The Young Ones STRATTON

Stratton, J 1992, *The young ones: working class culture, consumption and the category of youth*, Black Swan Press, Perth.

Introduction

'My main concern in this book will be to discuss Australian post-war youth cultures up to about 1960; those groups which have become lumped together in the folk memory as bodgies and widgies. Nevertheless it is necessary to look back at the tradition which preceded these groups in order to be able to understand the social historical context of these groups. By doing this I want to show not only the changes which have occurred in this tradition, such as the evolution of the modern concept of youth as an age-specific category with its own leisure culture, but also the continuities in the tradition.

Bodgies and widgies were an Australian working-class phenomenon. This book — will discuss that phenomenon from two major points of view. The discussion will disentangle what was new about post-war youth cultures, such as the emphasis placed on consumption, from what was traditional in the behaviour of working class young people. In addition, I will examine the image of bodgies and widgies constructed in media reports, particularly those of the press. In these middle-class reports many practices which were, and are, a part of working-class culture such as pre-marital sex, were constructed as being new departures from established canons of behaviour. In this way bodgies and widgies were reified and constructed into deviant groupings threatening to the moral and social order. Using **Cohen**'s (1973) categories of folk devil and moral panic, **John Braithwaite and Michelle Barker** have already devoted an article to this subject called *Bodgies and Widgies: Folk Devils of the Fifties* (Wilson & Braithwaite 1978).

The examination of these two aspects of the phenomenon of bodgies and widgies will allow us to understand why it is impossible to find (ex-)bodgies and widgies. For the same reasons it would be impossible to find a larrikin or a hooligan, or, for that matter a surfie or a mod or a punk. What these groups have in common that' (Stratton 1992, p. 1)

'they exist only at the level of the visible, of spectacle. When people describe themselves as having been members of one or other of these groups they are thinking in terms of a community of consumptions not of social practices. In post-war society the importance of visible consumption has increased the number of these groups constructed around images. However, behind this visibility the *members* of these groups merge into their cultural background living within established, customary forms of behaviour.

This book will enable us to appreciate the extent and the ways bodgies and widgies may be said to have existed, and enable us to understand them within their historical context. The significance of such a task is not confined to bodgies and widgies. Such an understanding of these people will enable us to see the continuities between these groups and earlier, and as well as later, working-class youth culture. In addition, by demonstrating their links with conventional working-class practices we will be able to give the lie to the established media formulations of these youth

cultures. Such an approach is not only good for Australia. A similar book could be written about English youth cultures, many of the images of which have, since the early 1960s, been imported to Australia. To the extent that Australia has inherited the traditions of British working-class culture many of the specific points made in this book are applicable there also. To the extent that post-war youth culture has evolved in England in a similar way to Australia many of my general arguments about, for example, the roles of the media and of consumerism are equally applicable. The importance of an analysis of youth culture during the 1950s is that such an analysis over this period demonstrates the evolution of the new consumption-based youth cultures and illustrates their basis in established working-class culture.

We can distinguish two periods of bodgies and widgies. The first ran from roughly 1948 to 1952 and the second from 1954 to 1959. From the point of view of the media bodgies and widgies formed a single folk devil which originated in the media around 1950 and disappeared between 1958 and 1959. There is one fundamental difference between the two periods. During the first period there was little or no awareness that these young people might form a part of a new consumption-oriented cultural grouping. They were discussed in the context of adolescence and their behaviour and cultural preferences were considered extraordinary. During the period of the second group of bodgies and widgies there was a gradual elaboration of a concept of teenage youth culture which was at first coterminous with bodgies and widgies, but which, by the end of the 1950s, formed a new back-drop for evaluating the activities attributed to bodgies and widgies. The first group may be considered almost a youth culture by default. The explosion of interest in swing music, jiving and American leisure clothing was primarily a result of the wartime American presence. During the war acceptance of popular American leisure activities had been general. However, with the withdrawal of American service personnel there had been a steady return in Australia to pre-war leisure activities. It was in this context that much which had seemed normal in' (Stratton 1992, p. 2)

'the period centering on the war started to seem abnormal as people reasserted pre-war ways. Those young people whose formative years were spent during the *abnormal* period would have found the recovered normality strange.

The situation in which these young people found themselves appears more complex when we examine the broader context of Australian culture. In the pre-war period Australia looked to Britain for its cultural input. As the fear of invasion diminished and as American troops began leaving so the British orientation was reasserted. In general the Anglocentric basis of Australian cultural life led to an assertion that British cultural products, whether High cultural or Popular cultural, were somehow *better* than American cultural products. This was the context in which a significant number of young people continued to take pleasure in things American. The situation was complicated by the fact that America already acknowledged the existence of the category of youth, usually discussed in terms of *the teenager*.

In Australia, by contrast, the young people concerned were perceived simply as refusing to grow up and, as part of this, putting off facing up to their responsibility of work. In fact the young Australians who were bodgies and widgies did work, the males often as apprentices and in similar jobs, the women as stenographers or shop assistants. However leisure and consumption were not as yet accepted as an important part of the Australian lifestyle. The myth of the lucky country as a place of

relaxation in the sun, on the beach or at the barbie was very much a late 1950s development and it represented a distinctively Australian inflection on the twin themes of leisure and consumption which produced a reconstruction of the established Australian iconography of the bush and the surf.

This was the time when Australia was being influenced again, both politically and culturally, by America. White, who traces the cultural myth of *the Australian way of life* through this period describes the shift like this:

> For many conservatives, economic, cultural and military dependence on Britain was replaced by similar dependence on America, and the concept of 'the Australian Way of Life' simply disguised the switch. Australian conservatism was impressively unsentimental about its change of allegiance, despite the Anglophile rhetoric of Menzies (White 1981, p. 162).

The shift during the 1950s placed a new emphasis on leisure. At the same time it accepted the construction of the category of the teenager with its own leisure culture and placed a new importance on the city suburbs as a context for the new link between consumer goods and the quality of life.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the first group of bodgies and widgies were before .their time; a cultural anomaly in the sense that the categories of the teenager and of youth culture did not, as yet, have any meaning in Australia. They were also before their time in the broader sense that consumption, with its ideological underpinnings of hedonism and the valorisation of leisure, was not yet an accepted practice.' (Stratton 1992, p. 3)

'The young people who became bodgies and widgies came, in the main, from working-class backgrounds. During the late 1940s and early 1950s the experience of the Australian working-class was one of living in a country of increasing prosperity. During the war Curtin and his Labor Party had introduced rationing on a range of goods from tea to petrol to clothing. After Curtin's death on 5 July 1945 Chifley continued with many of the rationing controls. In 1946 Labor won another election victory. Sugar stopped being rationed in 1947, rationing on clothing and meat ended in 1948 (Carroll 1977 p. 11). Petrol, however, was still being rationed and Menzies argued for an end to all rationing. In 1949 the High Court declared petrol rationing invalid but Chifley attempted to reintroduce it. A part of the background experience of the first period of bodgies and widgies was of increasing economic liberality. From the point of view of working-class young people the transition from Labor to Liberal government had no effect other than allowing increasing access to the few consumer goods in the country. Menzies came to power in the election of late 1949 when his Liberal party formed a coalition with the Country party. Whilst Menzies was a strong supporter of Britain and the royal family, in practice he acknowledged the increasing influence of America. The ANZUS defence treaty, for example, between Australia, New Zealand and the Uni ted States of America was signed in 1951. Menzies deregulated much of the economy with the effect that from 1951 to 1954 the country suffered very high inflation. In the March quarter of 1952 the annual rate of inflation was 22.5% (Carroll 1977, p. 35). However, throughout this period jobs were plentiful. Not only was unemployment very low but Chifley, through his immigration minister Calwell, had instigated a very large immigration programme designed both to populate the vast continent as a long-term defence strategy, and also to aid in the developing industrialisation of the country. Nevertheless it is likely

that the material effects of the high rate of inflation on young people, many of whom would have earned wages not affected by the national wage-fixing scheme, would have made life less pleasurable for working-class young people.

The first period when there were young working-class people designated as bodgies and widgies finished around 1952, and we can now see some of the general trends surrounding this. The late 1940s was experienced by working-class youth as a period of possibilities. Jobs were easy to come by, the money was good and the basic wage was still adjusted quarterly. The post-war industrialisation, which had had its beginnings in the war, raised the number of people employed in industry from about 10% of the working population in 1931 to over 20% in 1951 (Dwyer, Wilson & Woock 1984, p. 105). In the short term the creation of the new consumer goods industry appeared to open up new employment possibilities. It was only later that the recognition would have occurred that these jobs led nowhere, that is to say that the chances for promotion from the shop floor in a factory based on an assembly line are limited.

During this period Australia overall, was well off when measured in monetary terms. In 1956 Australia was ranked fifth in the world in terms of per capita' (Stratton 1992, p. 4)

'income. However, the rapid growth of the economy in the immediate post-war period was already slowing and by 1979 Australia had slipped to tenth place (Dwyer,Wilson & Woock 1984, p. 108). In September 1953 the Arbitration Court had already ended the policy of quarterly adjustments to the basic wage.

Many working-class young people who were old enough to leave school and get their first jobs in the late 1940s had images of American consumerism — and the ideologies associated with it — gained from Hollywood films. They also had the literal displays of consumption of consumer goods in the films, goods either as yet unavailable in Australia or, often, so expensive as to be as yet unavailable to people with their incomes. In addition, many of these young people had memories of the literal wealth of well-paid American service personnel who had been stationed in Australia during the war, and who had brought with them a new music and a new way of dancing, both of which allowed for the introduction of more emotion and involvement than current Australian dance and music. The impression created by these American servicemen and women (mostly men) was integrated into the fantasy image purveyed through Hollywood films. All this was combined, in the late 1940s, with high wages and employment levels, an experience of increasing liberality as a result of the ending of rationing and the likelihood of increasing access to the consumer goods seen in the films. With the lack of a category of the teenager in Australia many young people behaved as their forefathers had, by indulging in clothes and dancing. Only this time the clothes and dances were American in origin and integrated within an ideological form which, as it gained acceptance, would alter the context of the behaviour of young people. By 1952 the experiences of Australian working-class young people were changing. Few had any real memory of the war or Americans and the images of consumption in the Hollywood films, whilst still generating desire, were also beginning to generate a frustration as the value of wages decreased and access to the new consumer goods did not produce an amelioration of life based on an egalitarianism of consumption. Instead a new visible status structure based on the ability to buy a particular product from within a range of such products costing different amounts was developing.

There was increasing access to goods such as second-hand motorbikes in the post-war period. More generally the atmosphere of post-war regeneration expressed itself in a new emphasis on ownership. Between 1947 and 1954 home ownership in Sydney rose from 40% to 60% and

> In 1949-50, Australia produced 31 638 washing machines, 150 878 refrigerators and 1 070 petrol lawn mowers; ten years later the figures were 201873; 237 328 and 246 721 respectively. (White 1981, p. 164).

Australia was industrialising. This industrialisation meant an increase in the consumer goods available which had previously been both scarce and expensive due to problems of importation. In 1948 the standard weekly work hours decreased for most workers from 44 hours to 40 hours. Thus leisure time was' (Stratton 1992, p. 5)

'increased and, with money in their pockets, young people could indulge in leisure in ways taught them by, and as yet only available from, America.

By about 1952-53 this period of the post-war experience was over. The gradual decline in prominence of the first group of bodgies and widgies can be put down to their increasing age and their movement into a life phase signified by marriage. Marriage tended to occur when the males were about 21 years and the women a little younger. Bodgies and widgies, like all traditional working-class street cultural youth groupings, were unmarried. Here, we should note, is another overlap between the traditional working-class youth practices and the category of the teenager; both are constructed around the single young person. In the main, those young people who formed long-term attachments gradually moved out of the rather amorphous sphere of the group. Again, this is typical of male-dominated working-class youth groups in which *going steady* is perceived as a part of a process by which a girl extracts a boy from the male environment of the street and returns him to the responsibilities of the home. What marriage does not account for in the demise of the first period of bodgies and widgies is why younger kids did not simply pick up where the older ones left off. Two reasons can be suggested for this.

The first reason is that one of the major factors in the production of the group was the massive injection of American culture which was epitomised by the presence of so many Americans in person. The loss of the American presence led to a decline in the awareness of American youth, and popular culture. The institutionalisation, industrialisation and consumerisation of popular culture over this period commodified working-class popular culture into what is now often called mass culture, a development which had begun well back in the 19th century. This development went furthest earliest in America. During the war the records that introduced swing music to most Australian were brought over by American service personnel. Often they were sold to the earliest bodgies and widgies off the boats. With the decline in the number of visiting American ships this extra legal source of new music also declined. Bob Rogers, the disc jockey, has described how he:

> … began to haunt the docks to see if visiting seamen had any new popular recordings from abroad in their lockers (Rogers 1975, p. 1).

This was around 1949 but many Australian young people (it was mostly males who collected records) had been doing this since the war. Rogers has also described the type of protective cultural censorship which complicated importation in the proper, and legal, manner

> Stringent customs regulations provided privately imported records. The Federal Government of the day was the great protector of morality. All recorded foreign music had first to go through a Public Service cleansing bath in case it might contain anything that would contaminate us (Rogers 1975, p. 1).' (Stratton 1992, p. 6)

'One result of this was that not only was there little or no increase in available American music but there was an increasing anachronism as Australian bodgies and widgies continued to listen and dance to swing whilst sections of American youth were listening to be-bop — which never achieved a significant circulation in Australia — or listening to the rhythm'n'blues influenced music which presaged the white American development of rock'n'roll. The characteristic aspects of the culture of the early bodgies and widgies only appeared in areas where there had been heavy concentrations of American service personnel.

The second reason for the decline in the first group of bodgies and widgies concerns the changed position of young people in the economic order. I have noted the high rate of inflation in 1952. In addition to this in September 1953 the Arbitration Court ended quarterly adjustments. Whilst this would have had little immediate effect it is clear that, as I have already noted, the high inflation rate would have adversely affected the spending power of those drawing apprenticeship wages and those doing work for which payment was not controlled by Arbitration Court rulings. At the most general level the world, for working-class young people reaching say 15 years in 1952, looked very different than for those reaching 15 in 1948. There was little of the hope and possibility that existed in 1948. For one thing Australia was involved in another war in which many working-class males had enrolled to fight, in addition National Service lasting for between 3 and 6 months for males had been reintroduced in 1951. The scheme continued in a reduced form after 1957 until 1959. Australian troops went to Korea in 1950 and remained there, fighting, until 1953. Volunteers rather than National Service recruits were sent to Korea. As in the Second World War, the Korean War had a disruptive impact on the marriages of returned service personnel. The general effect of the Korean war on working-class young people was to provide a backdrop for a different understanding of the world than that of the first bodgies and widgies. For the earlier young people the large number of job opportunities had suggested a future of work choice and financial ease. For children whose parents remembered the depression this was a fundamental change. As one woman said:

> These fellows had good jobs. They were apprentices, apprentice carpenters. And they paid their bikes off. In fact John used to give me the money to pay off his car. Full employment. You couldn't conceive in the 1950s and 1960s that it would be any other way. If you had a trade and you got out Of your apprenticeship you could earn good money. If you put money aside you paid things off, you paid off bikes. And then you could borrow in order to get your home.

> And they wanted workers so badly, and of the course the awards were so good; but there were many getting over the award. John was always getting over the award because he was such a good tradesman (interview with Marie).

This woman is talking about the late 1940s. For women the situation was the same though the expectation was that you would only work until you got married. As this same woman said:'
(Stratton 1992, p. 7)

> 'You worked. That was the dream. You went to school, you worked but you only worked as a temporary measure, but you were really waiting for the knight in armour to come and sweep you off your feet. I don't say this with hindsight. It was THE romantic dream that actually you were meant to get married and have children and be a wife and mother. And that was it, you'd never work again (interview with Marie).

This woman's first job was in a solicitor's office.

By 1952-53 you might not have been able to conceive of unemployment but it was becoming increasingly clear that many of the jobs which the young people were being offered led very little distance from the new assembly lines of cars, fridges and cookers which formed the basis of Australia's industrialisation. General Motors Holden, for example, employed 7 560 people when it started production in 1948, turning out 10 Holdens a day. By 1974 the firm employed 26 515 people and turned out 800 Holdens a day (Griffith 1977, p. 39). In addition as the new consumer goods started to become available it also became clear that there was no egalitarianism of consumption. Each product was produced in a range from expensive to cheap — or, often, less expensive — and your earnings dictated which you bought. If the earlier period of bodgies and widgies can be said to have represented a hope in a future based on American-originated consumption goods and leisure then, by 1952-53 such a dream had disappeared. One omen of its disappearance was Fadden's 1951 budget which increased taxes and, by raising interest rates, caused repayment problems in areas from mortgages to hire purchase.

After a period in the late 1940s and early 1950s when, with a rapidly expanding economy, there were opportunities for upward social mobility the later 1950s was a time when these opportunities evaporated. During this period the expansion was, primarily, of the industrial base and of the service sector. Consequently the working-class became, once again, increasingly separated as a wage earning consumption group from the middle class. The effect of this was to produce a wave of working-class youth behaviour which brought the kids into opposition to middle-class authority. Working-class young people returned to traditional strategies of holding the street and asserting rights over the street or its equivalent. For example, as young males gained increasing access to motorbikes and cars so walking the streets looking for action and girls gave place to cruising the streets in the new private transport. At the same time that Australian society was preoccupied with American cultural influence and the press was giving a new prominence to the behaviour of working-class young people so certain traditional cultural forms of behaviour were becoming more common because of the changed context in which working-class young people were growing up. Such behaviour encompassed acts ranging from outright property destruction or vandalism, to classical forms of holding the street such as jostling or street crime such as mugging and bashing. In addition there appears to have been a resurgence of the territorially-based working-class youth gang. How strong and how organised these were, varied from area to area and, indeed, city to city.' (Stratton 1992, p. 8)

'The increased visibility of working-class youth culture in the post-war period was a product of the spread of consumerism, mass culture and the spread of the ideology of *youth,* the teenager, as a separate cultural category. For example the spread of specific clothing styles became the self-selected identifying mark of membership of a particular youth group. As we shall see, youth culture groups during the 19th century possessed particular clothing styles. However, we cannot call these *fashions* because they existed outside those institutional and social constraints within which fashion operated. One important effect of mass production in the clothing industry was the spread of fashion from the upper classes through to the middle classes and, subsequently, to the working class. In the post-war period such a devolution of fashion had been accompanied by an increase in the range of goods considered subject to fashion. From the mid-1950s there has evolved a mass fashion industry side by side with the older *haute couture* industry. In addition to the development of teenage fashions some groups of young people continued to mark themselves off by wearing either idiosyncratic clothes, from the point of view of fashion, or idiosyncratic combinations of fashionable clothes.

The rise of the mass fashion industry is best exemplified in the development and spread of boutiques. Mary Quant is credited with opening England's first boutique, called *Bazaar* in 1955 (Wheen 1982, p. 38), John Stephen opened the first English boutiques for men a couple of years later. In Australia the first boutiques seem to have opened about 1965 in the wake of the middle class youth cultural awareness which followed the Beatles tour in 1964. Some of the first were the *In* shops owned by David Scheinberg. In 1965 Jean Shrimpton, the English model, created a sensation by wearing a mini-dress in the members' enclosure at Melbourne's Flemington race track to watch the running of the Melbourne Cup. All the fashions sold in the new Australian boutiques at this time originated in London. However, about this time Prue Acton started designing clothes in Melbourne and, in 1968 Baiba opened a shop in Sydney's Paddington called *The Daily Planet* to sell clothes she designed and made herself. This spread of a mass fashion industry is important for the gradual reconstruction of working-class youth clothing styles as a part of fashion.

In the development of a youth mass fashion industry the mod fashions of the 1962-64 period mark a key moment of transition. In England it was the upper working class mod males who first frequented John Stephen's shops (Wheen 1982, p. 38). In Australia it was the more middle-class mod-males who went to the *In* shops. The earlier groups of Teddy Boys in England and bodgies in Australia had worn a combination of American mass-produced leisure clothing and tailor made clothing. These clothes were not, however, designed only for youth. Rather young people appropriated certain clothes marketed more generally to make up an image. The English styles, however, were produced and aimed at the youth market, incorporating youth as a category into the mass fashion market.

One reason for making this point about fashion here is to explain why this book stops around 1960. Before this period there is relatively little in the way of a' (Stratton 1992, p. 9)

'history of those areas which become so important to youth culture. **After this period there is a dramatic expansion in areas such as mass fashion clothing and popular music which require histories in their own right.** This book examines the historical background to these changes,

hopefully other books will examine the changes themselves and the youth cultures which participated in them.

In transport there was no similar incorporation into a system of fashion. Rather, the post-war period saw young people gaining increasing access to a widening variety of forms of transport. In the immediate post-war period in Australia most young people, like many adults, still relied on public transport such as trams and trains. As mechanised road transport proliferated there developed the possibility of a choice between, in the first place, cars or motorbikes. At a point in the late 1950s when second-hand cars became cheap enough for even working-class kids to own one, many chose to continue to ride motorbikes. Although the identification of the motorbike as a working-class form of transport goes back much earlier, at least to the Second World War, in Australia it is during this period of the late 1950s that the motorbike begins to take on a more assertively working-class quality. Of course this was not achieved through the simple possibility of segmentation, many other cultural inputs aided the development. One of the most important was the film *The Wild One,* which was released in America in 1954 and shown across Australia roughly a year later. The changes which made the film relevant in America had already taken place there — the film's plot line was based on a 'true life' happening at motorbike races at Hollister in 1947 (Thompson 1967, p. 74). In Australia the film's combination of youth rebellion and motorbikes helped to secure an already developing association in the minds of both some working-class young people and the population at large who made sense of the film in the context of their own experiences and, as is the case with strongly resonant media texts, used the film to help understand what was going on in their own society.

In the second place the increasing variety of transport available, the range of possibilities within motorbikes and the increasingly large range within cars, led to a further segmentation. Thus, for example, by the late 1950s bodgies who drove cars tended to buy second-hand '30s and '40s American cars, big old Chevrolets and Dodges — the later ones with the well known long fins on the back. Interestingly the Australian folk myth is that bodgies used to drive FJ Holdens. From a purely practical viewpoint this was unlikely. Holden only started producing the FJ in 1953 (it started making the earlier, and similar 47/125 in 1948) so, by the latter part of the decade given also the general demand for cars, their second-hand price would still have been too high for most working-class kids. In 1957 second-hand 1954 Holden sedans were being advertised for around £750. By contrast a 1948 Oldsmobile sedan could be bought for about £300 and pre-war cars, many of which were American in origin, were cheaper still.

Moreover, the majority of bodgies and widgies would not have been seen dead driving Chifley's family car. This was for two reasons. First the FJ was marketed as dependable, reliable and as an adjunct to modern family living. In appearance' (Stratton 1992, p. 10)

'it was similar not to American cars but to the British cars which had a much more conservative and sedate image. Second, to the extent that it neither was an American car, nor fitted the image of American cars of that period the Holden could not be assimilated into the myth of America as the site of youthful spectacular consumption.

The mid-1950s saw a proliferation, not only of consumer products but of an increasing choice within each one of those products. As a consequence young people were able to distinguish themselves

with ease and on a mass scale unknown to earlier generations, especially when aided by the new mass media which, on news and current affairs programmes on the new television which began in Sydney and Melbourne in 1956 and in Brisbane in 1959, spread images of the new styles chosen by young people. Of course, previously, this had been possible by means of the press and through the cinema newsreels productions but the television with its much larger coverage and ready accessibility in large numbers of home — by 195959% of homes in Sydney and 63% in Melbourne contained a television represented a quantum leap in access to images drawn from the society. Furthermore television also started to cater for the new teenager both de facto in the broadcasting of American programmes such as 77 Sunset Strip and deliberately in such Australian popular music programmes as The Hit Parade and Teenage Mailbag, both of which went to air in 1957.

It is often argued that bodgies and widgies differed from earlier youth groups in that they looked to America rather than continuing in the Anglo-Celtic Australian tradition. Like all good myths, this one contains a truth. Many of the concerns of bodgies and widgies, such as rock'n'roll and certain clothing styles did, indeed, have an American origin. However, the uniqueness of the development does not reside in this change of allegiance. Rather, it lies in a combination of factors which can be summed up in the term consumerism. This too, it must be said, has an American origin which we will need to discuss, an origin which stretches back to the turn of the century but which, for our purposes, first becomes prominent in the America of the 1920s and subsequently spreads to Australia — and Britain as well as the rest of Europe — in the period following the Second World War.

The terms bodgie and widgie, and in particular bodgie, have, themselves a particular folk understanding these days. They have a meaning allied to, but distinct from, that commonly attached to the term larrikin. If Larrikin conjures up images of working-class misbehaviour, vandalism and other similar kinds of behaviour considered a threat to (middle class) property and morals then bodgie tends to be associated with flashness, with an extroversion which takes a person beyond the accepted forms of behaviour. What is acceptable behaviour is based on middle-class cultural standards. Widgie tends not to be used in this way, but rather is applied in a more or less focused manner in relation to a clothing style. In this image of the bodgie we have a middle-class critique of working-class pretensions to upward social mobility through the acquisition of consumer durables.' (Stratton 1992, p. 11)

'I have already claimed that those young people who came to be designated as bodgies and widgies were working-class. Since class, as a term, plays a significant part in the story I have to tell it is necessary to say something about my usage of this vexed concept. Australian ethnographic discussions of class tend to fall short of investigating the cultural order *per se.* In these discussions values and attitudes are asked for and analysed to build up a picture of class relations. Most recently **Chamberlain**'s (1983) investigation of Australian class consciousness takes this approach. The consequence of this development for Australian sociology is that it tends to avoid any confrontation with the lived practices out of which such values and attitudes, and such social relations come. Happily in recent times there appears to have been the beginnings of a shift of emphasis. Both **Williams**'s (1983) study of women in a mining community and **Connell** *et al*.'s (1982) study of school kids have shown an increasing recognition of the importance of the cultural order. This book

describes common behaviour practices, which are based on shared values. In this book I am arguing that working-class life is not only characterised by a particular relation to the means of production but also by a particular culture. My argument assumes the existence of a distinct working-class cultural tradition — using the term culture in its widest sense — which is different from, but not necessarily oppositional to, a middle-class culture tradition. It also assumes that there has, historically, been an ongoing attempt, not necessarily in a form in which the context and consequences were known to the perpetrators, to impose middleclass values and behaviour on the working class.

This book is about traditions of behaviour of young working-class people. Not all the working class, I should add, for many of these traditional forms of behaviour have been watered down and sometimes replaced, by that section of the upper working class often described as the respectable working class. In this book I want to emphasise the commonness of some working-class youth practices across both historical and geographical distance. It is the case that much within American working-class culture as well as in Australian working-class culture derives from a common English source. However, as we shall also see, there have developed a number of distinctive inflections in the behaviour of Australian working-class young people.

In the context of my emphasis on class I must say something about the Australian self-image of a classless society. **Encel** has discussed this in the context of what he calls 'The pervasiveness of the egalitarian ideology' (Encel1970, p. 50). The image of a classless society is often equated with the idea of a single set of cultural practices, different groups eating the same ·food, drinking the same alcoholic beverage, enjoying the same leisure activities and — the standard example — people from all social backgrounds sitting up front with the taxi driver. During the 1950s numbers of media images of young people behaving in *deviant* ways were introduced into this hegemonising image of homogeneous order. Rather than viewing these deviant activities as newly visible aspects of a distinctive and indigenous cultural order the reaction was either to isolate them as the effects of' (Stratton 1992, p. 12)

'influence from an alien and unwanted culture or to view them as localised *problems.* In this way the middle-class image of classlessness was protected. In the academic literature the same assumption of classlessness, which drops out of existence the working class as an identifiably distinct cultural grouping, is also apparent. A good example of this is to be found in a discussion of post-war Australia which viewed it as a conservative society attempting to reassert pre-war values. The recent article by **Alomes, Dober and Hellier** (1984), for example, only pauses to mention class in order to claim that home ownership was extended to many lower-middle class and some working-class Australians during this period and, later in the article, to say that:

> Despite a continuing undercurrent of poverty most of those who had been affected by depression and war were having, if not a well-earned rest, at least a more comfortable time (Alomes, Dober & Hellier 1984, p. 6).

In discussions of post-war culture the possibility of distinctive class-based cultural practices have tended to be denied through a generalised assumption of cultural, if not material, homogeneity. It is this assumption also which I want to make a start at challenging in this book.

Having said something about my use of class in this book it is also necessary to say something briefly about my use of the term *culture.* However, this is not a theoretical treatise so I do not intend to write an extended discussion of this term. Broadly speaking, by *culture* I mean the lived practices, sometimes self-consciousl y elaborated, sometimes not, which express the underlying values of a class. In this definition I am following **Raymond Williams** who argued that 'a culture is not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life.' (Williams 1957, p. 325.) When I write about the culture of the working class I am referring to a group which, to a very significant extent, overlaps with the Marxist definition of the working class. Culture in the sense that I am using it is not the same as ideology. In this book I use the term ideology to refer to a conceptual and abstracted theme which exists both in relation to class and to values associated with class members. I am aware that this is an inadequate discussion of either the term *culture* or *ideology* for further relevant discussions I recommend **Hall** (1977), **Johnson** (1979), and **Williams** (1981) — these discussions are not putting forward a single position. In addition, in this book culture is sometimes used in a more conservative sense to refer to what might be termed entertainment such as music, dance, film and the like. Obviously at a theoretical level these two usages overlap. Which one I use on specific occasions should be clear from the context.

There remains for me to say something about the research itself. I have used two major categories of primary sources; the first being newspapers and magazines from the late 1940s and 1950s. The problem here lay in the lack of clippings files held by the major Australian newspapers. **In Melbourne I was assured that no newspapers, including *The Age*, had files extending back further than 1966. In Brisbane the story was similar. In Sydney, however, both major newspaper**' (Stratton 1992, p. 13)

'publishers, News Corporation and Fairfax Ltd, have files extending back to the early 1950s. Unfortunately it is now very difficult to gain access to the libraries of either group. In addition I consulted a very rough index for *PIX.* When it comes to American teenage magazines which were of great importance during the 1950s it is sad to relate that in no library in this country could I find any holdings of these at all

My second major source of primary material has been the memories of individuals who grew up during the late 1940s and 1950s and who identified themselves as, in some sense, either bodgies or widgies. It is necessary to acknowledge from the start that the people who contacted me were all self-selected. One aspect of the difficulty of tracking down ex-bodgies and ex-widgies lies in the lack of self identification of large numbers of people with these terms. This is one result of the dissonance between the media-promoted societal image and the day-to-day lives of the individuals who became labelled with these terms. Typical of many comments made to me in interviews is this one:

> I'll tell you truly, I never thought of myself as a bodgie or a widgie but in 1960 I started water-skiing and — - said "Oh, here comes Marie, she's the original widgie of Sandgate." … And I didn't perceive it myself (interview with Marie).

Another aspect of the problem relates back to the discussion of class. As I have already suggested those designated as bodgies and widgies came from predominantly working-class backgrounds. In

the Australian social consciousness the specificity of working-class life is generally suppressed by the assumption of cultural homogeneity. One consequence of this is that working-class people seem even more reticent than in, let us say, England with its acknowledged class-based cultural differences, to come forward and help in this kind of research project. Typical of a number of comments made to me in both letters and interviews was the following.

> The real bodgies were people who had a much more working-class type origin than I did. My family were fairly middle class (interview with Jim).

In spite of this problem a number of people who this interviewee would have regarded as *real* bodgies and widgies did get in contact with me. One more problem which compounded the general reticence to contact me lies in the extraordinary effectivity of the moral panic generated during the 1950s. One person who contacted me by letter wrote:

> N.B. All this information (about his having been a bodgie) must not reveal my identity as I could lose my Government job (Letter 21.12.83).

Whether or not this person actually could still lose his job is a moot point. His worry, however, is real and this was doubtless another reason why many people would not contact me, or when they did, asked not to be named or, in some cases, would not allow me to tape interviews.' (Stratton 1992, p. 14)

'My first attempt to solicit informants was through letters placed in papers in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Newcastle, Bendigo, Wagga Wagga, Perth and Adelaide. These produced some response from individuals in Sydney and Brisbane, but little from elsewhere. Newspapers in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth picked up on the story and ran small feature articles outlining my research and asking for people to get in touch with me. This produced a much better response. A number of radio stations noted my research from the newspapers and asked me to do 5-minute on-air phone-in chats. Whilst satisfying to the ego these produced absolutely no response whatsoever. Many of the responses I did get were from people who were angered at what they thought were misrepresentations of bodgies and widgies in the newspaper articles. Some of my respondents came to my attention offering their services through the informal contacts of friends.

All in all, the research for this project was not straightforward and I offer the resume above not only as an account of the research background of this book, but also a guide to those who may want to conduct other research into Australian post-war working-class social history. I received 32 letters sometimes of half a page, though usually about two pages but, in the case of three replies, as long as six A4 pages. I conducted one three-quarters-of-an-hour phone interview with a person who refused to see me because he was worried about his past coming to light — this was a different person from the one from whose letter I quoted above. I interviewed nine people who did not want to be taped and I taped a further 18 interviews. Two people, both male, kindly sent me tapes of themselves.

I would like to conclude this introduction by expressing my very great debt of gratitude to all the people who contacted me in the course of this research. I hope I have done them, and their memories, some degree of justice.

The first two chapters of this book provide a context for discussing post-war youth and youth culture in Australia. The following four chapters examine aspects of the phenomenon of bodgies and widgies and look at its relationship to established working-class practices and to the spread of the category of the teenager.' (Stratton 1992, p. 15)

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CH1 The category of youth and youth culture theory

'There is a difference to be found in the societal image of larrikins and late-1950s bodgies and widgies. Recognising this we become aware of one of the most important problems in discussions of youth culture. This is defining what actually constitutes a *youth culture.* Having raised this problem I need to state immediately that I will be arguing for a historical, as well as socio-cultural, specificity to be attached to the term. Whilst the major part of this chapter will examine the theoretical problems associated with the idea of youth culture, the first section will look at the historical constitution of the category of youth.

Adolescence and Youth

Youth, as a modern category, is centred around adolescence. The construction of the category of adolescence begins in England through the central part of the 19th century. Adolescence separates the child from the adult. The more recent construction of adolescence depends, then, on the earlier construction of the category of the child (on this see Aries 1962). This development does not concern us here except in some of its particulars. If, as it has become normal to do, we take Rousseau's *la Nouvelle Heloise* and his *Emile,* published in 1762, as the first delineations of the burgeoning discursive constitution of the child in middle-class culture, we can see the establishment of a number of important traits. Aries has summed up Rousseau's understanding of the child like this:

> The association of childhood with primitivism and irrationalism or prelogicism characterises our contemporary concept of childhood. This concept made its appearance in Rousseau, but it belongs to twentieth century history (Aries 1962, p. 119).

