecting would decide that marriage was the right option for them. Because, as one woman put it in *Back Rooms*, they had been "playing" at being married and marriage was what most people expected would result from their coupling (Lila as cited in Messer and May 1988, 19). The choices of adoption and abortion do seem to run more in the face of the nuclear family norm than teenage marriage, but it is important to see how each of these choices provided women the opportunity to eventually conform. Many of the young women who were sent away or who went away to give their babies up for adoption were told that this choice would allow them to move on with their lives, meet the right man, and have other children when they were in the "right" context (e.g. Annie, Joyce I as cited in Fessler 2006, 25; 133; 148). Though the out-of-wedlock birth was portrayed in these contexts as a transgression, relinquishment was meant to allow these young women the opportunity at redemption, and to eventually have the ideal nuclear family in the ideal conditions. Despite the fact that many of the women who relayed their abortion stories in *Back Rooms* and *The Worst of Times* convey abortion as a desperate choice, the women who did not have children or were not married looked at this as an opportunity to choose when they would participate in the norm, deciding for themselves what the "right" context was. For the unmarried and childless, many of them saw marriage as a trap, a hurdle to their education, or an impediment to their careers—this is particularly significant given the context of the time when a woman's role was defined primarily in terms of domesticity—and so they chose abortion in order to have the option about when, why, and if they married (e.g. Kathleen and Lila as cited in Messer and May 1988, 11; 19-20). More than anything else, being married and having children were the social norm. Providing a

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<sup>148</sup> This can be seen as an elaboration of the concept of "companionate marriage" or "companionate love" that emerged in the 1920s, when the family was undergoing a sort of democratization with the falling away of Victorian values, and the husband and wife were meant to open themselves up to one another and evolve as a couple, particularly in terms of intimacy. "Companionate marriage" stressed the importance of sexual relations within the couple and shared sexual pleasure. The fact that May sees the 1950s couple as continuing in this vein, in what is termed "an eroticized marriage," indicates that this had become an integral part of married life.

means for young women who had gone astray to come back into the fold demonstrates how social mores use transgressions to provide counterexamples that keep many in line and to reassert themselves as the way things are.

Though young women were offered a chance at redemption, the growing clamor for choices would help reposition the morality of premarital sex. The birth control pill was approved for contraceptive use by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960 (Allyn 2000, 33; Bailey 1999, 105; Heidenry 1997, 32). “The pill,” as it quickly became known, found a welcoming audience: in 1961 400,000 women were on it; in 1962 that number jumped to 1,187,000; in 1963 3,000,000 women took the pill; and in 1966 6,000,000 women in the United States and 6,000,000 worldwide were using oral contraceptives (Allyn 2000, 34; Heidenry 1997, 32). Beth Bailey contends that although the majority of women who initially took the pill were married, by the mid-1960s it had become a symbol of the sexual revolution (1999, 106). Journalist David Allyn reports that “the pill” was heralded not only as a solution to unwanted pregnancies, but also a means to topple the double standard, to neutralize differentiated sexual interests between men and women, and thus act as a harbinger of sexual equality (Allyn 2000, 33). Undermining the moral importance of abstinence was fundamental for unmarried women securing access to contraceptives. Bailey notes that single women did not have to rewrite that script on their own. They were able to co-opt the amoral language used to advocate birth control to combat the world’s expanding population and bolster Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society “war on poverty.” Ultimately, rejecting the rationales employed to further political policies, radical feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s claimed that birth control was a natural right: women had the right to control their own bodies (1999, 107). It was in using this line of argumentation that the demand for abortion was legitimated. We can see this in the Boston Women’s Health Collective’s course booklet *Women and Their Bodies*, “Abortion is our right—our right as women to control our own bodies. The existence of any abortion laws (however ‘liberal’) denies this right to all women” (1970, 88). As women were able to bring private behaviors into the public



sphere, the slogan, “The Personal Is Political” gained in significance.<sup>149</sup> In attempting to erode the doctrine of separate spheres, feminists were able to question the dichotomy of gender, the naturalness of biological sexual difference, and the reigning orthodoxy of patriarchy. Sara Evans describes such an impact in discussing “The Personal Is Political” in *Tidal Waves* (2003). She writes:

It raised questions about the nature of politics and about our very understanding of maleness and femaleness with all it implies for personal relationships, sexuality, and the family, and in so doing, it questioned one of the most fundamental and intimate forms of hierarchy, one that has been used in myriad contexts to explain, justify, and naturalize other forms of subordination (3).

For all their attempts to control the behavior of young people, advice manuals, educational films, and even convention were combatting a rising tide. The stark difference between word and deed in regards to sexual behavior perpetuated the image that much of the postwar era was sexually conservative, restrained by convention, and beholden to an orthodoxy that demanded conformity. Yet, American popular media outlets and the scientific community were discussing sex more frankly than they ever had before and the public was interested. The teen culture of the 1950s and 1960s opened the door to a discussion on gender roles and sex as adolescents became increasingly aware of what they were supposed to be because of very well-defined codes of behavior that were articulated through etiquette books, advice columns, and educational films, among other things. Sexual intimacy was becoming part of the status quo in unmarried, steadily dating couples, as they groped their way towards fulfilling the roles that were expected of them. With time, the personal and public discussion on sexuality allowed for alternative depictions of sexuality and gender to emerge from the shadows. Fewer people married and the age at which people married rose. The sexual revolution as a mass phenomenon came about

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<sup>149</sup> This slogan comes from feminist and writer Carol Hanisch’s essay “The Personal Is Political” (1970) in which she explains that consciousness-raising went beyond providing women with a circle of friends with whom they could discuss the problems they confronted as women. It had political importance as women came to realize that their private roles had political, economic, and social consequences.

inadvertently as Americans expanded their notions of the acceptability of sexual expression.<sup>150</sup> This undermined the rigidity of the gender order and snowballed into a questioning of the most intimate and basic institutions that governed people's lives.

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<sup>150</sup> On the effect of the sexual revolution, see for example Claude Chastagner's *Révoltes et utopies* (2011).



**Part 4: *The Viking* and *Les Bois*: Student Life via  
the Yearbook**



## VII. Betty Co-ed and Joe College: The Young Couple as a Reflection of the Times

I would like now to look more specifically at Portland State's and Boise State's yearbooks, *The Viking* and *Les Bois*, and the universities' respective archives to analyze the ways that youth culture manifested itself. The archives give insight into the ways that the administration reacted to issues relevant to students, while the yearbooks provide unique insight into young people's lives because they are made by those most directly concerned by them and they exist within the dialectical production of social phenomena. Indeed, "The yearbook is a piece of material culture, a distinctive physical artifact produced *by* adolescents rather than *for* them by adults. It is one of those 'resources that can be considered as being both effects and causes in history'" (Hoffman 2004, 5). One of its most important functions is to serve as a memory book and a document of the school's culture and tradition (ibid.). Between 1946 and 1973, *Les Bois* had multiple volumes that expressed the importance of their yearbook as a piece of memorabilia for the students. If we take the 1964 edition's foreword as an example, we can see the significance that the editorial staff saw in the annual as a keepsake.

Through this yearbook we present to you, the student, a record of your activities throughout the school year. The Editors and members of the staff hope that they have succeeded in capturing the spirit of the past school year, and that in years to come, as you thumb through these pages, memories of Boise Junior College will seem as real then as they are today (*Les Bois 1964*, 3).

The *Les Bois* staff felt that part of their mission was to try to document the academic year in such a way that the student body as a whole could use it as a tool to look back to that year and see themselves there. Yearbooks are not only meant to rekindle personal memories, though. Because they are temporally fixed, they can also serve as a historical record written by young people.

*The Viking* tended to portray itself more as a historical document through which insight on the times, place, and people can be assessed. The foreword in the 1956 *Viking* brings all of these elements into play. Stretching far into the past as a point of demarcation, the opening asserts the importance of change, growth, community, and place.

The early settlers probably never envisioned the thriving metropolis that is Portland today. Her businesses and industries, her harbors and buildings, her parks and schools, her homes and the people living in them – these together form the pattern that is Portland. In this first edition of the Portland State College VIKING, we salute the city that has given us birth. Our theme is Portland and the role of our college in the city (*The Viking '56*, 4).<sup>151</sup>

Throughout the 1947-1974 period, Portland State students consistently expressed an affinity with the surrounding environment and seemed to reflect more the mood of the changes that engulfed many college campuses in the mid- to late-1960s. Comparing these two city colleges' yearbooks should provide a more nuanced image, then, of this era, precisely because, taken together, they represent the entire spectrum of youth culture, not just the extremes. As such, *Les Bois* and *The Viking* speak to the social reality from which they sprung and paint a picture of the shared values of their communities. Educational specialist, Lynn Hoffman explains the value of the yearbook as it represents larger cultural currents in which they were produced. She writes, "The yearbook's worth lies in its ability to increase our understanding of the society in which it was created. [...] 'the researcher imagines the artifact as a mirror of culture, a code from which the researcher can infer beliefs, attitudes, and values'" (Hoffman 2003, 25). As it was produced by students, it is a demonstration that young people had the opportunity to officially give voice to their campus's culture and highlight what seemed to have the most meaning and importance, at the very least, for the producers, and at most, the student body as a whole (ibid., 26). Furthermore, the yearbook provides objective data about the schools themselves: socio-economic status can be inferred from the quality and length of the book, any discussion of the school's budget for extracurricular activities, as well as the fashions and commodities present in student snapshots; student portraits and candid photos attest to the size of the school and its ethnic diversity; the presence of certain extracurricular associations and clubs as well as the space devoted to them, or lack thereof, show the larger

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<sup>151</sup> This volume claims to be the first edition as this was the first year that Portland State was a four-year state institution. Between its founding in the fall of 1946, as Vanport Extension Center, and the academic year of 1955-1956, Portland State underwent several transitions from an annex meant to accommodate overwhelming student enrollments, to a local community college that would feed into the larger state universities, and finally to an independent four-year degree-granting institution.

community in which these schools were situated (e.g. the presence of a Rodeo Club at Boise State between 1960 and 1970 speaks to the rural nature of Idaho and the importance for some students to perpetuate a western culture embodied in the American cowboy) (Giordano 1995, 669).

Yearbooks attest to youth culture from a multitude of vantage points. In her article “We’re so Diverse: How Students Use their High School Yearbooks to Bridge the Gaps” (2004), Hoffman borrows the idea that high school students exist within different social subsystems in relation to school officials, which are “the formal,” “the semiformal,” and the “informal.” These spheres make up their scholastic experience. The formal is made up of “observable academic elements such as teachers, curriculum, books, grades, and rules.”<sup>152</sup> The very fact that Edward J. Neumeier published an article on the merits of the yearbook as part of the academic curriculum in 1961 indicates that for many educators there was a formal aspect of yearbook production that placed its creation well within the realm of work. He even lists the disciplines in which it might provide instruction, saying that art, photography, business, and to a lesser extent English skills could be gained (Neumeier 1961, 200). The semi-formal “includ[es] the recognized extracurricular organizations and activities in which students participate.” Finally, the informal is “often invisible to adults, in which students navigate a system of cliques, groups, factions, and friends” (Hoffman 2004, 6-7). Anthropologist Jacquetta Hill Burnett explains each of these in simple terms: the formal organizes academic work, the semiformal represents extracurricular, but school-associated, activities, and the informal characterizes the social experience of students (1969, 3). Based on the fieldwork she completed during the 1960-1961 academic year at a Midwestern high

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<sup>152</sup> I looked at the “formal” subsystem in Chapter 1 when I discussed the representation of students engaged in classroom activities through candid photographs in the yearbook. My overriding argument was that the formal subsystem participates in reinforcing the status quo when it came to gender behavior. It was not only the formal subsystem—the academic environment, the expectations of people in positions of authority, and scholastic opportunities afforded to students—that filtered men and women into male-dominated and female-dominated fields of study, students actively engaged in this as well. This latter point will be insisted on more in the context of the semiformal and informal subsystems as these two spheres were controlled more by students. In this chapter, the formal subsystem will be treated through the incorporation of archives and texts written by college administrators in the yearbooks in order to show the ways that official discourse was adopted by students and used to further greater independence.



school, Burnett insists the most on the semiformal subsystem to describe the high school experience. As the semiformal best illustrates the continued presence of ritual in an increasingly urbanized society and provided young people the opportunity to go through rites of passage and intensification (ibid., 4-5). This subsystem played a unique role in students' lives precisely because it was a more casual atmosphere in which adults, in the form of club advisors and coaches, could reinforce the official discourse encouraging students to assume their roles as adults (ibid., 3). Additionally, the events commonly associated with extracurricular activities—sports games, theatrical and musical productions, even dances—depended on adult and community participation, not only to make these activities financially profitable, but to provide a supervised in space in which adults could show through their example what it meant to be “mature.”

Through school activities, adults and parents were involved in socialization into that special style we have come to call ‘independence training.’ [...] The adults in the community, through their interest in local high school athletics and other entertainment events, ultimately influenced and affected the value-system of the students in the school—not in a one-to-one, adult-to-young, but through a complex network of influence (ibid., 8-9).

It becomes evident in both the Boise State *Les Bois* and Portland State *Viking* from the immediate postwar era in 1946 to its end in 1974 that students became increasingly aware of the controlling aspects of their respective administrations. As a reaction to the authority officials attempted to exert, it appears that students at both institutions came to prioritize representations of the informal sphere because it is the one where they were best able to create their own meaning and identity.

Though Hoffman and Burnett refer to high school students and high school yearbooks, I believe this model of the formal, semiformal, and informal can be appropriately applied to the students at Portland State and Boise State because yearbooks and their contents are produced in relation to these different spheres, even at the higher educational level. A yearbook is legitimated through a school's administration, relegating it in part to the “formal” subsystem. Frequently college and university yearbooks were put together in the context of a journalism course but demanded the extra time that an extracurricular activity would, which also places their production in the “semi-formal” sphere. The content and the themes of

yearbooks occur for the most part within the informal world of student life despite the formal and semi-formal parameters that produce them and that they document. Additionally, Burnett's categorization of events, qualified as rites of passage and intensification, likewise occurred on these college campuses during the 1950s and 1960s. Hoffman explains rites of passages as moments when an individual sheds one social status and gains another, while rites of intensification help groups pass from one social environment to another (2003, 24-25). Rites of passage focus on the individual and include such events as freshman initiation, graduation, alumni banquets, and the senior trip (Burnett 1969, 4-5). At each event, the individual embarks on a passage from one phase of life to another. Rites of intensification encourage group cohesion and fluidity when students transition from the classroom to the football field, for example. In this case, a pep rally would provide the ambiance that would prepare students to effectively shift from work to play, from formal interactions to more casual ones with a heterogeneous age group (Hoffman 2003, 25). Other examples of rites of intensification might include homecoming, football banquets, the Christmas dance, the New Year's Eve Party, the Sweetheart Dance, athletes' banquets, and honor days / parent days (Burnett 1969, 4-5). Whether they are rites of passage or intensification, both types of rituals are organized according to the academic calendar that provide starting points, midway markers, and conclusions for each age group. Furthermore, using Hoffman's and Burnett's explanations, it becomes obvious that the most marked events, rites of passages, are reserved for the youngest and oldest groups as they transition into one phase of their lives or out of it. Both authors further insist on the importance of both kinds of rites as a means for young people to move into adulthood (Burnett 1969, 8-9; Hoffman 2003, 24). Though schools provide the framework for these events to take place, they supersede "the academic and intellectual engagement [...] expected" (Hoffman 2003, 24).

It is in focusing on rites of intensification that I would like to look at the evolution of the youth cultures of Boise State and Portland State throughout my study period. I will focus on four different themes while examining the *Viking* and *Les Bois* annuals: the couple, student organizations and self-representation, housing, and the rhetoric of college officials. I will present these themes chronologically as they

waxed and waned in importance to show how student culture evolved and responded to college officials' discourse throughout the postwar era. National culture permeated these local student and campus cultures, although manifesting itself in varying degrees of intensity and at slightly different times. These yearbooks attest to a gradual and systemic evolution in the meanings of public and private life and the control that authorities could exert over youth. I intend to show how the informal realm of dating and intimacy, the semi-formal domain of student organizations, and the formal sphere of student housing evolved simultaneously, feeding off one another. Students were not the only instigators of change, however, as the rhetoric adopted by administrators encouraged young people to take an active role in citizenship. As students pushed this call beyond the scope initially imagined by school officials, they redefined public and private values and behaviors.

Before getting into the chronology, I would like first to present an archetype of the "typical" college or university student, "Betty Co-Ed and Joe College." The purpose of this is to show that no matter the preconceptions of who the standard student was, this model evolved through time, reflecting larger cultural shifts in the United States at mid-century. As it so happens, Portland State held elections for a Betty Co-ed and a Joe College during the academic years of 1949-1950 and 1952-1953 (see Figures 13 and 14). The Inter-Club Council—the intermediary between the student council and student organizations that facilitated funding and planning—sponsored this campaign. The composition of these photos is quite telling about the importance of men's and women's relationships. In both, the couple is looking each other in the eyes. In Figure 13, they are seated close together, their left and right shoulders nearly touching. Barbara and Cy are smiling joyfully at one another. In Figure 14, Gordon has his forearm and hand on the wall behind Ellene, the other in his pocket. The position of Gordon makes it appear as though he is trying to seduce her. In return, she looks at him demurely. The photographer even added a vignette effect to the borders of the photo to give it a softer, more romantic edge. There is no way to know the relation of these two couples to one another, but the staging of the photo implies intimacy. In both yearbooks, the school's Bettys and Joes were featured in the "Activities" section and found amongst the space dedicated to dances.



Figure 13 Betty Co-Ed and Joe College *The Viking* 1950, 74

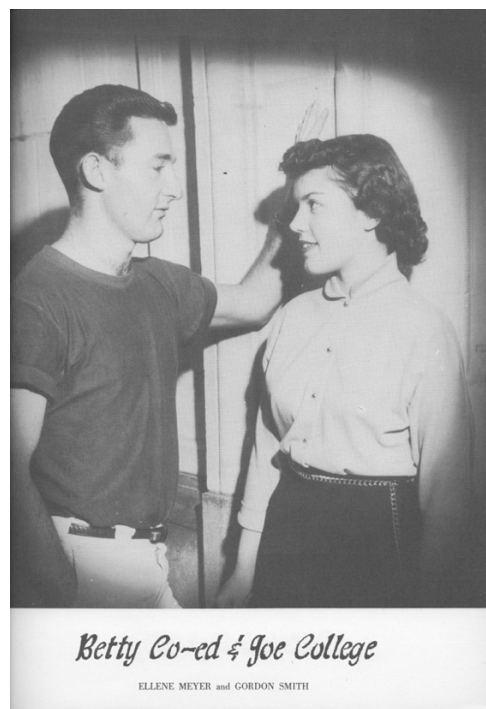


Figure 14 Betty and Joe College in the 1953 *Viking*, 93

From their placement, it is likely that the titles Betty Co-Ed and Joe College were associated to a dance and/or a nomination process that reflected the students' popularity. In the 1950 *Viking*, five pages are dedicated to portraits of the men and women who were elected as symbols of a dance—Homecoming Queen, the Sweetheart of the Delta Tau Rho Fraternity, the King and Queen of Mardi Gras—or presumably of student life—Betty Co-ed and Joe College and the Sweetheart of the Campus. The 1953 volume differs from this only in that “Betty Co-ed and Joe College” are more clearly associated with their social process as their page is followed by the nominations of “Outstanding Boy,” “Outstanding Girl,” and “Dream Girl.” This casts some doubt on the idea that these two were elected in association with a dance and might indicate instead that their peers found them to be the ultimate embodiment of the young college student. Though the election of Betty Co-Ed and Joe College appears to have had a short run,<sup>153</sup> such labeling does have larger historical and cultural significance.

In 1968, John E. Grinnell, a college professor, described in the educational

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<sup>153</sup> The only evidence I found of the Betty Co-ed and Joe College nominations were in 1950 and 1953.

magazine, *Phi Delta Kappa International*, who Betty Co-ed and Joe College were exactly. Though he begins his essay reminiscing about what he calls the heyday of Joe College and Betty Co-ed, which he identifies as being part of the pre-World War I era, his description aptly creates the aura of innocence and nostalgia that these figures continue to evoke to this day. He describes his Betty and Joe as belonging to a privileged group of people who were able to attend college, had high academic aptitudes, and were heavily engaged in the college community. They did not rush through their educations to pursue their careers. If Betty was a good dancer, had a nice face, and a shining personality, she would have plenty of dates and be engaged before the end of college. Many Joes were also known for their skills on the dance floor and were sought after as dance partners. Betty and Joe did not have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend. They would both remain unmarried until after college. They were young. They followed and believed in the rules; they saw them as the guidelines to manners and morals. Women, of course, were expected to follow the rules more than men for fear of spoiling their reputations (Grinnell 1968, 517-518).

After WWI, much of the innocence in the prototype Bettys and Joes was lost, according to Grinnell. He explains that this was first due to the fact that, returning veterans were not seduced by the disconnected reality of the campus after seeing war. Second, he claims there was a rise in opposition to the exclusivity of the fraternities and sororities, saying that the campus became an increasingly democratic place. Third, he talks about veterans coming home sexually experienced and so they did not treat women with the same kind of respect, nor did they want the same reserved and prude girl: they desired openness. Fourth, he says the “revolution in manners, morals, and dress” in the 1920s pushed women to wear shorter dresses and skirts, and make-up, and to keep their hair short, and their behavior had become “frank and expected.” Fifth, he talks about how the increasing popularity of the car made college less campus-focused. And finally, he laments that Betty and Joe were in a hurry to finish school in order to start earning a living (ibid., 519). This is the first break from the “traditional” college student, but it is also a description of what the standard had become. By the end of WWII, Joe College and Betty Co-ed were effectively dead for Grinnell, but I think their images lived on because, as Grinnell describes them, one can

see that Betty Co-ed and Joe College were supposed to be the stereotypical college student, an idea that necessarily evolves as the student population does.

The first incarnation of the new archetype of Joe College was a World War II veteran who had fought with people of different ethno-racial and religious backgrounds and so would sometimes object to the discriminatory statues in fraternity charters. Bettys likewise opposed the clauses in their kindred sororities. The model had changed: Betty and Joe came to college married or got married quickly after they had enrolled. Their focus had shifted from student life to married life, which meant that their studies were preparing them to support the roles this entailed. The G.I. Bill brought people from all sorts of backgrounds to the campus, which meant the student body was more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and academic aptitude. For Grinnell, these Bettys and Joes were “more mature and more industrious” (ibid., 520).

The second incarnation of the Betty and Joe archetype came with an expanding democratization of higher education. By the 1960s, the drastic increase in college enrollment can be explained in part by the fact that middle-class families felt that college was necessary. The proliferation of higher education led to more political and social awareness and a desire for political and social change. Betty and Joe became concerned with the issues of the day: Vietnam, nuclear disarmament, racial equality, consumerism, etc. They wanted to be a part of their school governments and demanded a voice. Consequently, by the end of the 1960s, the typical college student, Joe or Betty, reflected “[...] society in intelligence, economic background, academic interest, marriage status, and social standing [...]” (ibid., 520-521). As Grinnell so eloquently articulates, the college campus was a site of enormous social, political, and economic transformation. Though he bemoans the disappearing elitism, classicism, and discrimination that characterized the pre-WWI campus and perhaps disapprovingly sees the contemporary Betty and Joe as average, he is telling the twentieth-century American narrative: a near constant push for change, an increasingly educated populace, and a drive to extend the privileges of the few to the many. His use of this archetype helps render the “old College Campus” through time. As is made evident by their presence in the 1950 and 1953 *Viking*, Betty Co-ed and

Joe College remained symbols of college life even after World War II. One may think that their images did not live through the fifties and sixties, but the youth culture portrayed in the yearbooks of Portland State and Boise State convey new archetypes that reflect the average college experience during this era and thus take their place in the national narrative.

### 1. Students Play, Administrators Educate the Citizens of Tomorrow

The Second World War loomed large in the first few editions of the *Les Bois* and *The Viking*. On the one hand, the yearbooks show students processing the recent events and the change they had wrought. While on the other, they gave space to administrators to speak about the uncertainty of the times and the responsibilities students needed to assume for the future. Student support for the war effort was portrayed in the 1946 *Les Bois*, in the form of a “victory dance” (see Figure 15). This was an event sponsored by the Boise State Valkyries, a woman’s service organization for sophomore students. Everyone is paired off dancing, the most readily visible couples have some space between them so their bodies are not pressed together too tightly. The two couples in the foreground and background to the left appear to be



Figure 15 *Les Bois* 1946, 87

talking to each other as they dance, while most of the other couples seem to be focused on their dance partner. As both a money-making venture and in service to

their nation, the Valkyries organized this dance to encourage bond-buying and celebrate the cessation of hostilities. Many references were made in the 1946 *Les Bois* to the adjustments being made in the wake of the War. A patriotic tone permeates the pages of this yearbook. Figure 16 is a visual representation of patriotism, but there were many textual efforts to rally students around civic duty, too. In the foreword, the editors explain that this annual was published under wartime limitations and restrictions, in spite of which, they wanted it to serve as a bright step towards the future (*Les Bois 1946*, 4). In the college president's address, Dr. Eugene B. Chaffee's charges the students to recognize their responsibilities as citizens and not let the sacrifices made by the soldiers be in vein:

We have just finished a second war to insure democracy. Most of the two hundred and fifty service men who have enrolled know the cost of that effort in a very personal way. The remainder have felt that same cost in a less direct, but nevertheless, real sense. [...] It remains for us, the living, to 'carry on' and bring to fruition the work they started. We must not falter or fail our generous benefactors. Each one of us by his individual living must justify that faith (Chaffee as cited in *Les Bois 1946*, 11).

President Chaffee's words to the students was an encouragement for them to recognize the advantages afforded them through democracy and their duty to ensure democracy's continuation. In evoking the sacrifices made during the War by soldiers and civilians, Chaffee intends to perpetuate the notion that individuals were always citizens and part of their civic calling was leading the nation into the future.

Postwar life is not only couched in terms of obligation in the 1946 *Les Bois*. The changing demographics of the student population are heralded as something tremendous for both men and women, especially for the latter. In introducing the freshmen class, the editors describe the rapidly expanding registration rolls, the difficulty of having to get to know new people every term as more and more veterans flood in, and yet, they describe the reuniting of the sexes as a welcome change after spending years in single-sex company. "Glory be—that is, for the women. After y'ars and y'ars of being in the overwhelming majority, they once again this year found themselves in the midst of the masculine stalwarts. Of course, they loved it. And the men weren't heard to complain much, either" (*Les Bois 1946*, 35). Amidst the relief, a clear vision of expected gendered behavior emerges. While men are described



nonchalantly enjoying being in women's company again, women are on the verge of ecstasy. The implication seems to be that the women suffered from the lack of men on campus, while the men's experience goes unacknowledged. Perhaps, this is because it was too heavy to acknowledge in a quick quip about dating. Maybe, it was due to the fact that the editor was a woman and did not think about the men's experience. In any case, it positions women in a role where they can express their relief and men as the passive beneficiaries. This seems to reflect the "traditional" expectations of "masculine" behavior at mid-century described by Joseph Veroff, Elizabeth Douvan, and Richard A. Kulka in *The Inner American* (1981). Men "look to marriage for the warmth and expressiveness they fail to find (or develop) in the rest of their lives. [...] Many adult men in our society experience emotional expressiveness only vicariously through the expressiveness of the women in their lives" (Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka 1981, 23-24). Though they were speaking about married men, this can be extended to single men who were looking to date and marry, as they were also trying to find their place in American society as "mature" men. To link this back to the patriotic tone found elsewhere in this book, we can see a subtle interweaving begin between the civic obligation to carry on and the joy of men and women coming together again. The optimism of the postwar era, then, can be found in this forward thinking, which for many young people began with the couple.

*The Viking* of 1947 likewise contributes a great deal of its copy to the massive change brought about by the War and veteran students. Unlike Boise Junior College, which was established as a private organization in 1932, the very creation of Vanport College was in response to overcrowding in other Oregon State schools after the War (Chaffee 1970, 2). *The Viking's* focus is not so much on the civic responsibilities of the students, given that 90 percent of them were returning servicemen, but on their re-assimilation into civilian life, which was being made possible thanks to the GI Bill. In his address to the students, President Stephen E. Epler applauds the efforts of the first class of Vanport in creating clubs and organizations as well as a student culture that would continue to influence future students. He also speaks of the value of investing in education, for the individual and the nation.

Education is a form of wealth that bankruptcy or depression cannot destroy. If you are more useful to the community and a better citizen after your sojourn

here, then Vanport College has succeeded! An educated citizenry is the foundation of a democracy. The G.I. Bill of Rights is perhaps the greatest advancement American democracy and education have made in this century (Epler as cited in *The Viking* 47, 1-2).

In insisting on the importance of education to democracy, Dr. Epler espouses one of the philosophies university officials used in managing student behavior during the postwar era that Beth Bailey describes: part of the administration's role was to "develop 'mature,' responsible citizens through university education" by helping them to "learn to make responsible choices in their lives" (1999, 50). Epler does this by asserting that education is an intangible form of wealth and a cornerstone of democracy. The President is attempting to stave off the fear of economic uncertainty by boosting students' faith in their political system. In bringing material insecurity and political stability together, Epler reassures young men and women of the solidity of the American promise. In investing in higher education, the federal government could demonstrate its desire to see the nation's youth succeed and its commitment to ensuring access to knowledge that permitted responsible citizenship.

This first edition of the *Viking* is relatively short. In spite of its brevity, a great deal of importance is accorded to student life. The vast majority of the annual is devoted to "Extra-Curricular Activities," "Athletics," portrayals of life "Around Campus," and "Snapshots," 52 pages in total. The last two sections occupy nearly half of these pages and though not labeled student life, they are certainly portrayals of it. The couple and family are recurring fixtures on these pages. In fact, two pages are dedicated specifically to "Campus Families" and "Living Quarters." Figure 16 can be found amongst the photo montages in the "Snap Shots" section. There were no captions or descriptions on these pages, but we can see a young couple relaxing together on a couch. The man looks like he is resting while the woman smiles with her arm around him. It appears that they might be in group living quarters as the piece of furniture behind them looks like a bunk bed. There is an ease and comfort expressed here as we look on an intimate moment. Given their clothing—his bow tie and suspenders, her long gown and satin shoes—, they appear to have just returned from a nice night out. If *The Viking* and Vanport were trying to give their veteran students a sense of "normal" life, this picture seems to perfectly portray just that. It

shows a very mundane moment, which does not mean it is without interest. Its importance lies in the fact that it represents something so seemingly quotidian. It radiates hearth and home, reflecting what many young Americans craved in the aftermath of the War. Interestingly, several images exactly like this one can be found in the *Viking* yearbooks throughout the postwar era. This seems to indicate that having a relaxing moment cuddled up on the couch was acceptable, even expected, behavior, that it was so thoroughly integrated into the daily lives of student, it had to be pictured in the yearbook's pages. Another element of middle-class convention conveyed here that college life was offering the ex-GI was affluence. Continuing one's education did not only further the civic agenda of democracy, it afforded one access to the middle class. The couples' fancy attire suggests that they were already firmly ensconced in the trappings of the middle-class lifestyle.



Figure 16 *The Viking* 1947, 75<sup>154</sup>

As time wore on, postwar life normalized and the Boise Junior College (BJC)—previously referred to as Boise State—administration, just like that of Vanport, employed new means to guide their students toward maturation. The 1949 *Les Bois* reflects such an attitude in President Eugene B. Chaffee's address to the students. He presents academic success as an extension of an individual's drive and its failure with aimlessness. As Chaffee describes it, the former type of student enjoys a college experience that would provide him or her with a stepping stone to a happy and successful life, while the latter would flounder every step of the way. Education for this individual, then, would contribute little to him or her and to

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<sup>154</sup> This first annual did not have any labeled page numbers and so they are self-designated.

society. The prosperous student would take advantage of their education as an opportunity to do something more with his or her life, whereas the unsuccessful student would refuse to strike out on his or her own. Dr. Chaffee uses the returned veteran as the perfect example of both types of students: before the War, many were uncertain about what their future held and wondered through their educations; while after the War, ex-GIs returned with purpose and pursued their future with focus and determination. Their intelligence had not changed. The difference was their drive to succeed (Chaffee as cited in *Les Bois* 1949, 13). The President very much embraces the rhetoric of American individualism and exceptionalism as he challenges each student to rise to the occasion and prove themselves. Using more classical American symbolism than Dr. Epler did in 1947, Chaffee invites BJC students to assume their roles as adults by embracing the American values of self-determination and industriousness. Epler's symbolism and sentiment are reiterated on the following page, in the comments of the Dean of Men, Paul E. Baker, who encourages students to go out and "possess the promised land" (as cited in *Les Bois* 1949, 14). Chaffee and Baker seem to believe that there was a need to remind young people of "traditional" American values and encourage them to take their place in society. The presence of such rhetoric serves as a reminder of what Beth Bailey says in *Sex in the Heartland*, "The fifties were not a decade out of time [...]" (1999, 46). The War and Depression were still very present and weighing on people's fears. Even as prosperity, peace, and happiness reigned as the archetype of postwar living, drastic changes were underway. As a new generation of youth came of age (both teenagers and young adults), the shifting dynamics that resulted from mass physical relocation, class transformation, and a reshaping of social mores, spurred economic, political, and cultural anxieties (ibid.). As Dr. Chaffee contrasts two student types in the 1949 *Les Bois*, he articulates the concern that perhaps parental "protection" and rising materialism might not prepare this new generation for the work that "American" or "traditional" values demanded (as cited in *Les Bois* 1949, 13). Bailey articulates this quandary when she puts words to the fears of college administrators at that time, "Could members of the rising generation protect their country against new and greater challenges, or were they being spoiled by affluence and indulgence?" (Bailey

1999, 47). Education was one of the realms where adults could fortify the next generation for what laid ahead (ibid.). It is obvious in his address to the students that Dr. Chaffee was hoping to do precisely that.

In spite of the challenge presented by BJC's president, the more normative aspects of student life—clubs and school-sponsored events—seemed to replace the preoccupation with reconversion in the previous volume. However, the copy describing the associations' contributions to campus and community life demonstrates the ways in which students were trying to assume their roles in the adult world. The various women's organizations hosted at least one activity that might be akin to the voluntary work they would take on later in life. For example, the B-Cubes, the freshmen women's pep club, hosted a tea for incoming female high school students from Boise and the surrounding area (*Les Bois* 1949, 48). For its part, the only all-male group featured in 1949, the Intercollegiate Knights (I.K.), was given a sort of omnipresent status: "The I.K.'s of Boise Jr. College is a fraternal organization of select men from the student body, who have shown a willingness to carry out and to help carry out all the student affairs which make life on the campus enjoyable" (ibid., 50). Whereas women's service tended to focus on women's issues—integrating campus, socializing, raising money and/or food for the needy—the one men's organization is portrayed as having a hand in nearly everything. Such depictions of campus life for women and men can be looked at as BJC youth trying to assume the roles that would be expected of them once they left college. Both men and women should be involved in serving the community in which they lived, however, women would look after women's issues, while men took care of everyone's interests. Student clubs and associations tended to occupy the largest part of the space devoted to student life in any given yearbook, but the activities these groups hosted also facilitated much of the informal social interactions in which these young people engaged.

Dances also played an important role in student life, not only because of their preponderance, but also because of the consistency with which they are shown throughout my study period. Every yearbook except the 1974 Portland State *A Portland Family Album* and the 1973 Boise State *Les Bois* feature dances in their

pages. School dances, whether all students were allowed to be in attendance or not, exist between the formal and informal subsystem as they are officially sanctioned by the college, but outside the parameters of the curriculum and the classroom as well as the main educational goals of the college or university. Dances were meant to provide students with a time to socialize, relax, have fun, and meet one another. College and university dances were regularly scheduled during the 1950s and 1960s. Most major events that took place on campus were accompanied by a dance: Homecoming, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Graduation. Not all dances were school-wide; student clubs, associations, as well as fraternities and sororities also put on exclusive dances that required membership in order for one to participate. *The Viking* in 1959 and *Les Bois* in 1952 boast of their student union buildings having ballrooms, which indicates what the relevance of this space to the student body.



Figure 17 *Les Bois* 1949, 72



Figure 18 *Les Bois* 1949, 73

Figures 17 and 18 are examples of formal dances at BJC. Figure 18 is a school-wide dance. This can be deduced, on the one hand, because the Christmas Formal was organized by the social committee, whose objectives were to “present better and bigger entertainment for the student body” (*Les Bois* 1949, 47). On the other hand,

open attendance at this dance is made evident from the sheer number of people present when compared to Figure 18. The latter photograph was taken at the Intercollegiate Knights' annual dance. The fact that there were fewer people on the dance floor is an indicator that membership was a prerequisite for attendance. In both cases, it appears that formal dances required a date, as we can see that each and every one person is paired. Two of the women I interviewed described that attending any type of dance typically implied that one was in the company of a date. Linda commented on the difference between contemporary social events and those that took place when she was in high school and college. She said, "In my time you didn't do that unless you had a date. I mean you went to the dance if you had a date. You didn't go with a bunch of girls" (Linda, 2013). Kathleen expressed a similar sentiment, "I really felt like you had to have a date in those days, [which was] one of the things that I think made it difficult, probably for both the boys and the girls, but I think more particularly for the girls (2013). Both Linda and Kathleen suggest that such activities applied some social pressure on women to belong to the larger youth culture around them. As women, they were much more limited in their ability to freely access such cultural spaces because attendance was predicated on being invited by a young man. Another interviewee, Karen, explained that this could be frustrating for her when her then boyfriend, and eventual husband, would ask someone else to attend an event. She said:

Well, it was during that time, girls never asked boys. So it'd make me mad sometimes because he could go out and ask anybody he wants but I [couldn't] date others. There was this other fellow that I really liked down in my neighborhood, but he was too shy and he didn't ask me. So I just waited around for him (Karen, 2013).

From Thomas's perspective, dating did not exert the same type of pressure for men. Rather than feeling like he could only attend with an escort, like the women of this time, dating seemed like "a normal activity that you would do at that age and so everybody did" (Thomas, 2013). His feelings about the compulsion to date were based more on the generalized youth culture around him. "I think it was just like you got to that point; you were supposed to; that was the normal thing" (ibid.). These different viewpoints are meant to shed light on the nearly compulsory nature of dating in the postwar youth culture. Many events were organized around the

assumption that one would attend as a couple. Given the amount of space dedicated to dances in the pages of the yearbooks, it becomes apparent that dating played a decisive role in student life.

In addition to having to go as a couple, there were clearly other protocols around attending a formal dance: this is apparent in the dress and décor of each person in attendance in Figures 18 and 19. The dress code appears to be black tie and formal gown. At least one of the women in either photograph is wearing elbow-length gloves. Three women in Figure 19 are wearing tartan gowns, perhaps indicators of their affiliation with WASP culture. We can see some women wearing corsages and many of the men boutonnières. Given the expense of such occasions and the fact that both of these dances were hosted around Christmas, it seems probable that many attended with a love interest. This can be seen in the body language of the couples. Some are talking with neighbors, others have quite a bit of distance between them—this seems more widespread in Figure 19—yet, quite a few seem to be holding each other close. The fact that these were both held during the Christmas season might also designate these as special occasions to celebrate as a couple.

Formal dances, like these, would fit into the criteria of “a prized date” described by Beth Bailey in *From Front Porch to Back Seat*. On the most basic level to function as a “date” the meeting, first, had to cost money and, second, had to be public (1988, 58-59). Furthermore, the young man was supposed to pay. A 1951 Senior Scholastic poll reported that although 90 percent of the girls asked would “occasionally” share the expenses of a date, half of the boys questioned dismissed this idea (*ibid.*, 59). Even in the late 1960s in Boise, it was standard practice for the young man to pay, according to one of the men I interviewed:

The girl really did not have any kind of expectation whatsoever that they were going to have to pay for a date. The guy always did that. And you felt bad sometimes if you didn't have enough money and you had to borrow money from them, but you'd always pay them back, at least I did. I think that one or two times I'd probably get somewhere and 'Ew, I don't have enough money. Can I borrow some money?' And you only did that when you were forced to because otherwise it was embarrassing (Thomas, 2013).

Thomas hits on an important point when describing the obligation for the man to pay: it was integral to the gender roles that designated what masculine and feminine



behaviors were. Paying for a date conferred status on young men that was linked to the larger societal role of men being the financial providers for women. Failure to “provide” was embarrassing because it meant that, in a very public way, the young woman would be seen paying for herself, and perhaps, for her date. Additionally, this might have been shameful for her because paying her own way would tell others that she had very little value to her date. The cost of a date such as a prom in high school or a formal dance in college were occasions for extravagance and this was a large part of the experience of a “prized date” (Bailey 1988, 61). Tuxedo rentals, dance tickets, corsages, carfare or gas, and post-event entertainment were the standard expenses a man would bear on such an evening (ibid., 62). Women had their own costs to attend to which included a formal gown, shoes, and evening bag (ibid.). All the trappings were public symbols (ibid., 65). For the man, they spoke to what he could afford, while for the woman, they indicated how much she was worth (ibid.). As such, dating was its own economy that assigned monetary and social value to the participants and to some extent reduced them to commodities (ibid., 67).

By 1950, *The Viking* had taken a similar turn as the *Les Bois*, and student activities seemed to be at the heart of campus culture. The articulation of student life became increasingly more detailed and prominent, while the role of the administration was minimized. The first sixteen pages of this volume present a fairly typical introduction: large pictures of the campus and action shots of typical student activities narrated by headlines and subtitles. Though student life becomes the overarching theme in the 1950 volume, positioning Vanport within a historical timeline continues to be part of the student body’s story. The first four pages of the opening section begin to lay out the school’s historical trajectory, by juxtaposing its present and future.<sup>155</sup> Accompanying pictures of Vanport’s different locations, the copy announces the school was in transition, on the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation

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<sup>155</sup> The extension center’s past certainly must have weighed in the choice to depict the physical transition towards a permanent site, given the fact that Vanport Extension Center was forced to relocate after a flood decimated the city of Vanport on Memorial Day in 1948, displacing between 17,000 and 18,500 residents and killing 15-16 people (Mcelderry 2001, 142 and Taylor 1981, 122). Between 1948 and 1952, Vanport Extension Center was located at the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation site in north Portland.

site, we see, “Our Vanport of Today / vanport extension center” and on images of its future downtown location—and current general extension evening program—, the copy reads, “Our Vanport of Tomorrow/ Lincoln school” (*The Viking '50*, 2-3; 4-5). Featuring the school in this manner shows that the college community was not only forward looking, but that it was also desirous of giving their alma mater some permanency despite its initial mission to provide temporary relief for overcrowded state colleges (*Faculty Handbook* 1961, 6). This is likewise seen in Portland State University’s “Our History,” which describes the gradual transition towards physical and institutional stability with its feature on the “Oregon Ship” era. Under one photograph of the building, the copy explains “Students named the Oregon shipyard building Vanport College, even though it was still officially Vanport Extension Center” (“Our History” 2016). Under a photograph of the same building, one can only assume was taken at a later date, another change in name is featured, “Students change the name of the building to Portland State College in anticipation of the institution’s future, even though its official name upon moving to Portland in 1952 would be Portland State Extension Center” (ibid.). Making Vanport into more than an ephemeral blip on the historical screen seems to be important to the students. Such action and investment might be looked at as a demonstration of young people engaging in a project that reflects positively on and helps to further build their community, regardless of how superficial these acts were. In renaming, albeit incorrectly, and associating the school’s future with the city of Portland, Vanport students were demonstrating their desire to act as citizens and make their community a reflection of themselves. Though present at the beginning of the book, the historic theme of this annual plays a relatively minor role in the overall meaning-making of this volume, occupying four pages of a sixteen-page introduction in a 187-page book.

The real insistence is on the social life of the institution. Student government, rather than governing, was described as an organizing committee and budget allocator for the social side of student life. The fall term government was presided over by Dan Voiss. The yearbook says:

Dan's first major project was the opening of a student union to provide club rooms for the student body and supplied room for dancing and card playing. Presenting his plan to the student council, for approval, Dan recommended

that the lower floor of the Personnel building be cleared of surplus furniture and cleaned up for a student union. The student union was a huge success and eliminated congestion in the college cafeteria (*The Viking '50*, 31).

The spring term government was led by Don Bluss, who, likewise, was preoccupied with the social life that student government could facilitate.

Don wholeheartedly endorsed Vanport's newly introduced square dancing program. He also promoted plans for changing Vanport's name to something more 'Collegiate'. [...] Another promotion project of Don's was that of assisting students to become more 'socially minded' and to participate in the many activities offered at Vanport" (ibid., 33).

The fall president felt it necessary to carve out a space reserved for students and thus made it his mission to stake out some ground where that would be possible. The spring president not only supported a social program that would provide a regular activity for students, but tried to encourage other students to invest more of their private lives in constructing the school's social environment.



Figure 19 *The Viking '50*, 7

Once the student government's accomplishments are noted, the 1950 annual focuses its attentions on representing the student body, which meant showing day-to-day activities as well as the exceptional moments that occurred that year. Students are portrayed in informal, spontaneous social situations that probably took place during

school hours—sitting outside socializing, smoking between classes, and male students gathered around a game of poker, smoking pipes—and in more structured social settings—dances, sporting events, and square dancing lessons. Figure 19 is taken from these pages. Across the top of the page the title reads: “The pause that refreshes” (*The Viking '50*, 7). Though a clear view of the Coca-Cola brand is blocked by the couple’s extended arms as they raise a cup to one another’s lips, this photograph almost looks like an advertisement for the soft-drink company. The hidden logo in the background and the one clearly displayed on the cup the woman holds to the man’s mouth feels to this modern-day viewer like integrated advertising though in all probability it was not.<sup>156</sup> Regardless of the commercial intent of this image, it is an excellent representation of a quintessential mid-century dating practice, the “Coke Date.” Because a “date” was constituted by “going somewhere” and spending money, going for a Coke became a “usual date” (Bailey 1988, 58-61). This was probably due its relatively minimal cost, a coke date being one of the least expensive activities available to young couples, as long as it was not paired with a movie or another form of entertainment (*ibid.*). However, usual dates frequently bundled multiple activities that would drive their cost up: a movie and a soda or a game and a dance were typical activities that became more expensive as they became more elaborate. Figure 20 is a fun and seemingly innocent picture as it shows this couple engaged in the public, yet, intimate act of giving one another a drink. On the one hand, such an action could be read as a celebratory performance because a gesture like this usually takes place in front of an audience after a toast, and thus might be an indicator that this couple had something to commemorate. On the other hand, because of the title on this page, “The pause that refreshes” and the subtitle on the previous one, “between classes”, there is, perhaps, an implication that this was a manifestation of regular student behavior, during a break between classes (*The Viking '50*, 6-7). If the latter were the case, it would make college seem like the kind of place where one was able to enjoy the fun of a coke date, at any time, even between

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<sup>156</sup> Until the 1973 *Les Bois*, every yearbook I examined had a section for advertisements in the back of their yearbook. Most of which were local businesses who were attempting to cater their services to the college crowd.

classes. Dating emerges as an integral part of student life in *The Viking '50*. In addition to this forthright focus on dating, the “Vanport Campus Life” section comprises 83 pages, 26 of which are devoted exclusively to dances. In addition to qualitative portrayals of the couple, the *Viking* attests to the importance of dating quantitatively.

The 1952 *Les Bois* continued in this vein, emphasizing the importance of campus life and student activities, though largely through student organizations and social events other than dances. Numerically less significant, the dances were still given quite a bit of descriptive copy that was officially apart from the student life section. For each synopsis of a dance, the yearbook staff included an indication of who hosted it, what sort of event it was (formal or informal), and who was elected as the standard bearer of the dance. The Intercollegiate Knights hosted a Christmas formal, which had a “duchess,” and the Associated Women Students hosted the Sweetheart Ball, during which they crowned a “King of Hearts.” Although there were some dances hosted by student groups, the Social Committee was in charge of the vast majority of student dances, including Homecoming, the Christmas Formal, the Spring Formal, the Commencement Dance, and Union Nights.

The Social Committee appears for the first time in 1952. Its purpose was part of a larger effort to encourage greater student participation in school-sponsored activities, justifying their expense in the face of waning registrations. Nationwide student enrollments dropped in 1952 and this was felt at Boise Junior College. The 1952 *Les Bois* mentions it twice, in fact, first in discussing the “Executive Committee”—the organizing body that allotted funds to student organizations and school-sponsored events, the equivalent of the student council—and then again when talking about the publication of the *Les Bois*. The description of the Executive Committee confirms that BJC had fallen on hard times during the 1951-1952 academic year. The main purpose of student government—which is articulated during the first part of the postwar era as providing social events and extracurricular activities to the student body—was impeded by fewer students. Given that the associated student fund was low at the beginning of the year because of low registration rates that academic year, it makes sense that the committee would charge

themselves with the task of trying to bring student-funded activities to the greatest percentage of students.<sup>157</sup>

In that vein, it appears that the yearbook tries to insist on the extent to which BJC was a student-oriented campus. Two different social spaces are presented as part and parcel of student life in this annual. Both of them were meant to foster community and a sense of belonging. The first is the Student Union Building (SUB), which is described as being conveniently located, possessing a dining room and kitchen as well as several lounges and rooms where organizations could meet. The SUB also housed the college's ballroom where many of the school's dances occurred. Although a great place for large events, its greatest appeal perhaps was the ambiance that this space afforded in the day to day lives of students. It is described as supplying "[...] relaxation for students while not in classes" (*Les Bois* 1952, 19). Given the financial limitations of the student body fund and low enrollment rates, it seems like the 1952 annual was trying to highlight the SUB as integral to the informal social experience that the campus offered its students.

Another important space consisted of the college dormitories, one reserved for female students (Driscoll Hall), the other for male (Morrison Hall). Dormitories, possibly more than any other building, can be seen as the site where the public and private lives of students merge. As such, they define much of the social experience that is campus life. Driscoll and Morrison Halls were inaugurated that academic year. In constructing student residents, the college was abler to market "the campus experience" to prospective students and get those who were already attending involved in the institution's social activities. Dorms were the perfect environment through which postwar era administrators could further their mission to foster civic responsibility in young adults as they combined the public and private aspects of student life. They were a continuation of the scholastic environment, which was enacted on the BJC campus through mandatory study hours for dorm residents. They

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<sup>157</sup> A lack of funding is also apparent in this edition of the *Les Bois* compared to the 1949 and the 1955 annuals. The 1952 volume is shorter and it does not have a theme or follow the academic calendar, indicating that the staff had limited financing and, thus, tried to include just the essentials: identification of the administration, faculty, staff, and students, student organizations, the social life available on campus, and athletics.

were also the occasion for the college to provide autonomy and independence to young adults by furnishing students with a living space away from their families. Additionally, dorms were a means to soften the transition towards “full” adulthood because they were highly controlled spaces. As we saw with Linda, dorms frequently had full-time, live-in adult supervisors who were meant to act as chaperons for the young people living there. Beth Bailey describes the dormitories as the site where *in loco parentis*—where administrators acted in the stead of parents—was the most strongly felt (1999, 78). “Parietals”—the rules that imposed curfews on female students, study hours on freshmen, a code of morality and ethics on all residents at BJC—were supposedly done for the students’ own good (*ibid.*). They were supposed to keep young women safe, while simultaneously keeping young people’s sexual behavior in check (*ibid.*). The 1952 *Les Bois* boasts of the convenience and social environment provided by its new dorms, but also notes their function in controlling the gender and sexual behavior of students: “There are two new dormitories on the campus this year: Morrison for the women, and Driscoll for the men. These dormitories are located conveniently on the campus and are arranged for comfort, group living, good study habits, and guidance away from home” (*Les Bois* 1952, 37). This is the first mention in either *Les Bois* or *The Viking* of any type of college-provided supervision over the private lives of students. It seems particularly apt given the fact that the spring of 1952 was the first to see disorderly chaos erupt on many campuses across the nation in the form of “panty raids.” A national trend began where young men on college campuses would break into women’s dormitories and steal their undergarments, hence the name the “panty raids” (Fessler 2006, 31).<sup>158</sup> The

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<sup>158</sup> Beth Bailey explains the “panty raids” as youth coming together to contest administrative and parental authority through the explosive nature of sexuality at that time (1999, 46). She stipulates, however, that this was less revolution, and more carnival. Quoting Alfred Kinsey’s response to the panty raids—‘All animals play around’—reflects to some degree the purpose of such movements, but for Bailey, the panty raids represented a desire to subvert middle-class sexual norms and challenge the authority of university administrators (*ibid.*, 82). On the one hand, Bailey does not portray the panty raids as inherently problematic, but a means through which young people could express their discontent with the controlling influence of university officials over their private behavior, most notably represented by parietals and *in loco parentis*. While on the other, university and college officials, as well as those who read the sensationalized accounts of the panty raids in mass-circulation magazines, could see these movements for what they were “very public challenges to authority” (*ibid.*, 47). If “guidance” was included in this year’s annual in response to the panty raids, then it is

inclusion of the word “guidance” in describing dorm life in the 1952 *Les Bois* could have been an attempt to reassure any outsider that the administration was doing its utmost to keep such behaviors in check, whether it was rioting for panties or maintaining enough chaperonage to remind young people that they were still morally accountable.

Nevertheless, the administration did not exert absolute control over students’ behavior, nor necessarily condemn all forms of sexuality. Figure 20 serves as a good example of a public display of affection that is intimate without being overtly sexual. Below, we can see a young man and woman leaning over a table, kissing, while



Figure 20 *Les Bois* 1952, 43

another young man in the background looks on. Although the couple is not in a full-body embrace, this photo still seems to convey a deep sense of intimacy. Their body language, the look on the man’s face in the background, and the caption—“Five minutes is the limit!”—suggest that this kiss was sensual (*Les Bois* 1952, 52). Given the context—this occurred at a public event—and its publication, there is something mundane about this kiss, too. This picture was included among six photographs featuring Valkyries’ events, one of the women’s service organizations at BJC. There is one other shot where a young man and woman are sitting together and the caption is suggestive of romance, but the rest show the homosocial events and meetings. The description of the group makes these young women sound like serious-minded, service-oriented bastions of the community. The Valkyries were an exclusive group

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meant to serve as a reminder to students, future students, and the Boise community that the private lives of BJC students were being supervised, to prevent this sort of anarchy from taking place.



that only permitted those women to join who had maintained good academic standing throughout their freshmen year. In looking closer at the group's description, it seems possible that admittance was also based on one's popularity. The 1955 description of the Valkyries seems to admit as much when it states that the purpose of the club was to "foster a spirit of competition and friendliness on campus" (*Les Bois* 1955, 54). The fact that the man kissing the woman in Figure 20 was wearing a letterman jacket suggests that Valkyrie women occupied a certain rung on the social ladder at BJC, just as athletes would have. This is further substantiated by the fact that the Valkyries appear to be the masculine equivalent of the Intercollegiate Knights, the most prestigious male service fraternity on campus, as the two of them join together to host a school-wide carnival each year.<sup>159</sup> Membership in the Valkyries appears to have been based on one's academic and social success, which was demonstrated by a member's ability to navigate their expected gender roles: popularity, beauty, community-building, and community service. Hence, it seems fair to look at Figure 21 as a manifestation of not only what was considered acceptable public intimacy, but as a desirable fulfillment of one's social role on campus.

In 1953, the President of the school, in the vein of college administrators at that time, describes student activity as a service to the campus community. Dr. Epler writes, "You have changed bricks and stone from a high school building to a thriving, living, growing college. You have made Portland State a better place for the students that come after you and have started traditions that may be followed by future students" (*The Viking '53*: 8). Since the school's inception, Epler had taken it upon himself to prepare Vanport students to become the leaders of tomorrow. This is precisely how he frames their participation in creating a new academic environment for the students at Portland State: they have set the course for the school's future. He does not give the students credit alone, however. He also acknowledges the ambiance of the school that he has been trying to foster since the early days of Vanport between

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<sup>159</sup> One can see that even though both colleges were young and relatively small at the beginning of the postwar era that many of the student organizations they had on campus reflected the activities on older, larger campuses, which indicates that the "college experience" was very much part of the national narrative for young people.

the administrators, faculty, and students. This is important because it shows that postwar administrators were attempting to prioritize the individual and group experience as part of the “college experience.” Dr. Epler continues, “Portland State has a tradition of placing students and their welfare first. Faculty and staff are interested in doing their best for you, the students” (ibid.). It is significant that Epler frames the discussion in this way because he, in a way, seems to be adopting the vision that young people need to be shown a great deal of care and support in order to accept the challenges that the new, postwar world would throw at them. In encouraging them, in promising the support of their elders, he also lays the responsibility for creating the future at their feet.

The 1953 *Viking* has many elements that might constitute what might be considered a “traditional” yearbook: after the introduction there is a section dedicated to the faculty, then the students are pictured according to their school, next a larger student life section follows the academic calendar providing cameos of student life, features on sports, and extracurricular-activities (theater, speakers, etc.) Like annuals from previous years, this yearbook devoted much of its space to dances: twenty pages of the 37 in the “Activities” section depict dances. Seven of those twenty pages



Figure 21 *The Viking* 1953, 78

include portraits of young men and women who were elected to be representatives of a dance or were nominated to represent some aspect of the college, including the

Homecoming Queen and Princesses, the ΔTP Sweetheart, “Betty Co-ed and Joe College,” Outstanding Boy, Outstanding Girl, Dream Girl. Several of the student organizations that sponsored dances had copy on their page that described the dances they hosted or that mentioned the organization’s election of a person, of the opposite sex, to represent the group. For example, The Lettermen—a male athletic organization—instigated the “Dream Girl” election in 1953. The large amount of space given to dances and nominations suggests that participation in dances and school clubs was part of a campus-wide popularity contest. It is apparent that dating plays a relatively large role in this year’s annual as so much pictorial and descriptive space is dedicated to dances. However, this was not the only format in which one could meet a prospective date. If we look at Figure 21, we can see two young women happily and flirtatiously looking up at a man who is speaking to them while they sit on the steps of a campus building. This image was found in the “Activities” section and was one of six photographs that show students engaged in various activities around campus. The print across the photo points the focus towards the young women, but it is really their demeanor that makes the copy speak volumes. The posture of the cropped male body looks relaxed, he is taking up quite a bit of space as his leg is out with his arm and books perched atop it. The young women look demure. The woman on the right seems to be giving the young man a knowing look, viewers can only guess at its meaning. Her expression is almost coy, playful, yet seemingly inviting. The young woman on the left seems elated at the young man’s presence, smiling up at him. The caption gives some indicators to the uninitiated as to what this exchange was about: perhaps on these stairs, the most sought after women awaited a man worthy of their attentions to come along. Maybe, on this day, two attractive women were seen flirting with this man and so the camera’s lens was aimed at them. In any case, it appears that we are witnessing a personal exchange, something that is not immediately apparent, but still, there seems to be something romantic there.