Emile was principally concerned with education. Throughout its history the middle class has lain great store by education as the means, not only of inculcating' (Stratton 1992, p. 17)

'knowledge — unlike, for example, the traditional feudal technique of the apprenticeship — but also as a way of imbuing its youth with the lived culture, the *manners,* in particular, of middle-class life. In this, of course, the role of the English public school during the late 19th century, pioneered by Thomas Arnold at Rugby was paramount (Simon 1960, p. 99-102). Given this general context it is not surprising that Rousseau's work should have been concerned with delineating what he considered to be the right form of education for what he believed to be the real nature of the child.

In brief Rousseau's theory of education was that children should be allowed to learn naturally, at their own speed and in a conducive environment. Rousseau's ideas on education represent the beginning of a radical fringe in educational theory which, except for a period in the late 1960s, has never achieved much popularity. However, his insight was to envision the child as natural. This perception which allied the child with the naturalness of a world untouched by what he considered to be a debased society, lay at the basis of the Romantic valorisation of the natural world. The cultural understanding of the child as natural, and therefore innocent of social *evils* as well as of all the other concerns of an adult world summed up in the belief in the child's lack of knowledge of *sex*, has its origin in this period. The concern with sex, a pervasive aspect of the middle-class cultural system, is epitomised in the association of adolescence with the physical changes of puberty. In the moral panics over the new teenage culture of the 1950s sex achieved a position of great prominence.

If we look forward to the production of a teenage culture in the late 1950s in Australia we find a recurring preoccupation with sexual activities. One of the most common themes was that of widgie initiation rites. In chapter 6 I will examine the area of sexual behaviour in the context of working-class culture; here my point concerns the importance of sex as one aspect of the media's preoccupation with bodgies and widgies. The theme of initiation rites may be epitomised in articles such as the one from the *Sydney Truth*, 6 November 1955 which began:

> Startling revelations of juvenile immorality in the form of initiation ceremonies practised on teenage girls by members of a bodgie gang known as the Saints have shocked respectable Adelaide.

Here sex becomes the focus for an assertion of the homogeneity of bodgies, the exclusiveness of their organisation, the assertion of male dominance in a voyeuristic fantasy of female sexual submission and the presentation of the sexual welfare of the female young as the basis for the preservation of the socio-cultural order. By the end of the 19th century there developed a concern with an interim period between childhood and adulthood which came to be known as adolescence. In academic work this period has its basis in the monumental work of G. Stanley Hall published in 1905 and entitled *Adolescence.* At the same time Freud was arguing for a similar period of a person's life as the time of the resolution of the sexually based Oedipus complex. Adolescence also had a more social manifestation. As Musgrove writes:' (Stratton 1992, p. 18)

'Social legislation and changing social conventions made the adolescent (Musgrove 1965, p. 10).

In England Musgrove notes the Youthful Offenders Act of 1854 as well as the Factory Acts of 1833 and 1847 which were based on the assumption that young people of between 13 and 18 years required treatment different from adults. In Australia such legislation occurred later. In Victoria in 1879 there was an attempt to amend the 1873 Factory Act to bring it into line with British legislation. Among other things this would have prohibited the employment of children under 13 in factories and limited the hours of work for women and children to 48 hours a week. This amendment failed to get passed. In 1896, however Factories and Shops Acts were passed in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. These Acts enforced the recommendations of the failed

Victorian amendment (Gollan 1960, covers these points). The social aspect of adolescence formed the basis for the development of the category of youth.

During the later part of the 19th century the middle class started to impose the idea of adolescence on the culture of the working class. On the period between the two world wars Gillis writes that:

> On the institutional level, the raising of the school-leaving ages and the provision of extracurricular activities indicated the middle classes' belief in the universality of adolescence (Gillis 1974, p.137).

There is a continuity to working-class culture which stretches back before the 19th century. The attempt to impose the individual experience of adolescence and the developing social category of youth occurred in relation to an established working class understanding of the role of the youthful person. If we want to understand the true nature of working-class youth cultures we need to recognise that their cultural aspects have a historical continuity. Similarly we need to recognise that many of the elements criticised as parts of these youth cultures as if they exist in a vacuum are, in fact, a part of working-class culture.

Based on the individual period of adolescence as a part of growing up the social category of youth was reconstructed in America around the 1920s. This reconstruction occurred in relation to the new emphasis on consumption. Youth was constructed as a period of life with few responsibilities and much leisure when a person could indulge in the hedonistic pleasures of consumption. The category of youth was associated with a range of products aimed at the *youth market.* The term *teenager* became common in America during the 1930s. Wentworth and Flexner in their *Dictionary of American Slang* argue for its colloquial use from around 1930 and its standard use from about 1945. It is since 1945 that the term has gained acceptance in Europe and Australia. One place where we can trace the Australian acceptance of the category of the teenager is the development of a magazine industry aimed at *teenagers.* In Australia until well into the mid-1950s there were no magazines aimed specifically at the teenager, although as early as (19 May) 1954 *Women's Weekly* pioneered a short-lived monthly supplement entitled *For Teenagers.* Through this period bodgies and widgies would buy' (Stratton 1992, p. 19)

'imported copies of *Sixteen* and *Seventeen.* The first major shift in the direction of a youth-centred magazine came as late as 1959with the publication of *Teens Today.* I will have more to say about this magazine in the final chapter.

A specific youth culture, as opposed to the recognition of adolescence as a problematic period and of youth as an important transitional period, began to be evolved in America in the 1920s. Jenkins in his history of the 1920s sums the period up like this:

> Let's do it! – Do what? Practically anything you can get away with. Dance. Make love. Sing. Laugh. Make money. Lose money. Drink. Fly. Smash something. Spit on the carpet. At first it looks like a youth movement, but soon age is at it too (Jenkins 1974, p. 16).

Jenkins' approach may be a little journalistic but the point is made. Frederick Allen (1964) gives a lengthier portrayal of the new practices of young people in chapter V of *Only Yesterday* (first pub.

1931), whilst Paula Fass (1977) gives a scholarly account of the links between the changing position and behaviour of middle-class American young people and the spread of higher education in the 1920s and 1930s in *The Damned and the Beautiful.* For example the novel situation of large numbers of middle-class young people living away from home produced a new set of customs of which the most well-known was the evolution of the *date.* As Jenkins indicates not only were their actual changes in the position of youth during these years but this period also saw the beginning of the valorisation of the image of youth. Previously youth had been a period with little positive identity, however, from the 1920s it came to be increasingly associated with leisure and, most importantly the consumption-oriented society. The 1920s in America saw the first formulation of a set of consumption-based institutional elements which enabled youth to develop an identity of its own.

It was this youth culture consisting of both consumer goods and a specific cultural and moral set of practices which middle-class America exported both to its own working class and to other countries. In both England and Australia the new mass produced consumer goods got picked up first by the working class. In America the post-war period saw a rise in consumerism among the working class. Also in this period the underlying theme of adolescence as a period of disruption was reconstructed into a social image of youth as rebellious. In all three countries during the late 1950s this image came to be attached to working-class youth who accepted the goods of the consumer society but rejected the cultural and moral practices which the middle class had attached to the new representation of youth. Much of the recurring moral panic of the post-war period in respect of youth can be understood as having its basis in this rejection. In this sense much of the basis of the post-war youth cultural groups from bodgies and widgies, Teddy boys, through to punks lay in their attempts to rework the consumer goods into a different, non-middle-class meaning system.

In order to understand these developments we need to look at their place in the traditions of working-class culture. From this point of view we can recognise the' (Stratton 1992, p. 20)

'context and significance of Humphries' argument for the importance of his oral history research on working-class childhoods in late-19th century England. He writes:

> ...much of the behaviour of working-class youth sub-cultures that is conventionally stigmatized as anti-social can alternatively be conceptualised as resistance and viewed to some extent as an indictment of oppressive institutions (Humphries 1985, p. 6).

This is too simple a formulation for the consideration of youth cultures *per se.* One area which will concern us is how working-class young people and their behaviour became the site of a complex struggle with the forces of middle-class morality and how this struggle was transformed in the post-war period by the shift to a consumption-oriented society.

Theories of Youth Culture

The term *youth culture* can have two major meanings. The first refers to the recognition that youth in general has become a major cultural category based around the consumption of material goods whilst remembering that young people's consumption patterns and behaviour are governed by socialisation processes located outside of themselves. We can, then, understand youth culture as a

plurality of class and cultural-originated subcultures, given a visibility through the historical development of consumption and leisure-based preoccupations. The rise of these occurs in the context of the historical development of youth as a specific category in social life.

The term *youth culture* is also used to refer to those much more visible groupings of young people consuming the same goods and services who exist as minority groupings within the accepted category of the *teenage youth culture.* These groups compose what are coming to be called the *spectacular youth cultures* such as mods, punks and the like which are made up of individuals who choose a similar leisure lifestyle which appears in visible ways to be deviant from the parameters society deems as acceptable for teenage culture. It was these groups with whom the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies were concerned when they evolved their theoretical formulation of youth culture in the early 1970s. The earliest formulation of the group's position is to be found in an article by **Phil Cohen**. In it he argues that 'subcultures are symbolic structures (Cohen 1980, p. 83). In Cohen's original argument there is an awareness that youth cultures are tied in significant and complex ways to the lived folkways of the dominant cultural and class-based group from which its members are drawn. Thus, for example, Cohen shifts from talking about subcultures to taking about lifestyles. He writes that:

> …a given life-style is actually made up of a number of symbolic subsystems, and it is the way in which these are articulated in the total lifestyle that constitutes its distinctiveness (Cohen 1980, p. 83).' (Stratton 1992, p. 21)

'It is important to understand what Cohen is saying here because the later, and more well known, work of the Birmingham group in *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall & Jefferson, 1976) tends to emphasise practices as symbolic. The effect of this is to separate individuals from their social context, giving little acknowledgement to the importance of practices which locate those individuals within their social context. Cohen is describing a complex unity of inherited lived customs and achieved, often co-opted, practices as being the basis for a youth subculture. He goes on to write that:

> There are basically four subsystems, which can be divided into two basic types of forms. There are the relatively 'plastic' forms — dress and music — which are not directly produced by the subculture but which are selected and invested with subcultural value insofar as they express its underlying thematic. Then there are the more 'infrastructural' forms— argot and ritual — which are more resistant to innovation but, of course, reflect changes in the most plastic forms (Cohen 1980, p. 83).

Cohen is unclear in explaining not only in what a youth culture, or in his terminology a subculture, consists but also in generating a theoretical model which would enable us to assign limits to any particular youth culture. What he seems to be implying is that a youth culture consists of a cultural complex of which some aspects are appropriated from *out there* whilst others are, in fact, simply aspects of the lived folkways of a particular class-based cultural group. Cohen's concern is to demonstrate that these youth cultures, although located in forms of spectacular consumption are, nevertheless, not independent totalities but have a basis in traditional social practices.

In Cohen's useful discrimination between plastic and infrastructural symbolic subsystems it is clear that the most problematic is the infrastructural. This component, Cohen argues, is more resistant to innovation than the plastic. He does not go on to say why this should be but it seems likely that Cohen is actually setting up a dualism composed first of elements which individuals acquire in a bricolage fashion from an *outside culture,* which is defined as existing beyond the limits of the individuals' class-based lived culture. Bricolage is the choosing of a variety of goods available in the continuum of consumption which, in the case of youth cultures, has the effect of bringing them together to form a set of juxtapositions which resonate with meaning.

One important aspect of the historical development of post-war youth cultures in England has been the increasing awareness by subsequent generations of young people of all classes of the significance of spectacle in a consumer goods-oriented and mass media contextualised world. However, this particular usage of infrastructural forms is both a recent development and not widespread by which I mean that only a minority of young people acquire the visible traces of membership of a youth culture within the category of teenage culture. One reason why this is the case is that, at its limit, where all of one's customs, lived practices, have been co-opted into the youth culture the individual would lose all contact' (Stratton 1992, p. 22)

'with the wider-lived social order. From this point of view youth cultures such as mods, skinheads or punks are, to a greater or lesser extent parasitic on the established youthful behaviour of their members' peers. Youth cultures are not, as I have said, independent totalities but exist as spectacular outgrowths of the lived day-to-day life of particular cultural groups. The more aspects of taken-for granted behaviour that are incorporated into the spectacle of the youth culture the less contact the individuals involved have with their social environment. The reflexive self-consciousness generated by the spectacular nature of such youth cultures transforms areas of life into style.

The first person to associate style with youth culture was George Melly in his history of English youth cultures called *Revolt into Style* (1972) though Melly does not distinguish between an undifferentiated pop teenage culture and idiomatic groupings within that culture. Brake has also commented on the relationship between subculture and style (1980, pp. 12-15). However the most developed acknowledgement of the importance of style is to be found in Hebdige (1979). He writes:

> Much of the available space in this book *[Subculture: The Meaning of Style]* will …be taken up with a description of the process whereby objects are made to mean and mean again as "style" in subculture (Hebdige 1979, p. 3).

Style is a product of the distancing effect of reflexi vity which is a part of the placing of the practice concerned in a new spectacular set of referents. More established forms ofbehaviour from the individual's culture are simply continued whilst being integrated with more *spectacular* plastic appropriations. This does not mean that these established forms of behaviour do not, themselves, become spectacularised. They do, and this is where a part of the problem with Cohen's formulation lies. Aspects of behaviour which, to the people indulging in them, may seem perfectly normal- may, in fact, be within the parameters of the cultural behaviour as lived by parents and peers — may well be picked up by the spectacularising media and reconstructed as behaviour which is part and parcel

of the youth culture. Here, in the main, I am talking about the relationship between a middle-class media and working-class youth cultures.

In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* Stan Cohen has written that:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people, … (Cohen 1973, p. 9).

Stan Cohen describes the group identified as a threat as a folk devil. One aspect of the process in the production of a group which becomes a folk devil is the attribution to individuals who commit offences of either a criminal or a moral' (Stratton 1992, p. 23)

'kind of the term which designate them as members of a particular group. One example of this from Australia in the late 1950s was the wave of media reports of attacks on migrants from Southern Europe in major urban centres. The designation of the attackers as bodgies classified them as members of a specific and limited group who could be categorised not as working class but as a small group of young deviants. Widgies tended to be described as looking on, as in the *Daily Mirror* headline from 2 February 1956 which read 'Assault watched by girl in black.' Here the characteristic working-class division of labour in which the female is passive and the male acts as physical aggressor has been reconstructed to emphasise the voyeuristic nature of the female role. Stan Cohen developed the idea of folk devils and moral panics in relation to an idea of society as having a single shared-value system. In this book I rework Cohen's idea from the point of view of a Marxist understanding of society. From this point of view the process of the production of bodgies and widgies as a folk devil enabled an elision to occur whereby more general working-class practices could be separated from their context and criticised as the practices of a small and amorphous section of young people. The effect of this was to construct an image of a homogeneous society threatened by a small group of deviants. In this way the identification of a folk devil and the concomitant production of a moral panic helped to reproduce middle-class hegemony. More generally it forms part of a long running process in which the middle class has attempted to moralise the working class and eradicate working-class culture.

The role of media reports in the production of folk devils alerts us to another problem. Once we recognise the relationship between media reports and folk devils we must also acknowledge the problem this poses for the use of media reports as a part of the attempt to reconstruct social history. Thus, for example, the wave of newspaper reports of bashings during the period around 1955-58 may, indeed, relate to a new occurrence. Typical of such accounts is one from the *Sydney Sun,* 30 December 1955 which was headed 'Bodgies did this.' The first paragraph reads:

Bodgie gangs made two vicious attacks in northern suburbs last night.

In one attack Nita Maddocks, 19, was bitten on the hand when she attempted to stop a fight which a group of bodgies had picked with her boyfriend, John Tessoriero. However, rather than relating to a new occurrence, it may be that such accounts demonstrate an increased societal sensitisation to a

practice which had been going on for some time. Without alternative sources it is impossible to know which was the case. In this situation the shifts of focus of media concern need to be treated with caution. In the case of the rise in the accounts of bashings of migrants there are grounds for believing that such a development was new, if not absolutely then certainly in extent. At its simplest, the bashings of the late-1950s may be viewed as a result of a combination of a decline in working-class youth job opportunities, a tradition of working-class racism and the increased number of Southern European migrants during the mid-1950s. Thus what was classified as' (Stratton 1992, p. 24)

'the behaviour of a distinct and deviant few, may in fact be perceived as a more general reaction to a real problem. I shall return to this in the next chapter.

The production of bodgies as a folk devil a part of whose behaviour was racist, though random, bashings enabled concern to be redirected from a more fundamental problem. This was the effect of the creation of a new industrialised labour force, the members of which had little chance of ameliorating their conditions. In focusing concern only on the bashings the media enabled the *public,* both working class and middle class, to believe that the bashings were simply a crime-based problem related to a specific group and that effective policing would eradicate the disturbance. Understood in this way we can see how the bashings provided a basis for a conservative law and order campaign. Pearson (1983) has detailed a history of such campaigns in England which runs back to the 17th century. By giving the bodgie folk devil violence as a part of his make-up we can understand how public concern was effectively distracted from underlying causes to more immediately visible effects.

One important thing to note here is that visible similarity is not, in itself, a new phenomenon. As we shall see the English hooligan groups of the turn of the century, as well as their predecessors who do not seem to have had a generic name, and including their Australian spin-off, the larrikin, all wore distinctive clothing styles. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, the larrikin style derived from that of young people who subsequently became known as hooligans in England. Within this tradition what occurs in the post-1950 period in Australia and England is a quantum leap in the choice of ready-to-wear leisure clothing available. This development was itself followed in the late 1950s in England by a ready-to-wear youth fashion market aimed at the middle class and located in boutiques. However, for the period of the 1950s youth leisure clothing was not an internally sufficient fashion culture. That is to say its referents were those of the adult culture's leisure clothes. In this context the clothes consciousness of bodgies and widgies operated at two levels. On one level was the assertion of particular identity, an identity lodged in a myth negotiated between individuals, popular culture and the reporting of the mass media. The other level was the development towards a self-generated sense of fashion, a sense of *looking sharp* in relation to one's associates by assembling clothes in a bricolage manner from the choice available outside of mainstream fashion concerns. Although also present in the pre-20th century groups this development seems to have increased markedly in the post-1950 period when style has come to be an increasingly important component of youth cultures.

One trajectory in the development of youth cultures has been an increasing association with a widening variety of consumer goods. Hall and Jefferson in *Resistance Through Rituals* acknowledge this when they remark that:

> One important set of inter-related changes hinged around "affluence", the increased importance of the market and consumption, and the growth of the "Youth-oriented" leisure industries (Hall & Jefferson 1976, p. 18).' (Stratton 1992, p. 25)

'One problem in discussing post-war affluence is to know where an individual considered necessities to end and luxuries to begin. This well-known problem in turn hinges on another, historical problem. This relates to the gradual transference of activities ranging from bread-making through clothes making to entertainment from the home to external situations. Strasser writes of America that:

> Between about 1890 and 1920, mass production and mass distribution brought new products and services- gas, electricity, running water, prepared foods, ready-made clothes, and factory-made furniture and utensils — to large numbers of American families (Strasser 1982, p. 6).

Any discussion of the shift of activities out of the home is complicated by the importance of servants in the middle-class home. Servants took on much of the home-based manufacture for the middle class and it was really only in the post-war period in Australia and England that the relocation in industry of people who would otherwise have been servants forced middle-class homemakers to look to commercial resources for many goods and services that would previously have been sighted in the home. The movement out of home occurred first in the working class where there was a lack of home resources and time. Kingston (1975, p. 7) estimates that around 1890 about one-third of women in Australia worked outside the home. The majority of these women would have been working-class women and a large number of them would have been working as servants. With the shift from the home being the site of manufacture of goods for its own consumption to a place of consumption within a system based around the cash nexus the home became increasingly integrated into the capitalist economic system and its needs, in terms of that system, rapidly expanded.

This gradual commercialisation and institutionalisation of previously home-centred activities applied also to entertainment. Cunningham, writing of England, has commented that:

> If leisure for the middle class became commercialised in the eighteenth century, as Plumb [in *The Commercialisation of Leisure*]has argued, for the mass of the people it was being commercialised from the very early 19th century, and in a form which gave rise to a vigorous popular culture of entertainment (Cunningham 1980, p. 37).

The rise of an institutionalised popular culture was centred around the evolution of such activities as circuses and the music hall. It also related to the institutionalisation and commercialisation of many folk games, such as football and cricket, which produced the phenomenon of the paying spectator (Malcolmson 1973, Dunning & Sheard 1979, Mandle 1973 and, on America, Rader 1983, part III). The 19th century, then, saw the beginning of a vigorous commercial popular culture which was subsequently reinforced by the development of the mass media of communication. One consequence of this reinforcement, as we shall see, was a percolation of working-class

entertainment and traditions into middle-class homes whilst that entertainment became more commercialised and permeated by middle-class evaluations of cultural worth.' (Stratton 1992, p. 26)

'In both Australia and England the shift away from the home as the site of production occurred about 20 years after its occurrence in America. Moreover whilst these dates reflect the approximate moment of the crucial shifts the history America from the 1920s and of Australia and England from the 1950s can be seen in terms of the gradual completion of this shift. The shift from production to consumption is important because it alters the status of the goods produced. In society centred around predominantly home-production one can assume a correspondence between the goods produced and the class culture of the individuals who produce them. In a society in which mass-production techniques provide large numbers of goods from which individuals may *choose,* depending of course **on** a variety of constraints ranging from cultural to monetary, it is much less clear 'hat the class status of these goods is. Goods, a term which here refers to both material goods and cultural products, in such a society, are consumed as commodities and acquire class associations in the complex process of consumption. One of the most important ways this occurs is through advertising, another is quite simply, through cost.

Whilst one may well want to argue that Teddy boys and the earlier bodgies and widgies were, indeed, uncritically celebrating their new found wealth by buying the newly produced mass-consumption goods and entertainment, it is clear that other groups, such as the later bodgies and widgies to some extent but more obviously the English skinheads of the later 1960s and the Australian sharpies of roughly the same period, did not have this kind of relationship with consumer goods. Whilst it may be argued that concentration on access to consumer goods and services distracts the individual from his/her recognition of his/her real position in the social order it is also possible for consumer goods to be expropriated from the established system and mobilised as part of a different system founded on distinct cultural traditions to generate new, and possibly critical, meanings.

One strand which runs through this book is concerned to show how much of the culture associated with mass consumption and with the mass media actually springs from traditional working-class practices and entertainments. Phil Cohen argues that youth cultures select goods from the available range of dress and music. He seems to suggest that it is the act of selection which appropriates them out of the generalised system of passive consumption and rearticulates them within the spectacular practice of a youth-cultural signifying system. The important thing to recognise here is the impact of a historically developed consumption-oriented system. Without the deployment of such a system and the corresponding awareness of the importance of goods as a apart of a complex and encompassing system of signification, the possibility of appropriating goods and investing them with *alternative* meanings than those generally accepted for them (produced and reproduced in, for example, advertising) would be considerably lessened. This, in fact, is the basis of another argument which suggests that, as compared with post-World War II youth groupings, 19th century youth groups had less impact on the social order through visible means such as dress and had an impact more concentrated on their actual practices.' (Stratton 1992, p. 27)

'Phil Cohen described youth cultures as a mix of two distinct sets of symbolic subsystems. From a more general point of view he located youth cultures in a dual nexus. First he argues that, at a day-to-day level, youth cultures operate to decrease deep seated and generalisable tensions within the working-class family by replacing them with an apparent generational conflict. Specifically he writes: What I think is that one of the functions of generational conflict is to decant the kinds of tensions which appear face-to-face in the family and replace them by a generational-specific symbolic system, so that the tension is taken out of the inter-personal context, placed in a collective context and mediated through various stereotypes which have the function of defusing the anxiety that interpersonal tension generates (Cohen 1980, p. 82).

Once again history forces a clarification. Whilst one can find through the period of industrial capitalism some discussion of the unruliness of young people and how this relates to a degeneration in the quality of societal life (Pearson 1983) there evolved in the inter-war period in America and in post-war period in Australia and England a more specific rhetoric centred around the *generation gap.* This rhetoric reached its peak in America during the hippie youth culture of the late 1960s. Two interesting works from this period are Friedenberg's essay entitled *The Generation Gap* (1969) and Yablonsky's ethnography entitled *The Hippie Trip* (1968). This rhetoric was based on an assumption of the distinctiveness of the teenager *per se.*

The ideology of generational conflict offers a very specific understanding of youth cultures and teenagers in general in that, far from seeing youth cultures as deviant aberrations from a normal and harmonious pattern of youth development through to adulthood, it views them as extreme manifestations of a more general pattern of disaffection and dislocation associated with the teenager. In the post- World War II period, when youth itself was being integrated into the social order as the site of leisure an alternative image of youth was being constructed as the site of disorder. Films utilising the theme of disorder as the basis of the teenage myth become more developed in the 1960s. One extreme example was *Wild in the Streets* directed by Barry Shear in 1968. The story centred on a 24-year-old President of America who sends everybody over 35 years of age to concentration camps. Two years later Roger Corman directed a film called *Cas-s-s-s* in which an unknown gas, accidentally released, kills everyone over 25 years leaving behind various forms of disorder (for a brief discussion of these films see McGee & Robertson 1982, pp. 145-146). The most obvious example of a youth cultural image of youth as the incarnation of disorder is to be found in the gradual elaboration of the bikie image in the post-war period and films, in particular, were in an area of cultural production which mobilised many aspects of this image starting with *The Wild One* in 1955. In general terms the acceptance of the idea of a generation gap, which achieved its greatest popularity during the period of the middle-class hippie youth culture in America, was co-ordinate with the increasingly important role played by youth in legitimising the articulation of the consumer society, a legitimation brought about by the established synonymity between youth and leisure. Simultaneously the emphasis on the generation gap enabled theorists to represent' (Stratton 1992, p. 28)

'class-based conflict as age-based conflict, in the process shifting the emphasis from work to leisure and thus leaving unquestioned the capitalist basis of the new consumption-oriented society. The shift of concern from class to age allowed for a re-affirmation of the middle-class claim that society

was based on a single shared-value system and had a single culture. This argument does not detract from the validity of Cohen's point. Rather what it does is illustrate how the production of the myth of generational conflict in relation to the ideology of the teenager provided a legitimating mechanism for the construction of the post-war proliferation of youth cultures. Equally it enables us to recognise how an individual's investment in such youth cultures tends to distract the family from lived tensions within the home. Of course new tensions may be constructed but they will exist in relation to the manifesting of an image related to the public society. That is to say concerns about school, work, unemployment, traditional morality becomes mediated through concerns with hair length, clothing, drug use and the like.

It is the second aspect of Phil Cohen's argument which has been taken up and elaborated on by the Birmingham group and their associates. Cohen makes his point like this:

> It seems to me that the latent function of subculture is this: to express and resolve, albeit 'magically,' the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture. The succession of subcultures which this parent culture generated can thus all be considered so many variations on a central theme — the contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working-class puritanism and the new hedonism of consumption; at an economic level, between a future as part of the socially mobile elite or as part of the new lumpen proletariat (Cohen 1980, p. 83).

It can readily be seen that Cohen's argument is highly localised. His concern is with 1960s English working-class youth cultures and his theory is tailored only to fit these. In this context puritanism and consumerism are simply opposed, thus denying consumerism its more complex role in a more general theorisation of the articulation of visible, spectacular post-war youth cultures.

In addition the discussion of the economic contradiction locates the argument at the intersection of a very specific socio-cultural historical conjuncture sited at the mid-1960s end to the English post-war economic boom which produced the phenomenon of embourgeoisment. What Hall and his colleagues do in their more developed version of Cohen's theory is to generalise it by decreasing its historicism which they locate in the humanism of Cohen's work and increase its generalisability by emphasising the symbolic and structural aspects of the argument through an input of Althusserian and Gramscian originated ideas. They introduce the idea of hegemony, arguing that:

Working-class subcultures, …, take shape on the level of the social and cultural class-relations of the subordinate classes (Hall & Jefferson 1976, p.45).' (Stratton 1992, p. 29)

'For the Birmingham Centre theorists these secondary youth cultures are an attempt to *win space* in two ways; first, in the literal sense of protecting the working-class nature of dance-halls and football matches; secondly, in an ideological sense in which the encroachments on working-class traditions are experienced as a conflict and in which youth cultures represent what Cohen called a 'magical' solution. Hall and his colleagues call this a 'symbolically displaced resolution' (Hall & Jefferson 1976, p. 45). '

The Birmingham group's argument, then, recognises the class basis of youth cultures and views them, in the main, as working class in origin. Increasingly, however, their position shifts from a

concern with the individual as a member of a lived reality in a specific class relation to a concern with the youth culture as a holistic entity structured into society as a site of symbolic struggle and resolution. One consequence of this shift in emphasis is that the group argue that working class youth cultures inevitably fail in the long term to *win space* precisely because they are fighting on a symbolic rather than a material level. Thus the resolutions which they produce are not real and the contradictions which produced them remain.

The increasing concern with the symbolic aspects of youth culture reached its climax in Dick Hebdige's *Subculture — The Meaning of Style* (1979) which was primarily concerned with a semiotic analysis of what Hebdige called 'the loaded surfaces of life.' Hebdige considered post-war society a meaningful structure of signifying objects and practices. Embedded in this structure, and taking as their basis the immigrant West Indian black culture, Hebdige argued that there developed a number of working-class youth cultures which expressed their oppositionality to the encroaching hegemony of middle-class culture through their appropriation and reworking of objects given their original meanings in the context of a middle-class-originated signifying system. Hebdige's then, was principally concerned with decoding and analysing the texts of youth cultures as they were articulated in the context of a broader, cultural text.

We can see that, from one very important view, Hebdige's position was a good one. He recognised the importance of the image in the post-war consumption-oriented society. The underlying virtue of his work lay in his recognition that in a society where the image is lived as reality then a challenge to that image is a challenge to the real. In this Hebdige's position is distinct from that of his earlier, Birmingham colleagues. However, what needs to be acknowledged is the historical specificity of the cultural order which Hebdige is examining. His analysis of youth-cultural images fromTeddy boys to punks mobilises increasingly sophisticated forms of semiotic analysis. In the process Hebdige tacitly acknowledges that the cultural articulation of the youth culture as a text has become increasingly complex and sophisticated (on the post-punk period see Hebdige interviewed by Stratton 1982). Thus the trajectory of youth cultural analysis in England has been towards a type most suitable for discussing consumption-based spectacular youth cultures. These youth cultures tend to be' (Stratton 1992, p. 30)

'discussed from a point of view which replicates their increasing emphasis on Cohen's plastic symbolic subsystem. However, as I have suggested, this shift in emphasis tends to detach young people from their lived cultural context.

In this book I will emphasise the working-class cultural origins of many youth cultural and subcultural practices. For understandable reasons youth cultural theory has increasingly concerned itself with the consumption based, spectacular aspects of youth culture. With the spread of consumerism these have become *more* and more significant. Although many battles have been fought in the domain of spectacular consumption many more, and more important ones, have been fought out in relation to working-class cultural practices. This book documents some of those practices. It examines some of their changes over time and in relation to the new order of mass-consumption and the mass-media. Throughout this period there has been a continuing attempt to impose the cultural values of the middle class. This book examines this project and looks at the extent to which working class youth cultural practices have themselves been assimilated into the dominant order.' (Stratton 1992, p. 31)

'BLANK' (Stratton 1992, p. 32)

CH2 Hooligans, larrikins, bodgies and street culture

The construction of juvenile delinquency

'As the middle class began to define the category of youth during the 19th century it began the process of trying to impose its own moral order on working-class young people. One example of this was the classification of insubordinate working-class kids as delinquents. George writes of England that it was:

> At the beginning of 19th century, [that] manners, morals, "juvenile delinquency" and the cases of mendicity and crime in London first became the subject of serious inquiry and general attentions … (George 1966, p. 268).

Margarey (1978) has described how one effect of the deployment of a number of preventative crime Acts during the early part of the 19th century, and culminating in the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 was, to some extent, to legislate into existence the problem of juvenile delinquency through the concern of these Acts with street behaviour.

It is at this time that the street becomes an important site of contention. Historically working-class kids had passed much of their leisure time in the streets. With the institutional development of a police force it became possible to patrol the working-class kids on the streets. Those that were acceptable according to middle-class sensibilities could go about their businesss, those that continued to use the street as a space for recreation and who displayed in the street working-class cultural practices inimical to middle-class morality could be admonished. The battle over the streets resulted in the long run, in many of the cultural practices of working-class young people being transferred to places like dance halls and sporting arenas.' (Stratton 1992, p. 33)

'Margarey notes that Acts such as the Police Act were an important contributing factor to the wave of preoccupation with juvenile delinquence which grew in size during the first half of the 19th century until, as Margarey puts it:

> By 1851 "juvenile delinquency" was established among journal-reading, servant-employing Britons as a major problem in the condition of England (Margarey 1978, p. 11).

One very good example of middle-class encroachment through such reclassification can be found in the 1835 New South Wales Act for the Prevention of Vagrancy_ From our point of view the most important aspect of this act was that it was concerned with people' … without visible lawful mean of support, who were classified as idle and disorderly persons' (Grabosky 1977, p. 63). Such an act, designed to help eradicate indolence, to use Grabosky's term, enabled the police to act against individuals engaged in a wide range of non-work activities, activities which may well demonstrate

the reverse of indolence if accepted on their own terms but which could be classified as non-productive, and therefore indolent, when related to middle-class definitions of work.

More generally, the Vagrancy Acts were used against anybody engaged in behaviour considered to be unacceptable. In 1928, for example, after a raid on an East Melbourne flat where members of the American, black Sonny Clay's *Coloured Idea* jazz band were staying, six local white women who were in the flat were charged with vagrancy (Bisset 1979, p. 45). Since its inception the Vagrancy Act has been used with great frequency in relation to working-class youths. Here is one woman's story from about 1949:

> … anyway I got picked up. I didn't know my mother and father-well mum mainly - had been searching around the Cross (Kings Cross) for me for ages, and anyway, when the police picked me up they gave a choice. I had no money, so I was a vagrant. It was always important, you had to have money in your pocket. The Vagrancy Act was the only thing they could use against the bodgies and widgies you see. So all bodgies would try and protect each other by making sure that each one had money at the end of the night so they wouldn't get picked up. The mere fact you were a bodgie, you were discriminated against OK? And the mere fact that you were a widgie you were also discriminated against. So, anyway, they put me in jail which I hated. I was put in the Clarence Street lockup. I'd never been in jail in my life.