Seemingly mundane representations of flirting and dating alongside the actual space devoted to social activities that encouraged courtship reflect the far-reaching influence of the marital model at the time. Images like this taken in conjunction with promotional materials used to attract women to higher educational institutions convey

a message that going to college was a good way to meet that special someone. I found a document in the Boise State archives that relays precisely this. In the Boise Chapter's Student Home Economics Association's folder, there were a series of instructional papers meant to recruit high school students and incoming freshman into Home Economics. In these files, I found a skit—attributed as the brainchild of the college club department at the Oklahoma Home Economics Association—entitled, “A Letter to Jane (About Home Economics Careers),” which describes college life along these lines.<sup>160</sup> “A Letter to Jane” thoroughly intertwines college life and the pursuit of marriage:

College life is great, Jane. The new Student Union and coffee are terrible temptations. I'm afraid some of us almost spend more time there than in class. Coffee with the crowd is a must a [*sic*] least once a day. [...] Dorm life is all a part of becoming a mature, responsible citizen. A dormitory with its many residents is just like a small world. Solving problems of living with a roommate is real training for solving the human relations of daily life. Evenings—and afternoons and mornings, too—are spent on dates. College men are tops. A college campus is the best place possible to look for your 'life's steady.' And speaking of steadies, remember Mary and Bud? They exchanged class rings last Monday. We've always known they would. The real surprise came last night when Sue walked in wearing a new diamond she received from Bob. I've never seen a happier girl than Sue, and you've never seen stars brighter than the ones dancing in her eyes last night (n.d.).

This is an interesting take on college life. The academic component is completely relegated to the background as the social part of student life takes the limelight. There is, of course, mention of the fact that socializing can be a distraction from one's studies, but this is not necessarily portrayed in a negative light. Housing is described using the rhetoric of postwar administrators: dorms were a training-ground for assuming the responsibilities of adulthood; they prepared students for the social problems that inevitably stem from cohabitation. Practice with one's roommate(s) would ready one to live with their spouse. In this way, the college was coaching their students along the path to becoming mature and considerate adults. The letter's main focus, however, is on dating and men. The attention paid to the social side of campus

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<sup>160</sup> There was no date on the document, but the surrounding papers were dated January 1954, April 1954, and September 1954, which indicates it might have been from around this time.

life, the way in which dating is described, and the enthusiasm for engagements makes this letter sound like it was written by a “boy crazy” young woman, who went to college in hopes of getting her “MRS.” The letter’s declaration that a campus was “the best place possible to look for your ‘life’s steady’” speaks to the fact that many young women saw higher education in this light, but it also reinforces the vision that this was a good reason for women to pursue an education. Though the document itself was not created at Boise Junior College, its presence in their files indicates that the local club might have believed that this was a good approach to recruiting young women into their major field of study. At this time, which was not the case so much later in the Home Economics file, it appears that the goal for the young women who majored in Home Ec. was to become a domestic manager. If this is compared to the picture of the young women on the stairs, we can see that in the early 1950s, student clubs and students themselves felt that an important part of social life was the opportunity to socialize with the opposite sex. It was the occasion, one hoped, to meet one’s future husband or wife.



Figure 22 *Les Bois* 1955, 106

This romantic vision of college courtship and its intermingling with the purpose of higher education can also be seen in the 1955 *Les Bois*. Figure 22, found amongst a photomontage of fourteen pictures done on Homecoming, depicts the same “boy crazy” enthusiasm as “A Letter to Jane.” Figure 22’s caption reads, “Ronny and Queen Pat.” The young man is sporting a white blazer and the young woman a crown. Ronny and Pat were probably popular figures on campus, the nomination to

homecoming queen usually signified as much. The two women to the right look on approvingly, with the same sort of glowing approval that radiates from the letter. The association of this photograph and the tone of the letter seem apparent, but the link between the public study of home economics and the private search for a husband might be seen as a stretch. The description of the Home Economics club at BJC in the 1955 *Les Bois* should clear up any doubts. Known as the “Homettes,” the Home Economics club was newly formed on campus that year. The yearbook describes the group as an association of “girl students” interested or enrolled in home economic courses whose purpose was “to bring future homemakers together to share their common interests” (*Les Bois* 1955, 73). The copy indicates several elements of interest: home economics was a feminine pursuit; it was preparation for a career in domesticity; and generally defined, homemaking was an extension of one’s personality. These women were bringing together their public and private interests in their extracurricular activities and curricular pursuits. In joining the club or studying home economics, women were given the opportunity to focus on their future professions as housewives. This implies, however, that going to college was about finding a mate as much as it was about receiving an education. The women could obtain a degree in home economics, but they could not embark on their professional path until they got their “MRS.” Portrayals of women as “glamour girls” and “homecoming queens” went hand in hand with the larger gender prescriptions of the era. Being a successful college student for many women at that time meant preparing themselves for their future roles. Studying home economics was perhaps the most explicit form of this. However, it is apparent in other depictions of college romance that being in a couple was a step towards affluent domesticity for a woman.

1955 was ultimately a more successful year for the junior college as its enrollments started to climb after the post-GI slump. The Executive Committee’s page remarks on how this change had a positive influence on the social calendar. “An increase in enrollment made the task of the board much easier than for many in past years. Because of this the board administered a much more liberal budget and the result was the students received more for their student activity tickets” (*ibid.*, 84). This growth also gave the Social Committee enough work that a Union Night

Committee was created, transferring the task of organizing the recurring dances that took place after sporting events to one group. The presence of an independent body to organize “union nights” might suggest that planning a regular dance was too much work in addition to all the other activities on campus and/or that student activities were diversifying to a point that the Social Committee had to be available to host other types of events. In either case, the expansion of student activities’ committees speaks to a flourishing social life on the campus. Yet, another manifestation of this was the importance accorded to the social side of the “college experience” in the dormitories.

Since a social life is an integral part of a college education as well as home and academic lives, the women and men of Morrison and Driscoll Halls, respectively, were kept pretty busy. The big event was the formal dance 'The Wearing of the Green.' Others were the fall mixer, the Christmas caroling [sic] party, the spring patio dance, and the numerous spur-of-the-moment record dances at Morrison (*Les Bois* 1955, 93).

It is interesting to note that most of the activities at the dormitories were dances, which seems to speak to the important role that dances played in mixed-sex socializing.

## **2. Realigning Focus: Dealing with Growth and Expanding the Roles of Student Government**

Growth in student enrollments was a major driver behind the expansion of educational facilities and degree programs as well as a boost to the college’s academic standing. The bump in enrollments discussed in the 1955 *Les Bois* marks the beginnings of significant changes on the campus. The citizens of Boise took it upon themselves to finance the school’s growth by passing a bond, in May 1954, which allowed for the construction of a new science building and physical education building. This was meant to help alleviate crowding in overflowing classrooms, allow for popular departments like Business to continue expanding, and provide more space for the library (ibid., 118). Unlike the students in Portland who saw change as inherently positive at that time, the editors of the 1955 *Les Bois* were uncertain about what this would mean for the campus. They wondered whether, if BJC continued on this track, the school would lose its small, close-knit feeling. They conclude that

year's annual on this note, saying, "Who knows how the two new buildings under construction will change the campus next year or if the campus will retain its reputation of warmth and friendliness as it increases in size and number" (*Les Bois* 1955, 120). Fear of growth is an interesting sentiment to express then. Boise grew by a meager 0.3 percent between 1950 and 1960, while the larger West grew by 30.9 percent during the same period of time (U.S. Census Bureau 1963, 15 and U.S. Census 1961a, 10). Such expressions might reflect reticence about larger geographical shifts taking place in the United States by inhabitants of smaller locales, who, perhaps, worried about the effects that mobility would have on their relatively isolated communities.

At the very same time that BJC was expanding its campus, Portland's city college was becoming a four-year institution. The 1956 *Viking* provides a history commemorating the school's evolution from a lower-division support school to something akin to a junior college, and finally to its current status as a state-approved, four-year college, which culminated in a name change: Portland State College (PSC). Although both schools seemed to have been experiencing growth and making changes that brought their institutions up to par with other state institutions, in one regard Portland State deviated in an important way from the offerings that other schools had. Where housing had originally been a major selling point of Vanport, a pull factor for ex-GIs, by the time that the college began making its home in downtown Portland, PSC decided housing would no longer be one of the amenities that it offered. A letter found in Portland State's archives amongst the Dean of Student Affairs Office records states as much. Leroy R. Pierson, the Supervisor of Student Affairs, wrote to a Mrs. Leon H. Purtteman, who had applied to be a house mother:

Portland State College is a [*sic*] urban institution and as such does not provide college sponsored living accommodations. As our enrollment grows there will undoubtedly be a need for group type living quarters as provided by traditional sororities and fraternities. As that time comes we will be ahppy [*sic*] to consider your application as a house mother (Pierson 1955).

Pierson implies that the very premise of an urban school was that its students commuted to and from campus, from home to school to work, which made on-campus housing unnecessary. In spite of this, he also indicates that group living



quarters would probably develop as a result of growing enrollments. It is important to note that the Supervisor of Student Affairs does not suggest that the administration was considering student housing, but that they thought a thriving social life on campus would inevitably lead to student groups, who commonly live together, to establish their own communal living arrangements and that the administration would have some perfunctory role to play in that. Intimating that group living quarters would come from student organizations, not college officials, suggests that the institution felt a hands-off approach to housing was in their best interests. This is the beginning of a long paper trail where administrators at Portland State seem to reject the role of *in loco parentis*, unlike many campus-based institutions in the United States at that time. Pierson's letter appears as the first piece of the puzzle in understanding why when the institution relocated downtown it abandoned the idea of student housing. There was probably a financial reason for not acquiring dormitories, but in later documents the focus seems to be on limiting their responsibility for the private behavior of their students. This did not mean, however, that the college administration was hostile to all social aspects of the typical college experience. In fact, the 1956 *Viking* reports that construction was underway for a student center. The yearbook makes it sound like this new facility would allow student organizations to take on greater importance on campus. "With preparations being made for the construction of the new student center, organizations at Portland State are entering a new era" (*The Viking '56*, 253). There seems to be an inherent contradiction in the administration's support for student life. On the one hand, providing affordable, student housing was not a priority. While on the other, dedicating a building to social activities was. It appears as though administrators wanted social activities to flourish on campus, but did not want to deal with the disciplinary issues that might arise in group living situations. The refusal of PSC administration to provide student housing would pave the way for a unique housing situation to develop around the campus in later years.

As *The Viking* reports that student organizations would be "entering a new era" when the student center was completed, one long-standing student organization would take a new, albeit expected, direction: The Associated Women Students

(AWS). Because Vanport students were predominantly men in 1946-47, the AWS originally formed to bring female students together, to create a community of women in the vast sea of men.<sup>161</sup> However, in the 1956 *Viking*, its aims seem to have become increasingly domestic. Perhaps following the recommendations of many marriage and family educators of the time, the AWS's description creates a link between the higher educational experience and the future occupational role a woman was expected to assume after college. *The Viking* notes that the AWS's purpose was "to help the college woman towards educating herself for the future roles as a woman of culture and charm, as an intelligent citizen, as an efficient worker in her chosen field, and as a successful homemaker" (*The Viking* '56, 21). Despite the acknowledgement that women would work, much of this insists on the domestic roles of women. Describing college as preparing women to become "cultured," "charming," "intelligent citizens" and "successful homemakers" shows that the general orientation of the association was to make women into wives, who would be good conversationalists to their husbands, their husband's greatest asset at social functions, contributing members of society probably in the form of unpaid volunteer work, all the while managing their homes and raising their children. It does not seem to be a coincidence that at the same time when home economics as academic preparation for homemaking appears in the *Les Bois* annual, the AWS takes such a domestic turn. It is striking that the largest women's organization on campus, not a small special-interest/academically based club, had taken this turn towards creating a well-manicured wife, but it appears that most of the women's organizations—three non-sororities at PSC and four at BJC—were directing their attentions to activities that were "of a cultural, social, and service nature" (ibid.). As such, by the mid-1950s, the domestic ideal had gripped both campuses and for many of the young women enrolled, higher education was preparation, more or less, affluent domesticity.

Women's turn towards the home at PSC is not the only outlier in the 1956 annual, the student body government also is presented as evolving into something new. In previous volumes, both *The Viking* and *Les Bois* presented student

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<sup>161</sup> This organization was present in the very first *Viking*, but went by the Girls' Club. By my next sample year, it had renamed itself to the Associated Women Students.

government as being a sort of activity committee, but in the 1956 *Viking* self-governing seems to be a crucial aspect of student life. In fact, following the “Administration,” there is an entire section reserved for “Student Administration,” which includes the student body officers, the representative assembly, the Inter-Organizational Council, the A.W.S. officers, the sophomore and freshmen class officers, the *Viking* staff, and the *Vanguard* staff. Devoting an entire section to a student administration suggests that they were playing an increasingly important role in the decision making process, or thought they were. It is particularly interesting that the student-run print media were included as part of this section as this seems to indicate that these publications believed they were providing invaluable information to the campus, fulfilling the same functions that serious journalistic outlets do for larger society. At this juncture, no copy or explanation is given as to how the student government works or what they accomplished in terms of governing, but its prominent position and its independence from the section consecrated to student “organizations” implies that, at the very least, the editors of the yearbook saw its roles shifting and, at most, that it was gaining a voice in how decisions were being made.

The student life section that year was designated “Campus Life,” an interesting choice, given that the administration of PSC tried so hard to dispel the idea that the college was a campus-based institution. Even more interesting is the copy included in the title page introducing the “Campus Life” section, “Although it has been said that Portland State is not a campus college, this is not true. We have a whole city for our campus” (*The Viking '56*, 113). In acknowledging the administration’s position on the subject of a “campus,” the students at Portland State expand the horizons of their “college experience,” incorporating the entirety of the urban environment into their identity as a student body. This fits into a larger trend that seems to surface in this annual: PSC was transitioning from an inner-looking space to an outer-looking one. As official discourse limited the reach of the institution, students were breaking down the barriers between themselves as students and members of the community.

Once again, the onset of spring brings with it an allusion to student hijinks.

Because there was no on-site housing, PSC students could not participate in the wave of panty raids sweeping the nation, but this does not mean that other shenanigans could not be carried out.

No Panty Raids, but ... Ah, Spring! This year, as early risers sipped their coffee, in rolled a Lewis & Clark wheel ... (It had a little help, but we'll never tell!) ... Quick word by a few anonymous Vikings chained it to the cafeteria rail where it was discovered by the Administration. When irate L. & C. students arrived to retrieve their wheel, Les Egleston was dispatched for a saw (*The Viking '56*, 202).

I find this reference to the panty raids interesting because it implies a kind of camaraderie in spirit between this type of prank and those of a more sexual nature. Even though the yearbook notes the displeasure of the administration, this was even less of a contestation of traditional authority than the panty raids. Rather it can be seen as an extension of the rivalry that commonly existed between local schools and a desire to intensify competition between the institutions and create group solidarity on campus. Beth Bailey describes these types of hijinks as “eruptions and evasions” that were characteristic of the 1950s, direct confrontations in the spirit of carnival, but not demanding real structural or permanent change (1999, 82).



Figure 23 *The Viking* 1956, 166

Like many of the yearbooks that preceded the 1956 volume, dances continue to occupy a considerable amount of space. About twenty percent of the “Campus Life” section was devoted to dances and student activities that revolved around dating practices. Figure 23 is from a Sadie Hawkins dance, or a girl-ask-boy dance.

The importance of the Sadie Hawkins dance is apparent in its continuous representation. It was the only dance where a young woman could subvert tradition and invite the man out for a date. If women felt that they had to have a date to attend dances and were limited in their ability to participate in social activities when they were not asked, Sadie Hawkins was the occasion for them to be in control of their social status. The Sadie Hawkins at PSC was a costume dance. In Figure 23, the three couples sport theme-appropriate clothing. In their own way, each twosome demonstrates who their date was through physical touch. The most reserved is the couple on the left who have their arms around one another's backs. The couple on the right is slightly more intimate as the young woman perches on the shoulder of the young man she is with. While the couple in the center have struck the most intimate pose: the young man standing behind his date and wrapping his arms around to her stomach. This is probably the most extensive physical touch that we have seen thus far. Comparing this image to the couples demurely kissing—their bodies far apart—in previous yearbooks, it seems to express a new level of acceptable intimacy. All three couples are in near full-body contact with one another. Although, Sadie Hawkins was the opportunity for a woman to choose her escort, the body language of these couples suggests that this was more than a casual date.

From the pages of a yearbook, student participation in social events is difficult to assess. There are, of course, allusions to concerns by various student organizations about how many students attend activities, but actual numbers are difficult to come by. In the archives at Portland State, I came across a report that showed that it was not only students who were preoccupied with turnout and the types of activities that should be offered to student. In fact, in April 1957, the college received the results of a “Study of Student Social Activities,” which was designed to determine actual student participation in school-funded activities. Not only does this indicate that administrative officials were interested in garnering a convivial social climate on campus, but also that they were actively trying to shape what types of events would be suitable to their student populations. The study sampled 1,023 students of the

2,600 registered for the spring term of 1957.<sup>162</sup> A full quarter of these respondents said they did not take part in any school activities, while fifteen percent indicated that they “attended most of the important events” (“Report of Study on Student Social Activities” 1957, 1). The remaining 59 percent is reported to have been equally divided between those who participated minimally and those who attended important events only. The report thus concludes that “[...] over half (55%) of the students at Portland State either took no part or had little interest in student activities” (ibid.). In summarizing the findings, extrapolated numbers are provided to make actual participation clear: if the student body consisted of 3,000 people, 450 would regularly attend important events, 900 would attend some of the important events, and “1,650 would have little or no interest in the school activities” (ibid., 2). Though not all of the dances had taken place when the survey was administered, it appears that the formal dances ranked the highest in terms of anticipated or real attendance: the most popular being the Spring Formal (289 students indicated they would attend), then Homecoming (250 attended), next the Christmas Formal (186 went), and finally the Sweethearts Ball (178 participated). Attendance records and anticipated participation were further substantiated in the questionnaire by the majority of students indicating they preferred semi-formal dances. The second most popular dances were those held after sporting events. The costumed and themed dance had noticeably lower participation rates: Hula Oni Oni Dance (151 were planning on going), Pajama Dance (141 went), Mardi Gras (119 attended), Sadie Hawkins (118 participated), and the Odd Ball Dance (49 went). When the questionnaire asked students’ preference for dances, only eight percent indicated that they enjoyed costume dances. A couple of dances seem to stand out as outliers, the Welcome Dance (134 went), Belle’s Ball (125 planned to go), and Junior Senior Prom (119 wanted to attend). Outliers because the Welcome Dance presumably was at the beginning of the year and was meant as a sort of initiation to campus. Compared to the rate of those who attended

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<sup>162</sup> At the beginning of the report statistics on who was sampled were provided: by class—389 freshman, 300 sophomores, 193 juniors, and 104 seniors, the remaining 36 respondents did not indicate their class—, by marital status—191 were married, 475 were unmarried, and 357 did not respond—, and by sex—572 men and 211 women filled out the questionnaire, while 240 left this blank.

Homecoming, the Welcome Dance had a poor turnout. The difference between the two can be explained in looking at the preference expressed for semi-formal dances, which Homecoming was and the Welcome Dance was not. Belle's Ball and the Junior Senior Prom were both formal dances, but did not appear to draw the same large crowds that the other formal dances did. For the prom, a lack of interest might be accounted for by the fact that the entire student body was not invited to attend, while the Belle's Ball hosted by the Associated Women's Students would have been open to the entire student body. The report concludes that ticket admissions had little effect on attendance rates, where free dances sometimes had low figures and the more expensive dances had high participation. Though there seems to be a concern by those conducting this study about relatively low participation rates, students for the most part felt that the number of dances provided was sufficient and wanted no change.

Interestingly nearly half of the students who responded to the question, "Should the social program be broadened by eliminating some dances?" confirmed an interest in school-sponsored activities that were not dance related. The most popular were seminars with professors, followed by a school carnival, sports night, square dance, convocations, receptions, and basket socials. The report thus concludes that varying the social agenda would have enough student participation to justify funding such events (*ibid.*, 2-3). In asking about activities other than dances that the school already offered, the most popular were drama department productions, then school assemblies, and sporting events. Band concerts and baseball games had some attendance, but teas and receptions had the lowest participation rate.

Overall, the study seems satisfied with the current amount of student participation in student body-funded events because nearly half the students attended important events. They recommend that costume dances be discontinued and that these funds go to support seminars, school carnivals, sports night or a square dance, and that all dances should have admission prices since this did not change whether people would attend or not. The researchers insist at the end of the report that the social agenda should thus be broadened to bring in a variety of activities for students, providing more diverse events on campus while maintaining a similar attendance rate

(*ibid.*, 4). In asking for the social calendar to accommodate students' diverse interests, college administrators were attempting to respond to a student body that, over time, appears to become increasingly politically minded and less focused on the stricter protocols of dating. This appears to mark the beginning of a transition away from a semi-formal support network for courtship at PSC. Although, the report is a response to the student body, implementation of more cultural and academic events means that the formal subsystem was actively participating in reshaping student behavior.

Interestingly, the way that students behaved at school-sponsored events seems to have caught the attention of administrators during the academic year of 1956-1957 and at least one of them attempted to maintain older forms of decorum. The Dean of Students, Charles W. Bursch II wrote to the Chief Counselor for Women, Mrs. Margaret Greenslade about establishing "training" classes that would encourage "a high level of performance in college and social events" (Bursch, 1956). These were etiquette classes that were meant to provide students with the appropriate tools to go through "receiving lines," how to treat "faculty at dances," what responsibilities needed to be assumed by the student chairman, and what the "terms such as informal, formal, sport, or costume, as they pertain to college dances" meant so that students might participate appropriately. The Dean of Students believed student comportment could be kept in line through a six-step process: "actual experience; teas, receptions, and dances," "bulletin information for student distribution," "seminars for student leaders and others interested," "meetings with faculty sponsors," "visual aids," and "lecture and conferences using resource people" (*ibid.*). This indicates that the Dean of Students felt that the youth at Portland State were lacking in appropriate awareness of decorum and thus, charged the Chief Counselor for Women to initiate a program to ensure that these issues would be addressed. This letter, taken in conjunction with the image of the students at the Sadie Hawkins dance and the "Study on Student Social Activities," further attests to a very subtle form of change and the administration's awareness of it. While college officials probably saw all of their efforts serving the same goal, with time students would see suggestions like those made in this letter as paternalistic and those made by the study as grounds to demand more equality and



respect for their independence.

Housing is a particularly poignant issue when it comes to this contradictory discourse, especially at Portland State. A letter from the college president, J. F. Cramer to Dr. William Cohen of the Medical Advisory Committee, who had evidently written to Cramer about a tuberculosis outbreak, gives a telling description of the college's position on its roles in the private lives of students. Cramer writes, "All of Portland State's students live at home, and take advantage of the service of regular family physicians. [...] We do not have as much responsibility for our students as is the usual case in an institution where a large proportion of the student body lives in dormitories or fraternities" (Cramer, 2 Dec. 1957b). At nearly the same time that the Dean of Students is encouraging the women's advisor to see what she might do to bring the standards of students' etiquette up, Cramer is disavowing any responsibility the college might have over the students' physical health. If PSC were a residential school, the president would hold a different viewpoint, but as it is not a space where their private lives are conducted for the most part, this responsibility falls to their parents. This is an interesting contradiction about the place that the PSC administration saw for themselves in the lives of their students. They were directly concerned with social etiquette as school functions were an arena in which it would be put on display for the world to see, but they also would have been directly affected by students' health. The line they seem to be drawing is a fuzzy one.

The 1958 *Les Bois* opens with a section presenting the administration. In and of itself, this organizational choice is not remarkable, what stands out, however, is the copy describing the purposes of the administration and where to seek their services out. In two of the previous editions, the college's president had addressed the students, conveying the administration's philosophy about the responsibilities of students. This year, it is the annual that describes what the administration had to offer students—counseling and jobs—as well as the various roles of the President and Vice-President. These are described, thus:

Guidance as well as opportunities for student employment are offered in the various offices in the northwest end of the Administration building. The President's office at the end of the hall issues the foundation for college rule and endeavors to maintain good will with the community and other schools. The Vice-President's office takes care of student activities and the

administration of the grounds. [...] Every member found in this administrative section works together for the common interest of the students” (*Les Bois*, 1958, 3).

The inclusion of a description of the purposes of the administration and the last sentence reassuring students that those leading the school had their best interests at heart seems to indicate that the administration wanted their roles explained to the entire student body. This might have been purely informative, an encouragement for students to take advantage of the college’s services, but it is curious that the president and vice-president’s specific tasks needed to be made clear to the student population. It makes one wonder if there was contention over who led the college community, who ultimately represented it to the outside world, and whether students were of the opinion that the administration was more concerned with issues unrelated to them.

Another appearance in the 1958 annual that makes one wonder about the homogeneity of the social environment on campus is the formation of a new women’s organization. For the first time, a group called the Golden Zs appeared.<sup>163</sup> Their objectives were described as “service to BJC and the community; *to promote career ideas*; and *to promote college graduation*” (*Les Bois* 1958, 25 [emphasis added]). Not long after a club geared towards promoting housewifery forms, an organization looking instead to advance the status of professional women was founded. This is the first group, in either yearbook, that specifically states that part of their mission was to encourage women to see their educations as leading to a career outside of the home. Was this club a reaction to the dominant place allotted to women in society at that time, especially as one of the founding goals attempts to redirect the pursuit of a “MRS.” towards professionalism? In spite of the challenge posed to the domestic trend in the group’s mission statement, the actual activities in which they participated were very stereotypical of women’s service organizations at that time: serving at

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<sup>163</sup> The 1961 *Les Bois* describes the Golden Zs as being an organization that was formed by a women’s association in Boise called the Zonta Club. The first Zonta Club Convention was held in New York in 1919 and became an international association in 1930. The first college and university Golden Z and high school Z clubs were established in 1948. Zonta International describes its aims today as advancing gender equality through service and advocacy. A modern-day characterization of what the Golden Zs were doing at BJC in 1958 (“Student Clubs” and “Zonta International History” 2016).

dinners, ushering for cultural events, and putting on a style show. These events do not differ significantly from the Homettes, the Home Economics association, who provided a needy family with a food basket at Thanksgiving and hosted a fashion show, in addition to their monthly meetings that ranged from “poise and loveliness to the kitchen sink” (ibid., 36). The radical notion that women would seek educational and professional parity with men seems subsumed by white, middle-class standards of acceptable female labor: unpaid volunteer work in service to their community.

Many more of the clubs featured in the 1958 annual were academically inclined than in the past. In the past the Spanish, French, German, Drama, Future Teachers of America, International Clubs were staples, but in 1958, the Golden Zs, Nurses, Tau Alpha Phi (vocational studies), Debate, and Radio Clubs all emerged, as well. An increasing presence of organizations that promoted professionalism not only shows that growing student enrollments promoted diversity on campus, it also speaks to the emphasis by the end of the decade on education as a means to gainful employment.

At the same time, however, quite a bit of this book appears to be devoted to the dances—as in the case of PSC yearbook—and the dormitories played an increasingly important role in facilitating this student activity. As can be read in the

The co-dorm dance was held in March



Figure 24 *Les Bois* 1958, 86

caption for Figure 24, this picture is taken at the dormitories. The dormitories, as a social space and important generator of student life on the campus, also took up more

room than in the past. The copy for the women's dorm informs readers that "informal dances" were hosted frequently there (ibid., 84). By the dress of those in attendance, we can see in Figure 24 that this photograph comes from the formal dance that the residence halls co-hosted. Interestingly the description for the male and female dorms play up different parts of campus living: the women's emphasizes the social aspects of college life—dances, hosting guests, and club activities—, while the men's describes their living conditions as being on par with those they would enjoy at home—they enjoyed a washer, dryer, and TV. The intent seems to be to depict the things that seem the most important for each sex: for women, it was the social calendar and opportunity to meet men, while for men it was the comforts of home, with the social events playing a secondary role. This is not to imply that men did not bask in the social opportunities afforded them by living in the dorms, creature comforts, however, appear to be more of a masculine preoccupation. There is a subtle allusion here though, if men wanted to continue to have all the comforts of home after college, they would need to find a bride who would keep house for them.

The fear of change present in the previous *Les Bois* yearbook went unrealized as this year's annual affirms that the campus continues to be a warm and welcoming place. The editors write, "We, the staff of the 1958 *Les Bois*, have recorded in the annals of Boise Junior College the growth and accomplishments for the year. Included is the personality of our campus—its friendliness and humor, as well as its activities" (*Les Bois* 1958, 116). Returning to the need to expressly state the mission of the annual as a memory book, the editors of the 1958 edition provide a tranquil transition into the future.

### **3. The Seeds of Democratic Citizenship Begin Taking Root**

In the 1959 *Viking* there seems to be a shift towards an empowerment of the student. The emphasis that President Dr. Epler put on creating responsible citizens in earlier volumes seems to be a rhetoric increasingly co-opted by the student body at this time. The forward of this edition intimates this much:

Once a year, we look forward and backward. We attempt to assess our achievements and to look toward our potential. [...] We, the students, are an

integral part of Portland State College. A school can be only as good as its students. The students must assume their responsibility if the college is to continue to grow. [...] The 1959 Viking is a backward glance. We should not live in the past, but taking a glance once in a while gives us a clearer picture of our current position (*The Viking* 1959, 14).

This foreword seems much more serious than the last yearbook; it has a mature tone that imbues the student with the responsibility of representing the school and contributing to its expansion. The placement of the student at the heart of the school's future hints at a shift in the perception of the student's role on campus. In this vein, the 1959 annual continued to emphasize the importance of student government. Once again, the "Student Administration" followed the actual "Administration." It had grown. Adding to its ranks, there was a student court, a college center committee—coordinated dances, cultural events, and publicity—an Inter-Fraternity Council, and the Centennial Review—a literary publication. Significantly, this also was the first year that the Student Leadership Camp took place. From the captions, no descriptive copy is provided, it appears that this was a retreat for students in different leadership positions on campus where the faculty and administration could help them develop "characteristics of leaders" and learn about parliamentary procedure (*ibid.*, 234, 236). The documentation of this event was largely photographic, but it still leaves the reader with the impression that there was a lot of collaboration between the students and the administration and that this was a seminar that represented shifting ideas about forms of student representation and overall student responsibility. The administration continues to lend a guiding hand and it is through their encouragement, it appears, that students begin taking their "independence training" to the next level.

Figure 25 is a good representation of what seems to be one of the major sources of interest for the 1959 *Viking*: Greek Life. This photo was placed amongst a twelve photo montage of candid shots, many of which appear to come from a pajama party, but couples seem to be a staple in nearly all of them. The page is focusing on the fraternity Kappa Phi, the subtitle of the group's page claims the fraternity hosted "two parties a week" and the scenes depicted in the montage show young people

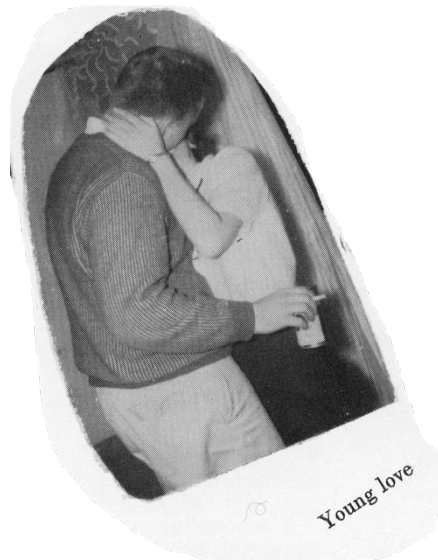


Figure 25 *The Viking* 1959, 105

drinking and canoodling with captions that range from “young love” to “the young married set,” from “two to tango” to “seclusion.” This page makes dating seem like an integral part not only of the bi-weekly fun enjoyed at the fraternity, but also makes it appear as part of the larger culture that defined the fraternity. Showing couples and captioning them in different stages of courtship and intimacy supports the larger cultural drive for young college students to pair off. I find this particularly striking because it is at a fraternity. There is a lot of documentation that indicates that women were encouraged, if not compelled, to participate in the dating for marriage culture of the postwar era, but little of it focuses on men. It only makes sense that men would have also been expected to some degree to have a major role in this and the Kappa Phi page is one of a few that supports this.

In 1959, Greek life appears as a staple part of the campus experience: for the first time, there is an Inter-Fraternity Council, several new Greek-affiliated organizations sprung up, older associations became parts of larger nationally chartered Greek organizations, while others still rebranded themselves with Greek name—e.g. Chi Rho, the Catholic student group, and Aesculapius, the pre-nursing club. The “Organizations” section begins with all-Greek organizations, the first nine pages are devoted to sororities (82-91) and the last sixteen pages to fraternities (100-116). Only nine pages are given to other types of clubs on campus.

Many seemingly newer Greek charters, in the copy, are given history by

creating a link between the newer incarnations and their past counterparts, e.g. Alpha Phi was previously the Vikes, a women's service organization, and Tau Kappa Epsilon was Tau Kappa, a local fraternity. This is also done through the description of the process of becoming affiliated to national fraternities and the adoption of nationally approved charters. An entire page was devoted to the "Bell Incident" (*The Viking* 1959, 217). Tau Kappa Epsilon members from the University of Washington had driven down to the University of Oregon in Eugene to recover the school's bell, which had been stolen as part of the school's rivalry. When they stopped off in Portland on their way to Seattle their brothers at PSC decided to elaborate on the prank by stealing it again (ibid. 106). This incident is of particular interest because it seems to continue in the tradition that we saw in the previous annual, when PSC students "borrowed" a symbol from a rival school, Lewis and Clark College's wheel. It appears that the growth of the Greek system on the Portland campus fostered an environment in which young people might blow off some steam either through elaborate hijinks against rivals or through throwing weekly parties to have a good time. It is interesting that the Greek system seems to represent so much more of a part of student life in this edition and seems like it is due to the fact that this was the time when Greek life began to flourish on campus. Significantly, the first fraternity house was inaugurated during the 1958-1959 school year. The Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity "moved into a twenty-two room 'mansion'" right off campus (*The Viking* 1959, 106). Even though PSC administrators had attempted to limit their role in students' private living arrangements, the spread of fraternities and sororities meant they were going to have to sing a different tune.

In spite of the presence of a growing campus-based youth culture that is centered on independent living from one's parents, Portland State's administration continued to insist that they did not have any interest in trying to police the behaviors of Portland State students. In fact, Branford P. Millar, the President of Portland State College, gave a speech on September 15, 1959, emphatically stating that the college had no intentions of taking on the responsibilities so frequently associated with *in loco parentis*. President Millar's speech read:

One last word. We do not have any housing at Portland State College. We do not contemplate any. We do in many ways avoid the necessity of assuming a

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status in loco parentis, and there are of course moments when we might wish to have avoided it altogether. In fact, of course, this is by no means possible, since it is difficult to find the exact cutting point between student and person, especially since students possess in the extreme the proclivities of behaving like people. In fact, too, we have increasing numbers of students from outside the area—we have to help find housing, but we otherwise put them on their own, and we take no further special responsibility for them outside of their normal curricular and extra-curricular activities. How long we can shut our eyes and turn our backs when students are off bounds or off hours, we don't know. Cities are magnets, especially to those seeking employment and outlets for their energies and ambitions. And they do cause problems for young people, single and in groups. [...] Whether we will have to take more responsibility, it is hard to say, but we have the situation under scrutiny and we hope that we can keep it in hand and that there will be no explosion. But I must keep you advised that this may be increasingly difficult” (Millar 1959, 6).

It appears as though the debate around housing and the school taking responsibility for student behavior was a common one at this time. Students associated with the college, like the Tekes (members of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity), might be behaving in a way that would draw attention to them, and, because of their association with the school, the college was contacted as a point of reference. Needless to say, Millar's speech indicates that the college views the position “in lieu of the parents” as particularly problematic and would prefer to stay out of the private lives of the students. However, he notes that the college did play a small role in helping some young people find housing, which he specifies were from out of town, but he maintains once housing was located the administration took a backseat to directing the private lives of students. His comments about the school's ability to shut out problems arising from student housing, sanctioned or not, seems to indicate that the question of housing became a pressing one for the administration as student groups became more vocal about their affiliation to the campus. Millar wants to quell fears that the living situation would burst forth in some sort of uncontrollable youth situation, which he reassures the Board of Higher Education that the living conditions of students were not going entirely unsupervised. Though Millar acknowledges a small degree of administrative participation in housing matters in this 1959 statement, the codes became increasingly complex with time.

In the 1961 Faculty Handbook, it is apparent that student housing had become



a tricky issue. First, for those students under the age of 21 who simply would have liked to maintain a different address from their parents, the school asked for parent or guardian approval (1961 Faculty Handbook, 44). For their part, “Group Living Arrangements,” i.e. fraternities and sororities, had administrative, legal, economic, and social stipulations imposed on them. First, the administration reserved the right to approve, deny, or withdraw support from groups living together. Second, the legal and economic rules required that these were set up by corporate structures, gave the college audit reports, obtained municipal and state licenses, and building codes were followed. Third, these organizations had to comply with the Director of Student Activities rules for planning and programming, which included that they have “an appropriate adult person or persons, living on the premises to be responsible for the direct implementation of college policies.” Everyone living in the facility had to be a PSC student, and had to “demonstrate social responsibility” through participation in school-sponsored events. Moreover, students had to meet certain academic standards, and an open line of communication had to be maintained with the counseling office for guidance to be given to inhabitants (ibid., 45). Fourth, conduct and discipline fell under the purview of the Dean of Students. And lastly, those under the age of 21 who were unmarried had to “continue to secure parental approval of their housing regardless of approval of the living group” (ibid.). The 1961 Faculty Handbook was the only one (at least within these archives) that stipulated rules for student housing, however it seems relevant that this would coincide with a time when the Greek system was growing on campus.

In 1961 the *Les Bois* was organized by a theme: time. This was largely done through the incorporation of images of clocks, systematically referring to the passage of time, and the seasons of the academic year. In the introduction two different clocks are shown, the first appears on the title page in a photograph of a torsion pendulum clock. Then on the very next page, there is a drawing of a clock, this time a sundial (*Les Bois* 1961, 2-3). From the outset, the annual presents time as an opportunity which is evident in one of the titles in the introduction, “The Place Which Offered Us a Time For... Friendship... Culture... Thinking, Athletics” (*Les Bois*, 1961, 4-5). Following this theme, the very first section of the book is entitled “Chronology,”

symbolized by a picture of an analog clock and it contains all the activities of the fall semester: “A Time for Registration” with students shown in the course of taking care of their day-to-day affairs—registering, doing laundry, and studying—but still having enough time for play, which is announced by “But There Was Still Time For Diversions,” featuring students engaged in leisurely activities like biking, gathering around a table, going through a food line (ibid., 10-12). The major fall events are then presented in a similar manner ranging from homecoming, to the holiday season with much attention being paid to community service, as well as a costume dance, the Christmas formal, concerts put on by the choir and band, shows put on by the drama department, a Christmas pageant, and finally the commencement ceremony from the previous spring. Most of these events are put in tandem with a title that has something to do with time so the theme resurfaces over and over again. The “organizations” title page features an hour glass. Two more clocks appear later in the book. One is on the title page of the “Athletics” section, which features a score board, and the other is on the title page of the “Academics” page, which has a grandfather clock. Though my initial impulse was to read this as the editors potentially tapping into the zeitgeist of the 1960s, the editors of *Les Bois* state their intentions clearly,

[...] this annual [...] was centered around the theme of 'time.' Time was the biggest problem of the staff [...]. The clock did not stand still as staff reporters worked with the pictures, completed layout pages, and typed stories. As you look at this annual it should help recall the time you spend at BJC during the 1960-61 college year (*Les Bois* 1961, 34).

Rather than seeing itself as part of “the times,” the editors of the yearbook had a very literal interpretation of the theme and their personal relationship with it in regards to the book.

The Student Executive Board appeared to expand on some of its powers by the early 1960s. Though the copy notes that the largest purpose of the board was to budget funds for activities for the entire student body, “student elections, coordinating campus activities, and promoting intercollegiate relations” were also included, for the first time, as part of their duties (ibid., 28). One of the more hands-on projects that might be seen as the student council taking on a more governing role was its attempt to get the Student Union Building opened in the evening for student use. Other organizations were surpassing the importance of the Social and Union

Night Committees: The President's Council—this was a group that brought together all the club Presidents who would then coordinate the college's social calendar so events could be attended by the majority of students—and the Associated Women Students (AWS). The latter seems to be in such a prominent position in part because of its size—all the women students enrolled were considered members—, but also because participation in ASW activities was high. The Social Committee continued to be in charge of all the major events on campus, including all the themed dances, while the Union Night Committee organized the free dances taking place on weekends when no other social event was planned.

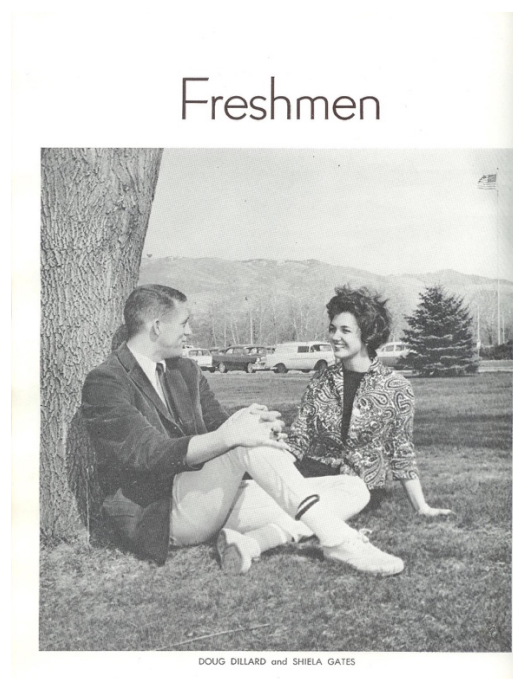


Figure 26 *Les Bois* 1961, 104



Figure 27 *Les Bois* 1961, 96

Although students seem to be shifting focus to their civic roles, dating continued to be a feature of the 1961 *Les Bois*. Figures 26 and 27 were the respective title pages for the freshman and sophomore classes. They precede the section that presents individual portraits of each student by class. Both are seemingly idyllic representations of the stages of a romantic relationship. Figure 26 shows two students, Doug Dillard and Shiela Gates, under a tree engaged in conversation. They are looking each other straight in the eyes, smiling. This photo opens the freshman-class pages and might be looked at as a representation of the early stages of a relationship. Figure 27 shows a young man, Jack Fawcett, opening a car door for a

young woman, Ruth Young. This picture introduces the sophomore portraits and seems to be showing a couple further into their courtship, as they have not happened upon one another as one might suspect of the two gathered beneath the tree, they are making a concerted effort to go somewhere. Both photographs endeavor to present a candid situation, Figure 26 a casual getting-to-know-you conversation and Figure 27 a young couple finishing their day at school. In a way, they present the stages of a relationship that coincide with one's age and academic class: the first year was the time to meet other students, to familiarize oneself with their future prospects, while the second year was the moment to begin concentrating one's energies and affections on one person, readying oneself for the next stage of life. Just like the 1959 *Viking*, the message that college was the space in which one might find one's spouse is not only directed at women. Men were also actively shown engaging in the courtship process. Couples, in general, are portrayed as a part of a young person's social experience, thus, reinforcing the expectation that both men and women went to college to meet a mate. The stages of courtship were not the only elements of the



Figure 28 Portland State College *Viking* 1962, 157

young couple normalized in the pages of the yearbooks. Certain forms of affection were commonly shown. The most prominent appears to be kissing. Figure 28 taken from the 1962 *Viking* shows a man behind bars with “Ze Kiss Sets Him Free” scrolled across the top of his cell. This is a photograph from a dance called “Paris Apache,” a themed-dance that recurred in the 1956, 1959, and 1962 yearbooks. In 1962, the Paris Apache dance was put on by Portland State's Kappa Sigma Fraternity. In previous years, it was hosted by other organizations. In cohesion with the theme, we can see a young man smiling imprisoned in “The Bastille” waiting for someone to set him free with a kiss. No explanation was provided in the copy or the caption as to what sort of offense one had to commit to be put in the cell, but one’s placement there would in some ways reflect how desirable their peers found them. The kissing booth is only fun and exciting when it is in use, otherwise it becomes a sad manifestation of one’s lack of popularity and becomes a lackluster prop. This young man looks very happy to be there, anticipating what would come next. If he brought a date or had a sympathetic female friend, he would be out promptly. The disembodied hand to the left of the photograph indicates that there might be an interested party. The fact that this dance quite literally had a kissing booth shows that leisure,

fun, and flirting went hand in hand for these students. This aspect of the dance encourages physical affection in public and makes this form of intimacy seem mundane. It also implies that some forms of sexual intimacy were so acceptable that a kiss did not impart a much deeper meaning.

1962 was the year when *The Viking* began to deviate from the traditional yearbook format. Rather than combining explanative text with photographs, which was a feature in the past, one can see a clear shift towards an increasingly photographic portrayal of the year. Though some traditional elements are maintained, like following the academic year as the book progresses or dividing the book into different sections, this book seems to assert more of an artistic style. The photographs were in high contrast; there were no page numbers; the pages that indicated a break between one part and the next no longer had labels. This becomes particularly apparent in the way that the “winter carnival,” a ski trip, was covered. It is more of a photographic essay, fancying itself more as literary journalism than simple yearbook

documentation. Additionally, about half way through the book, short poems are included in conjunction with the photographs. The yearbook's descriptions of the other print-media outlets on campus demonstrates that this was part of a larger journalistic trend engulfing PSC. *The Vanguard*, the student newspaper, was said to have "raised eyebrows" because of the editorial positions taken in the paper on controversial subjects, which was described as being part of a "healthy debate" (*Portland State College Viking* 1962, 132). Furthermore, the campus newspaper was touted as becoming more journalistic than it had been in the past as it had "more features, better photography and all-around quality journalism" (*ibid.*). *The Student Review*, a creative writing and art publication, likewise was given a glowing review in the yearbook as a reflection of the student body's interest in the campus's literary and artistic culture.

This annual also begins to really attest to the mood of the era. The foreword opens the book by philosophizing on the meaning of growth—the physical changes being made to the college and the maturation of the school, the faculty, and the students—and the place that young people would occupy in determining the future. The editors seem to be insisting on a need for action and change in order to reshape the future when they say, "At Portland State College, tomorrow comes soon enough. Here history must be only prologue, and past growth just the budding of a not so distant future" (*ibid.*, 5). A growing emphasis seems to be on the need for political activism and thought. Following through, perhaps, on the recommendations of the 1957 report that suggested more lecturers would be a welcome addition to Portland State, eight pages are devoted to people who spoke that year, including Martin Luther King Jr.; one of Oregon's U.S. Senators, Wayne Morse; George Korienko, a diplomat from the Russian embassy; a Nobel laureate in chemistry, Linus Pauling; and the Chairman of the Multnomah County Republican Central Committee, Robert Packwood. Korienko is noted as having attracted a large and interested crowd "but offered nothing more than the party line" (*ibid.*, 34). Pauling is described as having "urged the nuclear powers of the world to end forever the testing of atomic weapons" (*ibid.*, 127). The cultivation of intellectual curiosity and the critique of authority figures off campus continues in representations of students going about their daily

lives, first in classrooms, and then in the streets. Clearly this volume attests to the fact that the development of a political conscience among students was being felt ahead of the more visible demonstrations that would become more common in the latter-half of the decade. “Behind the wall of buildings, Portland State students gave uncompromising attention to their professors, but gained no sympathy from the unalterable law beyond...” (ibid., 51). Three pages are devoted to covering the student elections in this annual and two to the student senate, which the yearbook describes as, “Participation in student government is recognized by the college as contributing to the qualities and habits of civic responsibility” (ibid., 128). Such a statement demonstrates that students had begun to really take independence training to heart. They saw their roles in college as the beginning of their participation in society. The official discourse that afforded so much attention to students, that gave them the impression that they stood on cusp of the future, can be seen in a citation reprinted as the book’s final remarks. It comes from a speech given by of Oregon’s members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Edith Green, who said:

It is the mind of man on which the most noble, most useful and most lasting monuments to his greatness are built. Men cannot live by bombs, or by roads, or by dams, or by automobiles or even by inside plumbing alone. Our immortality is in the works of our minds. Our true greatness finds its citadel in the classroom (ibid., 169).

As the rhetoric from the top trickled down to students, they embraced the idea that higher education was the staging grounds for them continuing the American project.

Throughout its history, PSC faced challenges when it came to fraternities and sororities. This grew with time as they proliferated on campus at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s. One of the most significant problems that Greek organizations brought to the College was their history of racial and religious discrimination. As these organizations grew in importance, the administration realized its non-interventionist stance on student housing violated its commitment to ensure equal access to the college experience, regardless of a student’s race, religion, or national origin. This is present from the school’s inception at Vanport, when a fraternity’s charter was revoked because of a discriminatory clause. The 1947 *Viking* reports on May 6, 1947, “The student council revoked the charter of Delta Thau Rho, a recently recognized student fraternity, because of a racial discrimination clause.

[...] (17-18). This resurfaces in the mid-1950s at two meetings of the Fraternity Council Committee. The first incident took place on March 10, 1955 when the Fraternity Council Committee decided to add to their policies, “No organization shall be allowed to enter which has a discrimination clause” (Fraternity Council Meeting, March 1955). At an assembly the following month, the Fraternity Council Committee noted that they might have difficulties in attracting nationally chartered fraternities and sororities to campus because “Dr. Hart [had] investigated national sorority and fraternity charters and [had] learned that in [the] 57 that exist[ed] at Oregon State, approximately 80% have discrimination clauses” (Fraternity Council Meeting, April 1955). Over the next few years as fraternities grew at PSC, private citizens expressed concern about their history of discrimination. One example of which can be found in letter written to Rabbi Julius J. Nodel from President Cramer who was attempting to reassure the rabbi that although the college was actively encouraging the establishment of national fraternities, who had discriminatory charters against people of color and Jewish people, that the students at Portland State were not bigots. Cramer believed, despite the national charters legitimization of discrimination, that students at Portland State would not actually follow these prescriptions. He writes, “Portland State stands for complete non-discrimination. We have many students who are Negroes, Jewish, Japanese, and Chinese. We have a number of Jewish faculty members, also Japanese and Negro. I do not think there is the slightest feeling of discrimination in the College student body” (Cramer, 1957a). In spite of this reassurance, Oregon’s State Board of Higher Education must have seen discriminatory clauses being implemented as they adopted a resolution on January 26, 1960 concerning membership in student organizations which read, “It is the policy of the Board of Higher Education to oppose and prevent, on all campuses under its supervision, all discrimination based on race, color or religion” (State Board of Higher Education 1960). This was a response to the Portland State Faculty Senate agreeing to allow Greek organizations to affiliate with the college on January 18, 1960. The resolution insists that outsiders’ influence—the national organization that defined the identity of the fraternity or sorority—be limited in their ability to control the practices of local sororities and fraternities. Local campus organizations were to



be in charge of choosing who to nominate and who to select as members, specifically restricting the influence of “national officers, alumni, advisors, or others from outside the College” charters (ibid.).

Despite the State Board of Higher Education’s action and the Faculty Senate’s attempts to hinder discrimination, in September 1963 six sororities’ charters were suspended at Portland State. In a memorandum to the faculty, President Millar explained two African American women were consciously rejected from three different sororities because of their race. He states this unequivocally based on several facts. First, these women who had attempted to rush (to join the sorority) were asked to interview at three sororities, and then cut from the list of consideration. Second, he states that the justifications provided for why these women were rejected were preposterous. The sororities claimed that there was not enough space for all of the women who wanted to join. However, Millar notes of the 115 women who rushed, forty were supposed to be eliminated. When the college became involved only four women had been rejected, two of them were African American. If space was the reason that women were being excluded, then there should have been 36 more rejectees. All six sororities on campus joined together to fight the administration’s interference. One counterargument lobbed at the administration was that the college had been unwelcoming to sororities and this was an excuse to get rid of them. Millar contends, however, that six sororities had been welcomed since 1960 and that before they were incorporated the Board of Higher Education had adopted its anti-discrimination mandate, which made it difficult for the vast majority of sororities to set up on campus because they had discriminatory clauses in their charters. Another was that African Americans were being given special treatment, but surely there must have been other ethnic and racial groups who had been kept from pledging (joining) for the same reason. Millar states matter of factly that the college had been monitoring discriminatory recruitment practices for years and had had cases involving “Jews, Catholics, Orientals, and those with backgrounds of several European Countries as well” (Millar 1963, 1). Because of these precedents, the college thought it was high time to intervene. PSC “took the position that because of the many difficulties arising from interpretation of specific cases and general

practices, the only way the College could prevent discrimination in fraternities and sororities, was to put it beyond question, to leave room for no doubt, or no room for fraternities or sororities, as the case might be” (ibid., 2). Millar goes on to explain that the Faculty Senate had debated the institutional recognition of fraternities and sororities precisely for this reason and had finally agreed to allow them based on the inclusion of the anti-discriminatory clause being adopted as part of the school’s policy. Millar explains:

The obligation on the sororities at Portland State College—whatever the situation elsewhere—has always been to demonstrate beyond doubt a policy and practice of non-discrimination by race, religion, color, or national origin. Doubt, as I have indicated, has existed for some time. The demonstration has not been plain and incontrovertible. And the College at this critical juncture will entertain reasonable doubt no more (ibid.).

Millar goes on to counter the anticipated argument that any fraternal group is based on “freedom of choice” in stating that the pledging process instituted at Portland State’s sororities has been since their inception based on “limited choice” that might include discrimination based on race, religion, creed, or national origin. As such, the College did not intend to recognize this as a voluntary association affiliated with the institution. This is the last major point Millar hopes to drive home, that is, students were able to associate however they wanted outside of school, but organizations that wanted institutional recognition, had to follow the principles of the College.

After the suspension of the six sororities on campus, Millar organized a research committee to get an idea of where communication had ultimately broken down between the sororities and the administration. In a six-page memorandum that compiled the recommendations of the committee in accordance with the administrative feasibility, the faculty was informed about what had taken place in the interim and the ways that the administration and faculty might resolve the issue. The memorandum recognizes that the administration’s position that the sororities “prove” that they do not discriminate in their recruitment practices and that the college “prove” that they do discriminate placed both parties in the role of “assuming impossible obligations” (Millar 1964, 4). The larger issue seems to be over whether or not the college could prove an intent to discriminate and whether the sororities could claim free association in order to avoid having administrative action taken

against them. The memorandum expresses a true desire on behalf of sorority members for the issue to be resolved and thus proposes several recommendations that should help make the college's position clearer: explicit and extensive policies for recruitment selection; a seminar given to the organizations that clarify the college's position; a longer rush calendar so careful consideration can be made when selecting pledges; and an annual report that demonstrates compliance carried out by an appropriate administrative officer (ibid., 5-6). Though the Faculty Senate approved these recommendations at the end of January 1964, another memorandum issued on December 21, 1964 indicates that the demands put in the simplest of terms—sororities could not preclude women based on race, religion, color or national origin and student members were responsible for selecting their pledges, not alumnae or non-student advisors. C.M. Briggs notes “The sororities did not accept these requirements, and so invited themselves out. The present status of the sororities is that they continue to be operating outside the college and have shown little interest in resuming operation within the institution” (1964, 1-2). The administration's inability to get the sororities to recognize that their charter had to be in conjunction with college principles demonstrates how the administration's indecision about what their role should be in the private lives of students put them at a disadvantage at a moment when they might have provided crucial guidance in “independence training.”

By contrast, the 1964 *Les Bois* continued on its general treatment of college life as being a moment in time of which one should take advantage. In a more inadvertent way than *The Viking*, however, began to include notices that life on campus and youth culture in general were, indeed, changing. The foreword implies as much when it states, “The Bronc motif for this 1963-64 LES BOIS is symbolic of the youth and vitality of our community college” (*Les Bois 1964*, 3). Taking “youth and vitality” as the representative characteristics of campus is a less blatant claim to active communal meaning making than *The Viking's* assertion that the students were intricately associated with the Portland community and that they were responsible as civic actors, but it still indicates that student life was its own unique manifestation of youth culture at Boise Junior College. Even though, the editors of the *Les Bois* express an abiding faith in campus life, the creation of a new student group indicates

that perhaps there was some concern about how vibrant and dynamic participation really was. The Student Publicity and Interest Board (SPIB) appears for the first time in 1964, attesting to perhaps the same concern expressed in 1957 at PSC: administrators were concerned about student participation in the social calendar. The description of the group seems to imply this, “The Student Publicity and Interest Board was created to encourage greater student participation and interest in the various activities at the school” (ibid., 87). Waning participation in student-organized and funded events could speak to a changing student body, who was less interested in the types of events being offered, more preoccupied with other responsibilities in their lives, and/or less invested in ensuring that their college years were spent having the “college experience.” It is clear from the creation of the SPIB that the Student Council and administration had noticed a dip in attendance at school sponsored events and that this was due to a lack of information, hence the creation of a group meant to promote activities.

One organization stands out more than others this year as it is the only one to very subtly deviate from themes discussed in previous parts. It was the Esquires, an ex-servicemen’s club that was originally formed in 1953 in the wake of the Korean War and was reorganized in 1963. Membership was contingent on having completed two years of active duty in any one of the branches of the armed services. The description of the club’s activities does not stand out in any particular way except that they made a float for the Homecoming parade and dubbed it “Pray for Peace.” The float won first place in the Homecoming parade (ibid., 96). No further discussion of the float is given, but the fact that it was made and that it won, is indicative of a large portion of the student body’s feelings about the United States’ presence in Vietnam, the uncertainty of the Cold War, or both. This might not be considered outright dissidence given the banality with which it is presented, but it is a manifestation of how young veterans on campus felt they should present themselves to the community.