The choice to which this interviewee refers in this extract was a choice between going to jail and going back to her parents:

> So I went to jail. I went to Long Bay for 30 days. I nearly broke my parents' hearts, but at that time I just didn't want to go home. My father was drinking a lot and beating my mother and I wasn't big enough to help my mother, so I went to jail to keep away from it (interview with Irene).

By the end of the 19th century the treatment of young people was radically differentiated along class lines. In middle-class society there was developing a' (Stratton 1992, p. 34)

'perception of the period of the teenage years as being crucial to the production of a correctly behaved adult. Youth was a period for training in the proper forms of behaviour. Simultaneously the activities of working-class youth came under investigation. Their entertainment, the *popular culture* which, today, is so often conflated with mass culture was denigrated and many of the accepted traditions of working-class life were held up as deviant aberrations to what was considered - to be a universal, but which was in fact a middle-class, way of life.

The 19th century saw the attempt to extend what the middle classes called *rational recreation* to the working class. Rational recreation was the term given to activities which, it was considered, emphasised the mind rather than emotions. Cunningham writes that from the 1820s on:

> Books, museums, exhibitions, music, all these cultural goods from the middle-class repertoire were in a sense to be laid at the feet of a presumable grateful working class … (Cunningham 1980, p. 91).

Simultaneously the evolving commercial entertainments of the fair, the circus, the music hall and the established enjoyment of the tavern were criticised for their emphasis on the pleasures of the flesh and the emotions. Working-class traditional leisure customs were doubly damned, first for existing outside the new institutional forms of recreation and, second, for asserting values often the very opposite of those that formed the bedrock of middle-class orthodoxy.

Platt, in his discussion of middle-class attempts to *rescue* working-class kids in mid-19th century America describes how:

> The child savers were horrified that the "road to destruction" was made so easy in Chicago. Brothels, comic books, alcohol, amusement parks, and other "commercialized vices" were seen as a ubiquitous threat to the fragility of youth (Platt 1969, p. 91).

He goes on to explain that the child savers:

> … defined this crisis as a problem of person and social hygiene rather than of political power. Their solution to the "crime problem" was playgrounds, supervised recreation, "morals police", kindergartens, visits to the country, stricter laws and more efficient law enforcement (Platt 1969, p. 92).

Like her English and Australian equivalents Louise Howen, one of the most prominent of the child savers in America, felt that the development of a resolute *character,* combined with more, and more strictly enforced, laws would solve the problem of juvenile delinquency. Here we can see clearly the process by which working-class behaviour was attacked at what is considered to be the formative moment, youth, and reclassified by means of middle-class legislation as, at the least, deviant and evidence of a weak character or, worse, as simply criminal. *Unacceptable* behaviour by young people which was not necessarily criminal was defined as delinquent. As Gillis notes:' (Stratton 1992, p. 35)

'Delinquency served to delineate the central features of conformity, and vice versa (Gillis 1974, p. 137).

The rise of theories of juvenile delinquency during the 19th century corresponded both with the middle-class elaboration of the idea of adolescence and with discussions of the causes of juvenile crime. During the late-19th century the development of the concept of adolescence enabled a new rationale for delinquency to be constructed which supplemented the two already in use. These were, first, the idea that delinquency was an inevitable outgrowth of the degenerate *criminal class,* and, second the environmental view which held that delinquency was the product of social problems which centred on the claimed inadequacy of the delinquent's family background, a consequence of poverty and the like. In effect, in the environmentally-oriented theory - the nurture or deprivation argument- the role of the family was of considerable importance. Any departures from the *correct* model epitomised in the middle-class nuclear family was considered to place the child at risk. I will have more to say about images of the working-class family in chapter 6.

The spread and acceptance of the idea of adolescence as a period of life *naturally* prone to disorderly behaviour provided a new area for concentrating criminological investigation. The result of this shift of focus was, as **Gillis** has written in an article on this development, that:

> The model adolescent … became the organized youth, dependent but secure from temptation, while the independent and precocious young were stigmatized as delinquent (Gillis 1975, p. 97).

Delinquency became linked with a specific age group and there arose youth organisations whose purpose was to help adolescents through this *difficult* time. Young people who resisted such forms of organisation were laying themselves open to temptation if not already manifesting signs of incipient delinquency. The evolution of youth as an active cultural category in the post-World War II period has corresponded to a steady decline in the membership of youth organisations which were, in the main, themselves products of late-19th and 20th century middle-class concern with the *saving* of young people - mostly, of course, working-class young people. **In** 1960, in England, the National Association of Youth Clubs began to research into what they considered to be the alarming drop off in the membership of official-youth organisations. The results of this research were published in 1965 under the name of **Mary Morse** (1965) who had run the project. The orientation of the research was to use participant observation by field workers to infiltrate groups of young people who belonged to no organisation. This extract is typical of the research perspective:

> After two or three months in Seagate, by virtue of his acquaintance with Jeff and Larry, the worker became aware that he was on the fringe of a large, incohesive mass of young people best described as purposeless, being neither noticeably clubbable nor extremely delinquent. Most were aged between fifteen and twenty … (Morse 1965, p. 28).' (Stratton 1992, p. 36)

'Understandably, given the concerns of the funding organisation, lack of attachment to organisations was considered as a symptom of a deeper malaise.

In Australia the moral panic located in larrikinism during the mid-19th century was a counterpoint to what **Murray**, in his book *Larrikinism: A Nineteenth Century Outrage* (1973), has described as 'the cult of respectability' (Murray 1973, p. 22). As Murray goes on to write:

> The word "respectable" occurs with the power of a Wagnerian leitmotif throughout the larrikin period. As the cities developed, as great houses proliferated, as municipalities dignified themselves from the struggling outer suburbs they had originally been, the more solid class took on respectability (Murray 1973, p. 22).

Taking the contemporary accounts at face value Murray argues for an increase in the violence and belligerence of Australian youth gangs in the later part of the 19th century. Murray considers there to have been a shift from what he calls the more *innocent* gangs of the '60s and '70s to the more *daring* pushes of the '80s and '90s. Regardless, for the moment, of whether this change actually occurred what we need to note is the new visibility of larrikinism. Larrikinism became visible mainly through its increasing reportage in the middle-class press. It became the first Australian youth folk devil. But the meaningfulness of a folk devil is a product of its context. The production of the larrikin, like his English equivalent the hooligan, was a middle-class representation of the evils of working-class life. That, in many cases, the accounts of larrikin and hooligan behaviour were retailed in the papers with a greater working-class readership - in the same way papers like Truth carried the most detailed accounts of bodgies and widgies - does not negate their purpose. The act of reporting itself decontextualised the event from its surroundings and recontextualised it as an aspect of the visible,

middle-class social order. In the process the event became subject to a new set of middle-class determinations.

The increasing preoccupation with larrikinism through the 19th century runs parallel with the rise of an Australian urban middle class. Their concern with respectability was enhanced by their determination to shake off the stigma of the colony's convict past (White 1981, p. 24-28). Larrikinism as a folk devil developed in the context of the association of working-class traditions with a fear of the manifestations of depravity linked to convicts. In this way the power of the image of larrikinism was proportional to the needs of the middle class. In addition it may well have been the case that there was an actual increase in working-class disruptive behaviour. This could well have been linked to the economic depression of the period. In addition a greater degree of policing may well have led to a greater degree of working-class antagonism to the forces of middle-class morality.

In England **Humphries** has suggested that moral panics about hooliganism peaked during the Boer War and the First World War. He argues that this pattern may be a product of:' (Stratton 1992, p. 37)

> '· .. increased public sensitivity to law-breaking that followed from internal and external threats to the power and stability of the state (Humphries 1985, pp. 174-75).

In Australia during the 19th century the production of a state which defined itself in opposition to the colony's convict past precipitated the evolution of a folk devil which embodied many of the values attributed to that past and which served to compliment the development of respectability based on law and order.

In general the late 19th and 20th centuries have seen an increase in the literal visibility of working-class youth. The growth of the 19th century industrial city produced a well segregated artifact in which the middle class could avoid entirely the working-class areas. Thus, in London for example, the East End where the working class lived was a *terra incognita* for the vast majority of the middle class until the advent of the social investigators such as Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth whose books were published around the turn of the 20th century (in general see Keating, 1973).

The advent of the railway and, with it, the first cheap form of mass transportation, began the change in visibility. With the railway there developed a new working class leisure activity generally known as the excursion. Trains became a means of escaping the city either to the countryside or to the newly developing seaside resorts (Cunningham 1980, pp. 157-64). Unlike the private car the mass nature of the train gave it a blurred status as regards its class acceptability resolved by a differentiated price and comfort structure. The lack of specificity, in spite of segregated carriages, has continued and one modern manifestation is the working class youth rowdyism on the Melbourne trains going out to the western suburbs. Associated with traditional working-class values such as masculinity vested in daring or physical prowess, such activity can be understood as a modern version of the tradition of 'holding the street.' Later developments in transport have increased that mobility, allowing, for example, English mods to ride scooters down to seaside towns in a new individualised version of the 19th century working-class train excursion.

In Australia, with its widely spread towns and cities and, historically, its high level of community insularity, the new means of transport increased the visibility of the working class within the cities.

Furthermore, as transport between towns and cities became easier and cheaper the newly mobile working class were thought to pose a threat as a consequence of their intrusion into other communities. Such a threat has operated on two levels. Increased mobility has brought the working class into greater contact with the middle class. At the same time new means of transport have more generally, broken down the insularity of many isolated communities. To have such isolation overcome by working-class kids from the city appeared a triple threat to the authorities in these communities; the people were young and therefore potential perpetrators of disorder; the kids were working class and therefore liable to behaviour disapproved of by the middle class who ran the communities; lastly, the working-class kids were from the city, a region well known in our Romantic idiom as the site of moral and ethical laxity.' (Stratton 1992, p. 38)

'By the mid-1950s in Australia the established fears of working-class youth were compounded by the new associations of youth and consumerist leisure. In Toowoomba in 1956 we see both these concerns brought together in the context of, what was clearly still, an unusual visit. *The Toowoomba Chronicle* headlined the piece *Teenagers on Vagrancy Charges.* As we shall see The Vagrancy Act has been an important piece of legislation for dealing with working-class youth activity. The first paragraph of the report is enough to give the flavour of the incident.

A teenage girl and two youths who left Sydney in a car nine days ago with the object of "seeing Queensland" found themselves in the Toowoomba Court of Petty Sessions yesterday charged with vagrancy *(Toowoomba Chronicle* 17 February 1956).

There had been a second girl who, for reasons unexplained in the press report, left the group in Brisbane where she, too, had been charged with vagrancy. The three charged in Toowoomba all came from the working-class Sydney suburb of Sylvania and one of the males had served 3 112years as an apprentice electric welder. The increasing accessibility of second-hand cars to working-class youth made such trips more and more common during the late 1950s. Finally such geographical mobility became so commonplace that proceedings such as the above, in the main, ceased to occur. The rise, through the 1950s, of the working-class bikie may be seen as precisely a celebration of mobility which allows the simple visibility of groups in the *wrong* places to form the basis for their *threat.*

The joint origin of the English hooligan and the Australian larrikin lies in the middle-class reformulation of working-class youth practices in the late-18th and early-19th centuries. I do not want to enter into a detailed examination of English hooliganism here. Apart from the fact that it is not my focus of concern here, Pearson (1983) has already examined it in detail. However, there are some points which need to be made about English hooliganism because of its relationship to Australian larrikinism.

Pearson notes that the term *hooligan* first came into usage in England during the summerofl898. After a large number of arrests for such behaviour as drunkenness, assaults on police, disorderly behaviour and street robberies during an August Bank Holiday celebration use of the term became common in the Press. The evolution of the term hooligan from its unknown origin, perhaps as the name of one particular gang led by Hooley, allowed for the production of a folk devil to whom could be attributed a range of anti-social activities - mostly of the type listed in relation to that August

Bank Holiday. Whilst the origin of the term is unclear it is clear that the term became a generic to describe all forms of behaviour which deviated from the middle-class norm.

The most important thing about the hooligan, as it was about the larrikin and later would be about the bodgie and widgie, mod and even hippie (though this is a little more complicated) let alone the vandal was that he (vandals are rarely female for reasons discussed in chapter 4) never existed. In the previous chapter I described' (Stratton 1992, p. 39)

'how post-war working-class secondary youth cultures exist as a combination of the appropriation and reuse of consumer goods and the continued usage of unquestioned working-class traditions. At this point it is necessary to recognise that, in the articulation of working-class youth behaviour as deviant during the 19th century, the usage of the term *hooligan* in England represents a crucial moment of reification. From this point on the carrier of disorder at the heart of the English middle-class myth of a unified society wide order bears a name.

It is no coincidence that in fiction the 19th century saw the flowering of the Gothic tradition which had its roots in the late-18th century. Many of these novels, from *Frankenstein* to *Dracula,* are concerned with recognising and subjugating the source of a disorder which threatens the reality (or in literary terms the realism) of middle-class society. Often this threat is located at the heart of the apparently seamless societal social order. The working-class youth folk devil is, as its name suggests a Gothic construct. It is equally significant that Gothic literature, as Dalzeil (1957, pp. 13-20) points out, was the mainstay of working-class fiction reading in the form of the *People's Police Gazette* and stories such as *Varney the Vampire* and *The Lady in Black.* This was the period of the Penny Dreadfuls. Such literature stands in a complex relation between the middle-class moral order and working-class cultural values.

Racism

In the context of the construction of the hooligan as an external folk devil threat to a generalised moral order it is significant that, as Pearson again notes, hooligan behaviour was again and again described as 'un-English' (Pearson 1983, pp. 76- 77). This was one way in which traditional working-class forms of behaviour were reclassified as alien to a middle-class society which viewed its values as the basis for those of England as a whole. By this strategy the whole nation was counterposed with the alien foreigner, reworking what was, in fact, often a class difference. In the same way the working-class kids who, unwashed and ill-fed, spent much of their time in the streets, were often known as street-arabs. One irony of this middle-class discursive shift was that the English working class has a long, and strong, tradition of racism. Humphries (1981, pp. 193-197) has noted this tradition in respect of English working-class youth around the turn of the century, however as Shyllon (1977) has demonstrated racism has, in one form or another, been endemic to all classes in English society as far back as the 16th century. The transference of this tradition to Australia helped in the development of a Labor party which was, for a long time, a major supporter of the White Australia Policy.

What we can say with certainty is that the bodgies and widgies of the mid- and late- 1950s were, in general, simply much more visible working-class kids. Visible first because of their new, mass-produced clothing styles and because of their new institutionalised, entertainments such as

rock'n'roll dances. Visible second because of a new frustration and unrest among working-class kids of this period which reactivated a number of working-class traditions, which middle-class society classified as anti-social and delinquent. One of these was racism.' (Stratton 1992, p. 40)

'Racism has a long working-class cultural heritage. One way of understanding the working-class cultural idea of racism is to view it in relation to the theme of territory. Working-class racism unlike middle-class racism does not start by identifying particular groups as unwanted or by developing a hierarchy of races. Rather, it begins from the idea of defending one's space. Those outside of your group's space are to be vilified and attacked, particularly if they appear to be encroaching on your space. Race, in this context, refers to any possible isolating feature which might single a group and its members out. As a consequence of certain pressures which may be more or less local in origin, for example falling wages or decreasing available housing space, the territorial solution is to constitute a real group as the producers of the problem. In post-World War II Australia, with its history of the White Australian policy, working-class practices were inextricably linked with a range of middle-class national prejudices and a theorised and articulated set of arguments based on ideas of natural superiority as reflected in cultural patterns and ethnic purity. As a consequence there was an imminent racism in Australian society as a whole, which became more manifest as migrants with darker and darker skins were allowed into the country. At the local level this was compounded by incomprehensible languages and strange customs. However it was not these factors alone which precipitated working-class youth racial violence. Rather it was the more general slowing down of the economy, the recognition that the new job opportunities did not lead anywhere, the decrease in real wages and the historical decline in the quality of old working-class housing. All these factors were reconstituted into a territorial configuration which was articulated in racism. Experientially, however, racism is a bad term to use because the true context was territory and difference. The same features provided the basis for fights between neighbouring gangs, between bodgies and English Teddy boys who arrived as ship's stewards *(Sydney Morning Herald* 24.1.57), and between local-born Australians and migrants.

It was not unemployment as such which increased this type of violence. Unemployment did not reach 2.1% until after the 1960 mini -budget. Rather there was a recognition of the dead-end nature of the large number of jobs available. Between 1947 and 1951 there was a net migration to Australia of 110 361 people. Over the following 10 years there was a net migration of 78 234 people. In the period 1947-51 11.5% of immigrants came from Southern Europe. During the following period the figure was 33.1 % (these figures are from Sherrington 1980, p. 150). An understandable misinterpretation of the situation was that the new migrants were blocking promotion by taking jobs which offered access to upward mobility. A similar set of circumstances was apparent in the Australian cities in the late 1980s.

At the level of practice racism needs no such justification. Here is one account of an attack from the period:

> … the worst injury I ever suffered was one night after a dance when I was about 17 or 18 years old. My little troop and I wandered into the hamburger' (Stratton 1992, p. 41)

'shop and there was about 5 or 6 Italians in there. Well, we didn't like Italians I can tell you. They were sneaky little buggers we thought. And we'd heard stories from our uncles and that, about how Mussolini lost the war in the desert because they'd got all reverse gears in their tanks. And we considered them to be bits of cowards and gutless wonders.

But this fight took on and we got into these blokes and young George yelled out "One of them's got a knife." And I felt this sting in my leg. And I jumped out of the way just in time and I suppose I only got an inch or so of the blade in the upper part of my thigh. I was bleeding profusely but we flattened these Italians and what we didn't ran off (interview with Graham W.).

In this cameo of a racist fight we can see how native-born Australian working-class youth understood themselves to be defending working-class traditions of physical courage. The Italian youths were associated with cowardice and the fight may be understood as both a literal defence of white Australian working-class space, the territory of the community invaded by trespassers, and a metaphorical defence of working-class traditions lodged in the community which these trespassers would not uphold. Once again such behaviour as muggings and bashings was laid at the door of bodgies by the media who, for example, headlined one account of two separate bashings *Bodgies did this (Daily Mirror 30.12.55).*

As the bodgie and widgie were constructs, images that one could voluntarily and literally buy into because so much of their construction was based on the newly available mass-produced goods, there was another possibility to be considered. The image provided a possible vehicle for assimilation for immigrant youths into Australian society. By becoming bodgies and widgies, recognisable members of an acknowledged deviant grouping, but an Australian one rather than an ethnic one, many immigrant youths attempted to mitigate the effects of racism on them as individuals. This was, perhaps, most effective during the period of the earlier group when the bodgies and widgies felt, on the one hand, a strong affinity for America and, on the other, a sense of being different from other Australians, and in particular other Australian youth which coincided with the otherness felt by immigrants with non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. In addition, as I have noted, there was little pressure on jobs during this period which also decreased any sense of embattlement. Thus, for example, McDonald in his 1951 dissertation in the Anthropology Department at Sydney University discusses the number of Greeks in Sydney who were bodgies. In Brisbane there were a number of Italian bodgies who used to go to Jack Busteed's dance club and to the dances at Sutton's Beach where there would be some, mostly friendly, rivalry with the Australian-born bodgies over dancing and women. The incidence of immigrant women becoming widgies seems to have been very low and this can be put down to two factors. First there seem to have been more young male Southern European immigrants than female ones. Second, in the tradition of lower-class Southern European cultures the males were allowed more freedom outside the home than the females. The result of this was that more young male immigrants had the opportunity to buy into the visible street culture of bodgies and widgies than female immigrants.' (Stratton 1992, p. 42)

'During the later period the increasing availability of the youth consumption culture meant both that it was easier to assimilate into conventional working-class youth traditions and activities but that, also, it was more available to young people looking for a strategy to belong in a new, and often racist, society. Here is one account from Brisbane during the early to mid 1950s:

… But then what happened, because of my love of jitterbugging and things - I forget exactly how - but I was brought to this Jack Busteed's and that is where I was introduced to that circle of bodgies and widgies. I went to Jack Busteed's and this is where I really took to the place [Australia]. Somehow I felt at ease with these people. They accepted me. 'Gidday mate, how are you going' instead of all this wog business. Actually you know, without provocation you would walk in the street and 'You bloody wogs, you dago bastards - there's a couple of them.' That sort of attitude you see and it really hurt and I became embittered. And [these bodgies] they were really terrific fellows, they accepted me, they liked me, they welcomed me back and after the dances they used to invite me over to someone's place and of course drinking was a part of it and I was accepted (interview with Sal).

Here is a good illustration of how the deviant group can be used as a part of the process of gaining acceptance. However, as the culture became increasingly available such literal acceptance became rarer. Rather, as I have said, there developed more a system of buying into a general culture, more what one might call a community of possession.' (Stratton 1992, p. 43)

Sal dressed as a bodgie. This photograph was taken at Cloudland in Brisbane c. mid-1950s.

'   ' (Stratton 1992, p. 44)

The gang

'**The gang**

We have now examined a variety of ways in which the middle class extended their control over working-class youth, ways combining both the deployment of an image and the extension of legal powers. I now want to turn to one of the most evocative of youth images, that of the gang. The complexity of this idea, as with other aspects of working-class traditions, lies in the problematic relationship between the image and the reality which it portrays. During the 17th and 18th century apprentices had, in the main, consolidated around the focal points of their trades. During the 19th century one of the most important changes effected by industrialisation and the proletarianisation of youth was that working-class youth increasingly formed allegiances based on territory. I am being very careful here not to use the word *gang* without first discussing it. The working-class gang was not and is not a clearly defined group of individuals with a codified set of rules and a leader who is unchanging and whose word is law. This is a characteristically middle-class myth of the gang. In mythic form it invokes the structure of misrule to constitute the Other which produces disorder as the inverse of the system which institutes order. In Murray's book on the larrikins we are given just such a description of a late-19th century push which Murray seems to believe completely. This description, to be found in a novel by Ambrose Pratt called *The Great Push Experiment,* gives us not only a leader but a written application for push membership, an examination of the candidate's credentials by a formally-appointed committee, a probation period and the entry of the individual into gang membership by the signing of the gang book (Murray 1973, p. 128).

This myth of the formal, structured youth gang is a common one. **Yablonsky**, for example, in his discussion of New York gangs records how a newspaper reporter reconstructed a situation in which a small gang of highly disorganised youths had tried to force a number of other youths to join their gang into a newspaper report where:

> A 27-year-old hoodlum, known only to gang leaders as "Bobby", recently conducted a syndicate "charter signing" in a Manhattan community center. More than 60 gang leaders attended, including gang bosses from Brooklyn and Queens who were ready for a citywide syndicate (quoted from *New York World-Telegram* and *Sun,* 3.11.55 in Yablonsky 1962, p. 112).

Obviously some groups would have had, and do have, more cohesion and formalisation than others, but it would be rare, if not unique to find a working-class street gang with the degree of ritual formalisation usually attributed to middle-class organisations such as the Freemasons. Rather it is the effect of such an image which is important. Such images pervade middle-class commentary on working-lass youth activity through to the preoccupation of the 1950s press with widgie initiation rites.

The 19th century English working-class youth gang tended to be a loose knit groups of kids, male, with a semi-formal leader. Humphries writes of turn of the century youth gangs in England that:' (Stratton 1992, p. 45)

'Interviews indicate that most street gangs were loosely and informally structured, usually comprising 'cliques' or groups of friends, with no clearly defined status hierarchy or leadership, and no connections with the criminal underworld (Humphries 1985, p. 178).

Australian youth gangs, pace Murray, have a tradition of similar organisation. A good semi-fictional outline of Melbourne bodgie gangs of the mid-1950s is to be found in William Dick, *A Bunch of Rat bags* (1965). Dick emphasises their informal organisation. The youth gang, which we need to counterpose to the criminal gang of, usually older, males, has tended to be both relatively informal and territorially based.

The names of youth gangs have come from a variety of sources, often from some popular cultural origin. In the *Sun* of 15 September 1955 a report headlined *Old house is scene of "orgies"* contained the following:

> One room had a large inscription scrawled across the wall, "The Fowl Gang".
>
> Under the inscription "members" had signed their names.
>
> Names included Charlie Chook, Bertie the Bantam, Rufus the Rooster, and Freddie the Fowl.

Whatever the origin of this name the bodgies whom the newspaper claims were members of this gang do not seem to have taken the gang very seriously. In Australia many newspaper reports of the 1950s write of bodgie gangs called *The Saints.* Whatever the facticity of this the name has important connotations in the production of a folk devil with behaviour patterns that were anything but saintly. The important thing about these gangs was that they were not formal self-conscious organisations but rather informal, *natural* associations which grew up as an articulation of community. Such groups have a history quite independent of that of those middle-class folk devil productions the hooligan and the larrikin.

It is likely that, for socio-cultural and economic reasons outlined in the introduction, the later 1950s saw a real upsurge in working-class youth violence. This was not a product of the rise of bodgies and widgies, as the moral panic suggested, but was coincidental with it. With the spread of working-class dances which played rock'n'roll, fights often moved off the streets and into the venues. Fights were not a product of rock'n'roll as some reporting seemed to imply. The level of violence was linked to other factors such as the realisation of the dead-end nature of the jobs in the mass-production industries and the loss of a sense of opportunity for upward social mobility. These factors were combined with the working-class valuation of physical prowess.
The working-class gang has, historically, been territorially based whereas the earlier bodgies and widgies were identifiable -like later youth cultures - by visual style and leisure concerns:' (Stratton 1992, p. 46)

'Yes, there were gangs but they weren't bodgies. See, all the bodgies used to be in one group. They all sort of came together like a great big sponge and they all stuck together.

There were gangs within different suburbs too that couldn't stand what they used to call greasy longhairs - which they used to call us with other profanities attached.

Paddington (in Sydney) was in a bit [with bodgies and widgies] because Paddington was one of the top places you could get grog. They used to have a couple of big places up there that you could go and buy after hours grog, so if they struck trouble in Paddington it would probably be these guys who were associated with the grogshop and S.P. betting (interview with Irene). By the mid-1950s the traditional working-class youth gangs had begun to integrate elements of the new teenage culture into their dress and behaviour. William Dick describes this process in the novel which I have already mentioned called A *Bunch of Ratbags (1965).*

In Melbourne the gangs were centred on sites of institutionalised leisure such as ice-skating rinks. Later, the sharpie gangs of the 1960s, like many late-19th century larrikin gangs, would be centred on boxing gyms. The resurgence of the gang corresponds to an increase in violence. However, how much violence is problematic as the folk devil effect of newspaper reporting calls their accounts into question. Nevertheless we need to remember that there is a significant working-class tradition which appears in Britain and America as well as Australia in which masculine physical violence, its threat and the ability to carry it out, playa large part. Cohen and Robins (1978, pp. 89-96) argue that, in London in the post-war period, there has occurred a change in the context of fighting. They consider that the new, consumption based subcultures have disturbed the older embedding of fighting in adult as well as young peoples' lives with the consequence that, cut adrift from its earliest position within an integrated culture it has become a youth cultural symbol in its own right. Thus, they argue, one of the key aspects of the skinhead subculture was the preoccupation with *aggro.* This argument ignores the recognition that, within working-class culture, the ability to fight has always constituted an element of style.

The underlying feature of working-class violence is the mobilisation of physical violence as a context for establishing a male's status within the group. Parker (1974, p. 146) has described the preoccupation with violence as the 'ethos of being hard.' It is not simply the ability to win fights which is important. It is the preparedness to defend your territory, yourself and those in your protection by assertive and aggressive behaviour if necessary, which counts. Whilst winning fights gives one a status within a given group or gang the context of the fight must first be established. In this tradition there are two strands. The fighter whose violence seems to be out of context, irrational, sometimes achieves the position of leader. This was the case in the Glasgow gang studied by Patrick (1973) in the late 1960s. Alternatively and probably more often, as in Parker's study of a Liverpool' (Stratton 1992, p. 47)

'gang, such individuals may be steered clear of because they threaten the - on the whole - relatively peaceful working-class social order. In both cases, however, hardness is valued and, as Patrick notes, a boy who, perhaps because of his size, is unlikely to win many fights will nevertheless earn respect for his preparedness to fight.

In Australia the working-class tradition of fighting remains strong even though as in England the aspect of one-on-one bare knuckle fights for a wager seems to have died out in the post-war period. Not, I would suggest, as a function of the rise of youth culture or even urban redevelopment and changes in the division of labour as Cohen and Robins argue but rather as a function of increased policing and the imposition of middle-class norms of respectability on working-class institutional leisure haunts such as hotels. Historically, boxing, as a sport, has drawn its fighters from males

socialised in this tradition. It is understandable that gangs should often have been centred on boxing gyms. Equally there is a clear correlation between the decline of boxing in Australia, the attack on the opportunities for one-on-one fights and the impact of middle-class attempts to impose their culture on the working class (on the history of boxing in Australia see Corris 1980). In this account of a gang fight in Melbourne during the mid-1950s taken from a letter sent to me by a participant we can see the impact of different cultural attitudes to fighting:

> The biggest fight I was ever involved in was when the Glassarium (iceskating rink) gang fought those who patronised a Roller Skating Rink across the road.
>
> About 200 took part and it was very violent, the skates of both groups being used as weapons. The members of our group largely came from areas that were populated by tradesmen.
>
> The Roller Skating group came from the areas of Collingwood, Carlton, Fitzroy and South Melbourne, generally then populated by labourers with a smattering of criminals and where street fighting was not uncommon.
>
> They were much tougher than us and were well in the lead when the police arrived (letter, 21.11.83).

Here we can see how the more working-class kids, more embedded in a tradition in which fighting and the ability to fight was taken for granted, were, in fact, on the whole the better fighters.

It was, as I have said, the preparedness to fight which was important. One interviewee, commenting on his bike gang in the mid-1950s, described it like this:

> What would happen - it is a remarkable thing, it still happens today - is that when you came across an opposing bike group say, there was some inbuilt need to challenge them in one way or another. And what we would do, every group had their loud mouths that wanted to pick fights and act tough so they would thrash out there, making a big man of themselves,' (Stratton 1992, p. 48)

> 'yelling and screaming. We all did our share of it, but there was some need to act tough and that is what we did - see the opposing group and somebody would go up and call them a few names and push them a little bit and they would push back and then there would be a lot of yelling and finally a bit of pushing and shoving and then always at the last minute the more responsible of the group would come in and say "That's enough, we'll deal with them later". They would break it up and the guys who were making trouble expected that (interview with Jim S.).

The traditional defensive/offensive posture centred around the possibility of fighting is well expressed here. Sometimes, however, for any number of possible reasons, the stand-off was not achieved. Here is an account of a fight in the Illawong Hotel, Evans Head in northern New South Wales during the mid-1950s. Evans Head, and the hotel, were regarded as the territory of the Casino crowd because it was the nearest beach resort. On this night the Lismore crowd, whose beach town as Ballina, rode in on their bikes:

… I mean the pub was crowded and there were women there who were seen to be belonging to the Casino group. And the Lismore boys were looking for a bit of action and that sort of thing and there was criticism of the music that was being played on the juke box and generally a sort of atmosphere, I mean a very uncomfortable one developing. And a fellow (from Lismore one from Casino) had a dispute over a chair or something … I mean the seating arrangements at a table or something like that which, just, you know, they exchanged blows and the next thing the whole bloody place erupted into trouble, a real fight (interview with Jim).

In this working-class tradition the body becomes the final territorial space to be protected. The fight asserts the right to a variety of territories, oneself, women and actual physical space. These territories are preserved, and the rights acknowledged, through an ongoing system of testing. Sometimes *looking for action* entails precipitating a fight. The fight above, to the best of the interviewee's memory, took place on New Year's weekend, a traditional time for misrule. In the tradition of hardness the fight and the behaviour which may lead up to the fight, are enjoyable in their right - always assuming one wins or honours are roughly even.

One thing common to these accounts is the amorphousness of the gang. Humphries, in his account of working-class youth in turn of the century England has noted how, at that time:

The image of structured delinquent gangs with a clearly defined leadership, hierarchy and membership, whose aim was to plunder and avenge themselves on respectable society was one cultivated assiduously by the popular press (Humphries 1985, p. 176).

The Australian press reports of the 1950s continued this tradition as we have seen. The gang should not be considered as a clearly delimited group with an imposed hierarchy. The type of group we are talking about was an irregular number of young people who had similar interests or who lived in the same area. The self-conscious' (Stratton 1992, p. 49)

'existence of the group often only occurred as a function of meeting another group from a different territory at a milk bar, ice-rink or similar place.

Whilst this was the norm groups could be more or less institutionalised. One aspect of bodgie and widgie mythology which pertains to the media's folk devil image of the gang as a highly organised group was the constant reference to the *King of the Bodgies.* I have only come across one reference to a *Queen of the Widgies* which is in press accounts of a court case in December 1956 when a Melbourne girl was given this title. The term *King of the Bodgies* had an established currency among working-class young people. However, corresponding to the loose structure of the groups themselves it was not usually a term used to describe someone who held executive power, rather it tended to be used about someone who stood out for some reason and only, in this way, might have been regarded as a leader. Here is one account:

The King of the Bodgies in the general area was a bloke called - - who has since become a used-car dealer, the height of respectability. But he had a top bike and that sort of thing. He was the local leader in the Lismore area. Well, nobody really called them that. They just seemed to be. I mean I suppose they were acknowledged by the town generally as amongst the leading

elements of that particular group and therefore seen as someone deviant in their behaviour (interview with Jim).

The looseness of the meaning of the leadership term corresponds to the looseness of the gang itself which only under certain conditions, such as a fight, could be said to have existed. The above extract is from someone talking about the mid-1950s but it could have been earlier. Indeed it could, except for the motor bike, be from one of Humphries' interviews.

Here is another interviewee describing the power structure of his 1950s bike gang:

> It was a dictatorial structure really. Whoever was, not necessarily the strongest, but whoever could gather the most support. You weren't elected to lead a bikie group, you were there by associations. In fact it was not unlike the political Labor party. Whoever can muster the numbers. The leader personally is usually a reasonably smooth talker but not necessarily a strong fighter, or a physical fighter. If he had the support of a few blokes who were good muscle men, well then he would take the lead. You had to have done something reasonably good to get the recognition and that was usually taking one of the local motorcycle ops on in a drag and beating him or something like that (interview with Jim S.).