Following in the vein of *The 1962 Viking*, from the outset the 1965 volume “asserts [itself as] an artistic and poetic impression of Portland State College” (*The Viking 1965*, 7). The book is divided into three sections, entitled “Ellipses I,” which

comprise the fall term, “Ellipses II,” the winter term, and “Ellipses III,” the spring term. Abandoning the format of the previous two volumes which was organized by affiliation, the 1965 annual returns to a chronological depiction of the year. The first twenty pages of are introductory and demonstrate an artistic portrayal of college life, just as the editors announced. This introduction is mainly composed of photos of students outside of class and featured poems on campus life. “Ellipses I” then proceeds to present the fall semester including sports, dances, homecoming week, and cultural events hosted by the school. In this section three pages are devoted to the importance of student government and the copy indicates that they were taking on an increasingly active role in the college and becoming generally more important to the student body. Two pages were devoted to a demonstration which is described as being a response to the censoring of *Howl* at Central Oregon College in Bend. Clearly, the college was taking more of an interest in all things political, including the issue of free speech, which was further reflected in the description of the speakers that visited campus that year.<sup>164</sup>

This year Portland Staters were offered a smorgasbord of speakers from which they could sample opinions of communism, poetry, civil rights, laws, business, sex mores. [...] Speakers of every political shading, of varying authority, and of intense opinion come to Portland State. All are granted a platform if they present facts and answer questions from the usually large audiences (ibid., 59; 62).

It is worth pointing out that speakers were expected to be accountable to the audiences, hence the inclusion of an “if” clause that stipulates the speaker’s obligations to those in attendance. The implication seems to be that if a speaker did not rely on facts for their opinion and was not open to being questioned, then, the spectators were under no obligation to be respectful to their ideas. Even the debate team, referred to as “forensics” at that time, seemed to be dealing with increasingly volatile issues as the club’s description notes that they argued over the issues of

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<sup>164</sup> During the first part of the decade it appears that Portland State’s administration and students were developing their political and social consciences. The event with the sororities suggests that the administration wanted to be more in line with the Federal government’s push to end segregation and all forms of discrimination. Additionally, the changes in subject and form in the yearbook indicate that some students there were being influenced by the countercultural and the anti-war movement.

“teenage morality, Southeast Asia, and federal public works” (ibid., 82).

The second section, “Ellipses II” also has an introductory section that was ten to eleven pages featuring photo montages and poems. Then it segues into the “Activities” of the 1964-1965 academic year. Under the title of events held that year, the editors noted, “Assorted impromptu protest demonstrations were also big” (ibid., 97). There is mention of the fact that there might be less involvement at PSC because it is not a “campus-bound college,” but the annual insists on the idea that participation was a choice for those who wanted to be involved. Even though this is followed by recognition of seventy different programs being offered during that school year, the yearbook seems to focus on involvement outside of officially-sanctioned organizations. I came to this conclusion, on the one hand, because this entire section supposedly devoted to school groups, focuses on the importance that demonstrations played in the social calendar, devoting two full pages to photographs of protesters and continuously returning to an individual’s choice to participate. On the other hand, the language used, “‘activities’ come a la carte more than at the campus-bound college but they are there for the choosing of those who choose to be involved,” seems to want to implicate everyone (*The Viking 1965*, 97). The rest of the section continues documenting the “regular” events on campus: dances, sports, theater performances, but also includes a couple of new ones like the College Bowl—a radio and television game show that its own website dubs “the Varsity Sport of the Mind”—and the Peace Corps (“History of College Bowl and Its Formats,” 2016). *The Viking* boasts that Oregon had the highest volunteer rate per capita in the nation for the president Kennedy’s recently created Peace Corps. On the same page there is mention of more speakers and an abiding interest in the Middle-East program. The last two pages of Ellipses II were devoted to the student government election process.

Finally, “Ellipses III” follows suit with approximately fifteen pages of photographs, drawings, and poems to introduce the year’s final term. This section finishes presenting the organizations on campus, including the “Greeks.” Interestingly, *The Viking* claims that the Greeks had a “peaceful, productive year,” and then casually mentions that “an open break between Portland State administration and three national sororities” caused PSC to suspend recognition of these *three*

sororities, (*The Viking* 1965, 165). Just as the memorandum from Briggs intimated in December 1964, the sororities continued business as usual, and still played hostesses to “the wackiest ball of the year” (ibid.). Despite, the fact that the yearbook mentions that the sororities had lost official school recognition, the opening paragraph that claims that the Greeks had not caused much raucous that year, plus, their inclusion in the annual, plus, the praise heaped on the “former sororities” for throwing a great party while featuring two large photos from that party suggest that the students did not see the sororities as officially separated from the institution. As might be expected from the comments on the “Activities” page about participation in student life, the Greeks seem less a part of the social scene and therefore take up a smaller portion of the book than they had in the previous volume. Thus confirming a change in the student body and preferred activities at that time, and also perhaps a greater political consciousness for more students.

Most of the poems throughout the book seem to have an existential bent to them. They have quite pragmatic themes—getting up for class, dealing with parking, maintaining one’s motivation, desire for time to stop so class can be avoided, finals and the ensuing calm—but they have a recurring theme of uncertainty—knowing whether or not this is the proper path, whether the acquisition of knowledge is worthwhile, allusions to the instability of the larger geo-political situation. The final section, “Ellipses III,” closed its introduction with a full-page spread of a singular eye. On the retina the words “And you Will Know” appear (ibid., 163-164). The poems and their vacillation between the mundane and the existential angst of the young adult as well as the alternative formatting sets a mood in this yearbook that seems to be reflecting influence from the counterculture.

As is evident from the attention paid to “impromptu protests” in the activities section, a theme that seems to be gaining in importance over time and that furthers the possibility that the alternative forms of 1960s youth culture were beginning to rear their head at PSC is the continuous return to a politicized student body. *The 1965 Viking* devoted four pages to a small demonstration made by the six PSC students

who belonged to the National Party of America (NPA)<sup>165</sup> and the 250-strong crowd of students and faculty who gathered around them. As the yearbook reports, from the outset, the crowd was hostile to the group's leader's "rantings about Portland newspapers and Judaism," but eventually suppressed the demonstration by ripping down the confederate flag that was flying, slashing the tires of the truck in which the flag had stood, stealing the keys to the truck, and destroying "inflammatory signs" (ibid., 176). There are two occasions in the report where the mob of students and faculty are placed at odds with the local authority of the police. First, when the yearbook describes the crowd's initial response to the demonstrators, the police and "the Sears and Roebuck uniformed right wingers" watch the crowd. In all likelihood the police were there to protect the NPA's right to peacefully assemble and protest, but *The Viking* makes them sound like they are on the same side of the issue. Second, this is done, after the crowd loses control and the "anti-Semites rode off to headquarters in protective custody" (ibid.). Again, rather than looking at the police as fulfilling their professional and civic function, the editors imply that the two bodies' motives are one in the same. This hesitation about the Portland Police would become a recurring theme as Portland State's students became increasingly active in the anti-war movement at the end of the decade.

The issue of housing resurfaced in 1966 in the wake of the publication of a report by the Board of Governors of the City Club of Portland, entitled, "Supervised Housing for Minors and Young Single Adults."<sup>166</sup> President Branford P. Millar wrote to the club's president, Stetson B. Harman, to voice some of his concerns about the report's findings. Although Millar concedes some of the points made—there was "unsatisfactory housing conditions in the 'downtown bowl'" and "the growth of Portland State College has contributed to crowding"—, he largely writes to correct communal misconceptions of what the college's role should be in regards to student

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<sup>165</sup> An ultra-conservative political group.

<sup>166</sup> The City Club of Portland was founded in the fall of 1916 by a group of like-minded progressives who were concerned about the functioning of the city's public institutions. Its first constitution stated its aims were to bring together men from varying walks of the political spectrum, to promote discussion of civic issues, provide solutions that would improve the economic and social conditions of Portland, foster civic engagement, and to collaborate with other organizations to ameliorate the city ("History: The City Club of Portland," n.d.).



housing (Millar 1966, 1). This is a unique document because for the first time there is a full explanation of the reasons why Portland State had not secured student housing and they were based on “the dominant trend in American higher education” (ibid., 3). First, Millar takes issue with the claim that there were 947 students in need of housing at PSC. He notes that these were the figures for enrolled students not living at home, but specifies that this number included married students and those who lived with relatives (ibid., 1). Millar contends that the “traditional view of the college,” although widely held, was “obsolete and unrealistic” (ibid., 2). He states that the report’s explanation of the “European approach”—“the institution should concern itself only with academic matters”—adopted by “a major segment of American higher education” is reductive of the role that Portland State played in the lives of students (ibid.). He argues that the college did, indeed, continue the education of the individual through the extracurricular activities, social spaces, and events offered on campus (ibid.). He goes on to clarify part of the larger mission of the institution was to provide a less expensive college education to a larger proportion of the populace. Being “a non-residential urban college” means higher education was more affordable as room and board were cut from the overall costs of enrollment. Furthermore, Millar contests the idea that the “whole package” of one’s college education necessarily included living on campus and the assertion by the report that the students at Portland State were missing out on an invaluable part of the college experience (ibid.). Millar believes that sidestepping the issue of college housing had greatly contributed to the democratization of education. He states as much, “[...] along with low tuition, cutting out the cost of dormitory living is quite likely the single most important educational achievement of our time, in making post-high school education available to the majority of the population [...]” (ibid., 3). The PSC president questions the real educational value of “supervised student group living” (ibid.). He claims that many of the students who had transferred to PSC had indicated that such housing arrangements were “a distraction from education, maturation, and individual growth” (ibid.). Additionally, Millar defends the college’s position to “not stand habitually *in loco parentis*,” saying that the students at the institution demonstrated a great degree of maturity because the administration did not take a paternalistic role in their lives

(ibid.). This is evident, in Millar's opinion, by the fact that many of the PSC students "live, work, and carry on many activities as members of an adult urban community while they are studying" (ibid.). If anything, Millar believed this was excellent preparation "for fuller entry into adult life" because it allowed them greater freedom of choice (ibid.). Furthermore, he criticizes the ideal role of the academic institution being one where it is supposed to intrude on students' privacy, cultivate "'collegiate' behavior," and restrain "newer forms of 'alienated' adolescence" and informs Mr. Harman that this ideal was falling by the wayside in all American higher education (ibid.). The report apparently suggested that the residents of Portland would happily bond themselves to paying for residence halls to be constructed, but Millar argues that the college is in need of classrooms and laboratories and would prefer to put the bonding power of the community towards the advancement of the college's academic facilities instead of building housing that would be too expensive for the students anyway (ibid., 4). With an explanation like this, it becomes clear that Portland State officials were not only opposed to playing *in loco parentis*, they had a philosophical vision behind their efforts that held that true maturation came through real life experience. In this they were on a par with the student movement and their demand for the end of this practice. If what Millar claims that, in the mid-1960s, many college and university administrators had already begun the shift towards loosening the reigns on controlling students' private behaviors were true, then students would not have to revolt against the administration to treat them more like adults because they were already giving them the independence to make their own decisions in this regard.

Though PSC did not have the occasion to demonstrate how much they were part of this trend because there was no communal housing on campus until 1972, when students on the Boise campus asked for administrators to repeal parietals and *in loco parentis* in 1970, and to start a coeducational housing project in 1972, officials complied and the transformations were almost instantaneous.<sup>167</sup>

Falling in step with the larger atmosphere of the times, *Les Bois* 1967 waxes

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<sup>167</sup> This will be discussed at length in the following section.

poetic about BJC's growth and the importance of the human element in its foreword. Whereas this became a predominant theme as early as 1956 in *The Viking*, Boise Junior College appears to have just begun to make the larger connection between people and place. Opening with "Ours is a proud heritage!" the book traces the physical development of the school, but then adds that it is nothing without its students (*Les Bois* 1967, 2-3): "These buildings, however, are but an attractive shell... the real college can only be found in the people composing the student body, faculty and administration. It is the human minds, alive and questioning, which give life to the college, and reason for its existence" (ibid.). By contrast, the foreword seems to be more in tune with some of the more manifest things taking place at Portland State, the emphasis on individuality and the necessity of participation, albeit in very different ways. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Boise had undergone its own status change that year, going from being a two-year institution known as Boise Junior College to Boise College (BC), a four-year school in 1967. The state would recognize the institution as one of its own in 1969 and the name would change again to Boise State College (BSC).

There is more emphasis on political participation as three different clubs had organized on campus, yet they remained traditional party-toeing organizations: The Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative political group, founded that year; the Young Democrats Clubs, first established in 1964 and then, reorganized in 1966; and the Young Republicans Club, which had had the longest standing presence on campus, getting started over thirty years before. Though the Young Republicans is noted as being the longest-lasting political organization on campus, the Young Democrats were called "a major special interest club on campus," which indicates the traditionally conservative stronghold of the Boise College campus was home to a liberal minority (ibid., 168). It also appears that BC students were increasingly interested in the intellectual offerings that a college could afford them as guest speakers began visiting the campus. Politics and intellectualism came together in the panel discussion on the "nuclear proliferations problem" organized by the International Relations Club that was broadcast to the Boise community (ibid., 195).

Although the 1967 *Les Bois* did not document protests or evolve into an

exemplar of the counterculture, the growing presence of political activism was accompanied by small signs of changing student attitudes. In this regard, the Esquires stood out once again. Their motto was included in the annual this year and was stated as being, “Honor, Fellowship, Peace and Scholarship” (ibid., 188). Seemingly lacking in any hint of subversion, the Esquires motto speaks to the feelings of the active ex-servicemen’s feelings about Vietnam. It is not meant to be a rallying call for protest; it is a simple and earnest statement that speaks to their experience. The student government was, as usual, preoccupied by the social events on campus, but are very quickly referred to as actively reaching outside the college community as citizens to affect change for the campus. The *Les Bois* reports that they were “working for the passage of a bill to secure state funds for Boise College” (ibid., 172). For the first time also, we see the growing importance of music in the pages of the annual. There was a battle of the bands, a performance by the English music duo, Chad and Jeremy, and a Glenn Yarborough Fall concert. Even the dormitories were evolving. On the one hand, more students were being accommodated: they had gone from 3 in 1964 (Morrison [female] and Driscoll [male] Halls, and Falk Place [female]) to five different sites, adding Chapman House, opened in 1966 for women, and West Hall, opened in 1965 for men. On the other hand, some residents were gaining in autonomy. The description of Driscoll Hall describes it as a place that serves “as a resident for 78 men” and “a self-governing body trying to develop adult attitudes and to promote campus unity” (ibid., 175). This is the only dormitory that is given so much personal accountability. Although the women’s dormitories continue in the past tradition of talking about the residences as social spaces, it is significant that one dorm has taken on such an independent aura.

#### **4. Reaping What Was Sewn**

The 1968 *Viking* clearly conveys a mood that might be seen as speaking to the times: disaffection with authority, an ambivalent vision of time, and a distrust for all that had previously claimed that there was one truth or way in life. The foreword presents such a perspective:

The year at PSC is nine months of time and whatever several thousand people

do with it. Along the way knowledge in varying amounts is exchanged between students and professors. Of course, what else happens is momentarily or permanently memorable. Through it all the camera lumbers arbitrarily, like a dinosaur, and where its feet fall, these few prints become the only record of the time. In the end, the individual remembers only his small world. His story is not divided into years but into the memories of people. In these memories remains what was and what might have been. In these recollections are judgments of the world and of the time we shared (*Portland State Viking 1968*, 7).

Uncertainty predominates here. The very first sentence presents the reader with a specified amount of time and then makes a vague comment about what how explicit timeframes depend on what an individual does with them. The next subject ruminated on is the subjectivity of the educational process. It is described as an exchange between student and teacher, which does not necessarily guarantee that anything is gained. It is significant that it is constructed as a two-way process because it implies that learning is not just done by the student, but by the instructor as well. Refusal on either end, for whatever reason, hinders the exchange. This sentiment is perfectly summarized in a quote given by a science professor at the institution, “Learning is probably best when it is an informal experience. [...] The formal part of education is only a means to an end” (*Portland State Viking 1968*, 29). This perhaps has to do with the prevailing criticism of the curricula and of the student-teacher relationship in the student movement. The ruminations of the foreword and the inclusion of a faculty member stating the importance of informal education shows that some were moving away from a concrete definition of what learning should be by the end of the 1960s at Portland State and adopting a more flexible vision of pedagogy and instruction. The rest of the foreword focuses on the notion of time and its mutability. In this uncertainty, there is ambivalence about how representative a yearbook can be, and a questioning of the way that it is documented. This doubt springs from the fact that one’s memories come from the relatively small experience of an individual. In a way this is fitting of the late 1960s because it insists on a continuous subjectivity, a randomness, an ennui. It is the most existential text present thus far in the yearbooks because it really seems to convey a need for self-definition, for grounding, and acceptance of many truths.

This book is very nontraditional in a way. It features students in different

contexts of the college, usually focusing on one facet of their lives, like their studies or extracurricular activities, several photographs are taken of them in that context, and a long quote is presented to portray that individual. Some of them talk in depth about the activity they are meant to be representing, others focus on other interests or aspects of their personality. There is no explanation for how these people were chosen, but there is some diversity in the choices: Men and women, athletes and artists, popular students and hermits, students at every level of the academic and life spectrum are all present.<sup>168</sup> In trying to represent the student body, *The Viking* presents what it imagines is every type of student, faculty member, and administrator. They explore the variety of the campus, interviewing people from all different backgrounds, with varying levels of commitment and involvement in the Portland community and college community. Rather than focusing on groups or one's class, this yearbook uses individuals to create a heterogeneous portrait of the student body.

Another unique feature of this yearbook is its inclusion of other media: there are posters from musical—Clayton & Taylor as well as the Electric Zoo—and cultural events, including a poetry reading, pieces reprinted from *The Vanguard*, poems from interviewees, and a monologue from plays. There is even a recipe in white letters on a black page following an interview by a student who talked about enjoying the simpler things in life, like cooking.

The article included in *The Viking's* pages discusses Portland State's growth and its meaning. For the first time amongst Portland State's students, growth is seen

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<sup>168</sup> There is a woman psychology major; a man football player who is studying P.E.; a woman theater arts major; a man science professor; a woman member of the student government; a non-traditional student who spends a lot of her time protesting Vietnam; a black, male activist and artist, a female art major; President Millar; a nerdy wrestling star; a male instructor of Arabic grammar; the creation story of the Yappists;<sup>168</sup> a male basketball coach ruminating on the family and the current generation; a female advisor in educational activities; a male political science major, captain of the swim team, and member of the water polo team; a female cheerleader, who was homecoming queen and an education major who insists on the importance of informing young people about their roles as citizens and need to feel concerned about the world they live in; a female, loner, art student who enjoys the informality of PSC; a male professor in urban studies who believes in individual responsibility and making the most out of one's experience; a male graphic design major who participated in the making of the yearbook, was part of the Outdoor Program, anticipated joining the army, and a writer; a male member of the college bowl team, psychology major, and an article he wrote for *The Vanguard*; a female public servant and graduate student working with handicapped students; a male sixth year student who had had as many majors; and a freshman male business major.

as a menace to the culture that has been created on campus. It seems to threaten so many of the eccentricities that make the students love it there. The text spans five pages and talks about the unique urban-institutional environment that would be devastated by urban renewal. It explains how this would dissuade those who had previously been attracted to the school from attending because the spirit of “independence and creativity” at the college would have all but disappeared. Significantly it warns that with urban renewal Portland would come to feel like a large city: “bus drivers, frozen windshields, tokens, gas pumps, grey streets, traffic reports on the radio, tall buildings, and fumes” (ibid., 134). And the campus would come to resemble every other residential campus: “dorm counselors, small rooms, meals on the hour, rules for dress, and the return to the automobile for expressions of love” (ibid.). He laments the separation between the academic environment and the community that urban renewal would bring. He is certain that alienation would ensue. He espouses a similar vision of Portland State as administrators did in years past, as a non-residential urban campus it had something different to offer Betty Co-Ed and Joe College.

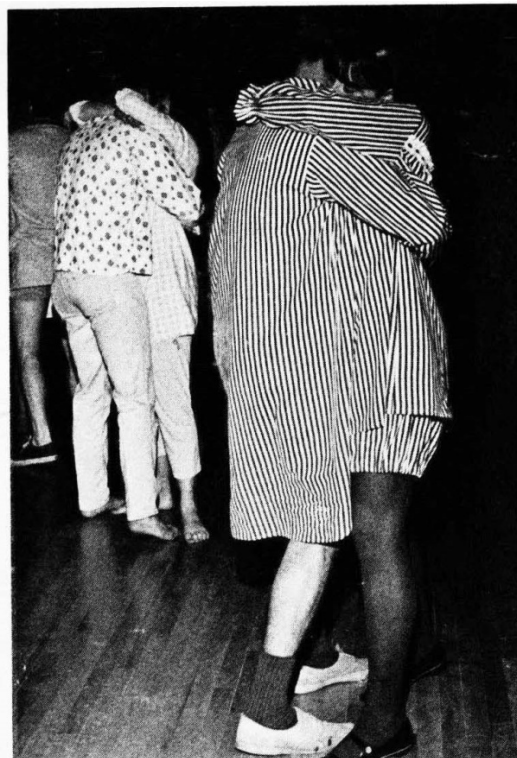


Figure 29 *The Viking* 1968, 13

As the focus of this yearbook is largely on the individual, very little alludes to the couple or shows people in groups. Figure 29, taken at the “pajama dance,” is one of a very few that shows people in an informal situation as couples. As can be seen, there are two couples holding each other very tightly. This is significant as this is the closest that any couples have been shown dancing. There is an intimacy that the viewer is able to access, but that does not feel voyeuristic, because this type of closeness, just like kissing, gradually no longer seemed so extraordinary.

The 1970 *Les Bois* appears to be more in the spirit of the times—more artistic, less rigid in every way, less copy, fewer captions, less observable organization and structure. However, it still contains all the classical information that a yearbook should. It does not completely abandon the form or layout. Like *The Viking*, by 1970, *Les Bois* also had adopted a more documentarian style to it. After the introduction, twelve pages are devoted to recording the sequence of one day from “beginning,” “progression,” to the “end.”

Just like Portland State, Boise College was adding students rapidly to its registration rolls, which necessitated greater facilities. This is reflected in the sentences that span the first couple of pages, which read, “1969-1970 at Boise State College... a year of stability...” “...of change...” “...but most of all people...” (*Les Bois 1970*, 4-9). At the same time that these ideas convey the feeling on campus, they also reflect the concerns of the student body. No copy was provided on what “stability” was meant to symbolize. It is included amongst two pages of aerial photographs of the campus. In such a context, it might be read as finding security in one’s surroundings, in the familiar, within the larger geo-political and national situation, it might be read as a desire to have peace and tranquility return to the lives of students. On pages six and seven where “...change...” is the central theme, there is a discussion of structural changes that had taken place and would take place over the next few years to provide better facilities to the student body. The “people” are shown through a myriad of candid shots and copy about the growing enrollments at the college, which were accompanied by directions sent out to students by the administration for the registration process. Though subtle, this juxtaposition between the vibrancy and independence of the candid photographs and the rigidity of the



registration process seems to indicate that the editors of the 1970 *Les Bois* found the administration's attitude to be a little "square." This deduction is based on the fact that the directions were set apart from the description of campus growth, they are preceded by "Students were given directions such as:" and followed by "—that was registration" (ibid., 10). The implication is clear that growth meant different things for students and administrators. The former saw their lives expanding, while the latter envisioned their task as more laborious.

By that time, the nationally-recognized Greek sororities and fraternities seemed to finally be making their present felt on the Boise College campus. Although there had been fraternities in the past, they were locally based and responded to niches in social life that had not yet been filled. The nationally recognized sororities and fraternities at Boise College appeared over the last couple of years: the sororities Alpha Xi Delta was "colonized" in early 1969 and Alpha Chi Omega as well as Gamma Phi Beta appear for the first time. The previous year's annual mentions the installment of three new sororities on campus, though only one is present in the 1969-1970 school year, the Delta, Delta, Deltas. The Intercollegiate Knights opened up its membership to young men outside of the service organization as it transformed into the Kappa Sigma fraternity. This is the first fraternity at Boise State, and Alpha Kappa Psi, a business fraternity also "colonized" in the spring of 1969.

The Esquires again appear to stand out as an organization as their role has gone from being one of subtle cries for peace to assuming the larger burden of readapting the soldier to civilian life. "The Esquire Club tries to unite these individuals on campus so their adjustment to college life will become easier and their associations with students of their age groups, experiences and social relations" (*Les Bois 1970*, 125).

Unlike their Portland State counterparts who were actively protesting and demonstrating as early as 1965, political activism was conveyed as existing in harmony with varying viewpoints. There was a feature of a relatively small group of people gathered together to observe the Vietnam Moratorium on October 15, 1969. Following this there is a picture of two different recruitment tables in the Student Union Building: one with a sign that said, "Peace Now" and the other with U.S. Navy

recruiters seated at it. The caption reads, “Differing opinions on war, the Moratorium and the Navy Recruiters peacefully coexist in the Student Union Building lobby” (*Les Bois 1970*, 26). Although there was a tone of trying to accommodate differing political opinions, the notes from the Student Senate meeting held on October 6, 1969, demonstrates that there was some radicalism present on the Boise State campus. They note:

Steve Welker made a motion to talk about the nation moritorium [*sic*] for nonviolence. This day was set aside for October 15, and Steve requested that all classes be dismissed so all students could participate in peaceful demonstration against the war in Vietnam. It was brought up that the Senate could not make a decision for all students concerning their feelings on the war, and if they were for the demonstration they would participate whether classes were dismissed or not (Student Senate Minutes, 1969c).<sup>169</sup>

This is then taken up again a couple of weeks later when the same Steve Welker asked Gary Felt to speak about the moratorium. Felt suggested that the student government had a responsibility to inform the state governor about their feelings regarding the War. As was evident in the minutes of the earlier meeting in October, there was dissent as to whether the student government could make such a statement on behalf of the student body and thus, they decided to set up a committee that would conduct a poll to get a sense of public opinion about the issue.

A more left-leaning political organization appears in the archives and the yearbook around this period of time, Apple. Granted student senate approval in April 1969, from the first discussions about its presence on the Boise State campus, Apple announced that it was political, claiming no affiliation to the New Left’s Students for a Democratic Society or any other political association (Student Senate Minutes, 1969a). It did, however, see itself as “a liberal group designed to improve social standards” (Student Senate Minutes, 1969b). Though Mike Phillips, one of the organizers, contended it was not a political organization, he said, “students are too apathetic and need to be involved” (*ibid.*). There is little information about the activism of the group, but immediately after the Senate approved them as a student

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<sup>169</sup> The moratorium was a nationwide event. Portland State hosted three different moratoriums during the 1969-1970 year. The final one in May, after Kent State and the escalations in Cambodia, resulted in students putting up barricades around the institution.

group, they began producing an underground newspaper. From its establishment the administration worried about the group's presence on campus. In a memorandum entitled "Status of APPLE Organization" from Dr. William Hendry, the Dean of Student Personnel Service and advisor to the ASB Executive Committee, to Mr. Harry Shimada, the Director of Student Activities and advisor to the Student Senate, Hendry wrote:

The Forum minutes of April 2, 1969 reveal that APPLE is a recognized student organization and operating as usual this summer. I met with Mike Phillips, APPLE Chairman, today and questioned him on the advisability [*sic*] of 1) conducting ordinary business in the absence of a faculty advisor, and 2) publishing and peddling an opusculum not consistent with our total educational objectives. Result: 1. A special meeting of APPLE will be called to select a faculty advisor pro tem. 2. The four thousand plus copies of the first and only APPLE publication will be destroyed in accordance with agreements reached by Mike Phillips and this office" (Hendry, 1969).

Apple did not get far in distributing its underground newspaper as is noted by Dr. Hendry, but their political leanings, whatever they were, were of enough concern to the administration that they immediately took action to ensure that the group had the proper faculty "guidance" to continue as a student association. Apple is noted in the 1970 *Les Bois* as sponsoring a local debate between the mayoral candidates, their support for the moratorium effort, and the instigation of "a panel discussion which led to the abolishment of the 'Statement of Student's Rights'" (*Les Bois 1970*, 139). Though late to the game, the Boise State campus had genuine representation of the counterculture. Further research on this issue might add an interesting footnote to Boise's socio-cultural history.

Although the counterculture and anti-war movement did not appear to take the campus by storm, a letter from the Dean of Men, Edwin E. Wilkinson, to the Chief of Police, John Church, still conveys a sense that students looked on authority figures with hesitation and distrust. Wilkinson wrote a letter to express his appreciation to the Chief of Police for an officer's behavior in an incident on campus:

On Monday evening, August 30, 1971, Sgt. Robert Brock displayed the highest standards of a professional police officer. During an on-campus outside dance attended by approximately 1,000 students, a number of complaints were received by the Boise Police Department concerning the disturbing echo from the music. Sgt. Brock did an excellent job of referring the complaints to me, other administrative officers, and student leaders, as

well as reporting the results and responses to our efforts to mute the echo. [...] Sgt. Brock's whole attitude was that of cooperation, concern and pleasantness under obviously trying and tense conditions. He handled the situation so well that we had 100% cooperation from the students, band and those in charge. He left no doubt in the minds of a large number of young people that Police Officers can be and are 'Good Guys' (Wilkinson, 1971).

Clearly from the vocabulary used and the underlying references being made here, there is the implication that this was a potentially explosive situation. However, because the police officer allegedly conducted himself with such professionalism, the young people were given no reason to believe that he was imposing his authority on them, that they were not fundamentally at odds. The Dean of Men applauds this approach to policing as it creates a more amenable relationship between authority figures and students, as well as the campus and community.

In the academic year 1970-1971, Boise State administrators began revising their role as custodians of the private lives of students. The women students initiated this, but it appears that the administration quickly complied. On October 6, 1970 Dr. Marjorie Jackson, Dean of Women, received a document from all the Vice-Presidents of the female dorms—Driscoll, Morrison, and Marion Halls—in which they proposed that any sophomore woman of good academic standing—maintaining a 2.0 grade point average (G.P.A.)—would be able check out a key to the dormitories, thus, allowing her to return after the dorm's curfew. The proposal reassures Dr. Jackson that “Any sophomore eligible for key privilege [...] must have parental permission as granted by the parents' signature on a sophomore key-permission card on file in the Dean of Women's Office” (“Proposal: Sophomore Key Privilege” 6 Oct. 1970, 1). Other stipulations were included as well. The first of which stated that, upon checking the key out the young woman would fill out a form indicating her destination, escort, when she would leave and return, which would be sent to her parents. The second laid out deadlines for key checkout and check-in, requiring eight hours between the request and key pick-up, meaning the paperwork needed to be filled out before 12 p.m. and returned by 6 a.m. the following morning, thus preventing dorm residents from being out all night (*ibid.*, 2). There is no record of how the administration responded to this specific request, but documents from a month later seem to indicate that they agreed to these terms.

Broadening the terms of curfew were not the only concerns raised by Boise State female dorm residence. Less than one month later, a letter was sent from Marian Hall to the Dean of Women suggesting that the imposed study hours, quiet hours, and dorm closing hours be modified. On November 3, 1970, Jo Ann Cill, the president of the women's dormitory reported to Dr. Jackson that the hall had agreed that the mandatory study hours for female freshmen between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. on weeknights should be abolished, but quiet hours maintained (7 p.m. and 7 a.m.). The women thought that this modification would allow residents time to study, while enabling those who had social occasions to attend to leave the dorms until the 11 p.m. curfew at 11 p.m. Cill suggested that if these modifications were not possible, freshmen women should at the very least be able to leave the dorms between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. on weeknights for socializing. The dorm women were requesting that the administration consider changing the resident's study hours and closed hours to quiet hours so that the women of the dorm would have greater freedom in choosing how to spend their evenings. Marian Hall's requests continued: the majority of residents wanted to extend the weekend curfew hours by one hour, thus, closing the dormitory on Saturday morning at 2 a.m. and Sunday morning at 12 a.m. With aplomb and maturity, Cill conveys the women's bewilderment at why the dorms closed at different hours on Friday and Saturday nights and explains that the early hours of 1 a.m. for Friday night and 11 p.m. Saturday put undue restrictions on the young women. For those young women who had gone out on a social call, these curfews frequently required that they miss part of the evening's entertainment so they might return on time. While for the residents whose parents lived far from campus and enjoyed going home to visit, the early curfews forced them to leave home earlier than they would have liked in order to check in before closing hours. Completely adopting the postwar administrative rhetoric that challenged students to behave like responsible adults, Cill closes her letter with this argument, "Marian Hall, as you may know, consists mostly of Freshmen. These girls feel that upon coming to college they have assumed the responsibilities of adults, and the restrictions placed on them as Freshmen are too severe" (3 Nov., 1970).

The freshmen at Marian Hall were not the only women looking for more

leniency in the dorms. The very next day, November 4, 1970, all of the women's residence halls voted to amend mandated study hours for freshmen female students and to extend the "sophomore key privilege" to freshmen. The results of this vote were immediately sent to Boise State's administration. The same rules that applied to sophomores for key usage would carry over to freshmen: maintain a 2.0 G.P.A. and have parental permission. Because being able to check out a key was still framed as a privilege, however, freshmen students had to earn this right and so were not eligible until they had proven their ability to maintain their grades (Hendry 10 Nov. 1970, 4). The female dorms unanimously took a stand against previous academic years' rules that stated first semester, female, freshmen students could not leave the dormitories after 7 p.m. for the first nine weeks of the school year. They asked that the rule be changed so that freshmen "are able to receive callers in the lounge and leave the dorm until 11:00 p.m." (ibid). Approximately one week later, the Dean of Student Personnel Services, William W. Hendry, sent a letter to Bonnie L. Fogg, the Rules Committee Chairman, stating that the changes in enforced study hours would take effect immediately and that changes to the key policy would be implemented during the spring semester (ibid., 1).

In spite of an acquiescent administration, the women's residence halls still felt that there was a lack of communication between themselves and the administration as well as some incoherence and redundancy in the rules regarding key privileges. Bonnie Fogg details the minutes of a meeting that took place between Morrison Hall, Dr. Jackson and Dr. Hendry on November 13, 1970. The first issue of debate was the minimum G.P.A. that would allow female students key privileges. Morrison Hall thought 2.25 instead of 2.5 was sufficient; the 12 p.m. check-out time seemed erroneous as did the minimum eight-hour delay between key request and check-out, and finally that filling out a form that would be sent home to one's parents was unnecessary harassment. Fogg states, "We feel that if a girl has a parent blanket permission she should not have to sign out on this card and have it sent to her parents. Her parents apparently have put their trust in her if they have given her this permission. Again it is unnecessary bookwork and cost" (Fogg 13 Nov., 1970, 2).

Responding promptly, the Dean of Women sent out a letter to parents dated

the same day, November 13, informing them of the changes taking place with the key privileges for both freshmen and sophomore students. In the letter, Dr. Jackson explains that signing the key privilege form would allow sophomore students, who had a cumulative G.P.A. the first semester of 2.25 and 2.0 the second, and second-semester freshmen, with a 2.25 average, “to sign out of her hall with a key on any night so long as she returns before 6:00 a.m. the following morning” (13 Nov. 1970). She notes specifically that the college would not be responsible for the girl during the hours she was signed out of her dormitory. She equally states that this was applicable only to minors, or those under the age of 21. It appears that the administration felt the women’s requests were reasonable and so complied accordingly.

The debate waged on at the end of the school year, however, as two new dormitories were scheduled to open during the fall semester. Representatives from the female dorms sent a “Night Hostess Proposal” for the new residence. In the initial draft, these young women attempted to subvert parental authority by adding clauses that did away with the requirement of a parental signature after more than one qualifying semester. They stipulated:

If parental permission is not obtained the first semester that a freshman or sophomore qualifies, she must continue to follow regular dormitory hours for that semester. The denial of parental permission is only applicable, however, for the first qualifying semester. If the girl still has the grades the semester following parental denial, she automatically assumes the privilege of the no-curfew system. Juniors and seniors need no parental permission, even if it is during their junior or senior year when they first obtain a 2.00 GPA” (Draft: Night Hostess Proposal for the Towers n.d., 1).

The administration was less acquiescent to this request. It was one thing to divorce themselves from standing in for parents, it was another allowing young women complete autonomy over themselves. They maintained that parental permission was the deciding factor on whether or not a young woman under the age of 21 was able to avoid the dormitories’ curfew. In the final draft, they do, however, allow a parental permission form to carry over, and thus not need to be asked for a second time, if ever the privilege was revoked because of one’s grades. Both documents extend the morning check in time to 8 a.m.

One of the revolutionary aspects of the new dormitories was that they did away with the material key. Instead, a buzzer would be installed and a night

hostess would be hired who would sign the girls in and out. Both the administration's and the dormitory representatives' documents note that this had practical, psychological, and emotional consequences for the young women on campus. One, fewer keys would be lost; two, the women would not feel as "psychologically restricted;" and three, the night hostess could act as a "surrogate mother to come home to" (Final: Night Hostess Proposal for the Towers 30 Mar. 1970, 1). Though this proposal was too costly to implement in the other dormitories, both proposals suggest that the larger rules for "no curfew" be applied when the adequate conditions were met—2.25 G.P.A. for freshmen and parental permission, 2.0 for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Given the final version approved by the administration had already suspended the suggestion that parental permission was not required for the more advanced students, it seems that they did not feel it was necessary to restate that anyone under the age of 21 would still require parental permission regardless of their class standing.

At the end of April 1971, the On Campus Living Committee reported that visiting hours within the dorms needed greater variation. Compiling the statistics from various surveys conducted by the group, they suggested that each residence hall ought to determine their "intervisitation hours" within the current open hours of the dorms—Sunday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. to 1 a.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.—limiting visiting hours to a ten-hour period. They stipulate that such a change would necessitate a student receptionist be on duty to sign visitors in, to inform residents of their visitor's arrival, to warn each resident and visitor when hours were closing, and to check each visitor out. Though this was a way for students to do away with study and quiet hours and have more control of what to do with their time during "open hours," the real revolutionary suggestion made by this report was to "discontinue the regulation of women's hours" altogether (On Campus Living Committee 1971, 3). This suggestion was approved by the Associated Students of Boise State College Senate and proposed to the State Board of Education. The report concludes that it should be decided by the residents in each hall, floor, suite, and room to decide if they wanted to have intervisitation and how to handle them. The State Board of Education approved all of the suggestions made by



the On Campus Living Committee at their June 30, 1971 meeting.

An example of what this ended up looking like can be seen in the “Chaffee Hall Visitation Regulations.” Chaffee Hall, an all-male dormitory, submitted their agreed upon visiting hours and the way these would be monitored on September 16, 1971 to the Dean of Men. In it they stipulate what “violations of visiting regulations” were: “excessive noise, violation of other floor members’ privacy, having a girl in your room before or after visiting hours, conduct of the host in a manner violating general moral codes and ethics, and possession by the host and his guest of alcoholic beverages and/or illegal drugs” (Chaffee Hall Visitation Regulations 1971, 3). Even though the On Campus Living Committee and the State Board of Higher Education granted greater freedoms to dormitory students in terms of hours, we can see by this document that rules were still largely aimed at controlling students’ sexual behavior.

Perhaps it is for this reason that one can see in the “Results: Visitation Survey” tabulated for Driscoll Hall in November 1971, female residents continued to express concern with too much oversight and too little confidence given them in their private lives. Though many of the respondents, 13 of 61, felt the rules were satisfactory, 19 did not like the monitor system, 4 felt there were too many restrictions, and 4 felt that signing visitors in and out was unnecessary (Results: Visitation Survey Nov. 1971, 1). This is made clearer in the question asked about whether students would like to have a 24-hour open lounge 11 of 48 affirmative responses said they “liked visitors after hours” 18 “liked place to talk,” and 7 said it was a “place to go” (ibid., 2). In trying to understand what the visitations were providing female students, it becomes clear that this was a way for women to go about integrating their private lives into the dorm environment: seven respondents thought it made the dorm more like home, 26 reported it gave them “privacy with visitors,” and nine said it gave them the chance to “study with boyfriends” of 53 total (ibid., 3). When asked what suggestions they had for the continuing system, fifteen of 25 felt the monitor system either was unnecessary or needed to be revised (ibid.). The report notes at the end that 85 percent of Driscoll Hall residents participated and that their inconsistent totals were due to the fact that students did not answer all the questions.

In January 1972, the Interdormitory Council (IDC) had a sub-committee meet to survey students about the possibility of coeducational housing. They had responses from 51 percent of the four college dormitories with 78 percent confirming they were interested in mixed-sex housing. A slim majority, 51 percent, did not believe academic requirements should have to be met in order to live in co-ed dorms. In response to this, the IDC submitted a proposal to President John Barnes asking for a pilot coed dorm to be initiated the following academic year. They stipulated that such housing should be reserved to upperclassmen of good academic standing—2.0 grade point average—and social standing—“not more than one appearance before a residence hall judiciary board or Campus Judiciary Council”—and that the dorms should be divided by sex—one wing for women, the other for men (Proposal for Cooperative Housing Unit 9 May 1972, 2). The proposal specifies that the academic advisor for the residence should be one who could “approach the position with the idea of being a friend and not as an ‘in loco parentis’ relationship” (ibid., 3). In accordance with the larger aims of college administrators at that time, the report explains, “This should not be considered as a ‘damper’ but rather as an additional opportunity for the students to define the adult role in society” (ibid.). Dr. Barnes approved the IDC’s proposal the same day the suggestion was dated. In the immediate aftermath of the War, *in loco parentis* was seen as one of the guiding principles for administrators and educators to help students along the path to adulthood, but by the end of the postwar era, it was ultimately seen as a hindrance.

In spite of changes in attitudes, not everyone in the Boise community believed that this was an “opportunity for the students to define the adult role.” On June 29, 1972, *The Idaho Statesmen*, Boise’s only city newspaper, reported on this pilot at BSC. A debate immediately ensued. One Mrs. R.D. Christensen wrote to the editor that she was “saddened to read” about the implementation of the coed dorm. She believed that this was a reflection of weakening morals, on the part of students as well as adults. She wrote,

From a Christian moral standpoint this could read: ‘This is another step in our continuing program of downgrading, regressing and animalizing our total resident hall program.’ A good deal of what is wrong with the moral standards of today’s youth is the fuzzy-brained thinking of so-called adults who have forgotten or never knew that we only have joy as we abstain not only from

actual evil but 'abstain from all appearance of evil' (I Thessalonians 5:22) (R.D. Christensen 29 Jun., 1972).

The following morning Bill Hathaway, a reporter for the *Statesman*, documents that BSC had already been home to co-ed dorms in the academic year of 1955-56. He bases this claim on the recollections of a Mrs. Dale Pine of Nampa who lived in Morrison Hall at that time and said because there was not sufficient housing available to male students, they were accommodated in the women's dorm. The bottom floor was reserved for men, while the rest of the dormitory was filled with women residents. Sexual immorality did not break out on the BJC campus because of co-ed housing at that time. She is quoted as having said, "Of course, there's always a lot of hanky-panky going on at college not matter what, but I never did hear of any saucy stories connected with the arrangement" (Hathaway 30 Jun., 1972). Two other letters to the editor contend that Boise State students were responsible enough to handle the challenge of coeducational housing. One written by a student at BSC and organizer of the proposed project reminds readers of the guidelines put into effect that would provide the dorms with a wholesome atmosphere. He disputes the idea that implementing coeducation residences on campus was un-Christian as they would still provide a supervised housing experience for students. Additionally, he says that, as a former soldier, that he felt that this environment was welcome among the more experienced and mature students at the college, who he thought would "bring merit to the total community of Boise" (Young, n.d.). In a similar vein, Carol Bachelder had a letter published in which she argues that coeducational residence halls were in perfect harmony with the larger academic missions of any college. She writes, "College is supposed to be an educational experience, and it should give some practical life experience along with the academics" (5 Jul., 1972). She describes this move as "sensible," "progressive," and "a credit to Boise's modern thinking" (ibid.). She justifies her position based on the fact that sex-segregated housing during the college years was the anomaly in one's life experience, not the standard. She explains that college students came from mixed-sex homes and then would enter into marriage, which was also male and female cohabitation. Furthermore, Bachelder argues that coeducational dorms were not the means for young people to engage in unrestricted sexual activity, but a good way for youngsters to socialize more in mixed company,

which provided men and women with greater tools for understanding one another. She sees this arrangement as perfect preparation for life after college, when she writes, “Coeducational dormitories are good preparation for married living” (ibid.). Despite the objection of one concerned citizen, the Boise State archives document the implementation of co-ed housing as being positively received by the community, thereby demonstrating the changes occurring nationally in the perception of relationships.

Like the previous volume, the 1971 *Viking* does features on certain individuals in its photographic and textual representations. Photographs dominate while the text acts as clarification. “This is a book about the people of the Portland State University community, a personal and informal look at them as they lead their daily lives in the midst of a large urban university environment. It is a reflection expressed through portraits of individuals and the words of individuals” (*Portland State University Viking 1971*, 7). Again the focus is on the individual rather than the group. In addition to highlighting the individual, the *Viking* insists more on the community; a trend that was becoming increasingly integral to the college’s sense of self. At the same time, explicit identification with the university is absent.

Though most portraits show a singular person, three pages are devoted to couples. On each page there is a different portrait of a heterosexual couple, close together posing for the camera. Figure 30 comes from these images. Representing the



Figure 30 *The Viking* 1971, 132-133

changing diversity of college life seems to be integral to this yearbook's overall project. Here we have a mixed-race couple sitting together.<sup>170</sup> There is nothing overtly intimate about their pose, but their proximity and the way that the young woman leans her head towards the young man's shoulder indicates that they were together. This yearbook pays attention to the representation of race on campus as people of color are shown in nearly every aspect of college life: here romantically, and elsewhere academically and socially. Race is not the only barrier that these editors seem to want to overcome. They also appear to contest the idea that college students are single, so families (a couple and their children) are shown and a marriage ceremony is included. As such, this annual pushes more towards the inclusion of the most intimate part of the informal sphere in the more public aspects of the semi-formal and formal spheres.

Nearly a decade behind Portland State's *The Viking*, the 1973 *Les Bois* is the first to reflect the general change in tone wrought by the activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The introductory pages feature a poem, of sorts, that seems to speak to the environmental concerns that had become a part of such activism. It alludes to the need for people to reconcile urbanization with a more harmonious relationship with nature, saying "concrete castles," "sprawling campus; sidewalk city," "statues grow where trees took root," "pavement living under-foot" "pollution's promise" "pressed to live together mind to mind, seeking answers hard to find, WITH nature must be right, lest we lost the fight" (*Les Bois* 1973, 2-9). All the while, images of the campus and photos of the natural landscape present a photomontage of the area. The conclusion has a different sort of poem with pictures of nature and students, showing young people acting in cooperation with the environment. Much more creativity and play are present in this book than others. There was less focus on the conventional activities. There were no photos of dances. There were portraits of associations, but it looks as though they were provided by the groups, not done by a

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<sup>170</sup> The inclusion of a mixed-race couple was truly revolutionary for the times. As mixed-racial couples had only recently been acknowledged and that the end of bans on interracial relationships in 37 states had only recently been addressed by the Supreme Court decision, *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967.

professional, school photographer. As documented in dormitory social events around the same time, the yearbook seems to have been suffering from a lack student interest and thus announces that the yearbook had not seen its budget renewed for the following year, though the *Les Bois* continued to be printed until the 1977-1978 academic year.

Following the seeming trend of lowered student enthusiasm for institutionalized events, the 1972 homecoming is described in the *Les Bois* as a flop. “The Homecoming program was almost bagged altogether when it was snapped up and given direction centered around students and a homecoming advertising volume. The students, however, didn’t see it that way. The whole week lacked support of the student body, even in the Queen elections” (ibid., 18). In spite of students’ disinterest in homecoming, this is the first occasion that race is explicitly acknowledged in the *Les Bois* annuals during my study period.<sup>171</sup> When it finally is, it is because a Native American woman, dressed in a traditional dress, was nominated the homecoming queen. “Although Homecoming Week didn’t mean much to most students at BSC, for some it was the highlight of their lives. Miss Verna Racehorse and the rest of those who participated probably came away feeling that Homecoming was an invaluable experience. ...it’s nice to think that somebody got something out of it...” (ibid., 22). Albeit, the editors did not assess this situation in the light of race, but the copy makes one wonder if they were asserting this moment as a “highlight” of her life because she was Native American. The larger question is, however, what does it say about the Boise State community that the one year the student body was disinterested in homecoming was the year a woman from an ethno-racial minority was elected?

Waning student participation in social activities can be seen in the way that the “Activities” section is organized. Unlike previous editions, the 1973 *Les Bois* shows very few events that graced its pages in the past. In fact, concerts take a predominant role, taking up space on 25 of the 54 pages in the section. Even though

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<sup>171</sup> There are editions before that show members of ethno-racial minorities. Race is not a focus of this portrayal though. The 1967 *Les Bois* has a photograph of the Hui O Hawaii club, organized for Hawaiian students. Even though most of the people in the photograph were Hawaiian, it is uncertain that the club formed because of a common racial or state identity, because people of other ethno-racial backgrounds were present as well.

music indicates a shift away from the heavily organized events of the past, many of the captions indicate whether or not the performances were successful or not—in terms of turn out and quality. In addition to an increased focus on music, other “non-traditional” events were also featured. There is a double-page spread that shows speakers who visited the college that year, most of them speaking about political issues (*ibid.*, 32-33). There were the Coffeehouse Productions, which appears to be an alternative to the official drama department. They put on productions that included Black Poetry, folk singing, and plays, participating in the inclusion of minority students into a more diverse college life. On more than one occasion, the editors of the yearbook even refer to the importance of “behind the scenes” student events that participated in the creation of the overall social environment (*ibid.*, 40). As such, they try to portray what one might consider some of the more mundane activities that represented different segments of the student population. For example, the give credit to “Foreign Films and Dances, Charity Drives and Pops Films, the Minority Cultural Center, and students being students, make the college live sometimes more-so than the intermittent surges of the ‘big’ events” (*ibid.*, 41).

In addition to showing a more alternative bent, there is also much more of a challenging political presence in this book. Over about six pages, a poem discusses the “apathy” and “indifference” that accompany the activity of student life (*ibid.*, 154-159). The text is juxtaposed against a photomontage of different student activities and moments throughout the typical day that show people uninvolved, and just going about their lives. Additionally, student government seems to be up for critiquing as there was a two-page feature on the Senate, where photos and portraits are arranged into the word “JOKE” and the copy mocks the process and lack of power of the organization. A wheel of fortune wheel with tongue-in-check responses mocks their ineffectiveness.

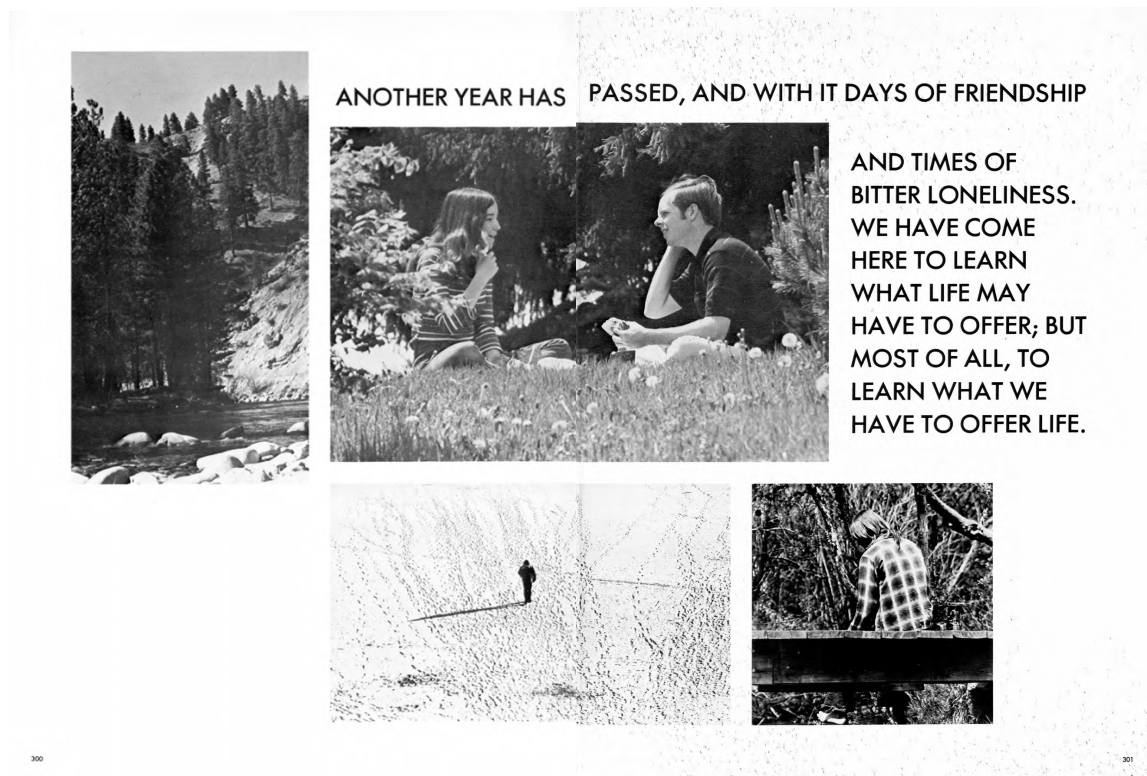


Figure 31 *Les Bois* 1973, 300-301

Figure 31 was the only identifiable picture of a couple in the entire yearbook. Perhaps reflecting the desire to assert identity or show the individual, most of the images in the 1973 annual show groups of people all together or as individuals. On pages 300 and 301 the reader is reminded of the opening theme of the book: humans peacefully coexisting with the environment. In each of the four photos on the page, the beauty of the Idaho wilderness is shown, whether it is an image of the unadulterated forest, a couple peacefully conversing in the grass, an individual communing with the elements, or struggling against them in the snow. These pictures in conjunction with the text are meant to look towards the future and to help one see oneself in relation to it. The couple, if it can be called that, in Figure 31 reminds the viewer perhaps of what is to come, but it is less regimented than in the past, less clear as to what it means, and absent of all gender codes, but dress.

A fitting end to this study resonates in the 1973 *Les Bois*, but takes full form in Portland State's 1974 annual, which appears to separate itself entirely from the campus, the administration, and the formal and even semiformal sphere of academics, redirecting attention to the public and private life of the individual. This is made



apparent in that it is no longer *The Viking*, but *A Portland Family Album*, which highlights even more than previous editions the importance of the individual *vis-à-vis* the community. This “album” does not even slightly resemble a yearbook, on the inside or the outside. The opening text refers to the city, not the school; it incorporates the national at the local level. “Portland, an American city in 1974, is more than the sum of its parts; its population, more than the sum of its individuals. It is the blend of American culture and thought. What we do in Portland affects other Americans; what happens in America affects our actions here” (*A Portland Family Album 1974*, 6). This vision allows for the urban identity of Portland to subsume the campus, but the student/youth culture of the campus to permeate the city’s larger environment. Most of the text in this book consists of quotes from national magazines that discuss national and world events: inflation, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan touring, the auto industry, natural gas, the Kohoutek Comet, and Nixon claiming he was not a “crook.”

Transitioning to the local level, the annual has a text about the cycle of the city. Then it tries to extend a bridge between national and local identity by waxing poetic on a theme that might be seen as an extension of the countercultural vision of the world—the presumption that those in power and authority lack conscience and empathy. As a historic moment in American history approaches, the editors feel it is up to them to begin a discussion to work this out. They explain it thus:

We are approaching our two hundredth anniversary and this year will perhaps mark a turning point in American life: the end of the frontier and the realization that maybe at last we have to live with ourselves and each other. ‘Do you like America?’ This question was put to many Portland people at the public library. It's not a deep or leading question, but it provided an opportunity to respond in a personal manner (*A Portland Family Album 1974*, 30).

The allowance that this question does not beg great pondering or seek a specific answer tries to confine the comments that precede it. In asking inhabitants of Portland, off of campus, whether or not they like America, was meant, it seems, to give the reader a vision of the community and how individuals saw themselves in relation to the nation. In a journalistic endeavor to show neutrality, the *Album* records

ten responses representing a variety of opinions. This is then followed by what appears to be a presentation of Americana: commercialism and consumer culture embodied by several pictures at a McDonald's, of a woman in a boat accessory shop, of an advertisement for a home show in Portland, and a short interview with a shoe salesman. It is unclear if what follows is meant to be a juxtaposition or continuance of Americana because there is a clear switch in the theme of consumer society to communitarianism as four pages are devoted to the Fremont Bridge's People's Day, when Portlanders appropriated a bridge that was to become a motorway.<sup>172</sup> Then, there is a series of pictures of people holding an American flag, which chronologically seems to be the second part of a project to make a point about how Portlanders feel about their country. Again, a variety of people are shown with the flag—a man with cowboy boots, a black man, a white woman, a man and boy, a young man—and one, as is explained on the page, refused saying, "I don't want to be seen holding the American flag. But you can take a picture of me holding this umbrella with the naked ladies on it" (ibid., 61). Why include this discussion? It seems that the editor believed there was some social commentary being made through it. The link between expressing one's political feelings, or lack thereof, the interplay of national and local values and customs, commercial and communal life in the city, and then the demonstration, or not, of one's patriotism says something about the school, the city, and the nation.

Portland State students are distinctively featured on page 74 with the state of affairs on campus being mentioned, followed by the year's highlights, and finishing with a photo collage of students. Five to six pages are exclusively devoted to campus-based people and events, before the book returns to national issues, the local

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<sup>172</sup> *The Oregonian* published an article Nov. 12, 1973 talking about how the bridge was opened to pedestrians for one day prior to it becoming a major byway for vehicles



Figure 32 A Portland Family Album 1974, 28

environment, and representations of “the real inhabitants of the city.” It is for this reason that Figure 32 seems like a good representation of *A Portland Family Album*, it is not necessarily student—or academically—based. We see a family posing for the camera. The parents look relatively young, perhaps students at PSU, but their lives, clearly, are not only about having a college experience. They are adults; they have priorities outside of school; they have communities to which they belong that have nothing to do with their student status. Though this is the only picture amongst fourteen others that has a couple in it, all of the photographs on these pages show people leading “normal,” i.e. non-academic, lives.