This group, was obviously, more integrated but still the person in the role of leader could only remain there if he acknowledged the interests of smaller groupings which were stronger than that of the *gang* as a whole. One supposes that there were more *ordered* gangs in some areas organised, like Patrick's Glasgow gang, around extremely violent leaders. It is worth noting that the Glasgow gang used the term *king* for leader. If the reality of working-class gangs seems to vary considerably the basic constituents are always the same.' (Stratton 1992, p. 50)

'One significant difference between English and Australian attitudes towards working-class youth is signalled by the earlier Australian use of a generic, larrikin. In England, as I have noted, the term hooligan came into general use around 1898. In Australia the term larrikin seems to have come into accepted use during the 1850s (Murray 1973, pp. 28-29), though, again, its general use seems to have developed about 20 years later (Grabosky 1977, p. 85). In both cases, however, the folk devil reified in this manner was the same, an individual who incorporated a range of semi-criminal forms of behaviour and traditions which could not be reconciled with those which formed the basis of middle-class culture and who therefore became part of an image challenging the social order policed by the state. Before looking at the possible reasons for the earlier use of such a generic in Australia we need, first, to examine briefly the continuity of working-class traditions between the two countries.

Crabosky, comments, in passing, that gangs were visible in Sydney in the 1840s (Grabosky 1977, p. 85). Murray, more specifically, locates the appearance of the first push at The Rocks in 1841 under the leadership of a freed convict called Slick (Murray 1973, p. 30). By the 1860s there was a profusion of groups in both Sydney and Melbourne with names like *The Plunket Street Boys* (Sydney) or *The Bowerie Street Push* (Melbourne). Some groups, demonstrating their history in the apprentice, trade-oriented gangs of an earlier period had names such as *The Livers,* whose focus were workers at the abattoirs at Glebe (Murray 1973, p. 31). The form of these groups is analogous to the

English ones of the same period which included a mix of trade-based and territory-based groups. The most fundamental reason for their visibility at this time is the development in Sydney and Melbourne of an urban working class. Whilst it is fruitless to look for the historical origins of such a formless institution as the working-class gang Murray's suggestion of its location in The Rocks makes sense in terms of The Rocks priority as the first working-class area of Sydney.

In addition to the nationalist preoccupation with respectability discussed earlier, the depression of the early 1840s in New South Wales may well have given an impetus to the middle-class awareness of this phenomenon as the lack of work and resources not only increased the literal visibility of working-class youth but also their likelihood of indulging in street crime. It is unlikely to be coincidental that, during the period 1841-43 the arrest rate for common. Assault rose from 276 to 363 to 413 (Grabosky 1977, p. 69) though it is necessary to assume that the increase is not simply a technical one related to a greater degree of police preoccupation with this crime. Moreover from the late 1830s, as Sherrington points out, the profile of Australian immigration altered. Whereas the 1820s saw a preponderance of what Sherrington calls 'gentleman investors,' as a result of new monetary schemes to aid immigration:

> … During the late 1830s and early 1840s [Australian immigrants were drawn] from lower down the social scale, including sections of the urban working-class and labouring population of Great Britain (Sherrington 1980, p. 38).' (Stratton 1992, p. 51)

'Slick's gang, especially given the fact that its leader was a transportee, seems not to have been a youth gang but rather the first Australian example of the criminal gang made up of older males. Humphries (1981) in the part of his research devoted to street gangs, has made a distinction between the delinquent gang and the semi-delinquent gang. He characterises the delinquent gang as being generally made up of older youths and young men who engage in theft, violence and similar behaviour in a more concerted and purposive manner than the younger members of semi - delinquent gangs. Indeed Humphries viewed the delinquent gang as often merging into the professional criminal culture. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) have, similarly, distinguished the 'criminal gang' from other gang types. The history of such groups in Australia does not concern us here, some information on them in relation to organised crime is to be found in Al McCoy's *Drug Traffic* (1980), however Slick's group seems to have been the Australian proto-criminal gang.

The first youth gang, or semi-delinquent gang, in Sydney, seems to have been reserved for a group known as the Cabbage Tree Hat Mob. It is worth quoting Grabosky's succinct outline of their activities drawn from *The Sydney Morning Herald* 12 January and 23 January, 1850 in full here because it illustrates well both the informal character of such groups and their form of behaviour:

The Mob, comprised of males drawn from lower classes, acquired its name from the low crowned headgear, popular with the members, which was woven from cabbage palms. The group's activities were generally limited to the delivery of insulting or offensive remarks to wealthier passers-by, and the occasional knocking off of the symbol of high status, the tall black hat (Grabosky 1977, p. 70).

Murray adds that this activity tended to take place in theatre foyers (Murray 1973, p. 31). The significance of the foyer here lies in its position on the borderline between the street and its culture

and the site of leisure time entertainment. For this reason the foyers became an important site of working-class *disorder. The Vagabond,* the example, writing in the 1870s noted the use of theatre vestibules by prostitutes plying their trade *(The Vagabond Papers 1876).*

By 1937 things had changed little. Now the generic had replaced a specific gang name and the theatre had been replaced by the cinema. The following extract is from a letter written by the Managing Director of Garricks Entertainments Pty. Ltd. who controlled *The Rialto* cinema in West End, Brisbane. The letter is commending the service provided by one Sergeant Donnelly:

> We could relate a number of incidents (before the sergeant's arrival) but the following, we think, will suffice to show something of the conditions that existed then.

Women and girls were being continually bothered by the uncalled for remarks of larrikins who loitered at street corners, in shop recesses, etc. The vestibule of our Theatre was being used as a urinal. Stones were being Thrown on the roof, and 'Bunger' let off in the theatre during performances. (letter dated 5 April 1937 in Police Files.)' (Stratton 1992, p. 52)

'There are two pertinent points of clarification to be made here. The first relates to throwing stones on roofs. This activity, whilst not peculiar to Queensland, is really only an effective form of disturbance where the roof is of corrugated iron. Murray records a similar case in 1860 (Murray 1973, p. 78) when a Michael Murphy was fined 15s for throwing ' … four large stones into the bedroom where Mr and Mrs Gorman were sleeping in Crown Street.' Murray, unfortunately, does not record the city but it would have been either Sydney or Melbourne. In Brisbane throughout the later part of the 1950s it was a practice regularly attributed to bodgies.

The second point refers to the use of the cinema's vestibule as a urinal. Here the reference is, presumably, to the often imperative effect of alcohol on the bladder. If this is so then another problem is raised, for at that time the age for legal drinking in Queensland was 21. Whilst it may have been the case that the youths in question had acquired alcohol illegally it seems more probable that another common habit, undesirable to the middle class, was here being attributed to the *larrikin.* These points aside we find here, 80 years after the Cabbage Tree Hat Mob, a similar group of males behaving in a very similar way.

In the inter-war period the myth of the organised youth gang was also very much alive demonstrating the continuity of the folk devil from the 19th century down to the 1950s bodgies and the 1960s sharpies. Here is part of a letter, signed *pro bono publico,* which appeared in the *Brisbane Courier* during early January 1929.

> Sir,
>
> Just a couple of lines to draw public attention to a very grave state of things that exist on Kangaroo Point. At the present time a push of blackguards headed by a foreign looking fellow is causing a reign of terror in the vicinity of the Pineapple Hotel. These lads have evidently no fear of the police for, on the 5th November last some explosive was placed in a letter box completely wrecking the box and a portion of the fence …

In addition, this *push* used language *beyond the odds,* fought each other and threw stones on people's roofs. A police investigation of this frightening gang revealed what looks, not surprisingly, like one of the Humphries' informal cliques. The investigating sergeant wrote in this report that:

> In the locality in question there is (sic) several Youths of ages ranging from 14 to 18 years resident with their parents therein. Most of these lads have been associated from early boyhood, and the friendships formed then still holds (sic), and they are to be found very often during the day and night time knocking about together (in Police Files, 14.1.29).

Whilst *pro bono publico* might have had a better grasp of written English, Acting Sergeant Honan seems to have been a better judge of the real situation.

The *foreign looking fellow,* a phrase resonant with racism, turns out from the Sergeant's investigations, to be Robert Connolly:' (Stratton 1992, p. 53)

> '··.·· from all outward appearance he looks like a foreigner as he is very swarthy in colour and look like a Greek. As a matter of fact he is a Native of Ireland and arrived in this State when a child with his parents, he is a motor mechanic by occupation …

In this case the police report punctured the folk devil gang image. Nevertheless it was *pro bono publico's* letter, reiterating and reinforcing the image in its own small way, which gained mass circulation.

In general it is possible to see not only a continuity of behaviour but a continuity of location between the youth groups of the 1840s and those of the 19305. Indeed there is a continuity which extends back to the period before industrial capitalism to the practice of misrule. Natalie Davis (1971) discussed the role of youth in relation to charivaris in France in the 16th century and, specifically in relation to ideas of misrule. In general misrule refers to those activities which invert in a variety of ways the conventional order of society. Depending on its context humour counterpoints seriousness, rowdyness peacefulness, and a set of images inverting the established social order are mobilised. Such behaviour has its greatest power in societies which operate within a single conception of the proper moral and social order because it operates as a critique of that order. Within the hegemonic structure of industrial capitalist society misrule still occurs.

Within a tradition stretching back to misrule the groups mobilised their licence as *youths* to attack, more or less symbolically, the middle class. Moreover the sites for this behaviour were places of entertainment, and of leisure, the theatre, the cinema, the hotel. In each instance, then, the licence invoked by the youths was reinforced by their utilisation of the arena of leisure which, in its turn, is the area *of freedom* constituted as the obverse of work. This theme runs through into the post-war period where it is supplemented by a new middle-class-originated, positive emphasis on youth and leisure as the ideological site for consumption.

Hooligans and larrikins

If we return to the description of the Cabbage Tree Hat Mob we find that, in addition to the distinctive hat, the group wore a suit of fustian or Colonial tweed (Murray 1973, p. 31). In the years that followed, the mode of dress of the working class males which would become one of the claimed

signatures of the larrikin would much more resemble that of the English working-class males classified as hooligans. Given the influx of English working-class families during the 1840s such a reversion to the English style is understandable. It is an interesting comparison that, during the early 1950s, when there was another influx of English working-class families the Teddy boy style, which many of the younger males brought with them, failed to develop a following in Australia being swamped by the bodgie style. Indeed there were many fights between Australian bodgies and English Teds in which the bodgies' territory had obviously expanded to include Australia as a whole.' (Stratton 1992, p. 54)

'In England in the late-19th century there was a working-class youth style the most general and distinctive aspect of which were fustian, bell-bottomed trousers. Pearson describes the style as:

> … the standard uniform of bell-bottom trousers, neck scarf, heavy belt, peaked cap and short cropped hair with a 'donkey fringe(Pearson 1983, pp.96-97).

Here Pearson is specifically talking about the Birmingham corner boys and street gangs of the turn of the century. It is important to note, and it is a source of much confusion in Murray's discussion of larrikins, that it is not only the gangs who wear the style but other young working-class males also. Whilst on this point it is also unclear whether all gangs wore it or just some. Certainly it is a common feature of gang *membership* that individuals should wear a visible sign of identification but, with a style which was not based in anyone group the wearing of that style would necessitate, as it did, further stylistic inflections to make identification possible. Perhaps the most pervasive modern example, and it is significant that it is the most securely working class of post-war youth cultures, is that of the bikies. In this case the, much more mobile, gangs use visible insignia and gang names to aid group identification.

In Australia, allowing for both regional variations and gang introduced alterations the style was the same. Murray writes of 'widely-flared bell-bottomed trousers.'

He describes the boots as:

> High-heeled, finely cut, they were often decorated with intricate tooling, and pointed so sharply that the wearer's feet were crimped in pain (Murray 1973, p. 32).

Meanwhile in England in 1890 the Police Court Missioner to Lads in Salford had written of 'narrow-toed brass-tipped clogs' (Pearson 1983, p. 96). The brass tipping was useful for the working-class tradition of kicking fallen opponents. In England putting the boot in was often accompanied by cries of 'Boot him,' in Australia the procedure was known as 'jumping his liver out' (Murray 1973, pp. 91-93, see also Murray's chapter *Misdemeanours into Major Crimes* for a death caused in this fashion). One stylistic development which does appear to have been an Australian regionalism was the increase in the height of the boot-heel. Another Australian variant seems to have been the adoption of a black hat, either hard or soft according to Murray. This development is worth commenting on because it was precisely this kind of hat which the earlier Cabbage Tree Hat Mob had been knocking off middle-class male heads. It may be that the adoption of these hats acknowledged a desire for a frustrated upward mobility. It is more likely that their adoption represented a form of humorous deflation, as well as challenge to the accepted structure as if was articulated in dress, indeed it was,

a form of what we shall discuss as *larking about.* In effect the hat becomes an element in the minor theme of misrule.' (Stratton 1992, p. 55)

'The continuity of misrule should not be ignored. We have now come across its presence in attitudes to both entertainment and dress. It was, and is, also present in the utilisation of specific periods in the year for festivals of disorder. In previous times such periods, as we have seen, were acknowledged by the society as a whole and took place on Christian feast days and days of specific family rituals in a society where the family formed the basis for social order. In the 17th century the apprentices still held to the use of some of the old dates, such as Shrove Tuesday. By the mid-19th century the use of Christian festivals had been replaced by the use of socially acknowledged, indeed ascribed holidays. Gillis notes that late- 19th century groups such as the Manchester 'Ikes':

> ... were abandoning the calendar customs of the past, substituting the relatively new Bank Holiday for the more traditional dates of revel like November 5th or May 1st (Gillis 1975, p. 129).

Holidays, here, again relate to periods of leisure, time away from work. We have already seen how the term hooligan gained general acceptance in relation to the English August Bank Holiday activities of working-class youth in 1898. Much earlier in Sydney on the New Year of 1850 there was a riot which: … involved young males whose energies were focused almost entirely on the destruction of property. The riot appears to have been a spontaneous by product of typical New Year's celebrations; editorials in the Sydney Morning Herald referred to the participants as "frolicsome" or "giddy" (Grabosky 1977, p. 70).

To win such approval it is clear that working-class youth had not yet been reconstituted as a generalised threat to middle-class Sydney society. This was, indeed, the case. Murray notes that it was not until 1883 that the term *larrikin* makes its first appearance in the official records of crime. Modern institutional holidays whilst not being a part of a ritual inversion of misrule allow for the possibility of what we must reclassify as misbehaviour, a misbehaviour which the *preservers of order* attempt to keep in check. Nevertheless such holiday leisure periods allow the possibility of disorder as in the English Bank Holiday *mods and rockers* riots of the early 1960s or, on a smaller scale, the Christmas mod, surfie, rocker fights at Australian holiday resorts a few years later.

We have seen that the term *larrikin* as a generic comes into common usage earlier in Australia than does the term hooligan in England. What we need to look at now is the contextual origin of the term. **Murray** gives two possible origins for it. One, with its personification of the bull-headed Irish policeman with a slight stammer who, in court, would say of an accused that he had been a *lar-ri-kin* has the ring of a folk myth about it in its making foolish of the representatives of the law. However in its derivation of *larrikin* from *lark in* about (Murray 1973, pp. 28-9). The term is not distinctively Australian. In that same set of disturbances on that significant 1898 August Bank Holiday in London four youths aged between 17 and 20 years damaged an ice cream machine belonging to an Italian. Pearson notes in passing that, in the write up of the case in the newspapers the youths were' (Stratton 1992, p. 56)

'described as larrikins (Pearson 1983, p. 82). A little further on Pearson describes some street rowdyism of the kind with which we are now already familiar as part of a long tradition. The description, from the *Daily Graphic* (15 Aug 1898) is of the Velvet Cap Gang:

Some dozen boys, all armed with sticks and belts, wearing velvet caps (we might reasonably ask if they were, in addition, in the youth style already discussed), and known as the "Velvet Cap Gang", walking along … pushing people off the pavements, knocking at shop doors, and using filthy language (Pearson 1983, p. 83).

This account, and others like it, Pearson tells us, were described in the press as *larking.* Pearson notes the similarity between this behaviour and Walter Besant's 1901 description in his book *East London* of' holding the street.' Pearson describes such behaviour as a 'violent ritual of territorial supremacy' which indeed it is but it is more than this. As Humphries points out larking about has a more politically significant connotation. Humphries argues that larking about:

> … was rooted in the aggressive, insulting and coarse traditions of working class humour that were widely condemned by middle-class cultural critics and social reformers as vulgar and a dangerous concession to the emotions (Humphries 1985, p. 122).

In addition Humphries view it as deriving from working-class leisure traditions.

Humphries considers the origin of larking about as lying in those areas of working class amusement such as the street and the pub which resisted the middle-class attempts at organised control. The most obvious example here would be the gradual replacement of folk games by organised sports which became increasingly commercialised. Thus when Pearson compares the idea of' holding the street' with the modern youth soccer phenomenon of 'holding the end' we can understand not only the continuity of the tradition within the context of the importance of the street as territory but also the political significance of a literal attempt to make space to use the terminology of the Birmingham group.

One effect of the preventative policing of the streets has been to drive activities identifiable as *holding the street* off the streets and into other locales. Thus, for example, on 17 May 1956 the *Sun Herald* carried this account of 'bodgie-widgie' activity in city stores. Here:

> Customers in shops were insulted and prevented from making purchases.

This activity would seem to be a new inflection on the old idea of holding the streets, an inflection apposite for the new consumption oriented society because it recognises the shift of cultural focus to the cash/commodity exchange. However, in addition to this form of demonstration, some youths indulged in more traditional forms of holding the street:

> Traffic in Swanston Street, the main city route, was halted when 20 bodgies played football.'
> (Stratton 1992, p. 57)

'Here football has been removed from the confined playing areas enforced on it through late-19th century middle-class reforms and returned to its original habitat as a folk game, the streets.

Holding the street, is a part of the more general practice of *larking.* Larking refers to a set of activities, founded in working-class traditions, which bring an individual up against middle-class culture, often in the material form of its defenders, the police. It is worth adding here, particularly in view of our discussion of larking in the Australian context, that Humphries suggests, on the evidence of the English interviews which he examined, there was an increase in larking about during the period 1889-1939. In Australia we have already noticed Murray's claim for an increase in larrikin behaviour around the 1870s. Humphries defines larking about as a set of oppositional activities. He views its increase as being the result of an increasing encroachment of middle-class institutions such as education, welfare and the penal system on working-class life. Indeed this encroachment may well be said to have *caused* the redefinition. However, this politicisation does not mean that these same acts may not also be anti-social. In Australia the early middle-class appropriation of the term reflects an earlier preoccupation with demarcating and asserting *respectable* middle-class culture. In its appropriation the meaning of the term was enlarged to cover a range of working-class activities which, whilst not a product of confrontation, were considered inimical to middleclass culture.

This, then, is the origin of the Australian generic 'larrikin.' It is a much more accurate and descriptive term than it is given credit for and its use during the late- 19th century would have acknowledged in an overt fashion the battle to generate and preserve a middle-class culture of respectability against, on the one hand, the lower-class convict migrants and, on the other, the 1840s influx of free working class migrants. One part of this battle was fought in the reconstitution of larking as the province of deviant working-class young people who were, themselves, reclassified as adolescents. That much of the fight was located in the area of leisure is plain when we consider that the two areas of most concern to larrikins were dancing and dress. This alone demonstrates the contextual continuity with the pre-1954 bodgies and widgies whose main concerns, reiterated in interview after interview, were clothing and dancing.' (Stratton 1992, p. 58)

CH3 Youth and consumption

'Youth and consumption

In the previous chapters I discussed the process by which there developed during the latter part of the 19th century a new category which was designated by the term adolescence and located as being based on the physical changes of puberty. In addition I outlined how the idea of youth was superimposed on adolescence. I also discussed how this middle-class concept was mobilised as a strategy of control in relation to young members of the working class who had their own traditions which derived from a pre-industrial era, though with many changes. I also indicated that, from the 1920s on, in America, a new emphasis was placed on youth as it was rearticulated as the site of leisure which was the crucial arena of the new consumption-oriented social order. In America this new emphasis was first focused on middle-class youth and was linked to the production of what was perceived as a distinctively youthful and youth-based culture.

Ewen, in *Captains of Consciousness,* attributes the increasing focus on youth in America during the 1920s to two main causes. On the one hand, he argues, the shift to mass-production techniques

requiring little skill but great endurance emphasised the role of younger people in the productive side of the economy. On the other hand Ewen writes:

> The fact that childhood was increasingly a period of consuming goods and services made *youth* a powerful tool in the ideological framework of business. Beyond the transformation of the period of childhood and adolescence into a period of consumption, youth was also a broad cultural symbol of renewal, of honesty, and of criticism against injustice … (Ewen 1976, p. 139).

The first part of Ewen's argument mayor may not be correct in its own right. Certainly one effect of the new focusing on youth was to emphasise the importance' (Stratton 1992, p. 59)

'of young people in the work place. However it is the second part of the argument which concerns me here. Ewen describes the 1920s American flapper as:

> … the pure consumer, busy dancing through the world of modern goods. She was *youth,* marked by energy not judgement. Her clothes, her vehicles, her entire milieu were mass produced — and she liked it (Ewen 1976, p. 149).

Harold Barger has argued that between 1899 and 1949 the output per man-hour rose 78% (Bell 1967, p. 168). The 1920s fall in the middle of this massive rise in output. Many of the new practices of middle-class youth, and in particular females, involved making acceptable forms of behaviour previously only current among the more morally dubious — from the point of view of the conventional practices of middle-class women. These forms of behaviour such as smoking and drinking in public places were appropriated as aspects of spectacular leisure consumption.

One of the most obvious changes was the rapid shift to cosmetics. In America in 1917 only two people involved in the beauty culture business paid income tax. By 1927 there were over 18000 firms and individuals concerned with the beauty business paying tax (Allen 1964, p. 88). In the early years of this century cosmetics had unsavoury overtones and they were supposed to be used in as unobtrusive a way as possible to give a *natural* look (on the history of cosmetics see Corson, 1972). Moreover their use was not widespread in the community. Among the middle class during the 1920s the perception of cosmetics shifted from their being viewed as unsavoury to being considered frivolous. The beauty editor of *Vogue* wrote in 1920, that:

> Even the most conservative and prejudiced people now concede that a woman exquisitely made-up may yet be, in spite of seeming frivolity, a faithful wife and a devoted mother. Like eating and speaking and dressing, making up has well-bred and vulgar possibilities. The woman who is innately tasteful will not powder to extreme nor daub her lips a too vivid crimson… Conspicuous make-up goes hand in hand with other vulgarities (quoted in Corson 1972, p. 453).

The flappers changed this, not only making cosmetics acceptable but making them a highly visible fashion adornment. Nevertheless a survey carried out by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in 1928 demonstrated the still considerable resistance among the bulk of American women to the use of cosmetics. This survey suggested that a little over half of American women used rouge and only 15% used lipstick (Corson 1972, p. 483). By the early 1950s another survey indicated that 67% of teenage

girls had worn lipstick and 90% had worn nail enamel since they were fourteen (Corson 1972, p. 535).

In Australia the acceptance of cosmetics lagged behind America. Murray, in his book on Australia in 1920s called *The Confident Years* (1978), refers to:' (Stratton 1992, p. 60)

> 'A priest in Bundaberg [who] refused communion to women with "painted lips", but had to admit there was no actual defilement of the sacrament from "floury faces" (Murray 1978, p. 147).

And Murray goes on to generalise that:

> The more extreme puritans saw the 'painted harlots of Hollywood' as a scourge in the land (Murray 1978, p. 147).

The importance of Hollywood in developing and spreading the new consumerist image of leisure is a theme to which we will return below in the context of the 1940s. Here we need to notice the resistance of the established cultural order to the American-originated changes. In the area of cosmetics use, as in other areas, the post-war widgies were in the vanguard. One informant, in a letter to me, wrote that:

> Make-up was fairly heavy for those days and as we were night people it didn't show too much (letter 13.6.84).

Just what was regarded as 'fairly heavy for those days' has been described to me in an interview:

> … We used to paint our lips with liquid. We didn't have eye-shadow, we used to have mascara. We didn't have eye-liner, we used to put eyebrow pencil on. We used to wear pancake makeup, which is basically the same as they've got now. It was a greasy thing you smoothed on and you powdered over the top. And you used to have rouge but it wasn't the kind of rouge there is now which is sort of …. You could smooth it on … the rouge was a sort of cake, and you had a little duster and you used to just wipe it on. A lot of the girls didn't wear a lot of make-up (interview with Irene).

As Irene indicates at the end of this quotation, wearing any make-up which was 'obvious' was still regarded in Australia as a little dubious and rather extreme. In America the vogue for make-up went along with the new acceptance of drinking and smoking among middle-class women. All these activities occurred in the context of the dance hall. The middle-class acceptance of the dance hall as a place for youthful leisure also represents a move up the social order of an institution long frowned upon by the middle classes as a place of drunkenness and moral licence. The changing position of the social dance will be discussed in chapter 5, the point to be made here is that the new emphasis on youth and consumption-oriented activities occurred in relation to the upward movement of a number of established practices which were previously unacceptable to the middle class. In Australia their acceptance occurred later than in America alongside the later acceptance of the youth/leisure/consumption complex.

Some young middle-class Australians did return to the country, after visits to America or England, imbued with the new idea of youth as coupled with leisure and consumption and as well as a certain image of disorder. However the Australian cultural order had not yet confronted, let alone accepted, this new' (Stratton 1992, p. 61)

'image of youth. Moreover their smallness of numbers made any attempt to establish an Australian *Roaring Twenties* unlikely to succeed. Murray, again, has this to say on the issue:

There was a little 'kicking over the traces' as they called it, among Australia's returned young rich but they were too few in numbers and, on the whole, too serious to establish a legend. Australia's twenties were more those of George F. Babbitt in Zenith, U.S.A., albeit a very, sporty, beach-loving version. They believed in suburban comfort, social order, progress, the Empire, sport, fun, work, and sometimes even God (Murray 1978, p. 141).

It was America which linked increasingly efficient mass-production techniques with the development of an over-determining consumption-oriented society located around fantasies of youth, leisure and hedonism. As Ewen notes, one of the major constituents in the production of consumption — oriented society is advertising. Advertising mobilises fantasy to generate an image of the lack which it is necessary for consumption-oriented society to make believe exists between non-ownership and ownership of products. In America:

In 1918, total gross advertising revenues in general and farm magazines was $58.5 million. By 1920 the gross had reached $129.5 million; and by 1929, $196.3 million (Ewen 1976, p. 32).

In Australia the take-off year for advertising was 1949-50 when the amount of advertising in newspapers returned rapidly to its pre-war figure (some of the few figures available are to be found in Heiser 1951). In advertising as in other areas related to the rise of consumerism, Australia lagged behind America.

By the Second World War in America the idea of youth as a consumption-oriented category had spread to working-class young people who began to acquire the newly available consumer goods if not the middle-class youth culture of leisure. In Australia and England and, for that matter, the rest of Western Europe the development of this new ideological and cultural formulation which provided a context for a social order geared to mass consumption did not occur until the postwar period. When it did begin it started through the assimilation of American ideas and impressions of consumer goods by such means as imported magazines and films. In countries outside of America it was the working class not the middle class which first accepted the ideology which associated consumption with leisure and pleasure. America itself became the location of fantasy, of the exotic, for people living in other countries. Within America itself the image of *The Promised Land* (to use Chuck Berry's resonant term) gained one further inflection which consisted of the striving for fulfilment through consumption.

The cinema and the car

The production of youth as an entity with its own positively evaluated culture began in America in the 1920s. The production of a new mythology of youth which was able to encompass both the idea of youth as a period of freedom within certain' (Stratton 1992, p. 62)

'limits associated with leisure, and the idea of youth as a period of more fundamental rejection which could well end in delinquency and which was a restructuring of the older, 19th-century concern with *deviant* working-class young people, was not fully elaborated until the early 1950s. Through the 1950s, as the category of youth became increasingly accepted as the site of leisure, these two aspects of youth were established as images within the category of youth. On the one hand, for example, there developed the youth-problem films starting with the working-class *The Wild One* (1954) and the more middle-class *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). On the other hand there developed the tradition of happy-go-lucky youth leisure films beginning with the *Gidget* series and running through many of the later rock'n'roll films such as many of Elvis Presley's films. Many of these films used exotic locations — there was both an Elvis Presley film and a Gidget film made in Hawaii which, from an American point of view, is both exotic with its Polynesian inhabitants and culture as well as being safe as a part of American social order to emphasise the link between youth, leisure and pleasure. As England started to accept the new ideology so similar films began to be produced there also. Cliff Richard and the Shadows film *Summer Holiday* (1962) described a holiday in Europe on a double decker bus. Here, again, Europe is an exotic, if not also a completely safe place, for the English. However the familiarity and safety is reaffirmed through the presence of a homely London transport bus.

The pleasurable *otherness* of locations such as Hawaii and Europe served to emphasise the connection of desire between youth and leisure. In addition the plots construct youthful disorder as something superficial and, therefore, enjoyable and youth itself as a period of life which fades gradually into the responsibility of adult life. In *Gidget goes Hawaiian,* for example, Gidget learns to understand the worries of parents about their teenage children when she worries that both of her parents are having extra-marital affairs unbeknown to each other. Of course they are not having affairs, the disorder of the film is only illusory, and the film ends with the misunderstanding cleared up, Gidget happily reunited with her ex-boyfriend and her father telling her that she now has an insight into the way that parents feel.

The institutionalisation of youth in America was founded on the category of youth where the unnaturalness of the teenager came between the Rousseauian naturalness of childhood and the social naturalness of adulthood. The achievement of the new consumption-oriented society was to take this unnatural category and naturalise it as the site of what, for a social order based on the naturalness of production, was the unnatural act of consumption. The association of disorder with leisure in our society goes back to the practice of misrule, the strong association of youth with disorder and leisure springs from the modern capitalist needs of the market-place. The extension of the deployment of the image outside of America was based on the need of American mass-production industries to look for markets outside of America. In both Australia and England the group first to indulge in the newly available cultural consumer goods in the form of clothes, music and dance, was that comprised of working-class young people. The more expensive mass-produced' (Stratton 1992, p. 63)

'goods, marketed as material necessities, such as cars, refrigerators, cookers and washing machines went first — and for a long time only — to the middle class and above who were the only group who

could afford them. In both Australia and England the conception of youth as a period of misrule and of celebration was still strong among the working-class young. Moreover the image of hedonism and material possession as a form of fulfilment overlapped with working-class cultural values associating pleasure with emotional enjoyment. The rebuilding of British industry in a context of full employment and the construction of a new industrial base in Australia in a similar context provided the working-class youth of the post-war period with regular employment, relatively high wages and the opportunity to spend them on the increasingly available goods previously only to be observed in American films.

The role of American films, particularly musicals, in the production of America as the location of fantasy world of leisure articulated in consumption, cannot be underestimated. In their book *Channels of Desire* **Ewen and Ewen** (1982) describe how, in the first quarter of this century, film occupied an important place in the re-socialization of immigrant women to America. They write, for example, that:

> For second-generation immigrant women, one step away from arranged marriage and family obligation, these new movies were manuals of desire, wishes and dreams. What was remarkable about them was the combination of new ideas of romance and sexuality with practical guidelines for change (Ewen & Ewen 1982, p. 102).

In Australia and England, from the supremacy of the American film industry over local industries onwards, film operated in a similar fashion. In both countries this supremacy was achieved during the 1920s. Tulloch notes that:

> … by 1925, … ,Australia was importing over90 percent of her films from the United States … by 192595 percent of all films screened in Britain were from the United States (Tulloch 1982, p. 14).

In both these countries, as, indeed, was the case in America film going became a regular and cross-class family occasion, though in all three countries it would seem to have first gained a large audience among the working class (Tulloch 1982, p. 21 touches on Australian attempts to build a middle-class cinema audience during the 1920s).

The rise of the musical from the early 1930s on signalled a shift in preoccupation. Increasingly films became concerned with illustrating a self-consciously unreal life of happiness in surroundings based in leisure — it is enlightening to consider the number of musicals which were located in the entertainment industry. One of the complexities of musicals is the shift between narrative and spectacle. The narrative structure serves as a strategy for interpolating the viewer who, the, lives the often fantasy song and dance numbers as a new reality. **Jane Feuer** has described the process in this way:' (Stratton 1992, p. 64)

'Some musicals carefully delineate dream and reality, narrative and spectacle, whereas others attempt to blend dream and reality, show and story. Yet this is ultimately a false dichotomy, a scholar's convenience, as is the distinction between show and dream. For in the musical, the show is the dream and the dream is the show. The Hollywood musical offers itself as the spectator's dream,

the spectator's show. Any initial opposition between show and narrative, … , dream and reality, is always collapsed by the musical's own narrative logic (Feuer 1982, p. 71).

In Hollywood musicals the fantasy worlds of the music and dance sequences was always bigger, brighter, more colourful, more luxurious and usually happier than the more mundane world of the ordinary narrative. In America this selling of a new American dream involved the audience recognising the mundanity of their own lives in that of the lives of the characters in the narrative. The shift to the satisfaction of the fantasy world then involved the problem of how that fantasy could be achieved. Often, at the end of the films the solution the audience was given involved a combination of true love and money/consumer goods.

In countries outside America audiences were forced to take one more step. Even though the lives of the characters in the narrative appeared mundane to Americans, to Australian audiences they were already exotic. Not as fulfilling as the fantasy sequences but exotic because of the ready availability of commodities such as cars and, within the context of the films, because America became the place where fantasies could be generated and, where, through consumption one strove to realise them in everyday life. Thus the entire film took on a fantasy quality and, by association, America in general began to be perceived as a place of fantasy.

At the same time these films portrayed a world of expensive consumer goods, fast cars, high fashion, big houses or apartments full of the new electrical appliances. *The Gold Diggers* series, for example, of which all but the earliest have choreography by Busby Berkeley, become for the viewer a complex metaphor in which the chorus girls, striving to marry rich males with, therefore, access to a consumption-based happiness, represent an image of the ordinary individual struggling in more mundane ways for the same image of happiness. In non-American countries such films, which assume a premise of the importance of a leisure/consumption-orientation and go on to describe the thematic organization of such a life-style, had an influence that was even more significant because the originating context was not yet present. Viewers from similar, but as yet still production-oriented, societies found themselves interpellated [sic] willy-nilly into films which assumed the leisure/consumption ideology. It is, therefore, no surprise to find that the bodgies and widgies of the late 1940s and early 1950s, while going to virtually all films along with the rest of the Australian public made a special point of going to musicals such as *Cover Girl* and *Till the Clouds Roll By.* For example one female interviewee, talking of musicals in the late 1940s said:

> Oh yes, we used to go to all of them; Glen Ford and Rita Hayworth were very big. So big that my girlfriend Dimiti and I used to go home and I would' (Stratton 1992, p. 65)

> 'be Glen Ford and she would always be Rita Hayworth and we would act scenes and all that sort of thing. Yes, we loved American movies, all the musicals, the Esther Williams,' we would pretend we were Esther Williams. We were very impressed with it all (interview with Pamela).

Here we can see not only the importance placed on American films, and especially musicals, but also, in the most literal fashion, how Australian kids interpellated [sic] themselves into the fantasy location which Hollywood generated for America. In many places in Australia the cinema was so

popular that it was normal to reserve seats. Here is an account from someone who grew up in the late 1940s in Sydney:

> We even used to have permanent seats at the theatre (cinema) on Saturday nights.

> Permanently reserved, yes. In those days there was no television and you would, at least once a week, go to the pictures. Thursday night would be the night to go to the pictures and you had your permanently booked seats because even on Thursday night the house used to be full. Possibly on Monday or Tuesday nights you could walk in and get a seat without booking, but later in the week they were always full. And you had a theatre that you used to go to.

Often, as in this case, a young male would book two seats on a permanent basis so that he could go to the cinema with his girlfriend:

> It didn't matter if you dropped your girlfriend, you still had your permanently booked seats so that when you got another girlfriend you were right (interview with Stuart).

Some young people's outings to the cinema were rather more strictly regulated. This memory comes from a woman who had a strict Catholic working-class upbringing:

> (We went to see) whatever was on. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday night would be one lot. But Friday and Saturday would be special. Two movies and you would see newsreels and shorts before and in the middle. Movietone and Cinetone newsreels. That's how we used to get our news apart from getting it from your radio. And Saturday afternoon matinees. But you seemed to go to the matinees when you were at school. Well, once you left school you went at night. And another thing. You always used to meet your boyfriend inside the theatre. You paid for yourself and he paid for himself. And then you went and sat beside him or he came and sat beside you (interview with Marie).

Meeting your boy or girlfriend inside was one way of attempting to keep the relationship from becoming publicly known. In these interview extracts we can see clearly the important role that the cinema played as a place of public entertainment for people of all ages. The rise of youth movies in the mid-1950s confused the established dual system of film attendance and produced a further segmentation which would become even more emphasised with the arrival of' (Stratton 1992, p. 66)

'television. We can see here the way in which the focusing of films at a specific group could aid the segmentation and classification of that group.

By the early 1950s the American film industry had begun to consolidate the new conceptualisation of youth. At this point it began to produce specifically youth-oriented films which encapsulated the concerns of leisure, freedom, rebellion and ultimate conformity. The vanguard of these films was *The Wild One* in *1954,Rebel Without a Cause* in 1955, and the *Blackboard Jungle* also released in 1955. *The Wild One* had a working-class orientation whilst *Rebel Without a Cause,* with a highly moralistic tone asserting the fundamental importance of the family and the need of young people for conventional role models, was set in a more middle-class context. This is not the place to discuss these films except to note that they mark a key moment in the dissemination of the new image of youth and, at the same time, they began the segmentation of film audiences. In Australia there are

many accounts of bemused families going to *The Wild One* and finding themselves surrounded by large crowds of working-class, mainly male, youths. Here is one account of the early category confusion caused by these films which were not children's films but not yet *youth* films:

Interviewer:

What about movies like *The Wild One, Blackboard Jungle.* Were these important in any way?

Interviewee:

Yes, but they weren't shown on Friday nights. They were considered top class movies, even by … I mean by parents went to see *Blackboard Jungle;* to see the good actors, Glen Ford and that sort of thing. I mean it was cause for concern by them, I don't think they wanted me to see *The Wild One,* but generally speaking there was a, I mean Friday nights were strictly kids stuff. It tended to be westerns and a serial, that sort of thing. *Blackboard Jungle, The Wild One,* these movies sort of developed I suppose and they showed lifestyles predominantly of youth. Saturday night movies brought out the wild elements in, I mean there was much roaring of motor bikes and races and that sort of thing after those sort of movies were on. Some sort of feeling of solidarity about the things that were portrayed in those. (But) going to the movies on a Saturday night in those days was something that appealed to most people. There were lots of people who were, I mean middle-class people. I can remember seeing things on Saturday nights like *A Roman Holiday* those sorts of things (interview with Jim).

This was the way things were organised in Casino, northern New South Wales. Friday night was children's night, Saturday night was family night.

The focusing of films at specific groups was reinforced as some *youth* films developed a *bad* reputation which were often a product of the image of disorder located in the idea of youth which was sometimes, as in *Blackboard Jungle,* linked to demonstrations of working-class delinquent practices.' (Stratton 1992, p. 67)

'… I was just that bit too young for *Blackboard Jungle* and stuff like that. I would probably have been 9 or 10 when they came out. I think I was up here (Brisbane) on holidays when *Rock Around the Clock* was on. I think I would have been 10 or 11 and I wanted desperately to go with my older cousin. She was going and she said yes she would take me, and my uncle said 'no, you're too young to see that sort of movie' so that was it (interview with Margaret).

The focusing of films at specific groups, particularly specific class-based cultural groups, could lead to real or apparent problems of control. In Brisbane, for example, the local bike boys used to go to the Roxy in Coorparoo to watch *The Wild One* and the Tater rock'n'roll films like *Rock Around the Clock.* They used to line their bikes up outside and, after the film, they would all start up their bikes together, revving them loudly, and then peel off down the road one by one. This behaviour led to a regular police presence. Here we can see a continuity of tradition focused on places of entertainment with the unruly cinema behaviour discussed in the last chapter. Control and disorder, middle-class values and working-class traditions are here, as in other places linked together in, at the level of day to day life, an inextricable manner.

In the immediate years of the post-war period outside of America no such differentiation was in the process of construction and so it is, in some ways, anomalous to call the first group of bodgies and widgies a youth culture. It was comprised of, predominantly, young people but outside of a historical context in which a general youth culture could be said to exist. Nevertheless this group fashioned a life style which drew not only on the established traditions of working class youth but also on a cultural ethos, and cultural artifacts, from America. In the process they formed the beginnings of a new kind of community based on a commonality of goods and practices which transcended the localised commonalities based on territorially-organised communities and inherited traditions and presaged the new communities based on commodity possession.

Consumer goods came with an *appropriate* use which related to a certain middleclass socially acceptable lifestyle. For example the acceptable purpose of cars was to get from one place to another and, more generally, as signifiers of wealth and status. However many working-class kids, whilst buying cars, used them for different purposes. For example cars were adopted ·as customised icons of spectacular consumption, as a means of reaching high speeds, as an object in the game of Chicken. For these reasons, and others, subcultural decisions about the most highly rated cars, or clothes or whatever, did not necessarily agree with more dominant middle-class cultural value assumptions about the best and/or most fashionable consumer product.

One of the most significant of the alternative uses to which the car started to be put was as a place of privacy for sexual activity. I will discuss this further in chapter 6, but here, given my earlier discussion of the cinema, it is appropriate to say something about the importation of the drive-in from America to Australia. The' (Stratton 1992, p. 68)

'first drive-ins in Australia were opened in Melbourne in 1955. They are likely to have been at Burwood, Oakley and, later, Essendon. A little later one was opened in Geelong. In Queensland Ron Grimstone with Tim Osborne opened the first drive-in at Capalaba on 20 December 1955. Sydney did not get drive-ins until late in 1956. The first was opened by MGM at Chullora. In the meantime one of the selling points of Pioneer bus tours to Queensland was a visit to the drive-in.

The spread of drive-ins in Australia coincided with the first availability of cheap second-hand cars which were in the price range of working-class kids. In the main it was the boys who bought cars but here is an account by a woman who was 14years old when she started saving for a car in about 1950:

> … so I saved up every cent. I used to walk to and from the station etc. to save the bus fare, buy no lunches, and all I was paying was my board and my weekly ticket in on the train because I worked right in town, near Circular Quay. And I got the tremendous sum of £197 together in two years which was truly monumental when I think that I was on about £5 a week then and I missed out on a hell of a lot of things like the company ball because I couldn't afford to buy a dress (interview with Margaret).

This woman, having left school at 13, under the legal age, lied about her age and got a job in the mail room at Dalgety's after spending 6 months doing a secretarial course. The car she bought was a second-hand Austin A40. It turned out to be a bad buy.

About the same time that she started saving for a car, this woman started going to drive-ins.

> I suppose it was with Jack (her boyfriend) and myself, say at 14, the lot of us, Colleen and Laurie, Wanda and Tony. We would all go to the drive-ins in Jack's [Ford] Prefect. … I remember going to see that *'Trad Dad'* [film] with Helen Shapiro and there was Jack and I and Jimmy and a friend of mine from school, and we had lined him up with this blind date …. The drive-ins were somewhere you went when you got paid. As I say there were limited places to go and the drive-in was a definite place to go (interview with Margaret).

In Melbourne and Brisbane, where drive-ins had started before television was introduced, the drive-in continued the tradition of the cinema as a place of family entertainment. Ron Grimstone who ran drive-ins in Queensland for many years, remembers it this way .

> . . . (the drive-in) became the family outing. It was so easy for Dad. He didn't have to get dressed up he could go in his slippers. All he was doing was driving the car.

> (You got) the mass of the people. The tricks they got up to to get in. You would see Mum, and two kids in the back and just as you got the ticket you would go round and knock on the boot and say 'come out now.' Amazing how many of them were in the boots, amazing how many kids used to get in the boot (interview with Ron Grimstone).' (Stratton 1992, p. 69)

'The period around 1956 was one of fundamental changes in Australian working-class leisure habits. The spread of drive-ins was matched by the increasing access of working-class kids to cars. In gross figures car ownership in Australia rose from 188 per 1000 people in 1939 to 266 per 1000 people in 1960. However the high pre-war figure for car ownership belies the concentration of ownership, because of purchase the running costs, in the middle class. One working-class male, remembering the situation in the early post-war period, put it this way.

> I lived in Sturt Street, Kingsford [Sydney] and I lived at 130 and I think there were 260 or 268 or even 270 houses in the street and for a long time there were only three cars in that street. One was owned by the local S.P. bookie — he was also an estate agent — another was owned by a copper and the other an insurance salesman had. He most probably got it through the company anyway.

This interviewee's wife added a similar story.

> I think there were (cars) in our street, one was owned by a builder- he lived up from us — and the other chap, down the road from us, he started up a business carrying something; they were the only two cars. That was at Leichhardt (interview with Rex).

The increase in car ownership between 1939 and 1960 may, therefore, be understood in terms of the spread of ownership into less affluent — and more working-class — homes.

Simultaneously the spread of television enabled people to have access to a visual entertainment at home. Increasingly drive-ins came to rely on the youth market, showing the new youth -oriented films. From a 1949-50 figure for cinema admissions of 145 million there was a gradual decline to 124 million in 1956-57. By 1961- 62, however, corresponding to the spread of television, cinema

admissions dropped sharply to 66 million. Of course a large component of a visit to the drivein was the possibility of privacy which it entailed. This was the basic reason for the reputation of drive-ins as a place of sexual licence. Ron Grimstone tells this story, but, as he says, just about every drive-in operator in the country will tell a similar story. Regardless of its actual veracity the story has the texture of an urban myth in its story combination of drive-in, car, sex and moral.

> I did have a funny story that's been told by every drive-in operator in Australia but it did happen at Capalaba. A bloke in a Morris Minor — all the other cars had gone — and there was one little car left on the ramp and we thought … we never left until every car had gone because many of them we had to jump start or we had to push and things like that. So we were there and we looked up and we said, 'Oh, well, if he's in trouble he'll come down here.' But he didn't come down. A girl came down, most embarrassed. 'Could you help my boyfriend?' and I said 'Why, what's wrong?' She said, 'He's in a very awkward position.' It was a Morris Minor and it had a dashboard with two openings, for glove boxes on either side. And we go up there and there's a bloke, his pants are down around his bloody ankles and' (Stratton 1992, p. 70)

> 'get the bloody thing out … And we took some bloody trouble getting him out, too. … Lucky he had a sense of humour when we started to laugh (interview with Ron Grimstone).

In the context of the appropriate uses given to consumer goods the designation of bodgie was applied to male youths who used these goods in unacceptable, deviant — and possibly delinquent — ways. However this development is a product of a middle-class appropriation of the term which has an origin in certain working-class practices during the Second World War.

The impact of American service personnel

The derivation of bodgie is from the English word bodgie which has the meaning of counterfeit or spurious. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces its written history back to 1552. In Australia it seems to have developed as a slang term. **McDonald**, in his 1951 B.A. thesis on *The Bodgie* (1951) submitted to Sydney University Anthropology department described the term as:

> … Darlinghurst jargon for "spurious, phoney, low quality and such" (McDonald 1951, p. 5).

McDonald claims that during the war Australian black-marketeers sold Australian cloth as American cloth and, in order to convince the customers, they sometimes pretended to be American seamen. Such people were known as bodgie dealers, though it is unclear whether this related to their goods or them, and, in the course of time, the individuals came to be known as bodgies. This is an origin for the term which is very specific, in order to understand how it came to be applied in more general settings we need to look, briefly, at the impact of American service personnel on Australia during the Second World War.

Australia had always looked to Britain for both its culture and its defence. We have already seen how Hollywood films had begun a cultural reorientation that was, nevertheless, resisted strongly. One particularly Australian inflection in the mass culture debate has been to view American mass cultural products as, in some way, more aimed at the lowest common denominator than British mass cultural products. In the 1950s a major campaign against the influx of American mass cultural products, such as comics was launched. **Clem Christesen**, using his position as editor of *Meanjin* took

one of the leading roles in the campaign arguing against what he called '… the dangers of koka-kola kulture.' (For this debate and more general history of Australian debates about the impact of American culture see White 1980). In the context of defence even before the fall of the Singapore garrison on 15 February 1942 Curtin had, in December 1941, made an appeal to America for help in the defence of Australia. In doing so Curtin challenged a deeply entrenched Australian belief in Britain's desire, and capacity, to defend Australia. American troops started arriving in Australia, in secret, in early 1942. By June there were 88 000 troops in the country and by early 1943 this figure had increased to about 250 000 service personnel who were stationed predominantly down the East coast of Australia (McKernan 1983, pp. 186-87. **McKernan**'s' (Stratton 1992, p. 71)

'chapter *Pacific Partners* provides a useful social historical background to the American presence). This number, which some sources place much higher, needs to be placed in relation to a total Australian population which in 1945 was estimated to be about 7 300 000.

The impact of so many Americans on Sydney and Brisbane in particular was the most important, though not the only, factor in the post-war development of bodgies and widgies. As a consequence it is worth pausing for a moment to experience their presence through the medium of a working-class girl who many later called a widgie:

> I knew exactly how I felt about Americans. They were gods, they had beautiful uniforms and lots of money and I remember when I was 10 and they marched in from the ships down Nudgee Road, they'd come to save us from the Japanese. And most Australian females had that idea. I wished I wasn't 13 but was 18 or 19 and I could go-out with them. And women I have since talked to at work who were a bit older than me — that was the best time of their lives. They had jobs and they were going out with Americans, they were going to dances every night (interview with Marie).

This interviewee lived just outside Brisbane which, at that time, had a population of about 150000, a significant proportion of the male population of which was away on active service. In this extract one can see clearly the links between being young, leisure, pleasure and America. Later in this interview, when asked how she related to American films, this was the reply.

> We really accepted it. We accepted all that American stuff coming out. You accepted it as being true and being right (interview with Marie).

In Brisbane, because of its size, the American troops had a very high profile and the effects of their presence permeated all aspects of life. This same woman commented:

> I had two cousins going out with Americans, I had aunties who entertained Americans at parties and in their homes. There were lots of American sailors, American army. One of my cousins, the one who was six years older than me, married an American sailor. We went to the wedding and the whole crew of the boat including the captain all came and came to the reception afterwards. I knew about black markets, I knew about brothels, I knew where they were, I saw men lined up at them (interview with Marie).

In Sydney, which was bigger, it was possible to escape the immediate impact of the American presence if you lived in the more middle-class suburbs. However, if you lived in the working-class dockside suburbs such as Woolloomooloo or in areas which had dance halls or brothels such as Darlinghurst, Paddington or Redfern this was not possible.

Even if you came from more respectable Manly, however, you were still likely to imbue the same kind of attitude to America:' (Stratton 1992, p. 72)

> 'Yes, well to us at the age of 10 (in 1947) to 15 or 16 America must have been Utopia. We believed the streets were paved with gold, everybody was rich and we used to put on phony American accents with one another when we were children …. and an American car if we saw one everybody would crowd around it, it was tremendous. Everybody's dream would be to go and live in America (interview with Pamela).

In this extract we can see that it was not only the bodgie dealers who put on American accents, the assimilation of American forms went much further. In addition the interviewee shows well how the image of America was of a country where consumerism was larger than life, where consumption produced a new and better reality. Whilst the American presence played an important role in the building up of an awareness of American consumer culture, a more pervasive influence was produced through American cultural products. Here is an extract from an interview with a Melbourne man who finally got to America by way of university.

> I idolised America for exactly the sorts of reason that you mention. Through the movies, perhaps the music, not so much being conscious of dress styles through the American servicemen but perhaps dress styles and so on through the movies. I was desperately anxious to go to America … (interview with Graham).

Such perceptions could lead, either deliberately or otherwise, to important misunderstandings between American males and Australian women. One male interviewee put it like this.

> There was a large thing with Australian birds marrying Americans and going to America. I knew two. All ended in divorce because the Yank would tell them "I live on a ranch" and when they got there it was a little quarter acre thing. There was a lot of dilution there (interview with Rex).

Given the context of the new understanding of America which was being built up it is easy to see how such misunderstandings could occur.

Nevertheless there was a reality on which this myth of America was founded. **Hammond-Moore**, in his book on the American war-time presence in Australia sums it up when he writes that the G.I.'s aura was a product of:

> Better pay, handsome uniforms, and ready access to many luxury goods in short supply — liquor, silk stockings, chocolate, as well as hard to get staples (Hammond-Moore 1981, p. 207).

The American private earned £17 a month compared with the Australian private's earnings of £9/15/0 a month (Adam-Smith 1984, p. 294). Not only did this allow him to buy a wide range of scarce, and therefore expensive, luxuries but also a large proportion of many goods was specifically

earmarked for American use. This seems to have been true most obviously of beer which, throughout the war and for a couple of years afterwards, was in limited supply. In 1941 the government ordered a cut of one-third in beer production (on this see McKernan 1983, p. 162).' (Stratton 1992, p. 73)

'However, when the Americans arrived it was not considered appropriate that they should suffer the same restrictions, as a consequence a significant proportion of the beer available was turned over to the American forces clubs. In addition there was a toleration of Americans drinking alcohol at American sponsored dances in spite of Australian licensing laws forbidding this. From this point of view of the average Australian, Americans and consumption must have seemed automatically to go together.

This general attitude held right across the spectrum. When the American Women's Army Corps arrived in 1944 the *Daily Telegraph* reported that:

> Many items of women's attire which was unprocureable here are provided in the WAC's kit. Besides two uniforms including dainty underwear, eight pairs of rayon stockings and sockettes, they can purchase brassieres, girdles and suspender belts at their store (quoted in Adam-Smith 1984, p. 294).

Adam-Smith goes on to note that, whilst Australian service women were issued with cotton bloomers much of the American service women's lingerie, once they had arrived, was being made in Australian factories. In these ways, then, by giving preference to American forces personnel during a time of shortage the Australian government helped to enhance the image of America as a land of plenty.

The outline of the AWAC's kit, however, demonstrates the basic truth of the image. As an earlier extract from an interview demonstrates, what struck most Australians first and most forcibly about the American service personnel was the quality of the tailoring in the uniforms. Here is another, more detailed, description of Australian attitudes to American service uniforms from a Sydney male.

> You see I think what turned the Australian youth towards American styles was that he saw American troops, and especially American nurses and — what was the other ones they had absolutely beautiful uniforms — an American nurse or an American woman soldier she always had a nice green gabardine, gabardine was nearly non-existent in Australia, always had nice shoes, nice handbag — genuine leather you know — and by jeez they were really smart. Whereas the English, we had English troops out here, well they wore uniforms worse than the Australians. They had the old-fashioned, very thick serviceable khaki stuff, bloody awful- English marines and that. .. (interview with Rex).

One of the most significant developments in the post-war period in relation to clothing has been the rise of the ready-to-wear industry. This form of mass-production has allowed for a profusion of garments in a wide range of styles. Again it was in the context of youth during the mid-1950s that the first significant effects were felt in Australia. It was then, for the first time, that young working-class males could walk into a men's outfitters and choose, not only from a range of shirts, but also from a range of good fitting jackets and trousers. In this way the stylishness inherent in the new

mass-fashion clothing could be adapted to more individual, or subcultural, requirements. The discussion of this development,' (Stratton 1992, p. 74)

'which coincides with the new visibility of working-class youth, the bodgies as the press labelled them, belongs in the next chapter. The point is important here, however, because it is necessary to emphasise how little ready-to-wear clothing of fit and style existed in Australia until that time.

The commercial introduction of stylish and fashion-conscious ready-to-wear clothing for both males and females was one aspect of the new consumerism of 1920s America. Before this period it was possible to buy clothes off the peg, as it was possible later in Australia — and England for that matter — however such clothes tended to be ill-fitting, functional and commanded little interest being made, mostly, for those who could not have their clothes made in the household or could not afford tailors to make them. The key problem lay in the ability to produce an array of standard sizes. This entailed collecting very large numbers of measurements in order to gain a set of standard physiques of average people. For males this occurred in America during the Civil War. Later refinements were added as effects of the Spanish-American War and the First World War. (Ewen & Ewen 1982 describe this development in more detail on pp. 162-68).

By the end of the First World War American tailors were in a position to switch from increasingly fitted uniforms to the production of a range of ready-to-wear clothing. During the same period an equivalent change had occurred in women's tailoring as a consequence of the industry's attempts to produce better and better copies of high fashion items (Ewen & Ewen 1982, pp. 183-86). Ewen and Ewen write that:

> By 1920 women's fashion comprised 76 per cent of the product of the industry, and was produced according to established seasonal patterns (Ewen & Ewen 1982, p. 185).

It was, at this time, with a ready-to-wear fashion industry in place that young people became important consumers. Indeed the formation was not in terms of cause and effect but, rather in terms of American youth's increasing access to income related to the increasing availability of cheap fashionable clothing. In Australia also, ready-to-wear clothing allowed working-class girls to dress in the fashion of flappers. **Norma Martyn** in her book on the history of fashion in Australia writes that:

> By 1918 women were celebrating their own fashion victory. High fashion's ready-to-wear duplications accommodated working girls' budgets. By the twenties the working girl had become a flapper (Martyn 1976, p. 99).

Because of the established link between women's clothing and fashion, fashionable ready-to-wear clothing for women appeared earlier than similar clothing for men. In Australia one of the first true ready-to-wear tailors was Fletcher Jones who, having worked as a draper and hawker between the wars, opened his first shop on the corner of Collins and Market Streets in Melbourne in 1946. Pat von Wolff, in her newspaper article on Fletcher Jones describes the first day's trading this way.' (Stratton 1992, p. 75)

'When they opened the doors the first morning, queues stretched for blocks. It was pandemonium. Within hours, Fletcher's stock of 1150 pairs of trousers was in danger of being depleted. A limit of one pair per man had to be set (Pat van WoIff 1985).

According to David Jones in the same article Fletcher Jones and his staff had worked 72 scientific sizes. Clearly, by the end of the war a demand existed for stylish, mass-produced male clothing.

Ewen and Ewen cull the following figures from Elizabeth Hurlock' s *The Psychology of Dress: An Analysis of Fashion and its Motive* published in 1929:

55 percent of the buyers of "dress goods" were under thirty;

53 percent of the buyers of ready-to-wear were under thirty;

62 percent of the buyers of underwear…

65 percent of the buyers of hosiery (quoted in Ewen & Ewen 1982, p. 222).

By contrast to America in Australia in the post-World War II period there was next to no male youth market. As one interviewee from Sydney put it:

The retail trade either through ignorance or maybe they were smarter than we think they thought there was no money there anyway, they didn't step into teen fashions like they do now (interview with Rex).

I would suggest that the lack of a youth fashion industry in Australia at that time had less to do with financial considerations and more to do with a combination of there being no sense of youth as a separate consumer category and very little in the way of local fashionable ready-to-wear clothing. The same interviewee goes on, when asked where he used to buy his clothes:

The local shops, but the local shop would be selling things to grandmothers and alongside they would have some clothes suitable for being a bodgie, but it wasn't a special section of some giant supermarket of anything like that, just a local store. Later some places in Sydney started selling pants with silver thread flecked through them, bloody awful they were, stove-piped (interview with Rex).

The 'later' here refers to the gradual development in post-war Sydney, and the other cities, of men's shops which set out to cater specifically for those young people in the post-war period who wanted to dress in the new *youth* style, much of which, as we shall see, was imported from America.

In Sydney, one of the best known of the early male *youth* clothing stores was called *Bennett's.* It was, in fact, run by a person who was himself a sharpie, which, broadly speaking, placed him within the bodgie spectrum but emphasised him as somebody particularly interested in his clothing style *(Bennett's* is advertised in the program for the All Star Jazz Concert at Sydney Town Hall on 26 Nov 1951 reproduced on pp. 126-29). **McDonald** claims that the term *sharpie,* derived from the American slang term *sharp* meaning to look good, came into use in Sydney around mid-1950.' (Stratton 1992, p. 76)

'He argues that the term was utilised by those bodgies who considered themselves snappy dressers but who were looking more to England than to America. In general McDonald's outline would seem to be of an older and more conservative person who looked down on the younger, flashier bodgies of the new generation. Many of the newer bodgies were, as McDonald puts it 'suburban' and the style appears to have spread around this time to the less urban inner city working-class areas of Sydney (**McDonald**'s discussion is to be found in McDonald 1951, section IX, pp.16-22). We might hypothesise that, in fact, the new generation was building on the foundations provided by the earlier bodgies whose acceptance of American clothing styles was dominated by the general Australian belief that there was no such thing as fashion and the general acceptance of English originated male fashions.

It was not unusual, as was also to be the case later during the development of a middle-class youth culture in the 1960s, for individuals from within the milieu to recognise the need — and possible potential — in a particular area and set out to supply that need. By 1951 *Bennett's* was describing itself in advertisements in jazz concert programmes for Sydney Town Hall as 'The American Men's Wear Style Centre in Australia.' At the same time, indicating the importance of American fashions the store claimed to self' Authentic American Style Suits.' These suits, which the prices indicate were not tailor-made, cost between £18/18/0 and £22/ 10/0.

In Melbourne the early development of a youth-grouping heavily influenced by American style was much less marked. However, as one interviewee said: There was in Melbourne at the time a very significant development for the young man when a fellow, I think his name was Herb Jackson, opened a hairdressing salon and called it Peter Jackson's. Now that was opened 'when I was at high school, so it must have been in the very late 1940s or 1950, and he was the first hairdresser that I am aware of who offered young men haircuts other than short back and sides.

> He subsequently opened a small chain of hairdressing salons and clothing shops because these same young men wanted a different kind of clothing from what their fathers wore and he put in men's clothing so he certainly would have been patronised by the sharpie (interview with Graham).

What can be seen from the above extract is how, in a small market, there could evolve shops dealing with more than one need which, with one area supplementing the other, could, clearly, run at a reasonable profit.

Clothes and hair in the development of the bodgie style

It is time to turn to the more specific context of the history of the bodgie way of dressing. I have dwelt extensively on the development of the ready-to-wear clothing industry and its links with the American forces because, as I have shown such links slide imperceptibly into the development of youth-centred consumption. At this point it is important to remember that, in America, the development of' (Stratton 1992, p. 77)

'ready-to-wear started out as a product for the urban poor. By the 1920s its market was also in the middle class and a price range had developed which reflected a range of quality and of fit. In

Australia in the post-war period the youth that pioneered the new clothing along with American styles was working class, but was composed of working-class kids who could afford the expense of, often imported, clothing.

In 1942, as a part of its attempt to help American service personnel to cope with the alien aspects of Australian culture the Special Services Division of the American army distributed a booklet which tried to explain aspects of Australian culture to Americans. It included a list of Australian slang terms with American meanings. One of these is of particular interest to us. A flashy dresser is called, in the Australian slang of the period a *Woolloomooloo Yank* (or, in fact, *Loo Yank)* or a *Fitzroy Yank.* An American, in the Australian rhyming slang of the period was known as a *septic tank* or simply as a *septic.* Both Wolloomooloo and Fitzroy were at that time, working-class suburbs, the one in Sydney and the other in Melbourne. In Sydney it was also common to describe flashy dressers as *Pitt Street Yanks* because Pitt Street was where many Australian males dressed in this style, some black-marketeers others not, used to congregate. I have described the significance attached to the presence of American service personnel in Australia but the origin of interest in American clothing styles cannot be attributed to them.

Aspects of American style were brought to Australia by returning visitors in the pre-war period. McDonald mentions, for example, Johnny Reynolds who was then (in 1950) a script writer for Hoyts, also Sammy Lee, then a night club entrepreneur and Jack Rooklyn who McDonald describes as a fun parlour owner (McDonald 1951, section VI, p.2). McDonald writes that since the zoot-suit style was not current then these people could not be classified as pre-cursors of the bodgies. The more general importance of the zoot-suit, apart from its being the basis for the Australian bodgie clothing style, lies in its being the first male working-class clothing style to intersect with the development of a mass-fashion industry. It would be correct to say that during this pre-war period the zoot-suit was a style still confined to American blacks. In addition there was in America as yet no recognition of a segmentation of mass-fashion styles by class. There was only a perception of mass-production and mass-fashion as offering a plurality of choice. It is probable that the zoot-suit style was not the one brought back by these men. It is also the case that these people, with their diverse interests and their small number could not be considered a cultural grouping. We should remember here Murray's remark, quoted earlier, about Australian young people who had been to America and England in the 1920s.

The men classified as the *Loo Yanks,* however, are a different matter. These men were, in the main, sailors who picked up on what was a specifically working class and originally black style and adopted it themselves. The basis of what was to become the bodgie style was the zoot-suit. This suit, as it appeared in Australia, was composed of a single breasted jacket with very wide lapels, often cut deep at the front with trousers pegged both at the waist and at the ankle and baggy at the' (Stratton 1992, p. 78)

'knee. It sometimes included a waistcoat and often a watch with an extravagantly long chain. This style seems to have originated among the New York black community where it was often worn by gangsters and jazz musicians. The Harlem zoot-suit was more extreme than the version worn in Australia which was, nevertheless, viewed with horror by the average Australian. The *New Yorker, 1941,* described the Harlem zoot-suit this way:

We herewith submit a preview of men's Easter fashions from the world's least inhibited fashion centre, Harlem. Trousers will be deeply pleated, with waistband just under the armpits, thirty-inch knees, and fifteen-inch cuffs. A popular suit jacket is one that measures thirty-six inches down the backseam and has a fly front, shoulders padded out three-and-a-half inches each side, two breast pockets, and slashed side pockets. This may be worn with a white doeskin waistcoat. Shoes may be pointed, the most popular leathers being light-tan calfskin and coloured suede. Hats may be worn in the porkpie shape or with crowns six inches high. Colors, as always, are limited only by spectrum (quoted in Anderson 1981, p. 317). Stearns and Stearns in their history of jazz dance in America (1964) have a number of photographs of black dancers in the inter-war period wearing suits approximating the zoot-suit. Anderson (1981, p. 317) describes Cab Calloway, the jazz singer and band leader, as having probably the most spectacular and expensive zoot-suit in Harlem.

In fact the history of what later became known as the drape suit can be traced further back from Harlem to the suit style current during the Edwardian period. Cosgrove (1984), in his article *The Zoot-suit and Style Warfare* writes of the origin of the style that:

Some reports claimed the zoot-suit was an invention of Harlem night life, other suggested it grew out of jazz culture and the exhibitionist stage costumes of the band leaders, and some argued that the zoot-suit was derived from military uniforms and imported from Britain (Cosgrove 1984, p.78).

There is a sense in which both these origins are correct. On the one hand the history of style may be traced back to the English Edwardian fashions. On the other hand the particular appropriation and mobilisation of the style grew out of a group excluded from the dominant society and its associated fashion system. In England this was recognised when working-class youths in the 1950s who wore the style were named Teddy Boys. The accepted origin of the Teddy Boy style is given by Jefferson (1976). He writes that the style was originally introduced in 1950 by a number of Saville Row tailors who were looking for a new fashion which would catch on with the young aristocratic men about town. They succeeded but the style was then appropriated by newly affluent working-class youths who wanted to look fashionable. Whilst the tailors may have attempted to introduce the style as an upper-class fashion it must also be acknowledged that the English working-class awareness of the style may have occurred in a similar way to the' (Stratton 1992, p. 79)

'development of an Australian awareness. Cosgrove (1984), for example, contains a photograph of a youth in a zoot-suit visiting a ballroom in London's Hammersmith from around 1944. English spivs, the equivalent of the Australian bodgie black-marketeers, also tended to be associated with the style. Clothes rationing did not come to an end in England until 1949 so it is not surprising that the spread of the zoot-suit/drape suit style among working-class youths should not occur until the early 1950s. In fact the spread of the style may be viewed in the context of a black/working-class tradition of styles. Whilst the origin of the style itself remains obscure it may well centre on a lower-class preservation of a fashion passed over by an upper-class — and, with ready-to-wear, increasingly middle-class — shift to a fashion for double-breasted suits.

In·its new formulation the style seems to have spread from New York's black community through other black areas, where it may also have been preserved, into other ethnic communities. Always it would have overlapped with lower-class white communities. Steams and Steams report an account

white middle-class boy who, in 1939, was 15 and developed a liking for dancing and jazz. Smith used to go to see white jazz bands but, as he learnt to appreciate the music and dancing more, he started to go downtown to a ballroom in the black section of Pittsburgh. His increasing sophistication in the area of jazz and jazz dance led him away from the *childish* dances of his high school:

> Instead, Smith became a member of a pretty rough gang of white kids, who went dancing to jukeboxes at nearby mill towns, picking up partners on location. These boys had never attended high school, and they wore their hair cut long and one-button, rolled-lapel suits with peg-trousers (Stearns & Stearns 1964, p. 330).

The clothing described is clearly a version of the zoot-suit. In addition the long hair is also part of a tradition. I will discuss this below.

The development of the zoot-suit style has clear associations with the evolved styles that we have looked at earlier of 19th-century English and Australian working-class youth groupings. Although it is fundamentally different in form, being based much more closely on the middle-class suit, it nevertheless represents an attempt by a group excluded from the established fashion structure to establish or formulate a distinctive style of its own. In the case of the zoot-suit the style is a much more self-conscious and flamboyant deviation from an established middle-class style than the hooligan and larrikin reformulations of what was, essentially, a characteristic working-class style. In their cases their variations were of a style variously described as typical of the sailor (bell-bottoms trousers) and the costermonger (cut-away jacket). It should be remembered that the spiv and bodgie black-marketeers were a function of government attempts to impose restrictions on the market. However 'knowing the right person' if you want to buy something cheaply is a tradition which stretches both backwards and forwards from this period and involves, in the main, working-class males operating on the fringes of the law. Costermongers, spivs and bodgies all come from the same' (Stratton 1992, p. 80)

Taken at Brisbane's Cloudland dance hall c. 1951.