In looking at *The Viking* and *Les Bois* as well as Portland State and Boise State’s university archives through time, I have tried to show the way that students’ lives unfolded in the yearbooks, reflecting the national and local cultures of both campuses. It becomes apparent in comparing these two places side-by-side that they underwent a similar evolution, to varying degrees, that reflects the transformations that the United States experienced at mid-century.

I have also attempted to weave in the administrations’ roles in preparing young people for the future. As Beth Bailey noted, postwar college and university officials set out to mold young people to assume the responsibilities of democratic

citizenship (1999, 50). In doing this, they may have inadvertently given students the tools to claim greater independence and demand greater respect for their personhood. The rhetoric of change for the latter half of the postwar era tends to position students/youth and authority/parents on opposite sides. I have tried to demonstrate that the seeds of change were present at the very end of World War II, when Drs. Chaffee and Epler told the students at their respective institutions to steady themselves for the tasks ahead. Understandably such responsibility could not be placed on the young while other less consequential matters concerning their private lives, but given such importance because of their moral implications, limited their independence. As students became more interested in assuming their roles in society, control of their private lives had to be ceded.

Representations of the couple seem to reflect the national trends and a push towards a renewed vision of individuality and independence. In the very early years, dating, marriage, and patriotism defined the social and civic tone of the yearbooks, even in depictions of the couple. Quickly these images gave way to portrayals of dating as a major part of the social life. The college experience could be shown almost in its entirety through courtship during this phase. For most of the postwar period these representations were consistent. This is why there are no photographs for the 1965 *Viking* and the 1964, 1967, and 1970 *Les Bois*. The postwar couple consensus reigned, campus life was relatively standardized.<sup>173</sup> Here and there, seeds of doubt were sewn, the Golden Zs and Esquires at Boise State, public speakers and political demonstrations at Portland State that shifted the focus away from a narrowly defined path that led to marriage and, mainly for men, a career. In assuming their responsibilities as citizens, young people began to infuse the different spheres in which they circulated. The formal, informal, and semiformal subsystems were no longer so clearly defined; one's private and public life were so staunchly separated.

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<sup>173</sup> Even though these books were the ones not included in the study period, the same assessment might be said of many of the earlier books. There is a marked transition at the beginning of the 1950s that remains consistent until the mid-1960s in Portland and the 1970s in Boise.



## Conclusion

After World War II, the white, heterosexual middle-class couple became the ultimate manifestation of companionate marriage. In accepting their roles as breadwinners and housewives, men and women could access the promises of the postwar order—affluence, consumerism, togetherness—that would supposedly bring them fulfillment and happiness. The tenets of the domestic ideal were meant to allow democracy to flourish in the most intimate realm, at the same time that they articulated a distinctive, albeit interdependent vision of gendered behavior. The incredible amount of political, economic, and social change taking place in American society after the War culminated in uncertainty and opportunity. Marriage and the family were the framework through which Americans could ensure that they took advantage of all that the postwar order had to offer.

The GI Bill and the economic prosperity of the War ensured that the nuclear family norm that was to emerge could be based on the couple's material and economic independence. A family wage ensured that male breadwinners could do more than provide the basics. It afforded families the opportunity to spend more money and time together. Additionally, as the couple emerged as the center of the familial unit, they were expected to be a united front, mutually dependent and deriving the majority of their satisfaction from life in their roles as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. This meant that the influence of the extended family, both emotionally and physically, was cast as potentially disruptive to the harmony of the couple and the family. As satisfaction and fulfillment became dominant tenets to family life, young people were encouraged to look for the traits in their future spouse that they believed would truly make them happy. Young people also were told to find a mate relatively early in life. This was not only healthy for society, but also the individual. Finding one's life partner at an early age would ensure that sexual mores would remain intact. Early marriage was an opportunity for young people to begin their sexual exploration with their spouse and in the long run to ensure that they found satisfaction in this part of marital life. The rush to marry was both encouraged

and reflected in college marriage and family courses and in educational films targeted at young adults. Society's support of early marriage encouraged dating to become more serious, more goal-oriented. It also cast youthful meeting places, like college campuses, as sites where women could take advantage of disproportionate gender enrollments between men and women to find their "life's steady." The renewed emphasis on "domestic love" and the portrayal of the home as an ultimate sanctuary for the family reinforced the idea that men and women were fundamentally different and should have different preoccupations in life, which ultimately resulted in a gender division of labor that placed women's work in the home, nurturing their families, and men's in the public sphere, financially and materially providing for their families. All of this took place in a time in American history when the family was more democratic than ever, which ultimately proved to be the imperfection in the ideal.

The 1950s domestic ideal has come to be seen as the hallmark of tradition. This is due to the fact that, as a social construction, this model has been bulwarked by a de-historicization that has fixed this institution as being an abiding standard, not a new one. Yet, the circumstances that led to the family taking such prominence in American society can be seen as both a reaction to the global political uncertainty engendered by the Cold War and the economic shift towards a mass consumer society that reinforced the family as the basis for political, economic, and social stability. The very fact that the nuclear family model was best exemplified by the suburban home attests to the massive changes that were taking place at that time.

"Togetherness" became the catchword to describe this new way of life. Familial and individuals' foundations were anchored in the idea that the family should provide the most personal fulfillment in one's life. Although it was a new concept, popular media outlets tried to portray the new model having ties to past traditions. Togetherness encouraged mass consumption through the purchase of suburban homes and outfitting them with all the modern appliances of the day. The importance of such images are reflected in Boise's and Portland State's student yearbooks as they both show a link to what the ideal home would be like and include, how important the couple was to student life. They also demonstrate that family life

was an integral component of student life. These representations indicate that young people were not only influenced by the social production of the new nuclear family norm, they were actively reproducing it. The white, middle-class, heterosexual couple and nuclear family units were epitomized in the new suburban developments that promised to be the anchor for the new American way of life. As such, the physical, political, and social landscape shifted. As suburban homes provided more inside and outside space, togetherness was encouraged through leisure activities. At the same time, the Federal government's subsidies ensured that private spaces would be more accessible to the middle class. Additionally, the economic opportunities afforded to white, middle-class and working-class families acted on some level to incorporate white ethnics into the body politic, while it continued to relegate ethno-racial minorities to the increasingly abandoned urban core. Even though, Boise did not fit this model—first because of its size, and second because of its slow growth—, Portland seemed to do so as urban renewal and suburban expansion were major features of the 1950s and 1960s. This would change at the beginning of the 1970s when the city tried to manage suburban sprawl. Togetherness and suburbia might not have been available to every white, middle-class American, but that does not mean that Americans could not have the new “American way of life” exemplified in the family and home because mass consumption provided opportunities for many Americans to adopt the new lifestyles regardless of whether they lived in the suburbs or not.

Hegemonic gender norms were central to the development of the postwar couple and family. They were typified through one's adherence to the heterosexual standard. Adulthood was reached through marriage. Marriage was based on mutually-dependent masculine and feminine roles. Women were to marry, have children, and devote their careers to homemaking. Men were to get married, have children, and devote their careers to providing for their family. Both men and women were supposed to provide nurturing guidance to their children, but women were the primary caregivers. Women expressed their love to their families by giving of themselves. Men's positions as breadwinners were so fixed that they were taken for granted. These roles were supposed to bring happiness to the individuals performing



them. Men were allowed more space to lament their lot, not in terms of their obligation to work and provide, but because the working conditions of the postwar era were allegedly undermining their ability to assert their manliness. White-collar work required social skills that had been typically identified with femininity and so cultural commentators worried that masculinity was in decline. Nevertheless, the home became the space in which men and women could hold onto their gender roles. Postwar leisurely activities revolved around interacting in a codified gendered script. A central tenet of companionate marriage, a fulfilling sex life, reinforced gender scripts through the overt sexualization of women. Beauty norms told wives they could be both demure and tantalizing. A sexually charged housewife would not upset the social order because her sexuality was confined within the parameters of marriage. Young unmarried women, however, were encouraged to hone their personalities to men's liking so they would make good companions one day. Women's roles in the home seemed to be a contradiction to the social changes that had afforded women more professional, social, and economic opportunities since the beginning of the twentieth century. The national narrative portraying women in the home tends to negate the extent to which women worked during this era. At the same time, professional opportunities continued to be limited to women. Whether this took the form of wage, job, or educational discrimination, it was justified by the fact that women were seen first and foremost as wives and mothers, regardless of their actual circumstances. From my oral histories, the university archives, and the local yearbooks, it becomes apparent that careers were considered less important for women. Hegemonic gender norms were a way to shore up the postwar model and a means to ensure its continued existence.

The heterosexual couple, representative of the sexuality of the middle class, was praised in society. Couples were encouraged to be sexual and to find personal fulfillment as well as happiness in a rich sex life. Homosexuality, however, seemed to challenge everything on which the nuclear family model was based. "True" men and women should marry and reproduce; they should express their sexual desires in marriage; the male gaze should objectify the feminine body for sexual pleasure and consumption; in return, women should dutifully sexualize their bodies to be ogled

and consumed, all because political stability was dependent on men and women adhering to these norms by creating a bedrock that would thwart the influences of communism. The rhetoric that told people to seek a happy and fulfilling sex life in marriage was not an isolated discussion on sex in marriage. Sexuality and sexual practices were increasingly part of the public discussion as some worried that morality was on the decline and others pointed to Americans persistent hypocrisies in regards to sex, when many were saying one thing and doing another. As a public discourse on sex grew, any sexuality that was not heterosexual and any sexual practice that was not “normative” were actively kept on the margins. It was one thing for America’s youth to be engaging in a little petting and entirely another for same-sex couples to flout sexual convention and spread their “disease.” American identity was, after all, inherently linked to the incorporation of national values on the individual level. Homosexuals could not represent the government or its interests if they were behaving in such “deviant” ways. Moreover, they were seen as posing a risk to the nation and local communities because they failed to conform to the heterosexual model. Their “aberrations” made them weak, susceptible to communists—whether they were easily converted to the political ideology or used to advance communist aims because they could be blackmailed—and dangerous to their communities—because they would spread their “sickness” to America’s youth. Homosexuality seemed to subvert all that Americans held to be sacred. As such, they needed to be cured so that they could be incorporated into the American body politic.

There was no better way to reinforce the postwar white, heterosexual middle-class model than through America’s youth. If young people could be convinced that marriage was the ultimate means for them to reach happiness, then the changes that had brought this standard into being would plateau and the nation would coast along from there. The very nature of social phenomenon, however, is that it is constantly in flux. In following the changes in the youth cultural practices of courtship and dating this is incredibly evident. For short periods of time, the way of doing things was static, but access to public entertainments drove youth out of the home at the turn of the twentieth century, just like a culture-wide desire for stability in the wake of the War led young people to find stable, albeit temporary, companionship in one person.

The intimacy that arose from “spending too much time together” steered past conventional sexual behaviors towards new ones. It was never as linear as this description makes it sound, however. These processes sometimes took decades and they were not experienced universally throughout the nation in the same way. As American society became more relaxed, so did the codes that defined dating and premarital sexual activity. Dating is a social activity. It might eventually become the means for one to find a lifelong partner, but when a young person began dating for most of the twentieth century, it was not because they were looking to marry. Dating, before and after the War, was a manifestation of young people’s social habits and a reflection of dominant values and those of their peer group. It was the ultimate embodiment of popularity during the interwar period. Though it continued to be a demonstration of one’s social standing after the War, the way one succeeded manifested itself differently. Before, the more people with whom one went out and danced gauged the young person’s popularity. After, having one steady date to attend social functions meant one could attend all of them, which gave them the occasion to socialize and be popular. In both the pre- and postwar manifestations of dating, the expression “going steady” was used. Over this period of time, however, the definitions behind it changed. Going steady went from indicating a couple was intending to marry to being a way to show one’s peers that they were in a monogamous relationship. As time went on, the expected amount of sexual activity in the steadily dating couple went from holding hands, kissing, and perhaps light necking to heavy petting. Though youth defined their own culture, cultural commentators and parents continuously weighed in on acceptable dating and sexual practices. As such, messages from parents and experts were frequently competing with young people’s doxy. To make matters more confusing, conventions and standards were inconsistent. So, some young people followed the straight and narrow while others veered far from the path. The simultaneous coexistence of such different conduct eventually made absolute abstinence an extreme, thus widening the definition of “acceptable” behavior.

Portland State and Boise State’s yearbooks and university archives attest to postwar youth culture. Taken together they provide a bottom up and top down

perspective on young people's behavior and the issues that were considered of importance, for both students and administrators. Though yearbooks are meant to represent the people in their pages, they also say something about the institution whose name is on their cover and title page, the community in which they are located, and the ways that these different actors came together and differed on local and national issues. Between 1946 and 1974, *The Viking* and *Les Bois* yearbooks were in line with many of the national trends, in similar and markedly different ways. Those on which I have focused were meant to really place emphasis on the dominant white, heterosexual, middle-class couple, marriage, and family and to show how official and student discourses were interwoven to such an extent that when the entirety of the postwar era is analyzed the question of causality arises: did university and college administrators inadvertently encourage student rebellion while preparing the citizens of tomorrow? The yearbooks from Portland State and Boise State attest to the importance that students placed on their private lives. Indeed, many of the yearbooks devoted significant amounts of space to representing the semi-formal and informal lives of students, whether that was in the form of dances, Greek life, or student organizations. As time wore on throughout my study period, it does appear that the emphasis placed on the couple for most of the postwar era waned, giving way to greater individuation and independence in the public and private spheres and making the boundaries between them blurry.

Changes in dating, morality, sexuality, and marital norms were not just a result of social, cultural, or political revolution. There was not one moment or movement that altered how couples were getting together. Instead, a slow, persistent reshaping of societal standards—later typified in the counterculture—rewrote the American couple and, by extension, marriage and the family. In the first four chapters, I hope to have demonstrated that the long 1950s, though it is so much set up as a hegemonic framework that it is looked at as static, was in fact a period of tremendous social change. While in the last three, I focused on youth culture, via the formation of the couple, to demonstrate that those transitions snowballed throughout the postwar era, and in some cases coalesced into the counterculture, but more generally contributed to new attitudes and beliefs that would contribute to a rewriting

of the status quo.

Although my purposes were to put Boise and Portland in a discussion with the national narrative, there is still much work to be done on both places. Case studies of both cities that provide a coherent analysis during the postwar era in terms of their political, economic, social, and demographic histories would provide greater insight into some of the ideas presented in this work. Boise lacks a comprehensive social history of this era. The story of the city from the heterosexual white, middle- and working classes does not exist, neither does a portrait of the city from its marginalized groups whether they were gays and lesbians, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, etc. The socio-cultural history of Boise since World War II remains undocumented and could be an interesting portrait of a small American city, which would be representative of many Americans lives at that time.

Portland, on the other hand, has quite a bit of historical documentation thanks in part to the work of the *Oregon Historical Society*.<sup>174</sup> Unfortunately, I have only been able to begin exploring its rich history through Portland State's archives and yearbooks. Like Boise, Portland would be a very interesting topic for a full-scale case study during the postwar era. Though different in size, Portland and Boise were not all that different during the 1950s, according to the native Portlanders I interviewed—both were politically and socially conservative—but when one looks at Portland today, they might think of *Portlandia*, of hipsters, or even a slogan found all over the city, “Keep Portland Weird,” on bumper stickers, public buildings and

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<sup>174</sup> Carol Abbott's monograph, *Portland in Three Centuries* (2011), traces Portland's entire history from the early explorers to the modern-day. For information on mid-century political history see Clark Hansen's interview with Howard Morgan in “Interviews: The Making of the Modern Democratic Party in Oregon” (1994), *Dark Rose: Organized Crime and Corruption in Portland* (2011) by Robert C. Donnelly, or Mason Drukman's “Oregon's Most Famous Feud: Wayne Morse versus Richard Neuberger” (1994); on Native Americans, see Nicolas G. Rosenthal's “Repositioning Indianness: Native American Organizations in Portland, Oregon, 1959-1975” (2002) or Christopher K. Riggs “American Indians, Economic Development, and Self-Determination in the 1960s” (2000); on African Americans, see Stuart Mcelderry's “Building a West Coast Ghetto: African-American Housing in Portland, 1910-1960” (2001); there are also interesting works on the changing racial composition of the city prior during World War II, see for example Quintard Taylor's “The Great Migration: The Afro-American Communities of Seattle and Portland during the 1940s” (1981) and Rudy Pearson's “‘A Menace to the Neighborhood’: Housing and African Americans in Portland, 1941-1945” (2001).

signs.”<sup>175</sup> From this work, I can tentatively conclude that Portland became the city it is today because of the presence of the counterculture in the state during the postwar era. Oregon was the home of Ken Kesey—a prominent voice between the 1950s’ Beats and 1960s’ hippies—, the University of Oregon—student protests during the 1969-1970 academic year engulfed the campus—, and several communes—which appeared in the state in the late 1960s and early 1970s and have sometimes survived to this day.<sup>176</sup> Though not everyone who lives in Portland was attracted by this, one couple I interviewed explained their reason for going to Oregon and then moving to Portland as being part of a common narrative in that place at that time. Michael and Nancy moved to Eugene, Oregon to attend law school in 1971 and 1972 respectively. When I asked why they went to Oregon, Michael explained:

Everybody that came to Oregon had the exact same story. After you came out here and asked about three people why and they told you a slightly different version of the same story, you never asked the question again. But since you ask it, I’ll answer the question.

It was the end of the sixties. Eugene, and Oregon, at that point [were] kind of a countercultural center. It was outside of the big cities. You could think of Boulder, Colorado; Madison, Wisconsin; Woodstock, New York. There were places that were in their own way renowned. Eugene had a reputation; there were thousands of people living in and around Eugene at that point in communes, so it was known. There were only so many places like that around the country. And it was kind of attractive not to be in a city. And so when I was looking to apply to law school, when I looked at Oregon, and knew that Ken Kesey lived in Eugene, I thought it must be okay; I learned that they didn’t differentiate between in-state and out-of-state tuition [and] that was a huge factor. Seriously when you got there and you said why are you here because there were people from all over the country, a lot of big city kids, everybody had the same answer at the University of Oregon at that time.

After finishing law school, Michael and Nancy moved to Portland. Nancy claimed

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<sup>175</sup> *Portlandia* is a television show created by Fred Armisen, Carrie Brownstein, and Jonathan Krisel that has aired on IFC since 2011. It takes place and is filmed in Portland, Oregon. It “explores the eccentric misfits who embody the foibles of modern culture” (<http://www.ifc.com/shows/portlandia>). I would add that the characters and themes seem to reflect cultural and social trends actually present in the city.

<sup>176</sup> The University of Oregon’s Knight Library had an exhibit on student activism in 2015, entitled, “Dissent and Defiance: Pacifists, Student Protesters, and Advocates for Economic Justice” (<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/scua/2015/01/21/student-protests-on-the-uo-campus-demonstrations-of-the-late-1960s/>). For information on communes in Oregon, and the U.S. in general, see Timothy Miller’s *The 60s Commune: Hippies and Beyond* (1999).

this was a compromise though Michael said it was not. They never did tell me exactly what drove them to move to Portland. According to their story, it appears that the weirdness onto which Portland wants to hold might be rooted in very recent social and migration phenomena. A case study of Portland during the postwar era would allow this story of transition to be told.

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the way that memory shapes the dominant narrative. In closing my oral histories, I asked each person to describe their perceptions of the 1950s and then the 1960s. The variety of answers I received really indicated a split perspective on the legacy each period has left behind. Some responses were inclusive, collapsing both decades into one era—as I have done—, some replies were divisive, pitting one against the other—sometimes in favor of the 1950s, but usually in support of the changes commonly associated with the 1960s. Generation impacted these responses to the extent that some of the older people, those born in the 1920s and 1930s, were more likely to see the 1950s and 1960s as one era. Patricia, born in 1936 in Chicago, Illinois said, “The 1950s and 1960s were the most transformational period of our history. We were affected. You had to be aware of the joy and despair at the same time. There were advances and setbacks” (2012). However, the vast majority of respondents seemed to show less of an ability to historicize the era and more of an inclination to remember what it was like for them. In saying this, I am not criticizing their responses, memories, or historical knowledge, I am trying to insist on the point that individual memory in relation to dominant memory is part of what the Popular Memory Group have called “contemporary consciousness” (1982, 51). They say, “For memory is, by definition, a term which directs our attention not to the past but to *the past-present relation*. It is because 'the past' has this living active existence in the present that it matters so much politically” (ibid., 46). The personal memories of individuals are susceptible to change and to be influenced by individual/internal as well as societal/external forces. Dominant memory is likewise in a state of flux as it is informed by the recording of and transactions in everyday life. Thus, my desire to establish a connection between the national narrative and the individual one has resulted in contradiction and clarity, conformity and divergence. It has nuanced and muddied the picture. Take the

perceptions of Carol and Thomas who gave drastically different opinions about the 1950s. Born in 1945 and growing up in New Jersey, Carol immediately talked about the fifties as a rigid and confined time. Rather than focusing on the larger political, economic, or social climate though, she recounted the inflexibility of social manners and the weight that gender played in her life. She said:

How would I describe the 1950s? ...Rules..., rules, and more rules. You couldn't wear red and pink. You had to behave a certain way. If you went to your prom, you had to wear little gloves. You couldn't be outspoken. Boys were more important than girls. In 1960, I was fifteen, girls were second-class citizens. Even in my household, boys could get bar mitzvahed, [whereas] girls had no Jewish education. So consequently, we were just not as smart (Carol, 2012).

Carol indicates that she was a child and young teenager during 1950s, so to some extent it makes sense that her memories of that time would be based around the home, but it is evident that she felt that her experience was typical because she speaks generally about the era.

Thomas was born in 1955 and grew up in Nampa, Idaho. Although he would have been a young child for the actual decade, he still experienced the long 1950s well into the 1960s in his hometown. He said:

I would think of them as kind of an innocent time, when things were very simple. People lived simplistically and they didn't have an expectation of the grandiose. I mean, they lived just really a very different life than we live today, in terms of maybe being satisfied with a limited amount of things, being satisfied with your financial status in life, that life wasn't all *that* it was more about the experience you had with your family and with your friends. I literally remember sitting there watching the test pattern on the TV because it didn't come on till like 6 o'clock. The TV had on and off hours! You played games and you socialized and you did things more within the family than you end up doing now, I think. But it was a very simple, very innocent time, for me (Thomas, 2013).

Thomas, unlike Carol, was influenced less by the family dynamics than he was by the presence of media and the amount of activity that has become a part of Americans lives since the spread of mass visual technologies, which, from Thomas's telling, sounds like it became something of a distraction from a simpler way of life. It is quite interesting that Thomas felt that his childhood, which spanned into the mid- to late-1960s, was a period of time during which consumerism and material goods were less present, especially as consumerism was on the rise and the buying power of the



average postwar family far outstripped previous generations.<sup>177</sup>

Carol and Thomas attest to the effect that memory has in shaping the individual's perception of their lives, which necessarily translates into their opinions about the 1950s. Charlotte Aull Davies reminds researchers using oral histories "to bear in mind that what is being collected are remembered lives" (1999, 169). Regardless of the oversimplifications or the political positions that their opinions might represent, both Carol and Thomas have attested to some truths about the era and shone a light on how that manifested itself in their lives.

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<sup>177</sup> One issue that I was not able to address in my analysis of Boise and Portland was class. This is particularly unfortunate because the interviewees who were not from the middle class talked about this era in a markedly different way—having to work as children, struggling to survive, etc. Part of this was due to the fact that these people were living in rural environments, where job opportunities were largely in the primary sector—most of them had parents who farmed, though not all children of farmers were poor. I believe Thomas's comments here greatly reflect his family's socio-economic background

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# Appendices



## **Appendix 1**

Included here are maps to give the reader a geographical reference point for Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon.

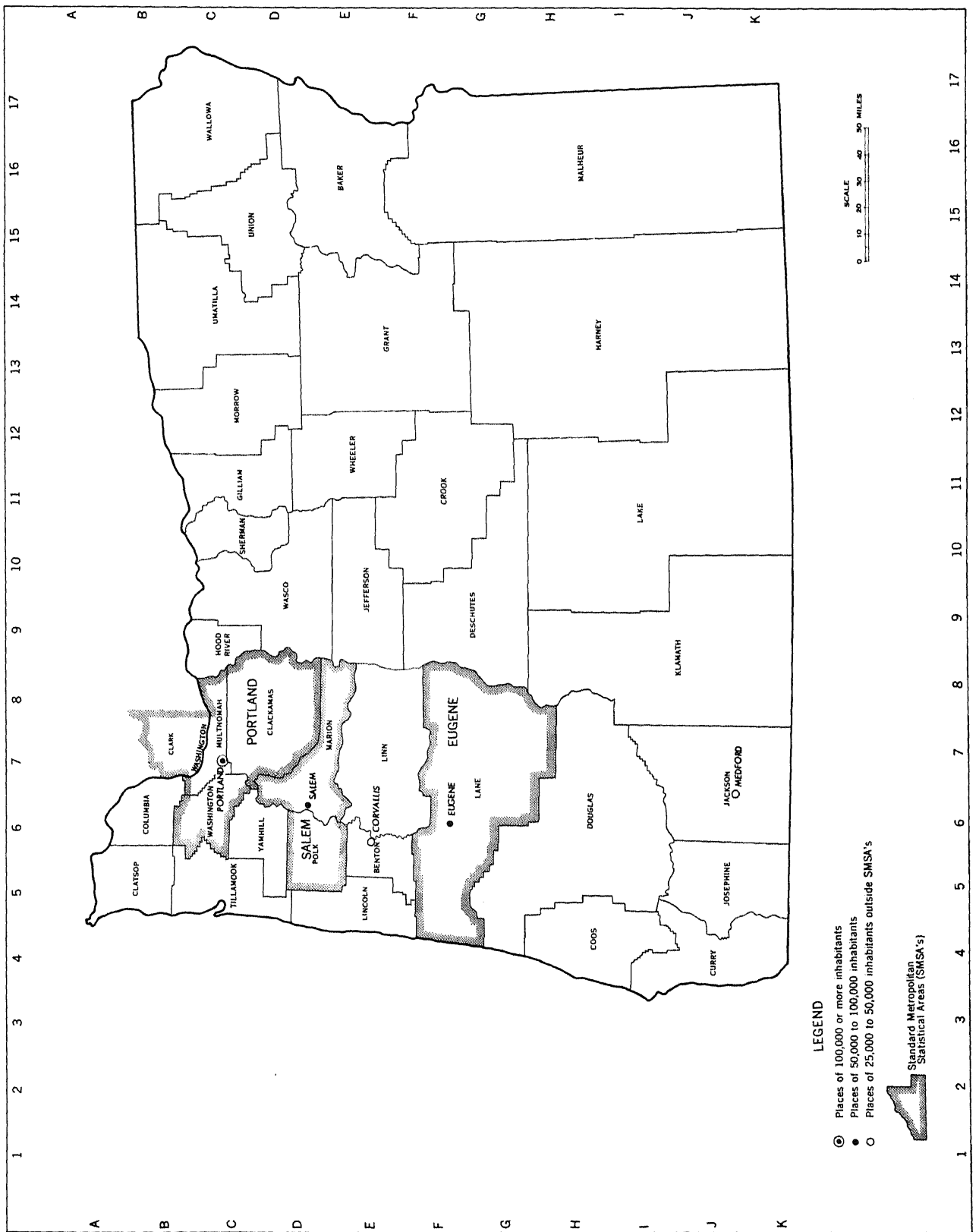


Figure 1 Oregon Counties, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and Selected Places U.S. Census Bureau 1973, 3.