'   ' (Stratton 1992, p. 81)

'background. It might be surmised that the evolution of the zoot-suit can be linked to the development of the new mass fashion industry and the awareness of a link with white middle-class American culture and a denial of its aesthetic of subtlety in a statement of spectacular consumption.

By the late 1930s the zoot-suit style had spread to the West coast of America. In Los Angeles the style seems to have been adopted by the males of the Mexican community. During 1943 there occurred a number of incidents between United States navy personnel and members of the Mexican

community dressed in the zoot-suit style. The people dressed in this style became labelled as zooters and the incidents themselves came to be called the Zoot-Suit Riots (See Cosgrove 1984 for a detailed examination of these riots). One aspect of the riots was that seamen, with the encouragement of members of the local Anglo-community would force zooters to remove their zoot-suits. It would seem, then, that, although the newspaper reports claimed that the source of the unrest lay in the sexual molestation of women of one group by the males of the other group, a more fundamental source lay in the cultural importance attached to the zoot-suit styles. It seems to have represented an assertion of status in an alternative fashion structure which the white community found disturbing. Hence the naval personnel, as representative of both the community and of the country, being in uniform, were in a strong position to challenge the members of an ethnic community who were asserting a status different from that ascribed to them and doing it by wearing a *costume* outside of those considered patriotic. A little earlier Anderson quotes a letter from a more conservative Harlem inhabitant in which the writer claims that zoot-suits made their wearers look like 'chimpanzees' (Anderson 1981, p. 318). Given the historical white racist association of blacks and monkeys the implication of this, one assumes black Harlemite's statement, is that, by moving outside of the white dominated fashion structure, these blacks have lost status. Presumably the black zoot-suit wearers, like the later Mexican wearers, would have asserted that they were demonstrating an independence of the white-dominated fashion system and, more generally, of white-dominated society.

Turner and Surace, in their account of the zoot-suit riots as a part of an article concerned with symbols in newspaper reporting, described the zooters as having two main characteristics:

> First, zoot-suits consisted of long suit coats and trousers extremely pegged at the cuff, draped full around the knees, and terminating in deep pleats at the waist. Second the zooters wore their hair long, full, and well greased (Turner & Surace 1956, p. 16).

It is important to examine the American context of the zoot-suit because it allows us to understand better how working-class Australian males could recognise a meaning in the style to make them want to import it into Australia. For the Australian seamen the positionality of the style as deviant and as distinct from the mainstream of the fashion and status hierarchy would have been understandable in terms of the tradition of working-class clothing styles. In addition its use by a' (Stratton 1992, p. 82)

'subordinate group would have reinforced this impression. Finally the spectacularity of the style, its ostentatious consumerism, would have been appreciated in the context of the image of America as the site of limitless wealth constituted in the acquisition of consumer goods. In this way the style was brought back to Australia by seamen on the Sydney-West Coast run before the appearance of American service personnel in Australia during the war. During the war, however, the docks area around Woolloomooloo was saturated with both black and white American service personnel and the spread of a distinctive Australian style, based on the American image occurred. One assumes that many of the bodgie dealers, whom we have already met, were a part of this group.

In 1948 the zoot-suit and greased hair style still predominated among Australian bodgies — though the term bodgie did not yet have a general currency. Anderson (1981, pp. 317-18) notes that Harlem

jitterbugs, as they were known, also wore heavily greased hair. However the zoot-suit was not the only American clothing style worn during this period. One trajectory in the production of a distinctive bodgie clothing style in the late 1940s and early 1950s lies in the increasing importance of the zoot-suit, adapted in a number of ways, as the basis for the image. In the late 1930s and 1940s other aspects of American working-class clothing, which no doubt looked slightly less strange on Australian streets, were also significant. In fact McDonald goes so far as to say:

> The 'Loo Yanks' had not established a well integrated clothing complex… anything from America or that looked American was worn (McDonald 1951, section VII, p. 21).

One of the most important of these other articles of clothing were blue jeans which were not available in Australia at this time. Jeans, in the '30s and '40s, were still only American working clothes. Ewen and Ewen describe how, in the 1950s, jeans became a part of a statement which embodied a rejection of consumerism and a relation to the simpler and less corrupted days of the West as portrayed in the film westerns of the post-war period (Ewen & Ewen 1982, pp. 112-13). In Australia the image was more complex. Whilst, by the mid-1950s, jeans might have been a part of the image of a rejection of conformist, suburban life as articulated in such films as Rebel Without a Cause and The Wild One, as Ewen and Ewen suggest, in Australia such an image was over-determined by the fantasy image of consumerism and excitement of the country from which the films came, during, and immediately after, the war jeans combined, for Australian males, an image of the worker and of America. These jeans had to be brought over from America. Often, along with other goods, Australians used to buy them from Americans on the ships. Sometimes, too, Australian women used to wear jeans as did this person:

> Oh, that was another thing they used to bring off the ships too, jeans. And they (the males) used to spend hours boiling them to get that washed look. They used to boil them. They used to get them off the sailors too. They used to buy their old working gear, because they already had that washed look.' (Stratton 1992, p. 83)

> 'But I used to wear jeans. You could hardly move in them, they were that stiff. They used to have a lot of that metal studding on them. And that was very popular. Anything with a symbol of America on it, emblazoned on a pocket or something, was very in, very popular (interview with Irene).

McDonald writes that blue jeans stopped being worn around 1948 (McDonald 1951, section VII, p. 21). They did not become popular again, this time as a mass youth working-class style until the later years of the 1950s. In addition McDonald considered that 1948 was the year when the drape suit replaced the zoot-suit. In fact, as we shall see, the drape suit was really a conservative adaptation of the zootsuit.

In many ways 1948 saw the beginning of the first clearly definable bodgies. However there is just one more point about the *'Loo Yanks* and their associates. Not only did they pick up on American working-class clothing styles, they also imitated the haircut. Turner and Surace described the above quotation, the zooter's hair as being long, full and greased. The same interviewee as above described the Australian bodgie male haircut of the late 1940s as:

> Dovetailed, always had a piece hanging down the front, very slicked back, always long.

To keep it in the dovetail position they used California Poppy. They didn't use Vaseline or Brylcream, right? It wasn't heavily lacquered like you see grease boys in America, nothing like that. It was very lightly touched (interview with Irene).

The dovetail at the back was retained as an element of a working-class hair style right through the 1950s. Indeed the style of the 1960s sharpies, with a long, narrow length of hair at the back may well have been a metamorphosis of this style. In England, where the style had the same American origin — though this is not made clear in the **Turner and Surace** quotation — it was to form the basis of the Teddy boy hair style. The most common English term for the style was the D.A. an abbreviation of 'duck's arse.' Cosgrove (1984), in his discussion of the American zoot-suit riots, includes a photograph in which the long, full hair at the back of the head is clearly visible. In a long quotation from the *Los Angeles Times* which Cosgrove also include there is a reference to the zoot-suiter's 'Argentine Ducktail' haircut. The use of California Poppy gradually was replaced by the use of heavier lacquers. One reason for this was the steadily increasing length of the working-class hairstyle during the 1950s. Indeed the use of heavy lacquer came to be, in itself an assertion of working classness. The original use of a lighter lacquer may well have had an origin in the attempt to compromise the image somewhat for Australian sensibilities. The fringe at the front, whilst we do not know how the zooters wore the front of their hair, fits well into the traditional Anglo-Australian working-class style of the donkey fringe. McDonald attests to the continuity of this style when, in the context of a Cornel Wilde boy, (we shall meet the Cornel Wilde boys in a moment), he describes how this youth had originally:' (Stratton 1992, p. 84)

'… worn his hair long with a big 'cow-lick' hanging down to his nose, in the manner of some Australian 'street corner louts' (McDonald 1951, section X, pp. 1-2).

Thus we can see that already, in the first assimilation of the American style it was gaining an Australian formulation. From about 1948 on a broader range of, mostly American originated, hair styles were introduced.

The *Loo Yanks* represent one strand in the development of the bodgie style. Another strand lay in the evolution of a group who became known as the Cornel Wilde boys. The name would seem to be anachronistic as, again, the beginnings of the group can be traced back to the late 1930s. The reference to Cornel Wilde, though, illustrates once again the importance of American films in the spread not only of an image of America but also of style. The film of Cornel Wilde's which was of most importance was *A Song to Remember,* a vehicle for Cornel Wilde which gave him star status and in which he played Chopin. It was a film of Chopin's life. The film, made by King Vidor, went on general release in 1945 and certainly Wilde's hair-style which involved the hair being swept back without a parting but with a quiff at the front, became one variation in the general theme of bodgie fashion.

McDonald, who makes no comment on the name given to the group gives it an origin in 1941 when one of his informants spotted a male 'who looked like an American civilian' standing on Saunder's Corner- I presume he means in Pyrmont where he would have been close to the docks — who:

> … sported thick, black hair which was cut short on top, brushed back on the sides and full and curling up on the neck (McDonald 1951, section X, p.2).

This style, which seems to include the basis for the more radical dovetail, was adopted by McDonald's informant and subsequently spread among a number of males around Bondi. Another version places the origin further back in 1938. Here I am quoting from a letter sent to me by one of my informants:

A top young surfboard rider of the day Jack 'Bluey' Mayes at 16 years of age went to Honolulu in 1938 with the Australian Surf Life Saving Team and came back with American clothes and what is known as a 'Cornel Wilde' hairdo. It was regarded as long hair but was only 1-1 1/2" long, scalped to the head.

Having returned yet again to hair perhaps this is an appropriate place to mention that the normal male hairstyle of the period, which allowed for little or no variation and which remained the standard male hair cut until the middle-class acceptance of male hair dressing salons from the late 1960s on, was what was known as the short back and sides. This hairstyle, which involved a parting on the left hand side, was precisely as its name describes, short and graded at the back, cut above the ears at the sides and shaped to the head on top. Its prevalence, one could add its hegemony for it extended, in a gradient of expertise, across all classes, dates, for our purposes, from the turn of the century. Paul Thompson, in *The Edwardians*' (Stratton 1992, p. 85)

'(1975), has a photograph of some old working-class men drawing their first pension in England in 1908. He comments:

> Note the hairstyles: The Edwardian generations differed in taste, the younger men cutting their hair short while the old stuck to the longer hair fashionable in their own youth.

The tradition of working-class male youth wearing long hair and of authority frowning on this goes back a long way. Pearson quotes an order from 1603 that apprentices should not' … wear their hair long nor locks at their ears like ruffians' (Pearson 1983, p. 193). This extension of the masters' - authority caused trouble for the following 40 years.
It is in this context that we can understand the association of long hair with a rejection of the established custom. The hooligan and larrikin styles included, for their day, long hair. Similarly the proliferation of styles adopted by working-class youth in the post-war period all came within the perception of long hair except for the crew-cut and its variations which were derived from the hair-style of American troops, a hair-style which, perhaps, originally signalled the acceptance of governmental authority. What was new was the heightened visibility of long hair in the films, and subsequently television programmes of the period. The effect of this was to produce a variety of fashionable styles of long hair. All, however, were pretty much contained within the working class until the mid-1960s breakthrough of the mod/hippie cultural complex in which, for the first time in the consumerist era middle-class males also adopted long hair. Contemporary and subsequent English working-class secondary youth cultures, such as skinheads and punks, have inverted the tradition cutting their hair short. At the same time large numbers of working-class young males have continued to wear long, often almost shoulder length hair.

The precise origin of the Cornel Wilde boys does not matter. What is apparent is, once again, the impact of images of America and American consumerism on a number of Australian males. In this case we are talking about members of the North Bondi Surf Club and, I am led to believe, the Tamarama Surf Club also. In this group, already concerned with image and display, the emphasis appears to have been more on conspicuous consumption. McDonald notes that: Their clothes were not those of the Kings Cross area. They concentrated on gaudy, clashing colours in the tradition of the Australian "lair", in wearing bright ties and two-tone shoes, both abhorred by the 'Loo Yanks and Burts Boys' (McDonald 1951, section X, p. 4).

Whilst McDonald's association of their style with lairs — by which he means larrikins — is questionable, the preoccupation of the Cornel Wilde boys with the spectacular aspect of the new styles highlights how much the later bodgies of the late 1940s and early 1950s toned down the possibilities of the American formulations as they were adapted into Australian working-class traditions. In fact the Cornel Wilde boys fade into the more general spread of these American originated styles and become one group among many.' (Stratton 1992, p. 86)

CH4 Bodgies and Widgies: image and reality

'This chapter will be concerned primarily with distinguishing the newspaper images of bodgies and widgies from the lived reality. This will involve spending the first part of the chapter discussing some of the thematic constituents of the image of bodgies and widgies. Much of the concern over the new teenager, as we will see, can best be understood as a reaction to changing consumption patterns of young people and the increasing visibility of working-class youth. Among the middle class there was also a resistance to, and criticism of, the ideology of the teenager part of which was focused on its being an importation from America. Having discussed the image of bodgies and widgies that was generated through the newspapers the chapter will go on to discuss the role of women, widgies, in the predominantly masculine working-class street culture as a basis for an understanding of why women occupy a minor position in the image of bodgies and widgies. Finally I want to examine two material aspects of the image of bodgies and widgies, milk bars and as the newspaper reports called them *sex drugs,* to distinguish what role each actually played in the lives of young people labelled as bodgies and widgies.

The Bodgie and Widgie folk devil

In the last chapter we traced two strands of the evolution of the bodgie style in Sydney. Whilst Sydney was the most important city in the development of the style similar innovations were occurring in both Melbourne and Brisbane. In the main, however, the development of the style in Melbourne appears to have had much less of a connection with seamen, the blackmarket or Americans. The bodgie style seems to have had a much less developed precursal in Melbourne and, whilst gaining a footing in the working-class suburbs around Fitzroy it was, in the main, centred around the dance hall and the milk bars of St Kilda. In Brisbane the style made a much larger inroad early on mostly because of the wartime presence of so many American service personnel.' (Stratton 1992, p. 87)

'The spread of a distinctive bodgie style really occurred around 1948. However it was not until 1950 that the newspapers began to pick up on the term bodgie and to apply it to youths dressed in the distinctive style. Wilkes in his *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* cites its first usage in 1950 in a report on a court case.

> 'This youth frequents King's Cross milk bars with other young hoodlums and prostitutes,' Vice Squad Constable Thompson said … (The accused) stood in the dock dressed in the bizarre uniform of the 'bodgey' — belted velvet cord jacket, bright blue sports shirt without a tie, brown trousers narrowed at the ankle, shaggy Cornel Wilde haircut.

In this report from the *Sunday Telegraph,* 7 May 1950 we can already see in place the core set of connotations attached to the bodgie over the next 10 years by the media. He is young, he is a hoodlum who wears strange clothes and sports long hair. In addition the element of sexual deviation, if not of threat, is present in the linking of the youth to prostitutes.

The continuity over time of the constitutive elements mentioned in the press report is easy to demonstrate. Here, for example, is a paragraph from a long report relating to an incident in Melbourne in 1956 which is headlined *Widgies in Wild Brawl.* The paragraph reads:

> (A senior police officer) said that there had been many reports of sex orgies, vandalism, and demonstrations in recent weeks which police attributed to bodgies and widgies *(Sun-Herald, 17.5.56).*

By this time the terms had become so invested with meaning that a description of the young people's *bizarre dress* was clearly considered unnecessary. Instead the hoodlum has become more definitely a threat to property in the reincarnation of a vandal and the weak connation of sexual deviation to be found in the earlier association with prostitutes has now been heightened to the active participation in *sex orgies.* This, by the way, is one of the few newspaper reports which focuses on the behaviour of widgies. One reason for this, as we shall see, is the domination of working-class street culture in the lived world by males. In one important feature the moral panic surrounding bodgies and widgies replicated the assumptions of working-class youth life. This was in the positioning of women within the home. As a consequence the newspapers constructed widgies as predominantly passive and, where they were not, as engaging in *unfeminine* activities, like brawling, or in activities which deny them status as potential respectable home makers, like *sex orgies.*

The continuity of the thematic content of the terms bodgie and widgie in the press reports of the 1950s produced a public image of an unchanging folk devil which continued to present the same threat to law and morality. In the real world the nature of the working-class youth groupings underwent a fundamental change during the 1950s. The youth group of which we examined the beginnings in the last chapter faded away around 1952 as the generation who had adopted the clothing styles and activities got married and found permanent employment either in legitimate work, which accounted for most of them, or in work regarded as' (Stratton 1992, p. 88)

'criminal by the arbiters of the middle-class moral order. However the tradition of the style lived on to become reinvigorated during the middle years of the 1950s in a new context. This time as one

aspect of the lived reality of the spread of the ideology of youth as an active, consumerist category embodied in the *teenager.* This development was tied in closely to the commercialisation and institutionalisation of entertainment which had previously been an organic part of street culture. The spread of popular culture in its new commercial, some would say mass, guise generated an analogous set of problems to those already noted in chapter 2 relating to the spread and alteration of working-class traditions in differently evolving cultural contexts. The spread of popular cultural forms through the mass media and within the commercialised structure of mass-production did not mean a passive acceptance of cultural commodities. Rather these commodities were understood and made use of within the established cultural context. One of the most important of these in Australia resulted from the recession which followed the 1954 budget making employment for working-class youth much harder to find. The point I wish to make here concerns the difference between the real changes which went on in working-class youth groups which need to be understood in the context of the real continuities of traditional practices and the apparent continuity which was embodied in the image of bodgies and widgies purveyed by the media.

The appearance of continuity was reinforced by an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 January 1956. This piece, headlined *Bodgie Cliques Break With Old Traditions But …* acknowledged the link which had become established between the term bodgie and the idea of juvenile delinquency which, as we saw in chapter 2, has a discursive history of its own. The linking of bodgies and widgies to the theme of juvenile delinquency allowed them to be placed as a part of thematic continuity which itself stretches back to hooligans and larrikins. The article then set out to look behind the term bodgie to discover who bodgies really were. It did this by extracting from and precising McDonald's 1951 dissertation from Sydney University's Anthropology department, the same work that I was using in the previous chapter. Without giving the date the article described the dissertation as a 'recent anthropological survey.' Indeed the whole tenor of the piece increased the image of a stable, and one must assume, self-replicating group which had a continuity of existence over the years. As is typical in the construction of folk devils the bodgie of the image was decontextualised from any lived sociocultural order. In this way the investigative piece served to supplement rather than challenge the assumptions implicit in the reporting of incidents attached to bodgies and widgies in which they were contradictorally constructed as both ever present and a new threat.

But in the period around 1950 this was not always the case. The bodgie and his female counterpart had not yet taken over the larrikin's role as the middle-class folk devil threat to acceptable society. Many reports as late as 1950 described the clothing styles and activities of bodgies and widgies as variations on conventional styles and activities. Wilkes, in *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms,* gives such a piece as the first example of the use of widgie:' (Stratton 1992, p. 89)

The first page of the *PIX* article, 'Growing Up in Australia', 3 December 1949' (Stratton 1992, p. 90)

> 'A benefit dance will be held on Friday at the Gaiety Ballroom, Oxford Street. …There'll be competitions for jitterbugging, Charleston and prizes for the most colourfully dressed 'bodgy' and 'weegie' *(Sun,* 5 July 1950).

Here, the reporting makes the *Gaiety,* which was the most important dance hall in Sydney for bodgies and widgies, sound like the site for a conventional evening's entertainment. The competitions associated with clothing style are given the appearance of fancy dress competitions and the dance competitions seem to refer to esoteric dances. In fact dancing, and in particular the jitterbug and its associated dance, the jive, were as basic to the people who regarded themselves as bodgies and widgies as were the clothing styles and the importance of these two elements has a history which goes back at least as far as those working-class kids classified as hooligans and larrikins and includes, in America, the black originators of the zoot-suit and the jitterbug for whom:

It was a thrill to be called for by a hep cat, who was togged to the bricks, and taken to the Savoy, where both would blow their wigs boogieing, lindying, and trucking (Anderson 1981, p. 318).

In Australia in the immediate post-war period we can see well a fusion of traditional working-class cultural concerns and newly introduced material practices which, nevertheless, originated in the same cultural preoccupations. There is one more point to be made about the newspaper reports which is that, as yet, there was no standardised spelling of the terms bodgie and widgie. The standardisation occurred with the increasing usage of the terms by newspapers around 1952. Perhaps the earliest of the investigative reports on the new youth styles was the article in PIX, 3 December 1949. This piece, which was also the cover story, was entitled Growing Up in Australia followed by the question 'Is slavish imitation of Americans making today's teenager a youth without a future?' As is implied by this question the bulk of the article is concerned with two areas which are constructed as problems and which are conflated. The first area concerns the impact of American mass culture on Australian youth. The second area concerns the possible effect of such an impact. It might produce young people who do not grow up. The conflation needs to be understood in the context of asocial order in which youth does not yet occupy a cultural place. The fear of an American mass cultural invasion , which in fact occurred in the much more general formulation of consumerism, dominated the possibility of understanding the emergence of a new, consumption-based cultural category.

The emergence of the new category was clearly understood by *PIX's* own reporter:

… the reporter, Kay McFarlane, herself a teenager, … made the following observations: — For the first time in Australia's history, she said, teenagers have a definite position in the community. They are specially catered for by big department stores. Dress designers spend half their time studying teenage requirements and crazes.' (Stratton 1992, p. 91)

'McFarlane goes on to outline the two different types of teenager, the long-haired and the short-haired. The long haired group:

…usually sit around the milk-bar for several hours talking over the day's events, playing their favourite juke-box numbers, smoking, and jitterbugging if they're in the mood. Later they may drift along to a dancing club where they can jive into the early hours to the solid be-bop rhythm of one of Sydney's biggest jazz bands.

The milk bar McFarlane is talking about here was Burt's which, as we have seen, was the Kings Cross centre for the most developed cultural group of early bodgies and widgies. We have already come across this group at the end of the last chapter, they were McDonald's Burt's Boys. McFarlane's other type; the short-haired teenager, seems to refer to the beginning of the more conventional side of the new category of youth. S/he is described as spending less time in milk bars and more time going round the shops and going to films. It is, perhaps, superfluous to point out the consumption orientation here. What really seems to mark off this group from the other group is their preference for American square dancing rather than for jitterbugging.

This difference, which may appear minor, is in fact crucial to an understanding of the fracturing of the new category and the labelling of some young people as bodgies and widgies. The dances have fundamentally distinct sets of connotations lodged in their very different historical origins. Whilst

both dances have an American origin, jitterbugging was considered the more deviant of the two. Indeed during the early 1950s concerted efforts were made by groups concerned with the moral welfare of youth to popularise square dancing in Australia as an acceptable alternative to the jitterbug. In Australia, with its white heritage, square dancing was a much more institutionalised and acceptable form of dance than the emotional, black-originated jitterbug.

Square dancing was based on the early English country dances. These dances, formalised at the French and English courts, came to require *sets* of couples. Each dance contained a number of basic figures. The advantage of breaking a dance down into a number of units is that these units can be recombined in different ways depending on the preferences of the dancers. These dances, such as the quadrilles, precursed the closed couple dances of which the first, and most famous, was the waltz. In America the formalised country dances formed the basis of square dancing. During the 1940s America saw a resurgence of interest in this type of dancing (Rust 1969, p. 102). Indeed in 1946 3000 people assembled in New York's Central Park to square dance. This resurgence can itself be seen as a conservative attempt in America to counteract what was considered to be the pernicious influence on the moral health of the nation's young people of the frenetic and emotional jitterbug. I will touch on the background to this in the next chapter when I discuss the pre-war spread of swing jazz and jazz dancing in America.' (Stratton 1992, p. 92)

'In Australia the American source of square dancing was mitigated by its earlier, European origins. The attempt to popularise square dancing could, in a sense, kill two birds with one stone. On one hand it acknowledged post-war youth's interest in America. On the other hand it could be viewed as a start in giving Australian young people a knowledge of their assumed British heritage as well as providing some continuity with the established and accepted old time dances. Certainly square dancing was perceived as a safer dance than the unambiguously American, and black, originated jitterbug. In Australia a New South Welshman called Eddie Carol even published a book of square dancing figures in 1953. He summed up square dancing like this:

> Square dancing is valuable aid in physical conditioning and personal development, but the real reason for its growing popularity is to be seen on the radiantly happy faces of the dancers — whether they be young or old, eight or eighty, from city or country. Square dancing is just clean, wholesome fun (Carol 1953, p. 21).

The idea that square dancing aids physical conditioning and personal development seems to be an updating of the 19th century English middle-class concern for a healthy mind in a healthy body.

It is hard to give an estimate for the extent of the popularity of square dancing in the early 1950s in Australia but some indication might be gleaned from the fact that the edition of Carol's book which I used had already been reprinted three times in 1953. From the quotation we can see that square dancing was promoted as being a similar form of recreation to organised sport, healthy and fun. One assumes that this characterisation of square dancing implicitly counterpointed the attitude to jitterbugging which with its loud jazz band music and fast rhythms was viewed as, at least, a threat to morality and, possibly, a threat to social order.

The origin of the jitterbug lies in a dance step in the black American dance tradition known as the Lindy. Stearns and Stearns (1958, ch. 39) trace the Lindy back to a dancer known as George 'Shorty' Snowden who improvised the steps during a dance marathon in Harlem's Manhatten Casino in 1928. Snowden claims the steps were not new and it may well be that what was new was the large audience and the publicity surrounding the marathon. The air steps seem to have been added to the Lindy by Al Minns and others around 1936. In the black tradition there were a large number of dance steps and new steps were continually being introduced whilst old steps were combined in different ways. It was an essentially fluid dance form unlike the white ballroom tradition which emphasised the forms of a few, limited dances. As with all middle-class entertainment the dances which made up the ballroom dance canon were rationalised and formalised, quite unlike the black and working-class tradition of emotional involvement in dance and entertainment generally.

The transference of the Lindy/jitterbug to the white ballroom situation ossified it as a dance in its own right. Nevertheless it was a more emotional and improvisational dance than the established ballroom dances. In Australia when the jitterbug' (Stratton 1992, p. 93)

'gained some currency during, and after, the war there was a tendency to conventionalise the dance by removing the air steps. This had the double advantage of making the dance seem a little more like the acceptable ballroom dances and compromising with prevailing middle-class morality by eliminating the view of expanses of female thigh while the more acrobatic air steps were performed. It was this dance, without the airsteps, that came to be known as the Jive.

In general in Australia the end of the war and the decreasing presence of American service personnel signalled the beginning of an attempt to return Australia to a variety of pre-war, and non-American, pastimes. Jitterbugging embodied a number of features considered undesirable. It was a part of an American culture which, as we have seen, was considered inferior to its British counterpart. With the decline in the likelihood of a Japanese attack and with the subsequent decline in the American presence Australian adults felt more prepared, and more able, to criticise American popular cultural customs and reassert pre-war cultural practices. The jitterbug seemed to emphasise, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the immorality implicit in the increasing use of the dance hall as a place where young people of both sexes could meet and form liaisons. Also, in a country preoccupied with race, the jitterbug, and the swing jazz to which it was danced, was well known to be of black origin. It is, indeed, significant that these early bodgies and widgies not only accepted swing and the jitterbug but made welcome in their clubs, such as the Gaiety, any visiting black serviceman.

Typical of the persistent association of jazz, and later rock'n'roll, with the black American tradition and, through this, with the *depravity* of blacks in general, is this extract from a piece by **Malcolm Muggeridge** in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* 2 April 1958. The piece was entitled *An Evening with the Bodgies of Melbourne.*

> We went on to a dance hall packed tight with rocking and rolling bodgies and widgies. A picture of Presley dominated the proceedings ….

> The insistent Negro rhythm got going, and as the dancing worked up to its frenzied climax famous characters were pointed out — this one helped organise the pyjama party the other night, this one was just out after a stretch for robbery with violence, and so on. They were the big shots.

Muggeridge goes on to describe the young kids as ' … lubricated by soft drink and animated by American-transmitted jungle beat.' Here in one article, Muggeridge has drawn together the pejorative connotative possibilities of racist perceptions of Negroid blacks and of American popular culture. In doing so he implies that the sources of Australian working-class culture have been polluted.

In chapter 2 we saw how one Victorian strategy for containing and condemning London working-class youth practices was to label them as foreign. The kids were called, for example, street-arabs. Here, with a little more historical justification, Muggeridge is using the same strategy. Without suggesting other reasons why one kid should have just done a ' … stretch for robbery with violence' or acknowledging' (Stratton 1992, p. 94)

'the possibility of different class moralities, Muggeridge associates *foreign* cultural practices with a general behaviour of *local* kids. It was in the context of this kind of view that, for example, many dance halls such as the Sydney Trocadero attempted to ban jitterbugging and jiving in the post-war period and to return dance hall patterns to the more acceptable closed couple dances such as the waltz and the fox-trot. America was given the blame for the behaviour of working-class kids who had accepted American popular cultural styles when often the perceived behaviour was being taken out of its traditional context.

The first part of McFarlane's *PIX* article describes how:

> The teenager in Australia today is finding it harder to grow up than any of the generations which preceded him. His wholesale acceptance of American ways of dressing, American ways of dancing, American foods and American clichés of speech and thought are making him misunderstood in his own country.

Here we can see an expression of the period of adolescence from which people *grow up.* Overlaying this period are the new American *youth* ways. The fear is that this cultural structure will alienate the individual from his/her society. Indeed, the working-class kids so classified would be distanced twice over. Firstly they would not be *adults* and, secondly, they would not be Australian.

The irrationality of the idea that a new cultural category based on the already existing category of adolescence between childhood and adulthood could make it impossible for a person to become an adult is displaced through the concern with the foreignness of the cultural practices. Professor Elkin, who at that time was head of the Anthropology Department at Sydney University, is quoted in the article as saying:

> Later on, … , they will settle down. They will realise they must be plain Australians and Englishmen, although for the time they are hypnotised by ways that look exotic.

Growing up, then, requires not only a passing of teenage culture but also a rejection of the image of America so that the individual could live in the reality of an Anglo-Australian culture. We can see here some recognition of how the American construction of consumerism was articulated through the production of a distinctively teenage culture. However Elkin was unable to distinguish the general economic shift from the specifically American props. As a consequence his argument appears distinctly xenophobic. He was not alone in this. Throughout the 1950s both Australian and English commentators would see the deployment of consumerism in terms of the encroachment of what were seen as American mass cultural traditions.

In general the article provides a relatively balanced piece of reporting, a situation which, as we have seen, would not last through 1950. The other interesting aspect of the piece is that it uses neither of the terms bodgie and widgie. On 22 June 1950 the *Brisbane Telegraph* ran a picture feature spread on jive dancing in Brisbane' (Stratton 1992, p. 95)

'which showed a number of local bodgies and widgies. Again, the piece was informational. As yet the critical rhetoric had not been fully established. The widespread use of these labels was coterminous with the production of a folk devil which bore little resemblance to the cultural manifestation to which they purported to refer.

In this context, having discussed the origin of the term bodgie we should look at the more shrouded, but perhaps less complex, origin of the term widgie. It is more shrouded because there is no traditional word from which the appellation might be derived. **Partridge** in his *A Dictionary of Unconventional English* gives its origin as a diminutive corruption of the term wigeon which he claims to have into use around 1946 as a term of endearment for a little girl or female teenager. What lends this etymology some credibility in spite of the rarity of the use of wigeon, is the way in which it represents the importance of women in the constitution of the youth group as secondary. By this I am not referring to their lived position within the group as subordinate, though in many ways it was and this is understandable in terms of the standard pattern of working-class sex relations from which the group developed. Rather I am referring to the part women played in the construction of the image. However, the most likely explanation of the origin of the term which I have come across, likely because it relates to the newspapers'· need for descriptive (and reifying) terms, is the following:

> The unwanted reporters picked up on (the term bodgie), and then, intentionally or not, misinterpreted the word "weakie". (A weakie was a poseuse). Somehow the reporter lit on this word and twisted it into widgie (letter 3.4.84).

The origin of the term remains obscure. One other suggestion of its source, made in a letter (undated) to me is that it derives from the slang phrase *ridgee-dige.* One reason for the obscurity of the origin of the term lies in the historical absence of women from street culture and it is to this area that I now want to turn.

Women in street culture and the widgie

In the history of working-class youth styles from the mid-19th century on it was always the males who formed the image. Both hooligans and larrikins were male. The more general constraints of

patriarchal society were materialised in the fundamentally higher visibility of working-class males. Whilst the women may have worked they were expected by their menfolk to spend their leisure time in domestic chores. The middle-class Press also expected them to live domestic lives. **Cunningham** has this to say about prevailing 19th century attitudes to working-class women and leisure:

Leisure for women, it was assumed, posed little problem, for the solution to it lay in the home, and in the home, in the nature of the case, there could be no class-mixing. Although there was some unease that on the Saturday half-holiday the men might be free to enjoy themselves while the women scrubbed and cleaned, the answer was not that men should help, but that wives should not work. The proper task of women was that of home-' (Stratton 1992, p. 96)

'making, one of particular importance among the working-class(Cunningham 1980, p. 129).

Men, however, were literally visible because, when not working outside the home, they were indulging in leisure activities which took place outside of the home like playing games. These originally took place in the streets. Their commercialisation and institutionalisation was coupled with the increasing illegalisation of street activities. Subsequently the men went to watch the newly developing spectator sports of football (mostly in England and Melbourne) or cricket (mostly in Australia) or else went to the pub. For working-class males the period between childhood and marriage was historically a time of visible disruption.

There is a theoretical problem which needs to be noted here. **McRobbie and Garber** in an article entitled *Girls and Subcultures* (in Hall &Jefferson 1976) point to the question of whether girls have really been absent from youth cultures or whether their presence has simply not been acknowledged. For an example of female presence they point to the small group of English Teddy Girls. They go on to suggest that, in later youth cultures girls occupy an increasingly large space though they have, nevertheless, remained invisible. This is correct. For example, as they point out, female teeny-boppers consumed much of their leisure in the bedroom, putting up their posters there and listening to records there. What is being offered here is a general framework to account for this invisibility. The lack of a historical position for women in street culture has not stopped them becoming an important youth cultural consumer group even if much of their consumption has taken place in their territory within the home.

This is not to say that, in street culture, women did not associate with males — of course they did. After all the males were not a group apart, they were just working class guys looking for a good time. In the main, however, women were constructed into a domesticating role. They were perceived by males as *threats* to their *independence.* Willmott (1966) reporting the results of his study of working-class male youths in East London between 1959 and 1964, includes this statement from a boy aged 16 about going out with girls:

> Three-quarters of us don't go out with girls; we'd sooner go out with boys and have a giggle. It's more excitement. A girl will do for one night, but you get over it. Some boys nowadays they take a bird home and they think 'I like her, I'll go with her again and again,' but I don't think that's no life' (quoted in Willmott 1966, pp. 41-42).

The established context for a young unmarried working-class female has traditionally been as an extension of domestic, family life. To the young working class male the female has embodied the paradox of desire for sexual satisfaction and the fear of losing his membership of the street culture. Few women in any generation have attempted to place themselves outside of this positioning. Those that have, have in a sense, been forced to take the part of men. Indeed, historically the press has reported such behaviour as a variation on male street culture. Pearson, writing about the end of the 19th century cites headlines referring to *Girl*' (Stratton 1992, p. 97)

'*Hooligans* in a case where three females aged 15 and 16 were brought to court charged with hustling a woman and then stealing 9/2 1I2d (Pearson 1983, p.90). There were, he tells us, other cases in which the females concerned were known as either Girl Hooligans or Female Hooligans. He goes on to report two cases involving young women which are good examples of the practice of holding the street.

In such a social order the female was doubly damned. First she was required to stay in the home — paid work, no matter how normal a fact of life for the bulk of working-class women at the turn of the century was, nevertheless, viewed as an aberration — and second, the visible life of the street was a male domain. In the male world, then, the historical institutionalisation of work around factories, set jobs, regular hours and the like was matched by an institutionalisation of leisure in the form of organised entertainments such as the music hall, the dance hall and the new formalised spectator sports, all of which cost money and took the male out of streets into new more structured and organised domains. In the female world of the home, work and leisure were viewed as inextricably mixed.

Women who moved into the streets moved into a culture in which there was no recognised place for them. Where women did appear in the street their role was that of the passive observer. Later, as entertainment became institutionalised so, again, women's role was to watch — not to play in bands. In this role they were constituted as a group to be protected and as a source of (domestic) refuge. Unmarried working-class girls trod a fine line between being accepted and hunted by predatory males in the street culture and being protected as sisters or girlfriends and in these roles they were perceived as a link with the matriarchal home. The more active a role the girls played in street culture, the more desirable they were to the males who lived that culture but the more they jeopardised their position as representatives of domesticity and therefore, also, the more they jeopardised their claim to protection. Both these points are clearly brought out in this description of bikie attitudes towards girls in the late 1950s.

> (Bikie molls) used to swear, which in those days women didn't do.

> But also they wore real clothes, what was considered cool in those days — tight fitting (today they'd be tee-shirts, in those days they were sweaters), very tight fitting sloppy-Joe type things, that really showed their figure off and were bloody sexy. Peddle-pushers were in. They were jeans that came down to about here, used for riding bikes…

> Whereas all the other girls seemed to be prim and proper and it really did not do your image a lot to be seen with a prim and proper type girlfriend, your image was a lot better if you had one

of these wilder type women and the really way out ones had a tattoo which in those days-like a lot of women are tattooed today, particularly in bikie circles, but in those days very few women were and if your girl had a tattoo you were in (interview with Jim S.).' (Stratton 1992, p. 98)

'This outline of a bikie's preferred girl in the late 1950s shows how the girl's wildness coincides with her adoption of a variety of practices which were regarded as male preserves such as swearing and wearing tattoos. One other common feature bikies of the time looked for in a prospective girlfriend was a burn scar on the leg from a motor bike's exhaust which showed that the girl knew how to ride a bike. All these features positioned the girl in street culture.

In addition the interview extract above shows how the new *teenage* clothing, because it was still unacceptable to the dominant culture, made the girl seem more *wild.* This clothing had the further advantage of making the girl look sexy, thus also placing her further from the domestic domain and further into street culture. Girls who accepted and developed this image led a stable life, so long as they had a boyfriend. However, if the couple broke up, the girl became subject to much harassment from males trying to gain her favours:

> If a guy was going with a particular girl it was definitely hands off. You would be ostracized by the whole group if you started chatting her up. Nobody ever said that, at least nobody ever said that to me, but that was there and you knew it. At the same time as soon as they broke up, because she was then what was called a bikie's moll, because she was already known as one, every other bikie would be looking to get her because bikies' molls weren't all that popular ('popular' here means common). There was always more blokes than women (interview with Jim S.).

In this kind of culture women lost the possibility of invoking the protection of the domestic image. However they had some power because of their limited number in the culture. One writer illustrates the common nature of this situation when, in a letter to me, he described the situation in Melbourne gangs of the late 1950s:

> The ratio of bodgies to widgies, to the best of my memory, was about five to one; consequently the females had a lot of power and a male standing back and letting the girl be humiliated would bode ill for his future hopes of sex and affection (letter 21.11.83).

Even in the passive role allocated to women in street culture they had some power depending on the extent to which they were considered desirable.

In Australia the associates of a larrikin were often called a 'larrikiness' but, more generally, as **Murray** writes:

> Gigglers these girls often liked to be called but their real role was to be 'donahs' or 'clinahs' whom the larrikins both protected and maltreated. They were feminine lovers of rough play, though some objected when the treatment became too extreme (Murray 1973, p. 34).

The women's position in this context was as an observer, an audience for male activities and sometimes as an instigator of those activities. Occasionally disputes between the women would

erupt into fights, taking on the tradition of physical violence associated with male street culture. Even here, however, the seriousness of the fight might be undermined by the perception of the fight as a spectacle for' (Stratton 1992, p. 99)

'the male audience. Indeed the inversion of roles might be well described as a version of misrule within the street culture .

> … in the city, though, they went in boots and all, knives, the whole flaming lot. Widgies, they hopped into one another. There was nothing worse than seeing a couple of widgies into it, they really went at it hammer and tongs. They really did; tooth and nail job it was. Scratching and tearing at one another's faces with their nails. You've never seen anything like it in your life. I suppose the noise level was pretty high as well with all the bodgies and other widgies hanging around cheering their respective opponents on. It was really shocking (Graham W.).

This interviewee is describing street behaviour in Melbourne in the late 1950s. Fights between widgies were a spectacle in which the combatants fought as viciously as male combatants but in which the level of actual violence was less overt because less obvious weapons — fingernails, for example, as opposed to knives — were used. Whilst fights between males and between females were both spectacles for those not involved, those between females had greater entertainment value because they had less significance in the male-dominated order of street culture.

Any active role pursued by women under these conditions constituted the playing out of male activities. Holding the streets, which I have noted Pearson discussing, ~ is a good example but there are others which demonstrate better how deep the problem for women went. One very good example involved transvestism. Murray records a case in which:

> Some of the girls … had taken to impersonation, and two of 'seventeen years' had appeared in 'the habiliments of a developed larrikin of the present time, even to the indented billycock hat and high-heeled boots.' These two had paraded on many occasions between Pitt and George Streets, and without police hindrance (Murray 1973, p. 120).

It is true that Murray had previously recounted two examples of males cross-dressing but both these instances occurred in constructed environments. One took place in a theatre whilst the other happened at a dance. Male to female cross-dressing has a long history in the context of misrule. Places of entertainment such as theatres and dance halls, because of their association with the misrule constituted by leisure become acceptable places for such behaviour. However for a larrikin — or, for that matter a bodgie or a mod or a mid-60s sharpie — to walk down the street in women's clothes would have been another matter entirely.

Many women, though, seem to have perceived a possibility for taking on an active role in street culture by becoming as *male* as possible. One of the most obvious ways of doing this was to wear the clothing of male street kids. If Murray's description of women dressing as larrikins does not convince, we can move on to Cosgrove's description of female zoot-suiters:' (Stratton 1992, p. 100)

Female bikies and male friend in Brisbane in the mid-1950s.

The press related the incident (of a razor attack) to the arrest of Amelia Venegas, a woman zoot-suiter who was charged with carrying, and threatening to use, a brass knuckleduster. The revelation that girls were active in pachuco subculture led to consistent press coverage of two female gangs: the Slick Chicks and the Black Widows. The latter gang took its name from the members' distinctive dress, black zoot-suit jackets, short black skirts and black fish-net stockings (Cosgrove 1984, p. 84).

Here we can see the male tradition of physical violence which viewed attack as the best means to defend space. In England such behaviour became known as *aggro* (aggravation). Here it is being appropriated by women who also adopted the basic male clothing style. What the women added was the traditional *sexy* clothes of the prostitute. Prostitution, in fact, was possibly the only activity which fully legitimated a woman as a real and active part of street culture. It was also the activity which removed her absolutely from any relation to the home and to any protection that such a claim might have afforded.

In the post-war period the rise of consumer-based youth culture has seen the spread of teenage female fashions. We have already seen how, in some places, this overlapped with street cultural styles in the case of late 1950s Australian bikies. In that case as teenage female fashion became accepted by the dominant culture so female bikies went back to wearing versions of the prevailing male style though often substituting a short black skirt and black tights for jeans. In secondary youth cultures such as mods and sharpies and skinheads (Knight, 1982) the female style,' (Stratton 1992, p. 101)

'although in the case of mods a marketed style, always echoed the male fashions. Without wishing to push the argument too far the development of uni-sex fashions in England in the late 1960s could be understood as an attempt to market a consumption-based mass street culture for both sexes within the tradition of the male basis for street cultural styles. That, recently, youth cultures have played with the male display of *feminine* indicators such as make-up suggests that the establishment of the youth culture as a separate category, particularly since punk, has made it a site of real-life entertainment, a place where misrule is legitimated. In the late-19th century and on through the post-war period this was not the case however. Males could not wear female clothes on the streets. Most significantly there was no distinctive female style as there was a male style. Murray describes the dress of the larrikins in this way:

> Huge hats announced her from afar, and those feathers were as vital to her appearance as boots were to her larrikin counterpart. She was a lover of gaudy colours … Her flouncing dresses, underpinned with 'wild petticoats and stockings as wild, were viewed to best advantage when she was dancing with one of her friends (Murray 1973, p. 34-35).

The effect could well be described as obvious but only in its brightness did it differ from the standard wear of the youthful working-class woman of the period. To become *active* in the culture of the street required the impossible, becoming male. The next best thing was to appropriate the male dress style. This is what Murray's larrikinesses did and, in the 1960s on a more general scale, it is what English skinhead girls and Australian 'sharpie chicks' did. Earlier, particularly in England, the female mod style was often commented on as being masculine in effect.

In the mid-1950s in Brisbane there were a group of female bikies who, in their gear, looked virtually indistinguishable from the male bikies with whom they used to ride. They were not, and did not want to be the female associates of bikies. In other words they wanted to be active members of the culture rather than play some version of the passive female role. Their solution was to become *male* in all outward form. They wore bikie clothing, rode and mended their own bikes, and drank with the male bikies in the pub that they regularly used — the Wickham Hotel in Fortitude Valley — at a time when, in Queensland, women were not allowed into public bars. In the period just after the war I have already quoted from one woman who used to wear jeans, at that time a male article of clothing.

What complicated the position of the young woman in relation to street culture in the post-war period in Australia was the advent of distinctively teenage female clothing styles. These, of course, were American in origin and began feeding into Australia after the end of the Second World War. It was these styles which were worn by the women who used to frequent *Burt's* and the *Gaiety.* And it was these women who came to be known by the term widgies. The complication was that because there had not been a distinctively female youth style in Australia before it was unclear to the observing middle-class media whether the style being worn' (Stratton 1992, p. 102)

In town last night . . . . despite the heat

The war to-day . . . and (?) to-morrow

Undated clipping from Brisbane's Courier Mail *c. 1950 (used with kind permission of Queensland Newspapers).*

' ' (Stratton 1992, p. 103)

'then was a general fashion being picked up on by all young women or a specific style being generated by a female group counterpointing the male, bodgie, style. With hindsight we can say that it was the former although, before the style became general, we could say that it was both. Within this fashion there also evolved a fairly specific style which could be described as designating a widgie.

I want now to turn to an examination of the early widgie clothing style. It involved shoes with flat heels, for dancing in, a gabardine skirt which came to the upper calf and was pegged at the bottom and a short-sleeved or sleeveless plain white *peasant* top. Often the skirts would have a split up the back which made jiving easier and also getting on public transport. As one woman remarked:

> I mean with pegged skirts the only time that you could see the body was when we had to try and get on buses and trams. And they used to have trams in Sydney then. Getting on trams was a joke, and getting on buses was a joke, because you had to hoist your skirt up to about an inch down past the place you weren't supposed to show, and of course all the guys used to love that. I mean people didn't like widgies much, but they certainly loved watching them get on buses (interview with Irene).

The gabardine of the skirt was nearly always black and one can suggest an association with the gabardine skirt of the American service women. A wide leather belt also tended to be worn. In addition, certainly in Brisbane, one sign of being dressed up was the addition of a long chain which looped down the side of the skirt and ended back in the pocket. This chain was also worn at times with the bodgie's drape suit. Nobody is too sure what was supposed to be on the end of it, some people had keys, some a penknife. In fact its history goes back to the American zooters where it was a watch chain, and further back from there, to the Edwardian pocket watch. Here, again, then we find a female usage of male style element.

Stockings were rarely worn. Partly this had to do with their lack of availability. Silk stockings were impossible to come by and only the Americans had access to nylon stockings. Instead women used to use leg paint and widgies would sometimes even paint designs on their legs. But mostly the legs would be left bare though some women would wear the short white socks of the American bobby-soxers. In 1955, when Frank Sinatra came to tour Australia, there were still bobby-soxers here — long after their demise in America. All these details are open to debate. There was no one absolute widgie style. The clothes varied from group to group and city to city. What was the height of widgie fashion for one group would be anathema to a widgie from somewhere else. This is another example of the local evolution of working-class popular cultural patterns.

From round about 1952 teenage female fashions from America began to appear in Australia. To begin with, as we have seen, such clothing styles were associated with, and worn by, women who were involved to a significant degree with street culture. However by the late 1950s these styles were accepted as teenage fashion. They include flared skirts with rope petticoats, tight sweaters and thrust bras. All' (Stratton 1992, p. 104)

This photograph and text are from PIX 29 November 1958. The article was on rock 'n' roll dances.

(Stratton 1992, p. 105)

'these clothing elements had been present in post-war musicals. The origin of the thrust, or uplift, bra is usually traced to the bra designed for Jane Russell to wear in *The Outlaw,* a western made by Howard Hughes in 1943 but held from distribution for some years because of censorship problems. In spite of this, as Carter (1977, p. 70) points out, publicity stills from the film showing Russell in the new bra made her world famous. The flared skirts and petticoats are commonly to be found in many dance films from the post-war period. Here we have a good example of the interlocking of popular culture and mass media cultural products, an interlocking became more significant as the post-war period progressed.

The gradual acceptance of youth culture in Australia in the mid-1950s seems to have involved the acceptance of this clothing style as a mass teenage fashion which, in folk memory, is associated with rock'n'roll because the mid-1950s was the period when the fashion, like rock'n'roll, spread rapidly. One woman, 12 years old in 1956, remembers how:

> I got into 50s gear, which was interesting because my grandmother used to allow me to buy the right sort of clothes — mum was always a bit against it. Things like pedal-pushers; you had Presley purple shirts, you had Sinatra red, you had Mitchell blue as in Guy Mitchell and so I remember I had a Mitchell blue pair of pedal-pushers and a Presley purple shirt — incredible colour combination — and I had my hair done and I had a duck tail. I had very long hair and I had that cut short and brushed back in a ducktail.

> …Then you had your extremely full skirt with about five starched petticoats underneath, bat-wing cardigans and jumpers … (interview with Peggy).

Pedal-pushers were a current widgie style from the late 1940s. Here one can see how teenage girls' clothing fashions of the late 1940s and 1950s overlapped and merged.

Styles originally designed for dancing in, and for pin-ups could cause problems in day to day life. Another interviewee remembers how:

> …they invariably made (rope petticoats) too long and you had to stick elastic around your waist and turn the rotten sods over, and half-way through the tunnel at Central [in Sydney] they would drag down and you could feel that you had something like eight inches of rope petticoat hanging out the bottom of your dress and there wasn't a damn thing you could do about it in the tunnel. You would try hitching your waist but they were so heavy — and they were sods to starch and iron … (interview with Margaret).

However this woman's most embarrassing moment involved her thrust bra which, a he said:

> …you ironed … to a point. Starched and ironed to a point. And when you weren't over-endowed in the top section actually there'd be more bra' (Stratton 1992, p. 106)

> 'than anything else. One of my girlfriends gave me a poke one day [on the train] and the rotten thing stayed in. It was terribly embarrassing (interview with Margaret).

The haircut was a feature common to both eras of widgies. It was already present in the late 1940s when it has which has been described to me as:

Short sides — ducktail and a curly top (letter 13.6.84).

This description is from the woman who claims to have originated the style. She writes:

I had my hair permed one day and hated it so much I went to a barber who always cut the Sydney musos hair and had him cut mine. ...It was the original and first widgie hair style in Sydney and, as far as I know, Australia (letter 13.6.84).

Whether or not this really was the origin of the style the bobbed look had been current in America since Irene Castle popularised it in the *teens and twenties.* Certainly the story illustrates yet again the importance of male styles to women who wished to be involved in street culture, and the increasing provision of facilities to provide these styles.

Milk bars and sex drugs

I want to turn now to two very different themes which recur in the newspaper· reports on bodgies and widgies. The first of these is the association of bodgies and widgies with milk bars. I want to examine the lived context in which this theme had its source. The second theme I want to look at is the one concerned with bodgie and widgie use of *sex drugs.* The idea of sex drugs became current in the newspaper reports around 1955 and, as we shall see, the reporting seems to have been at marked variance with the amount of actual usage of drugs of any description by youth of the period. However the strength of the theme as a part of the moral panic lay in its ability to unite two practices which deviated from accepted middle-class standards — pre-marital sex and non-prescribed drugs.

The meeting places of bodgies and widgies was often given as milk bars. It was in the first newspaper extract in this chapter dating from 1950. In 1958 (12 April) *PIX* ran an article on bodgies entitled:

Lack of parental control is blamed for the menace of the MILK BAR BODGIE.

which inadvertently correctly identified both the working-class youth tradition of street culture and the shift away from the street to more commercial and institutionalised sites for street cultural activity:

The names may be different, but Melbourne youth is much the same as three or four decades ago before the words teenager and bodgie had ever been heard of. And in proportion there are no more delinquents now than there were then.' (Stratton 1992, p. 107)

'Instead of forming larrikin pushes, armed with razors and knuckle dusters, youths play chicken or make noisy mayhem at a rock'n'roll dance. They congregate in brightly lit milk bars instead of dark alleys.

A Brisbane milk bar c. 1959.

The association between bodgies and widgies and milk bars remained constant and, I want to suggest, was grounded in the reality of the development of an off-street site for what, historically, was street cultural activity.

According to **Peter Luck** (1980, p. 222) the first milk bar in Australia was opened in Martin Place, Sydney in 1933. The milk bar in its modern form, as a place of predominantly working-class resort supplying non-alcoholic beverages, dates from this decade. From a *respectable* point of view they evolved slightly unsavoury connotations. The cause here would seem to be the middle-class' problematic attitude to working-class leisure. In the cities in particular milk bars had the possibility of developing into informal meeting places where groups of friends could rendezvous for informal gatherings because of the nature of the milk bar's trade. Some milk bars developed along these lines, introducing juke boxes and pin-ball machines as supplementary sources of entertainment. Other milk bar proprietors saw their role as more limited to the supply of non-alcoholic refreshments.

In the post-war period the milk bar was an ideal institution for providing meeting places for working-class youth with their new access to leisure and money. Hence a further segmentation occurred in which some milk bars became the place of' (Stratton 1992, p. 108)

'regular resort for certain groups of local young people, each group tending to gravitate towards one particular milk bar. In some cases, and this seems to have been particularly true of country areas, milk bars merged into cheap restaurants. In this situation some tended to pick up a more middle-class patronage. As one interviewee, talking of mid-1950s, remarked:

In Casino there were quite clear distinctions. There was a bodgies' milk bar and there was a middle-class milk bar. They were both run by Greeks but one was sort of coffee and that sort of thing, which was the middle-class one and the other was-strictly a Coca Cola or milk shake, and fish and chip place.

And (there was) a big cafe, a high class one called *The Rose Marie Cafe* which was run by another Greek family called the Zandosses (interview with Jim).

The *Rose Marie* would seem to have been the Casino equivalent of the long established middle-class tradition of the tea rooms. By the mid-1950s milk bars had divided into two main types, first those that served a passing trade of all ages but of mostly working-class background. By the 1960s in the major cities there had developed out of these the fast food variation of the sandwich bar.

The second type of milk bar, was composed of those milk bars which, by intention ,or, often, against the wishes of proprietors who wanted to keep them *respectable,* became the hangouts of groups of working-class kids. One woman, from a Brisbane suburb, described the attitude to milk bars in the late 1940s like this: There were milk bars in Sandgate and, yes, we went to them. In every suburb there were milk bars, probably Greek milk bars, where you hung around.

Yes, there was a special one in Sandgate, near the station, over the road were the cab offices. Sunday night was the night respectable people stayed at home. I would be home. I would be at my mother's or having a nice tea that she had cooked or something like that. Naughty girls and the bags would be down the milk bar with the fellas. Sunday night was the night respectable people stayed at home, that was the attitude. Here we can see how the possibility of passing leisure time away from the home, in a place where a group of young people could meet informally and without supervision, was construed as a potential threat to conventional morality. The interviewee, brought up in a strict Catholic household, emphasises Sunday night. For a family such as hers, the visible hedonism of time spent in a milk bar on the evening of the Sabbath would carry a range of connotations from the implication of breakdown in family discipline to the suggestion of the low moral standards of those individuals involved.

However, as I have indicated, not all milk bars welcomed such established custom:' (Stratton 1992, p. 109)

'(Some milk bars) you'd be chased out of … if they didn't want you there. Some were really hangouts where the proprietor was like the customer, he knew it meant money to have you there. It meant good custom, and there were certain places, they were the only ones that would have you (interview with Marie).

Standing outside a milk bar in the late 1950s.

For working-class kids the milk bar became an extension of the street, providing an institutionalised version of the street. The milk bar was not only a place of informal meeting but also as a site for, literal, consumption as well as a place where the new cash nexus based entertainments of pin-ball and juke-box could be found. In view of this it is not surprising that in the quotation before last this interviewee should emphasise the presence of women in the milk bar. As in the more obvious street' culture the position of women in the street culture of the milk bar was problematic.

In the period between about 1945 and 1960 not only did the clientele of milk bars shift slightly but the structural position of milk bars in the range of venues offering refreshment also altered. Here there were two important developments. One very important but later occurrence was the demise of the local hamburger cafe-cum-milk bar, and the corresponding spread of American style hamburger chains. The other was the spread of the new coffee bars. Around 1960 the entertainment entrepreneur Lee Gordon had attempted to start a chain of hamburger restaurants called Lee Gordon's Drive-in Restaurants, based on a model culled from his native America. Only one, at Taverners Hill in Sydney, was ever opened (Rogers 1975,' (Stratton 1992, p. 110)

'p. 118). McDonald's, who had opened their first American restaurant in 1955, opened the first in Australia in 1971 at Yagoona in Sydney's western suburbs. It would seem that the failure of Lee Gordon's venture had more to do with poor business management than lack of trade. Nevertheless it seems to have provided a reprieve for the small, privately owned individual hamburger cafes which subsequently lost out to the economics and American image of highly commercialised, standardised 'mass-produced' fast food.

One interviewee described the milk bar and the hamburger cafe of the early 1950 this way:

> The typical milk bar of the day would not have made hamburgers. They would have sold sweets, lollies, perhaps bread, maybe cigarettes, but they wouldn't have sold hamburgers. These hamburger bar/hamburger cafe places made hamburgers and, typically, in addition to the counter they would have had a few tables and chairs and some of them would serve full meals … (interview with Graham).

Often it was to the late-opening hamburger cafe rather than to the milk bar that working-class kids went after a visit to the dance hall. The hamburger cafe was never a real challenge to the milk bar as a location for socialising probably precisely because it served food which provided more of a focus for the patron's presence than did a soft drink but in the period before the spread of franchised fast food outlets it provided a local service for kids who, for whatever reason, were not in a position to get food at home.

In Brisbane, for example, the *Windmill* on Petrie Terrace was as well known in the 1940s as it is in the 1980s as one of the very few all night opening purveyors of fast food. Many bodgies and widgies, spending a night listening and jiving to swing records patronised the place as did the punks of the late 1970s. In the majority of cases, however, the local hamburger cafe has been replaced by larger, more streamlined operations serving a bigger locality.

The spread of the coffee lounge is a little more complicated. In England where there was no tradition of the milk bar, the coffee bar, as it was known, spread rapidly through the 1950s replacing transport cafes as social gathering sites for Teddy Boys and other working-class kids. In Australia, where milk bars already provided a site for working-class youth meetings, the spread of coffee lounges was corresponding slower and they always seem to have aimed at the upper end of the $_v$ milk bar clientele. One complicating factor in the spread of coffee lounges can be /' traced to the influx of European refugees during the late 1930s and 1940s. Many of these people came from societies where some form of street culture, one aspect of which was the cafe, was an accepted part of the middle-class way of life. Emery Bares, for example, in his biography of this period of his life in Australia, called *Backyard of Mars* notes how he and other refugees found the lack of European style cafes particularly frustrating because they would have provided obvious meeting places for the dispersed refugees in a strange country. **Bares**, writing of the 1930s, has this to say:' (Stratton 1992, p. 111)

> 'Another Hungarian who used to live in Italy and had bought a couple of expresso machines there with the intention of opening a coffee lounge in Sydney could find no one to finance the venture because (a) Australians drank only tea and (b)if they like coffee they wanted it as a long drink with salt and lemon and not in the concentrated form of black poison (Bares 1980, p. 67).

Though this is one origin of coffee lounges in Australia the real popularity and the spread of coffee lounges through the late 1950s seems to have been, in the main, caused by the demand of young people who, in Australia tended to be known, not so much as beatniks but as jazzers.

In the late 1950s the coffee lounges began to attract a more middle-class group of young people who became known as jazzers. This group consisted of young people who remained interested in non-commercial jazz when other young working-class kids shifted their interest to rock'n'roll. Jazzer

interests ranged through the bebop of Dizzy Gillespie to the revival of New Orleans jazz, always they saw themselves as specialists in the music. Some even revived dances such as the Charleston or the cakewalk.

The milk bar developed as the social meeting place for the new working-class youth. This development was one aspect of the movement of street culture off the street and into commercially-operated and institutionally structured sites run for specific purposes which required for this reason a certain degree of appropriation. Sometime in 1949 *Burt's* milk bar in Kings Cross changed hands and the new, Greek (McDonald 1951, section IX, p. 11) owners, attempted to oust the bodgies and widgies with the intention, one surmises, of hopefully attracting a more *respectable* clientele. One, final, general point about milk bars which it is worth making here in the context of a broader social history is the large number of milk bars which were started, or taken over, by migrants from Greek or Lebanese backgrounds during the 1940s.

I want now to turn to the issue of *sex drugs.* As I have noted the idea of sex drugs became a minor theme in the newspaper accounts of bodgies and widgies from about 1955. The theme gave a material linkage to two components in the moral panic, pre-marital sex and the use of non-prescribed drugs. Historically middleclass culture has privileged its sexual morality (the basis of the family) and reason as the basis for action. The idea of sex drugs combines these two concerns in an image of irrational sexual immorality. Sex and drugs became long standing components in the moral panic surrounding bodgies and widgies in the mid-1950s and, more generally, themes in the disruption and misrule associated with youth in its new cultural form of the teenager. One recognition of the importance of these themes in the context of youth culture was to be found in the late 1970s when Ian Dury wrote and recorded a now celebrated popular song with the title *Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll.*

In the last half of the 1950s the themes of sex and drugs were linked in *sex drugs.* For example, in the article from the *Sun Herald* (17.5.56) headed *Widgies in Wild'* (Stratton 1992, p. 112)

'*Brawl* from which I have already quoted at the beginning of this chapter there is, later in the article, a story of the discovery of some teenagers in a house in South Melbourne who were:

> … acting in a manner suggesting they had taken sex drugs.

What these *sex drugs* were is not stated. The theme of *sex drugs,* however, continued throughout the late 1950s. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any specific drug was meant. The linking of the two deviations of non-marital, non-monogamous sex and the taking of drugs seems to have been quite enough to distract readers from more concrete concerns. **In** fact, drugs of any description played a relatively minor role in working-class youth activity until the increase in use of types of stimulant in the early years of the 1960s. Although there was a common idea that the combination' of Coca Cola and asprin was an aphrodisiac. Nevertheless, in retrospect, the theme of sex drugs prepared the way for the linking of the increase in marijuana usage and the rise of the myth of the permissive society during the later part of the 1960s.

Apart from nicotine and alcohol the only drug which seems to have had any real currency among working-class young people of the late 1940s and 1950s was benzedrine which was available from

chemists. The use of this drug, like the later use of purple hearts by English mods, seems to have been a way of extending the leisure time available to young people over weekends. Uppers enabled Friday night and Saturday night to become times of active leisure consumption rather than of sleep. Benzedrine was no part of the consumption goods of either bodgie and widgie period. Its use probably owes more to the increase in long-distance trucking and the corresponding need to stay awake over long periods of time.

In Australia the vogue for amphetamines seems to have been imported along with other aspects of English mod culture in the mid-1960s. In Brisbane a report in the *Courier Mail* for 8 May 1966 is headed *Concern over Sales of Pep Pills Here.* The account claims that Purple Hearts, known as *Purplies,* first appeared in Brisbane from Sydney in December 1965. McCoy notes that:

> Amphetamines, readily available on prescription, enjoyed a far wider popularity in the late 1960s and abuse became so widespread that the NSW government changed the drug's classification on the Poisons Schedule, effectively banning it from general use (McCoy1980, p. 266).

The consequence was the creation of an instant black market in a drug the use of which was already firmly established. In mod culture amphetamine use was an accepted cultural practice. **There was, for example, a rock band called *The Purple Hearts* which played in Brisbane during 1966 who were obviously drawing on the *in* cultural knowledge of the drug. One of its members was Lobby Lloyd who was then known as Barry Lyde. Lloyd, who subsequently played with Billy Thorpe's *Aztecs* and with *The Wild Cherries,* is now a well respected record producer**.

McCoy (1980, p. 258) writes that in November 1964 Bernard Delney, then a narcotics agent, first came into contact with marijuana in the EI Sombrero, a hang' (Stratton 1992, p. 113)

'out for St Kilda prostitutes. He discovered that the owner Anne Grant was dealing both amphetamines and marijuana. One can surmise that she started dealing both these substances about the same time, the one coming in along with other English mod customs, the other, as McCoy suggests, indirectly a result of the growing European and American use and directly by American service personnel.

McCoy points out that Grant's arrests in possession of a marijuana cigarette was the first of its kind in Victoria for over 20 years. However in some certain lowerclass groups in Australia there is a long tradition of drug use. After the British introduction ofopium to the Chinese in the 18th century, and its forced legalisation after the 19th century Opium Wars, the Chinese brought it with them to Australia. In England opium, often as a component of patent medicines, was also not uncommon among the working-class. In Australia it seems to have become established among the Chinese migrants and their associates.

By the 1920s and 1930s the rise of the Australian razor gangs as a part oforganised crime owed much to the cocaine trade. Prostitutes seem to have been a major consumer of this drug during this period. In America McCoy (1980, p. 71) notes that in the decade prior to the First World War the government passed strict cocaine laws to curb its use among ghetto blacks. The razor gangs themselves, so called because of their use of razors as offensive weapons, have a connection with

the English semi-criminal and professional criminal razor gangs. Indeed the use of the razor as a weapon can also be found in America during the 1930s. However by the war the use of cocaine seems to have decreased though, after the war, it still seems to have had a small presence among some working-class youth:

> There was no such thing as drugs. We heard and we saw occasionally drugs, it was mainly cocaine … There was one chap in the surf club and I noticed he was getting a bit strange, glassy eyed and that, numbness, oh he was on cocaine. Then he would go away to some home for a while. And the police, because of its rarity, didn't treat it as a highly publicised dope campaign or anything like that, getting to a hospital or anything else was so rare (interview with Rex).

This interviewee claims there was more drug use among 'theatrical people and lawyers' however it would seem likely that this working-class usage was a part of a long tradition which was only criminalised in later part of the 19th century. The context for the construction of drugs as a possible material element in moral panics lies in the 19th century medicalisation of healing practices and the deployment of legislation relating to this. Thus, for our purposes, the key Act in England was the 1868 Pharmacy Act. This Act provided for examinations and a system of registration for those wishing to be pharmacists. In addition it restricted the ability to sell certain preparations to those who had been registered. One substance included in the Act was 'opium and all preparations of opium poppies' (Berridge & Edwards 1981, p. 117). One effect of this, and similar, legislation was to clarify the distinction between the *proper* use of certain substances in a medical context and their *improper* use in a recreational context. In relation to what I noted' (Stratton 1992, p. 114)

'earlier about the significance of reason in middle-class cultural practices it is significant that 19th century debates about the non-medical use of opium described it as either luxurious or a stimulant (Berridge & Edwards 1981, p. 49). The idea of a stimulant, here, seems to refer to the substances' capacity to alter thought, in this sense stimulating a change rather than in the modern sense of increasing thought and activity. This idea also relates to the middle-class concern with rational recreation. Hence the 19th century usage opposes the reason of *natural* thought and stimulated thought.

Middle-class use of opium, by such as De Quincey and Coleridge, was increasingly rationalised as being for medical purposes. Among the working-class people continued to buy opium at the corner shop either straight or as a part of patent medicines, for a range of ailments. The idea of self-medication to feel personal improvement lies at the basis of the problem. *Feeling better* spills over from ailment relief to relaxation and many working-class people associated opium with alcohol. Berridge and Edwards note that opium:

> … appears to have been a widespread popular means of controlling and counteracting excessive drinking' (Berridge & Edwards 1981, p. 33).

The passing of Acts like the 1868 Pharmacy Act, by gradually extending the distinction between usage and criminal usage, which mapped onto an ideological distinction between medical and recreational usage, gradually extended middleclass distinctions and control over an undifferentiated

working-class practice. In Australia a similar act to the English Pharmacy Act of 1868 was passed in 1876, called the Pharmacy and Poisons Act.

In this brief outline we can see a tradition of drug use among the lower classes. In Australia, during the Second World War, marijuana arrived along with American blacks. Bisset (1979, p. 85) writes that marijuana did not become illegal here until the passing of the 1952 Poisons Act. Its presence in Australia was minimal throughout this period. Bisset notes, for example, that during the war in the club for American blacks, the Booker T. Washington Club Merv Acheson, the Australian tenor saxophonist, was much admired for his Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry influenced playing:

> … the Negroes … handed up reefers as tips. M.P.s patrolling the club did not take any action because marijuana was not illegal then and no one knew much about it (Bisset 1979, p. 85).