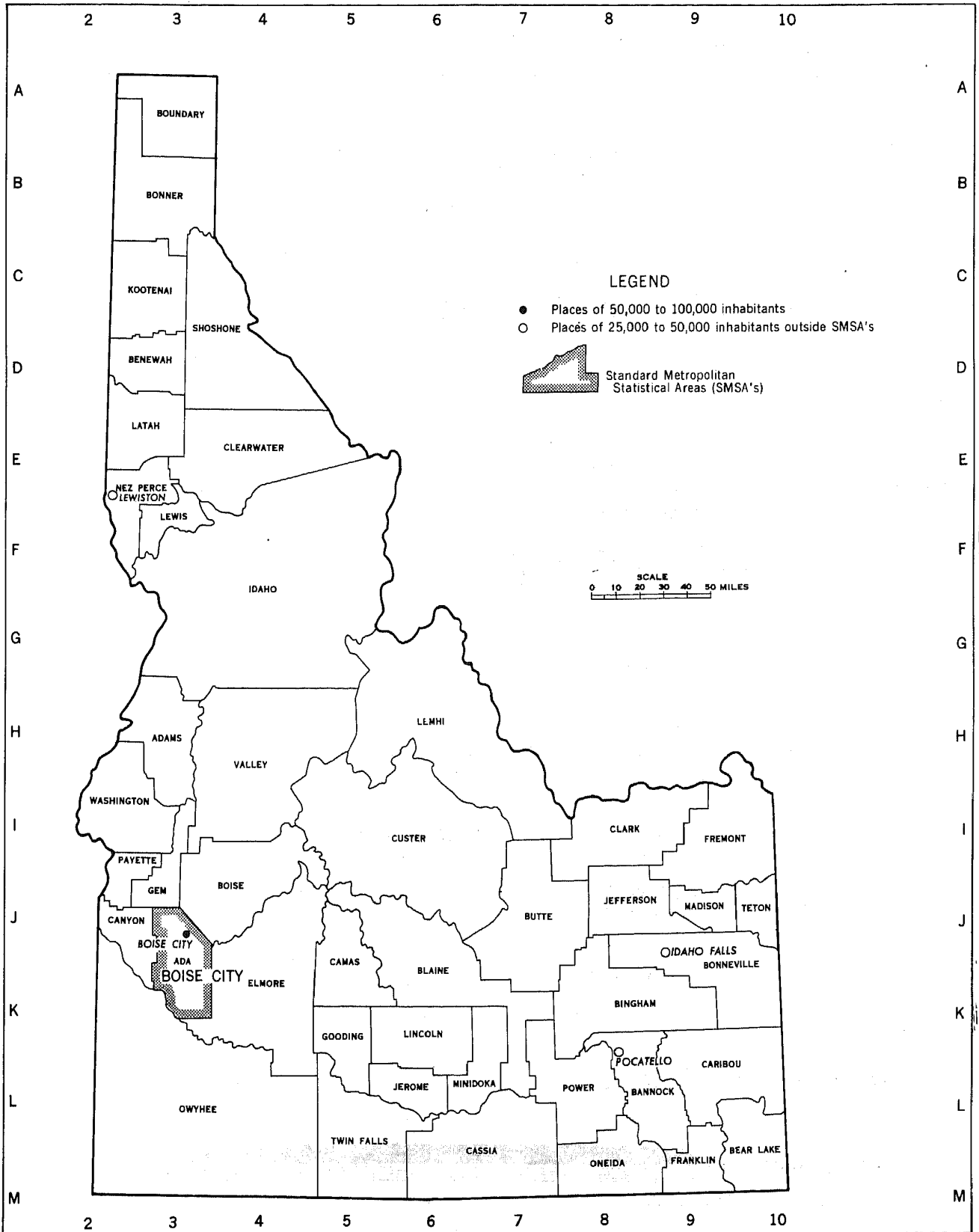


Figure 2 Idaho Counties, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and Selected Places 1973a, 3.



OREGON—SECTION 1  
CENSUS COUNTY DIVISIONS

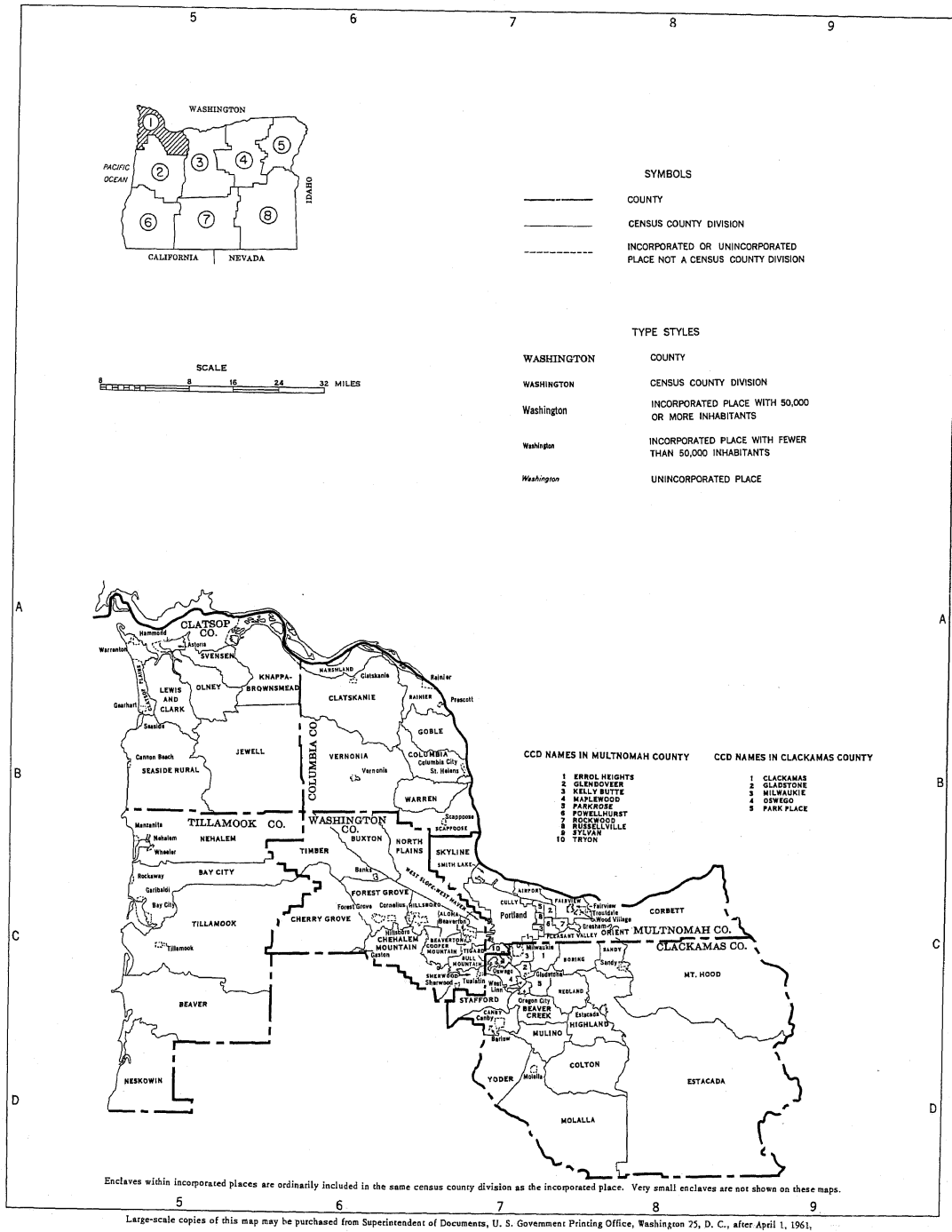


Figure 3 County close-up of Portland, U.S. Census Bureau 1961b, 3.



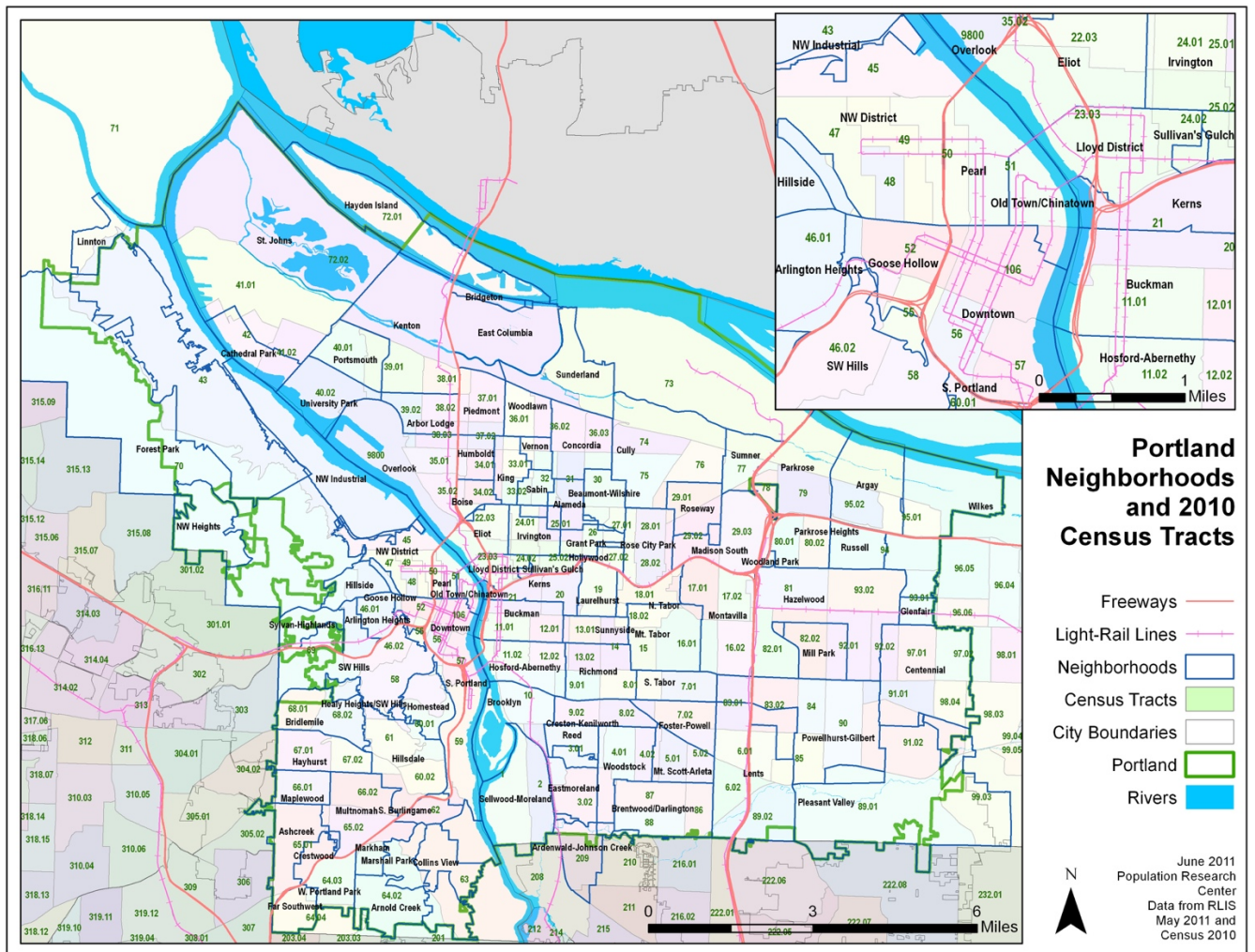


Figure 5 Map of Portland ("Mapping" 2016).

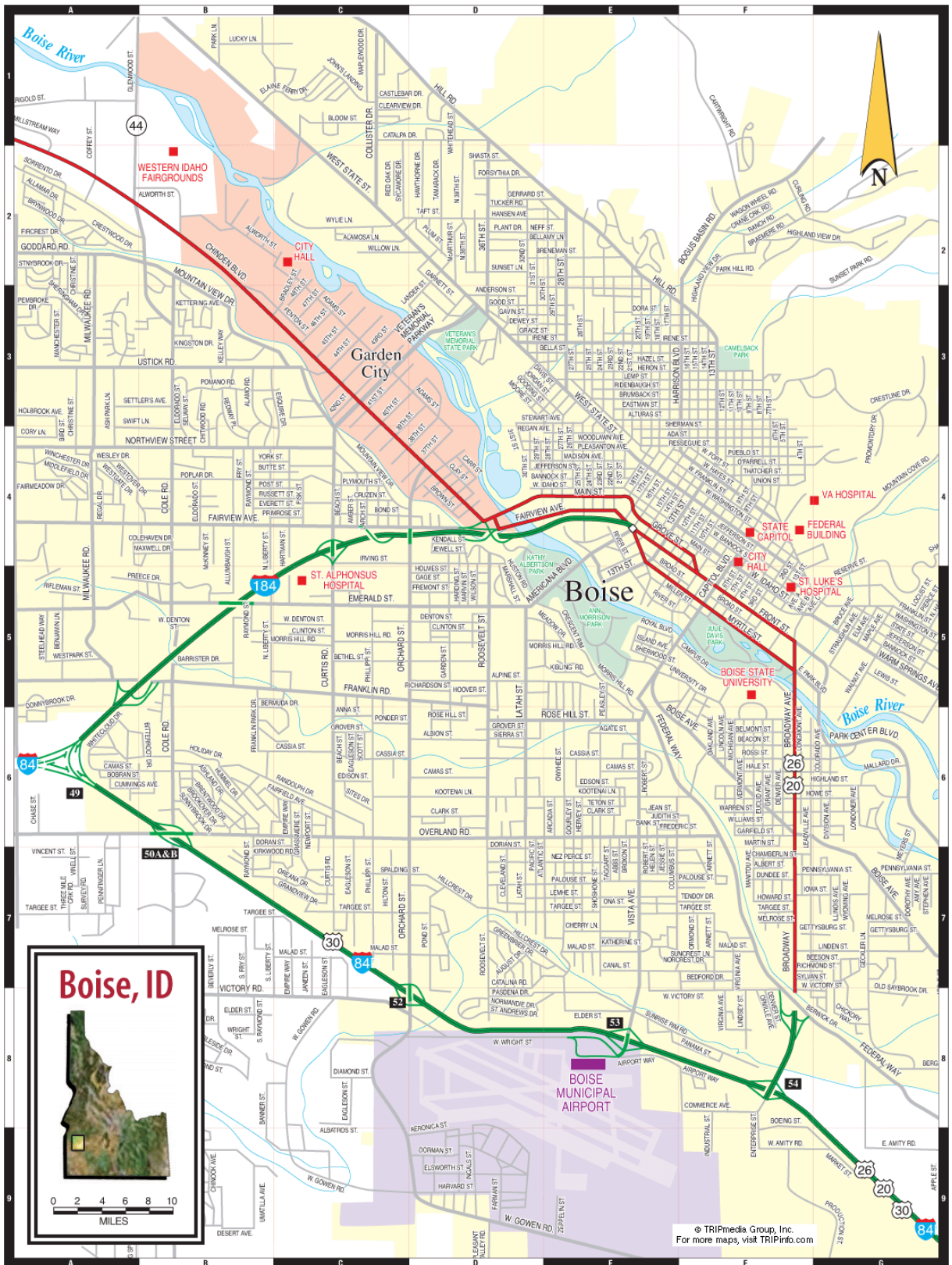


Figure 6 Map of Boise (“Boise Road Map”).







		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959		Les Bois 1973	
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
	Women													0
Industrial Business		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
	Men													7
	Women													0
Marketing		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
	Men													14
	Women													2
Office Administration		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Men													0
	Women													1
Salesmanship		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men	0												
	Women	1												
Secretarial Science		1	-	3	-	33	8	20	1	-	-	-	-	-
	Men	0				1	0	0	0					
	Women	1		3		32	8	20	1					
<b>Education</b>														
Business Education		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
	Men													1
	Women													10
Education (Music, Teachers, & Pre-Ed.)		4	5	2	-	1	44	48	2	2	239	-	254	2
	Men	0	1	1		1	13	13	0		88		101	2
	Women	4	4	1		0	31	35	2		151		153	0





		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953		Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959		Les Bois 1973
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
Environmental Health		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Men													1
	Women													1
Medical Record Technology		2	3	1	-	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	15
	Men	0	0	1			0	2						0
	Women	2	3	0			2	5						15
Nursing		1	2	2	-	-	1	10	2	-	-	-	-	113
	Men	0	0	0			0	0	0					3
	Women	1	2	2			1	10	2					110
Pharmacy		-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men			1				0						
	Women			0				1						
Physical Therapy		-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men							1						
	Women							1						
Pre-Dental		-	-	1	-	-	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men			1			2	8						
	Women			0			0	0						
Pre-Medical		1	5	5	-	-	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men	0	2	5			10	2						
	Women	1	3	0			0	1						
<b>Humanities</b>														
Art		4	5	-	-	10	4	12	-	-	-	-	-	6

		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953		Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959		Les Bois 1973
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
	Men	0	1			6	2	3						3
	Women	4	4			4	2	9						3
Communications		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
	Men													6
	Women													0
Drama		1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	Men	0		1			0							2
	Women	1		0			1							3
English		-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
	Men					1	0							4
	Women					1	1							14
History		-	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
	Men		0			2	1							9
	Women		1			0	0							9
Humanities		-	-	-	-	86	-	-	-	1	102	-	138	3
	Men					45					53		69	0
	Women					41					49		69	3
Language		2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men	0												
	Women	2												
Literature		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men					0								
	Women					1								
Music		4	4	3	-	6	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Men	1	0	1		5	2	2						2

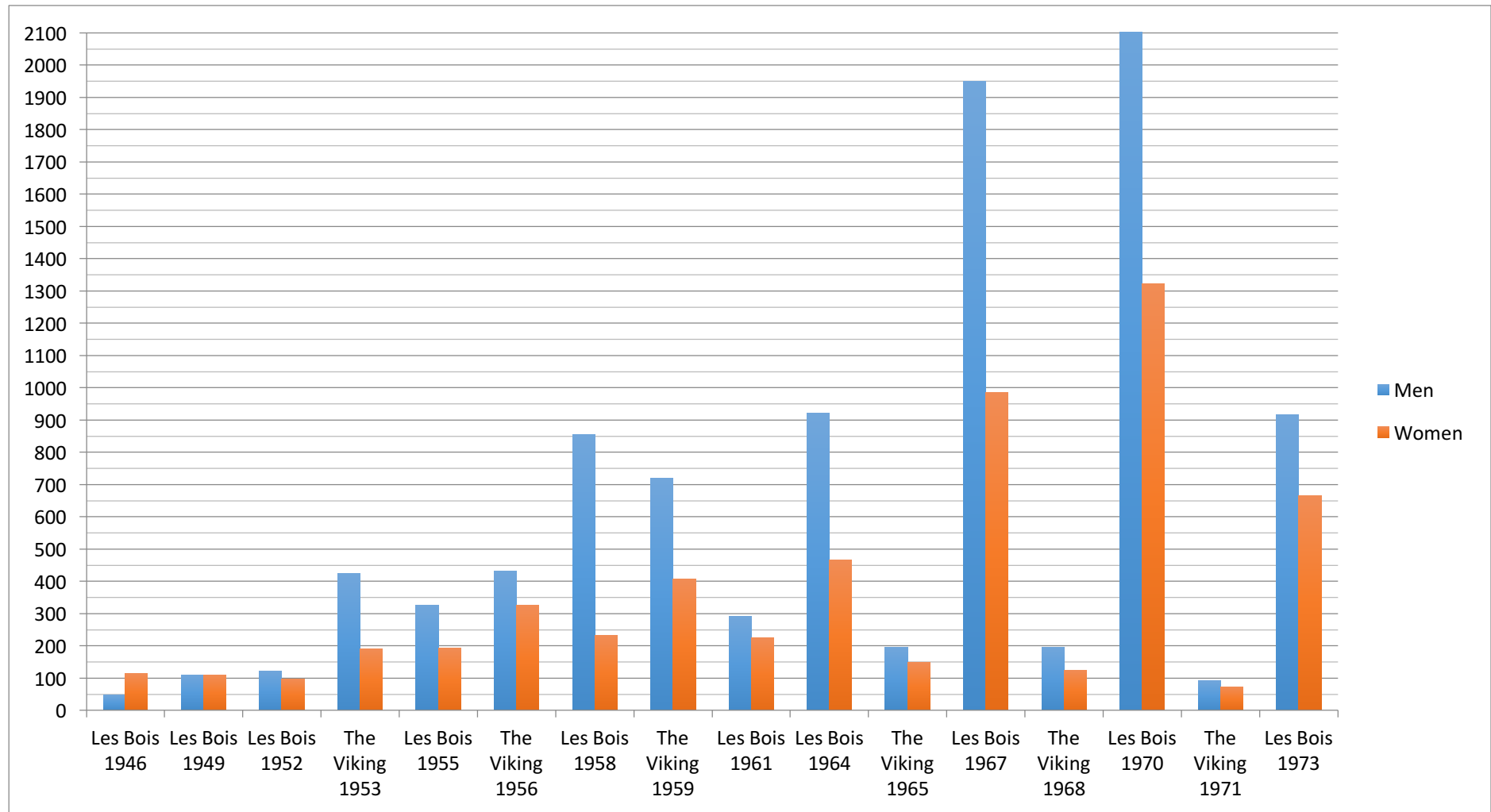
		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959	Les Bois 1973		
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
	Women	3	4	2		1	1	1						0
Speech		-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men						1							
	Women						0							
<b>Sciences</b>														
Agriculture		-	-	-	-	5	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men					5	1	3						
	Women					0	0	0						
Biology		-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Men													1
	Women													2
Chemistry		1	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	4
	Men	0					2	1						3
	Women	1					0	1						1
Forestry		-	4	2	-	13	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Men		4	2		13	2	8						1
	Women		0	0		0	0	0						0
Geology		-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Men		1				1							3
	Women		0				0							0
Horticulture		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	Men													4
	Women													1
Mathematics		-	-	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	7
	Men					3	1	1						6

		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959	Les Bois 1973		
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
	Women					0	0	0						1
Physics		-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men							1						
	Women							0						
Pre-Veterinarian		-	-	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men						4	1						
	Women						0	0						
Science		1	1	-	-	77	4	3	-	4	-	-	293	-
	Men	0	0			60	4	1					244	
	Women	1	1			17	0	2					49	
Science and Math		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	207	-	-	-
	Men										166			
	Women										41			
Zoology		-	1	-	-	-	1	-		-	-	-	-	-
	Men		1				1							
	Women		0				0							
<b>Social Sciences</b>														
Criminal Justice		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
	Men													5
	Women													4
Economics		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
	Men													4
	Women													0
General Studies		6	10	19	-	-	17	24	2	-	-	-	-	6
	Men	1	2	6			10	17	0					2



		Les Bois 1946		Les Bois 1952		Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955		Viking 1956		Viking 1959	Les Bois 1973		
Major	Gender	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Soph. & Fresh.	Soph.	Fresh.	Special	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors	Jrs. Soph. & Fresh.	Seniors
Sociology		-	1	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
	Men		0			0								3
	Women		1			6								1
<b>Vocational and Technical</b>														
Food technician		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men					1								
	Women					0								
Machine Shop		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Men													1
	Women													0
Office Machines		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Men													3
	Women													0
Radio and Electronics		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Men		1											3
	Women		0											0
Stewardess		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men		0											
	Women		1											
Vocational (Auto Mechanics, Auto Body)		-	-	1	-	-	2	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Men			1			2	13						
	Women			0			0	0						

**Table 3: Graphic of the gender composition of Boise State and Portland State**





**Table 4: Students by sex and race<sup>ii</sup>**

	Les Bois 1946	Les Bois 1949	Les Bois 1952	The Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955	The Viking 1956	Les Bois 1958	The Viking 1959	Les Bois 1961	Les Bois 1964	The Viking 1965 <sup>iii</sup>	Les Bois 1967	The Viking 1968	Les Bois 1970	The Viking 1971	Les Bois 1973
<b>Gender</b>																
Men	49	113	125	424	749	433	854	719	292	920	198	1949	198	2310	94	916
Women	116	111	99	193	380	326	234	408	227	466	150	987	126	1323	75	667
Total pictured	165	224	224	617	1129	759	1088	1127	519	1386	348	2936	324	3633	169	1583
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>																
<b>African American</b>	2	0	0	11	0	3	3	11	0	2	4	9	11	17	4	12
Men	1	0	0	6	0	1	2	5	0	1	3	7	9	16	2	7
Women	1	0	0	5	0	2	1	6	0	1	1	2	2	1	2	5
<b>Asian</b>	2	2	2	3	2	6	-	6	3	10	4	23	4	32	9	30
Men	1	1	2	0	2	2		4	3	8	1	13	3	23	6	15
Women	1	1	0	3	0	4		2	0	2	3	10	1	9	3	15
<b>Latino</b>		0	2	-	2	2	2	1	0	4	-	2	-	8	1	14
Men		0	1		0	0	1	1	0	3		2		6	1	11
Women		0	1		2	2	1	0	0	1		0		2	0	3
<b>White</b>	161	222	220	603	518	748	1083	1109	516	1369	340	2902	309	3576	155	1527
Men	47	112	122	418	326	430	851	709	289	908	194	1927	186	2265	85	883
Women	114	110	98	185	192	318	232	400	227	462	146	975	123	1311	70	644
<b>Total Minorities</b>	4	2	4	14	4	11	5	18	3	16	8	34	15	57	14	56
Men	2	1	3	6	2	3	3	10	3	12	4	22	12	45	9	33
Women	2	1	1	8	2	8	2	8	0	4	4	12	3	12	5	23

**Table 5: Administration, Staff, and Faculty featured in the yearbooks**

			Les Bois 1946	Les Bois 1949	The Viking 1950	Les Bois 1952	The Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955	The Viking 1956	Les Bois 1958	The Viking 1959	Les Bois 1961	Les Bois 1964	Les Bois 1967	Les Bois 1970	Les Bois 1973
Administration			11	16	-	12	26	16	6	25	53	51	41	12	28	8
	Men		2	5	5	2	3	3	5	6	12	7	7	10	24	8
	Women		9	11	1	10	23	13	1	19	34	16	34	7	4	0
Director's Office			7	8	3	-	3	9	4	9	1	11	19	3	3	4
	Men		2	3	3	2	0	1	4	2	1	5	3	3	3	4
	Women		5	5	-	8	3	8	0	7	0	6	16	0	0	0
Personnel			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Men														1	
	Women														0	
Financial Aid			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Men														1	
	Women														0	
Information Office (News Bureau)			-	1	-	1	4	-	-	-	2	2	-	1	1	-
	Men			0		0	0				1	0		1	1	
	Women			1		1	4				1	2		0	0	
Counselor's Office			-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	-
	Men						0				2				1	
	Women						2				1				1	
Registrar's Office			1	1	-	-	5	1	2	1	21	1	1	1	1	1
	Men		0	1			0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Women		1	0			5	0	1	1	20	1	1	1	1	0

		Les Bois 1946	Les Bois 1949	The Viking 1950	Les Bois 1952	The Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955	The Viking 1956	Les Bois 1958	The Viking 1959	Les Bois 1961	Les Bois 1964	Les Bois 1967	Les Bois 1970	Les Bois 1973
	Mimeograph Office & Instructional Materials (post 1967)	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
	Men					0								2	
	Women					2								0	
	Business Office	1	3	1	-	6	4	-	5	13	5	5	1	3	-
	Men	0	1	1		2	1		1	3	1	0	1	3	
	Women	1	2			4	3		4	10	4	5	0	0	
	Library	2	3	-	1	4	2	-	2	-	2	11	5	1	-
	Men	0	0		0	1	0		0		0	0	0	0	
	Women	2	3		1	3	2		2		2	11	5	1	
	Deans & Non-Departmental Directors	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	4	1	2	4	5	10	1
	Men			1					3	1	1	3	4	9	1
	Women			1					1	0	1	1	1	1	0
	Student Union	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	1	-	1	1
	Men								0	2		1		1	1
	Women								2	2		0		0	0
	Admissions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Men												1	2	
	Women												0	0	
	Directors of housing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1
	Men								0	1					1
	Women								2	0					0

			Les Bois 1946	Les Bois 1949	The Viking 1950	Les Bois 1952	The Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955	The Viking 1956	Les Bois 1958	The Viking 1959	Les Bois 1961	Les Bois 1964	Les Bois 1967	Les Bois 1970	Les Bois 1973
Staff			5	18	-	18	13	25	-	36	7	30	5	-	4	-
	Men		5	10		9	7			14	6	13	1		2	
	Women		0	8		8	6			22	1	17	4		2	
Custodial			5	11	1	10	4	10	-	15	1	13	-	-	-	-
	Men		5	10	1	9	3	9		14	1	13				
	Women		0	1		1	1	1		1	0	0				
Bookstore			-	-		-	3	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	1	-
	Men						1				1		0		0	
	Women						2				0		3		1	
Cafeteria			-	7		8	5	15	-	21	1	17	2	-	-	-
	Men			0		0	3	0		0	1	0	1			
	Women			7		8	2	15		21	0	17	1			
Physician			-		-		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
	Men										1				1	
	Women										0				0	
Nurse or Assistant			-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
	Men						0				0				0	
	Women				1		1				1				1	
Sports			-	-	-		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
	Men										1					
	Women										0					
Photographer			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-

		Les Bois 1946	Les Bois 1949	The Viking 1950	Les Bois 1952	The Viking 1953	Les Bois 1955	The Viking 1956	Les Bois 1958	The Viking 1959	Les Bois 1961	Les Bois 1964	Les Bois 1967	Les Bois 1970	Les Bois 1973
	Men									1				1	
	Women									0				0	
Faculty		32	48	-	43	56	54	88	56	146	65	87	146	-	267
	Men	21	30		29	41	38	75	36	124	42	60	102	-	216
	Women	11	18		14	11	16	13	20	22	23	27	39	-	51
	Faculty Chairs & Departmental Directors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6	23	-
	Men										5		6	22	
	Women										1		0	1	
Total		48	82	-	73	91	95	94	117	199	124	133	166	55	275
	Men	28	45		40	51	50	80	56	142	67	68	118	48	224
	Women	20	37		33	40	45	14	61	57	57	65	48	7	51

<sup>i</sup> I have used the abbreviations Sr., Jr., Soph., and Fresh., to indicate fourth, third, second, and first year students.

<sup>ii</sup> These numbers are estimations based on my ability to decipher one's ethnicity or racial background according to old black and white photographs.

<sup>iii</sup> The 1965, 1968, and 1971 *Vikings* only had pictures of seniors and Master's students.