Certainly not many Australians knew much about it. The drug seems to have gained a small following in bohemian Kings Cross and among seamen. In England marijuana seems to have had a similar following in the working-class dockland areas. However its use seems to have spread very little outside these groups. One woman from Sydney in the late 1940s remembers its use like this:

The only drugs I ever saw was marijuana and I tried and didn't like it. There was a fair bit around.' (Stratton 1992, p. 115)

> 'We never heard of the compressed stuff. Kids used to have this stuff that looked like grass, brown or whatever it was. And they used to just roll it in brown paper and smoke it. That's what they used to do in my day. They used to use brown paper, it held the stuff, they held it and they'd twist the end.
>
> In my day the guys used to get it off the ships, off the American ships. Mostly from Negroes … they used to get it mostly off the black guys. There were a few white guys they could get it from but mostly the black guys. They used to smoke it all the time (interview with Irene).

McCoy (1980, p. 71) notes that American marijuana legislation in the 1930s was, in the main, the result of attempts to impose control over Mexican migrants. We can, therefore, surmise a diffusion of marijuana use from the Mexicans to the blacks who, in turn, introduced it to some working-class Australians. However, during this period its use remained very limited. The diffusion of marijuana use up through the American class structure and through into both working-class and middle-class Australian youth would not occur until the late 1960s. Australian working-class youth, including bodgies and widgies, had very little contact with drugs outside of alcohol and nicotine until the spread of amphetamines in the mid- 1960s. The idea of *sex drugs,* therefore, seems to have owed its existence more to its effectivity within the 1950s moral panic than to any reality in the actual lives of working-class young people.' (Stratton 1992, p. 116)

CH5 Boys dressing up, going dancing and playing music

Boys dressing up, going dancing and playing music

'People who were designated as, and/or claimed to be bodgies and widgies from the period immediately following the Second World War usually sum up their preoccupations during that period as being clothes and dancing. In order to recognise here the underlying continuity in working-class youth traditions it is necessary to note the importance of clothes and dancing to such youth during the 19th century. We have already examined the specific and, from the point of view of the dominant culture, idiosyncratic clothing styles of hooligans and larrikins and, to a lesser extent, the women with whom they associated. I have, in the previous chapter, discussed the intersection between the spread of mass-produced, fashion clothing for young women in the post-war period and the adoption of a particular style by women who associated with those males called bodgies. I want to begin this chapter with a discussion of changes in the bodgie fashion style over the post-war period to give some indication of the complex processes at work in the integration of local working-class youth clothing styles with the spreading acceptance of mass fashion and the mass-fashion industry. If clothes have been important as an entertainment and, in this context, as an informal way of meeting people — especially the opposite sex.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with providing a historical social context for dancing in order to demonstrate that its significance for working-class youth was very different from its place in middle-class society. I want to suggest first that, with the shift of street culture off the streets and into commercial establishments with specific purposes dancing became increasingly important as a way of meeting members of the opposite sex. In relation to this and in the more general context of assumptions about emotion and involvement which underlie working-class culture I want to discuss the difference in nature of working-class and middle-class dancing. This will enable us to understand better the steady' (Stratton 1992, p. 117)

'penetration of working-class (and American black) dances — and the associated music which I will examine towards the end of the chapter — into the cultural practices of middle-class young people.

Bodgie clothes and hair

From about 1948 there developed what we could call the classical bodgie clothing style. This centred around the drape suit. In essence the drape suit was a toned down zoot-suit. In particular the bright colours of the American zoot-suit were replaced by colours such as powder blue or grey. At a time when the majority of Australian males who wore suits were wearing the double-breasted style the drape suit jacket was single-breasted. The most fashionable jackets would have narrow lapels and would plunge, at the front, to a single button. The length of the jacket, which gave the suit its name, could vary from reaching to one's fingers when they curled inwards with the arms at the side, to somewhere above the knee. One interviewee described a sports jacket he used to wear like this:

> We used to wear a lot of gabardine. Gabardine was the *in* cloth actually. The preference was for a charcoal grey colour. If you couldn't get that you got a very light fawn colour. This was just for ordinary wear although I do remember I had one sports coat, it was powder blue, just an

ordinary woollen sports coat, it had tremendously padded shoulders, they used to stick out about two or three inches beyond my shoulders, and it came down in a very narrow lapel, single button and the tail of the coat used to come right down almost to my knee. And I used to wear that with a pair of gabardine trousers (interview with Stuart).

Trousers were pegged at the waist, baggy at the knees and pegged again at the cuffs. Mostly they had turn-ups though sometimes they did not. The baggier the knees and the tighter the cuff, the most stylish was the wearer. In fact he was described, using the American expression, as sharp and, in the early 1950s, males who were predominantly interested in looking good in this fashion style became known as sharpies (not to be confused with the 1960s youth culture of the same name).

The emphasis on a clothing style as something in its own right rather than as visible sign of membership of particular community indicates the potential for upward mobility in the clothing style as a fashion and, to some extent, this took place. In Melbourne, for example where the inner city working-class suburbs are much more clearly grouped and defined the differentiation between sharpies and bodgies was more obvious:

I believe the bodgie/widgie would have been very much a blue collar, some of the youth of the blue collar group. Now the sharpies were more from white collar groups I think.

(Sharpies) were less exaggerated in their gear. I think that bodgies for example wore really tight pants, pegged trousers as they called them, and had really exaggerated haircuts with the D.A. at the back … I think' (Stratton 1992, p. 118)

'sharpies were less exaggerated … to me I think Tony Curtis was the epitome of the sharpie, young, different from the older generation but sort of smart rather than rough and tough (interview with Graham).

Here we can see how class difference was transposed into a difference in style. As the working-class image started to move up-market as a fashion so it also became compromised with established standards of fashion. From another point of view the expansion of mass-production techniques to clothing produced a much wider variety of choice than ever before, in the process breaking down many of the conventions about what clothing was suitable for specific occasions and developing new mass-fashion categories.

At another point in this interview the interviewee was discussing the question of transport. He came from the working-class suburb of Brunswick but he stayed on at school using education as a channel of upward social mobility.

Now all the others would have left school as soon as they were able … a great many of them had motor bikes and I used to occasionally jokingly say to my mother than I think I'll get a motor bike and she would say "no you're not." But I didn't really want a motor bike because that was not my scene — a sharpie wouldn't want a motor bike, a bodgie sure, a sharpie wouldn't want one, he'd rather go without (interview with Graham).

The historical association between motor bikes and working-class culture had already been made. The clothing style could be appropriated as a fashion and adapted but the use of motor bike would have too clearly indicated a background from which this male was trying to escape. In addition many young males just did not want to appear too extreme in their dress. As a consequence the difference between a bodgie and a sharpie was vague. The distinction was one of style and was, in the main, inter-referential although there was a certain class basis to the distinction.

In fact the appropriation of the motor bike as a young working-class male's means of transport seems to have occurred round about the period of the Second World War. One working-class Sydney man remembers the post-war motor bike situation like this:

> At the outset of the war the Army seized all the motorcycles for dispatch riders and that. I lived near an army depot and I can remember *1930/40* seeing all these trucks going there and there were hundreds of motor bikes. So what this did was effectively ruin the secondhand market. You had to wait for them to be bought new and then wait a few years for them to become secondhand. But the bike culture was very big in the Eastern suburbs (interview with Rex).

In Brisbane in the late 1940s a group of young males would ride their bikes up and down Queen Street, drinking, it would seem, in the Carlton. However a distinction between bikies and bodgies does not appear to have been made until the mid- 1950s when bike riding, leather jacket wearing bodgies first started to be called' (Stratton 1992, p. 119)

'*leatheries.* The *Sydney Sun,* for example, on 24 January 1956 carried a report headed *Lout war over girls.* This piece describes a fight between bodgies and leatheries. *PIX,* in a 12 April 1958 piece entitled *Milk Bar Bodgie,* referred to in the previous chapter, also has a paragraph about leatheries:

> During the year there were reports that 'leatheries' — boys in leather jackets and jeans — on motor bikes were molesting girls and playing chicken with motorists.

During this period many young working-class males would ride motor bikes wearing ex-RAF flying jackets, tee-shirts and jeans whilst at night changing into pegged trousers and drape jackets to go to dances. The bikie was yet to appear as a folk devil.

Brisbane bikies c. 1958.

Gradually, however, conditions produced the possibility for a segmentation to occur. As secondhand cars became cheaper only those who wanted to ride motor bikes did so. These bikies were mainly

Triumphs and BSA's (known as Beesers). Simultaneously *The Wild One* presented Australia with a ready-made image of the bike-riding rebel against society. One bikie from this period expressed the confusion over groups in the mid-1950s this way:

> Yeah, in a way *(The Wild One* was important) because, for a start the bodgies were a funny group in as much as they had no natural enemy like a lot of cults of today have got another cult that they're opposed to. And' (Stratton 1992, p. 120)

> 'the bodgies didn't appear to have that. The one enemy they sort of had was the bikie group but then a lot of bodgies were also bikies, as was I, so really they didn't have a natural enemy until the surfies came along. And we adopted them as our enemy. A lot of bikies were bodgies and a lot of bodgies were bikies ….

This interviewee's favourite bike from that period was a Triumph Thunderbird. Although difficult to prove the split between the more respectable, although still *deviant* bodgie and the leatherie or bikie was probably to a significant extent class-based with the lower working-class kids becoming more identifiable as bikies. In the process many of the values of male street culture such as aggression, physical bravery and male domination were recontextualised as fundamental components of the middle-class folk devil of the bikie.

One effect of *The Wild One* was to give the pre-existing bikies a certain consciousness of their own existence. To quote this same interviewee again:

> When the Marlon Brando film, *The Wild One,* came out his bike group was called the Black Rebels in the movie. Now, as a result Rebels grew up in almost every suburb. That was the influence of the movie. It became necessary to distinguish them by saying The Concord Rebels, or the so and so, until we eventually dropped the name Rebels because everybody had it … (interview with Jim S.).

The film did not cause the production of *bikie gangs,* rather loosely knit groups of young working-class males, often centred on territory — as we have seen they traditionally were — appropriated for themselves some of the image of the film. This interviewee, for example, described how he got to know a group after spending a night in a police cell having been caught at the end of a police chase when he was booked for riding without a licence, carrying a pillion rider without a licence, riding an unregistered vehicle, riding an uninsured vehicle, speeding and resisting arrest. In this instance he was riding a 250cc Excelsior:

> … I went into the local bike shop to buy a part for it. He said "What's it for?" and I said a 250 Excelsior and he said "Oh, you're not the bloke they grabbed up here the other night are you?" and I gained recognition. And all of a sudden everyone was talking to me and I didn't particularly go out of my way to be friendly to anybody. And then all a sudden I was in this group and I just stayed with them and they seemed like a pretty nice bunch of blokes that I related to and a few good women around so I stayed with (interview with Jim S.).

In this account, in addition to a good description of the loose nature of membership of the group we can see how the impact of legal pressures to conform to *their* standards reinforced the sense of

community of the group. At this time during the mid -1950s the rest of society began to associate together motor bikes, leather and jean clothed riders and a greater threat to order than that posed by the, by comparison, relatively conventional looking bodgies.' (Stratton 1992, p. 121)

'The bodgie's suit was tailor made. This is not surprising as almost all suits, for the reasons discussed earlier, were at this time tailor made. As with haircuts each city had certain tailors to whom the bodgies went. In Brisbane it was Hoffman's, in Sydney Bennett's. The suits could cost anywhere between about £45 and £60. In 1950 the basic wage for males was raised from £7/2/0 to £8/2/0 a week. The average pay for somebody wearing the bodgie style was about £10/10/0 a week.

One person I interviewed described his first job like this:

> I left school at 15 and I went into the Post Master General's Department as a telephone technician and there was a group of us, around 240 started off in first year as a massive group. Of course there was a lot of peer pressure amongst that group. You could imagine, as bodgies started to come in a lot of these kids became bodgies and we sort of got peer pressure. I started in the P.G. in 1951, I guess I was a bodgie by about 1953. I was earning a pretty good wage. I started on £3/2/6 a week as a first year apprentice and by the time I came out of my time at the end of five years I was earning £15/0/0 a week (interview with Stuart).

Here we can see how the style spread horizontally through groups of youths working in the same area partly, as the interviewee remarks, through peer group pressure. In this situation, as was to occur more and more with the impact of the new consumerism, the sense of community existed in the wearing of the same fashion rather than in, for example, living in the same locality. Other bodgies held similar jobs at the time. One, in Brisbane, was earning 14/6d as an apprentice motor mechanic in 1946. He remembers buying a suit for £30 which he paid off in stages. Another, in Sydney, was an apprentice jeweller.

Hire-purchase, rather than lay-by, in which access to the commodity being bought is immediate, expanded rapidly in post-war Australia and provided a major means of by which working-class youth, in their new jobs, could own expensive goods without saving. In 1944-45 the available figures suggested that £5.8 million was outstanding in credit agreements. By 1950-51, this figure had climbed to about £104.3 million (Arndt & Shrapnel 1953). It is impossible to know for certain but young working-class people buying clothes, motor bikes and other consumer goods would most likely figure prominently in these figures. One person, who had ridden motor bikes in the second half of the 1950s remarked:

> Yes, they (our bikes) were all bought on tick. Often through an informal hire purchase agreement. There were two bike shops in town … which handled a wide range of bikes from push bikes through to motor bikes and they sort of make, I mean they used to make informal types of arrangements with people. They're not inexpensive, motor bikes, and the people [the bike shop owners] knew who were employed and their parents were well known in the town and that sort of thing (interview with Jim).

In this way government restrictions on hire purchase could be evaded.' (Stratton 1992, p. 122)

'Along with the suit it was usual to wear imported American brand name Country Club shirts in a plain colour — stripes were considered loud. Mustard was a preferred colour. Later, as the clothing industry started to recognise the potential in the new teenage fashion market colours were attached to the names of popular singing stars. There was, for example, Guy Mitchell blue, Sinatra red, Dean Martin yellow and, a little later, Presley purple. The shirts cost around 63/-. The tie would usually be a Scottish silk knitted one and the socks would be usually either blue or fawn and made of cotton. The shoes, particularly around 1950, were bought with an eye to dancing. Shoes with crepe soles which started coming onto the market in the early years of the decade were popular with males who went dancing a lot because of the grip they provided. Often golf shoes were worn for a similar reason.

The majority of the early hair styles were imitated from film stars. In addition to Cornel Wilde there were influences from Kirk Douglas and from Tony Curtis who was very popular in the 1951 film *The Prince who was a Thief.* In addition, particularly around Sydney the late 1940s saw a vogue for the crew-cut, a development clearly instigated by the American troops. During the early 1950s the American tennis professional Jack Kramer, who had a big following in Australia, instigated a vogue for a semi-crew-cut style which increased in length at the back of the head. In addition it was accepted to have your hair cut every week. It cost 2/-. The origins of these styles illustrate well the complex relationship between working-class cultural traditions and the new mass cultural products. Films, for example, did not originate styles but provided wide coverage to particular inflections of styles.

In Melbourne we have already seen the rise of Peter Jackson as a specialist barber. In Brisbane the period saw the increasing importance of Col Naylor whilst, in Sydney, the most well known of a small group of barbers prepared to give bodgie hair styles was Angelo de Marco who had a shop near Kings Cross in William Street. These barbers continued catering for a changing clientele with changing hair style requests through into the 1960s and always the clientele would be labelled as bodgies. In the mid-1950s there are stories of Saturday morning queues outside Col Naylor's shop in Brisbane.

The rejection of the bodgie, and widgie, was also a rejection of the consumption orientation with which they were associated. Sam Perri, who now runs the Stallion's Stables chain of male hairdressing salons in Sydney described the relationship between barber and client in the 1950s like this:

> You always used to get a short back and sides. And of course how it always happens is that a couple of guys would go in and see a barber and he would have a little bit of feeling of what you wanted and he would start getting into the groove of things too because he was educated by these kids. They might not have had photos but what they wanted they would describe — 'look I want you to leave my hair long at the sides and long at the back,' because they want to comb it into a dovetail which was very fashionable … I think the kids educated the barbers on fashion, it wasn't the barbers that were the fashion leaders … (interview with Sam Perri).' (Stratton 1992, p. 123)

'Perri here is describing well the resistance of the hairdressing industry to the recognition that what previously had to be understood as an idiosyncratic working class style had altered into an inflexion of mass fashion.

In England, in 1963 the *Hairdresser's Journal* wrote that:

> Modernists, or mods for short, account for 35% of Britain's male teenage population. Their fashions are the furthest-out, the most up-to-the-second of any, and the male mod probably devotes between a quarter and a third of his weekly income to his appearance. As such, they represent a valuable clientele to the men's hairdresser who is prepared to give them the sleek, carefully groomed styles they are looking for (quoted in Wheen 1982, p. 29.)

In this passage we can see the attempt by the English house journal of the industry to persuade its members to acknowledge the new mass-fashion hair styles. That, in England in the 1960s they did, began the demise of the barber with his limited abilities and the rise of the uni-sex hairdressing salon. In this instance males moved into female territory. The larrikin's cow-lick had become by the late 1950s a variety of stylish, fashionable hair cuts made popular and familiar through films and, later, television and available in the teen-oriented — and American imported — magazines. The cow-lick itself, however, did not die out, it was popularised by Bill Haley in the less extreme form of the kiss-curl on the forehead.

Similarly whilst many young males set out to look like Elvis Presley, many already looked like him because he was, himself, in the-albeit American -working-class youth tradition. Ian Whitcomb in his informal history of popular music called *After the Ball* gives this thumbnail sketch of Presley around 1956:

He was now billed as the 'Hillbilly Cat' and quite a sight to see: no cowboy rig-out but rainbow dazzle sports clothes, a satin stripe down his trousers, a drape jacket with collar turned up. Longish hair in a duck tail, with truck driver sideburns (Whitcomb 1974, p. 230).

There are differences, obviously, but Presley's image was remarkably similar to that already in place as that of the bodgie in Australia. As the interviewee put it:

> and of course the great Elvis Presley came on the scene. Now there was a fellow that we could really relate to because he wore the same clothes — or we wore the same type of clothes that he did (Graham W.) .

The confusion here is understandable. Conventional wisdom, which corresponds, in this case to classical right-wing (leavisite) and left-wing (Frankfurt School) media theory, suggests that it was the stars such as Presley who produced and spread the image. To some extent this is true, and it had certainly been true of the impact of film in the 1940s. However by the mid-1950s Presley was drawing on traditions and practices which were already established in Australia, and England for that matter.' (Stratton 1992, p. 124)

'Presley was recognisable to young working-class males as a working-class kid who wanted to look good. There was no need to try and manufacture identification, the bodgies who enjoyed Presley's

rock'n'roll understood from his clothes and hair that they had the same background. Murdock and McCron drawing on an unpublished doctoral thesis, note that:

> Presley's brand of rock-n-roll was an almost exclusively working-class taste (Murdock & McCron in Mungham & Pearson 1976, p. 16).

At this point working-class culture and culture disseminated by the mass media overlapped. Where they did not overlap was in the recurring attempt to impose middle-class values on traditional working-class behaviour.

The kids who formed the basis of the spread of bodgies and widgies in the late 194Qs and early 1950s were of the generation who had observed the effects of war on the Australian social fabric but had not been directly involved in it. Many of their attitudes were handed down from older brothers and sisters who had gone around with Americans. In the late 1940s many young Australian males, early bodgies, in Sydney and Brisbane had seriously pretended to be Americans in order to increase their chances with Australian girls who found the combination of American clothing style, money and manners in relation to women, very attractive. I can do no better here than quote at length from a letter I received:

A number of Australians hit on the idea of masquerading as 'Yanks' so as to take advantage of the female 'benefits', and if possible, rip them off for a few quid as well. These men, who were known as 'Schedualists' believed that as the women were mainly motivated by monetary gain, then they were fair game to be picked by those whom they thought were good financial catches. I knew two of these characters, one of whom changed his name from Keith Cooper to Glen Antonio Salvadore Zamorra from Pala Alto; CA. By 1950, I believe there were only four or five of these men still operating. They were professionals. They picked a home town in the States, obtained maps, phone books, studied the accent for the region. They had their mail delivered to the U.S. Information Library or the Consulate. They were faultless in this deception (letter 3.4.84).

In this extract we can also see how a street activity, a hustle designed to gain an advantage, could fade imperceptibly into a professional strategy for living. Similarly some Kings Cross bodgies who had stayed with friendly prostitutes gradually became professional pimps living off immoral earnings. There is no line drawn between the two situations except that imposed by the law and its associated middle-class standards. Not many went to these lengths. McDonald considered that the phenomenon of putting on phoney accents had died out by 1948 after the Americans left and most males of the group went no further than putting on a phoney accent. In Brisbane, with its smaller population, *crockin Stateside* as it was known was uncommon. After all, as one person remarked to me, you would look pretty bloody stupid pretending to be American among people you had grown up with.' (Stratton 1992, p. 125)

'The later bodgies and widgies of the period around 1950 had no such close connection with the Americans or the war-time culture. Nevertheless many had had some contact either as shoe-shine boys or as the recipients of small gifts such as chewing gum, evidence of what McDonald calls:

> ... the American serviceman's ... well-deserved reputation for a sentimental interest in children. In addition, in calling at their girlfriends homes they exercised their wise custom of ingratiating

themselves with the girls' younger brothers. From these children came many later recruits to the bodgies (McDonald 1951, section VI, p.7).

Such material determinants aside apart from clothing the other major innovation brought by the American service personnel was in music. It was, in fact, not only the popularising of jazz — in the 1930s form of *swing* — but also the spreading of jitterbugging and its relatively more sedate form of jiving in Australia. I want, now, to turn to the question of social context of dancing in Australia. In the previous chapter we have already looked briefly at the history of the jitterbug.

Dancing

The 1920s in America is often known as the Jazz Age. The period through the 1930s is equally often classified as a time of dance mania. In fact the context for the apparent preoccupation with dancing was the rise in respectability of dance halls. The public dance had, in America as well as England and Australia, been looked upon as a working-class activity of exceptionally dubious morality through the latter part of the 19th century. This was, not least, due to the efforts of the Church. In 1850 in England, for example, the *Bible Christian Magazine* included a catalogue of sins. Among them were 'the ballroom, the card-table, the village wake, the race-course, the bowling-green, the cricket-ground, the gin-palace, [and] the ale-house' (Cunningham 1980, p. 179). During this same period in England the public house increasingly provided the focus for working-class entertainment not least, one suspects because so-called preventative policing was driving working-class males off the streets. As a consequence most dance halls were attached to pubs. From a middle-class perspective the existence of dance halls reflected the failure of Christian and secular reform movements among the working class to alter working-class recreation patterns towards more *rational* activities. Public dance halls around the turn of the century in all three countries were relatively rare and considered not places to be frequented by respectable people, including respectable members of the working class. Roberts, for example, in his autobiography of First World War life in a Salford, England slum describes the dance hall as 'low' (1973, p. 16) and later notes that 'dancing rooms' as he calls them were often taboo to young people (1973, p. 52).

Most middle-class dancing occurred in organised settings, at balls. This, in fact, represented the end-point of the tradition of middle-class social dancing begun during the 18th century. The middle-class tradition, was never fully institutionalised or commercialised. In the 18th century Assembly Rooms at Bath Beau ash ensured that high standards were kept. The formal quality of these dances can be gauged from this outline:' (Stratton 1992, p. 126)

'The rules of Beau Nash were that the balls were to begin at six. Each ball was to open with a minuet danced by two persons of the highest distinction present. After the minuets, which generally lasted two hours, the country dances began, with the ladies of the highest rank standing up first. At nine, came a short interval for rest and tea. Country-dances were then resumed until the clock struck eleven when, even in the middle of a dance, the ball ended (Rust 1969, p. 62).

Middle-class dancing, like the aristocratic dances from which it was derived, retained a formal and stylised quality which was a product of its position as a part of social ritual.

The pleasure of the middle-class dance lay in the correct performance of a step. The pleasure of the peasant and working-class dances — and in the black American dances which became so important in white society from the 1930s on -lay in the expression of emotions. In chapter 3 I quoted from Stearns and Stearns (1964) history of jazz dance the reminiscence of a white middle-class boy who found he preferred going to jazz dances rather than ballroom dances. There I quoted his memory of the clothes the 'pretty rough gang of white kids' used to wear. Here I want to quote his perceptions about dancing and class. The 'childish,' one assumes ballroom and old time, dances of Smith's high school need to be contrasted with the dancing of his new partners:

> On these excursions Smith found girls who could dance. They were the first white girls who could move in the authentic, flowing style: "I suppose you'd call those mill-town girls lower class. They were poorer and less educated that my high-school friends, but they could really dance. In fact at that time it seemed that the lower class a girl was, the better dancer she was, too …" (Stearns & Stearns 1964, p. 330).

I will be discussing dancing in the next chapter, however, it is worth including this quotation here to illustrate the point that the clothing style was one aspect of a popular cultural formation. The ability to dance to a rhythm was contrasted by the middle-class preoccupation with dancing as a formal ritual. In the post-war period there has been a general tendency among youth, moving into middle-class youth in the 1960s, to emphasise the working-class assumptions about dance over those ' of the middle class. In specific terms this has spent the spread of the jitterbug, jive, and later, the mod dances followed by the solo dancing often referred to as *idiot dancing*. Subsequently the pogo of the punks was another example. The pleasure of dance as an emotionally involving experience did not coincide with the 19th century English middle-class preoccupation with rational recreation. The emphasis on expression in these working-class dances suggested to the middle-class guardians of morality (in particular parents) the possibility of other moral laxities. The spread of jazz dancing was criticised in just these terms. In Australia, for example:

> A shocked father wrote to the *Argus* (19 September, 1925) asserting that 'a dance is but an excuse for kissing and cuddling, and even worse' (Bisset 1979, p. 38).' (Stratton 1992, p. 127)

'The complexity in the discussion of the spread of the dance hall lies in the assumption that middle-class and working-class attitudes to dance were the same. They never were. The spread of dance halls in working-class neighbourhoods reflects a shift in the importance of dancing among this class rather than an undermining of moral values. The spread of jazz dancing among the middle class in America during the 1920s and 1930s, however, reflects a fundamental shift in the usage of dance which brought it into closer alignment with working-class usage.

The Lynds in their ethnography of Middletown, in America, in the 1920s remark that one of the major leisure changes between this period and the 1890s was the evolution of public dancing. They remark:

> Dancing is today a universal skill among the young; their social life, particularly among the high school group, is increasingly built about it. The dance apparently held no such prominent place in the leisure activities of 1890. Dancing there was, to be sure: great balls by the policemen,

cab-drivers, clerks, nail-makers, green glass workers, and other occupation groups — usually for charity (Lynd & Lynd 1956, p. 28).

These dances were one-off, institutionally arranged functions. Further up the social scale there would be small dances held for invited guests in private homes. Here we can see clearly how the penetration of middle-class institutionalisation and morality produced a hegemony over dancing, a long established misrule/ leisure activity.

The public dance to which anybody could go was much frowned upon as a place of sexual intrigue. In Australia larrikins in the late-19th century seem to have been very fond of dancing. Murray gives an extract from *The Bulletin* describing a public dance of the period:

Tis a large room, but poorly lighted, wherein, mixed up in inextricable confusion, is an immense crowd of men, boys and girls, and women, all hot, all moving, and all oily-looking. There a bloated old man is whirling a sweet 'sixteener' about, grasping her as tight as though she were a runaway horse. She smiles upon him, while her head hangs upon his shoulder (Murray 1973, p. 36).

It was to these public dances that larrikins, and other working-class males and females, would go. The Annual Police Report for 1884 opined that:

> Amongst other schools of vice the dancing saloon is probably one of the most pernicious (Murray 1973, p. 37).

In Middletown by the 1920s there were, the Lynds tell us, still some working-class home dances but most working-class youth went to the public dance halls attracted by' … the better music of public dance halls.'

However the shift to public dance halls was not only occasioned by better music. As working-class youth was forced off the streets they had to find other places to' (Stratton 1992, p. 128)

'meet and interact with the opposite sex. Humphries compares 19th century middle-class and working-class attitudes like this:

> Whereas most middle-class youth might meet partners only through formal introductions, normally planned by parents when their children were in their late teens, horseplay and humorous exchanges provided working class youngsters with a ritual introduction to anyone they fancied 'getting off' with (Humphries 1985, p. 137).

Here, Humphries is not only acknowledging the street as a meeting place but also demonstrating how aspects of larking about became politicised, in this case . through middle-class attempts to impose their own sexual morality. It might be added that the street as a meeting place has a long history which in some Mediterranean Roman Catholic countries, such as Italy and Malta, has been formalised and preserved in many places. In America, England and Australia the attempts by the authorities to clear the streets increased the importance of the dance hall as a meeting place. Simultaneously the new emphasis on the dance hall as a place for the sexes to meet forced certain changes in dancing practices. As dancing became an increasingly sexually charged activity so the

practice of males dancing together, which both Roberts (1973, p. 189) on England and Murray (1973) on Australia mention, declined.

Meanwhile, in the 1920s, middle-class American youth going to the rapidly expanding colleges were also beginning to use the context of dancing as a means of social and sexual interaction, dancing at a huge number of dances put on by different campus groups. **Paula Fass** in her detailed examination of American College youth in the 1920s, *The Damned and The Beautiful,* gives this example of the spread of social dancing among middle-class youth:

> The University of Wisconsin was reported to have hosted 30 college dances and 80 fraternity and sorority dances each month in 1925. At Michigan, women attended an average of eleven social affairs per month and men an average of nine. More than one half of all Minnesota students reported attending dances and parties on a regular basis, … (Fass 1977, p. 199).

The increase in middle-class youth living away from home and requiring new means of meeting and creating new social relationships produced a new emphasis on dancing as a social rather than primarily a formal activity among the middle class. There was, as a consequence, an increased acceptance of dancing in spite of the continued strictures against it. Simultaneously the split between popular songs and dance music ended. Popular music became music to be danced to also, thus decreasing its already dubious legitimacy among middle-class reformers.

The 1930s' shift among the American middle class from ballroom dancing to jazz dancing reproduced the shift in the usage of dancing. No longer was dancing for the middle class a highly formalised and ritualised exhibition. Instead throughout the early p31'1of this century there was a movement towards an acceptance of dancing as a central aspect of courtship among groups for whom previously it had' (Stratton 1992, p. 129)

'been a peripheral activity. In essence the spread of ballroom dancing in the decade before the First World War itself represented a compromise in middleclass attitudes. On the one hand ballroom dancing in the new, specially constructed dance halls acknowledged and accepted the new importance of dancing as an opportunity for meeting the opposite sex. On the other hand, by accepting the popularity of dancing it became possible for the authorities to extend their surveillance into the dance hall. For nowhere was this so true than Australia. In Australia the building of new dance halls, away from hotels, enabled State governments to legislate against the availability of alcohol in dance halls. In this way the authorities sought to break the long association of these two aspects of lower-class entertainment and introduce middle-class moral concerns into the working-class dance. It needs to be added that, at the same time that the working classes were paying to dance waltzes, foxtrots, quicksteps and the like in the new dance halls the middle class were performing the same dances in more ritual circumstances such as weddings.

From the 1930s on, for roughly 30 years until after middle-class youth in Australia started going to social, commercial dances and liquor laws started to be loosened in the 1960s, a war over alcohol in dances was fought. Individuals, mostly males, would drink before going, would hide bottles of alcohol outside where they could easily be reached for a refill, would hide bottles inside capacious

overcoats and use many other stratagems to defeat the attempts of the authorities to separate dancing and alcohol. One interviewee remembered that, In the early 1950s:

> That was one of the reasons we didn't go to a lot of the other dances, because they wouldn't let you in if there was any smell of beer or anything on you. (The Surreyville dancehall) weren't so particular about the smell of it, they just wouldn't let you take it in to the other places (interview with Stuart).

The Surreyville dance was categorised as a less respectable dance. The refusal to allow alcohol into dances can be understood as a rear-guard action by a middle class concerned, in the most general sense, with rational recreation. Alcohol, like opium, was a stimulant in the old 19th century use of the term discussed in chapter 4.

In the early years of the century the tension between the two purposes and understandings of dancing was represented and mediated in the attempts to *tame* the American black-originated dances as they appeared in white circles. For example the Castles turned the cakewalk into the one-step. Simultaneously there was a spread of dancing studios to teach the newly formalised and structured routines. However, beginning in the 1920s and taking off among middle-class college youth in the 1930s, there was an increasing move to what tended to be known as jazz dancing because it was performed to the spreading jazz music. In 1925 Henry Ford:

> … opened a drive against the new music by sponsoring a series of traditional folk dances which he hoped would counteract the evils of "jazz" dancing (Leonard 1962, p. 44).' (Stratton 1992, p. 130)

'In the same year Arthur Murray, who started the first major chain of dancing studios after Vernon and Irene Castle's innovations, formalised the Charleston, the most popular jazz dance of the period and taught it as a step by step routine.

By 1929 some 60 communities in America had legislated to ban *jazz* in public dance halls. However by the end of the 1920s the strange, to white ears, improvised jazz was becoming increasingly conventionalised and more recognisable to white ears used to the melodies of Tin Pan Alley. Bands increased in size until by around 1935 it was found that groups of about 13, with 5 brass, 4 reed and 4 rhythm instruments could provide both enough volume of noise and an appropriate balance of sound for the new arranged swing jazz. The earliest swing bands were made up of black musicians: Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington both formed large bands. However by the late 1930s there were an increasing number of white jazz bands led by Paul Whiteman, Benny Goodman and others (on this see Leonard 1962, ch. 6). In this new organisation a limited amount of musical improvisation was possible within the formal, written arrangements. In Australia many musicians such as Frank Coughlan and Ben Featherstone went to England or the source, America, in the late 1920s and 1930s to gain experience in playing the new popular dance music. (On jazz in Australia see Bisset 1979.) Bisset claims that Jim Davidson, augmenting his 5-piece band to 10, played Sydney's first *rhythm* concert on 14 August 1932 (Bisset 1978, p.53). As jazz became an acceptable form of music so jazz dancing, by now the jitterbug which had been but one of a series of dance steps (including the cake-walk) to spread into white culture from black Harlem, became tolerated. It was, in fact, demarcated

as a part of the new youth culture as an over demonstrative dance which the kids would grow out of.

Little of these dance developments had reached Australia by 1939 and, where they did, they were considerably diluted. Bisset notes that:

> The Footlight Star (June 1919) reassured readers that it was unnecessary to wear a dress cut above the knee as a properly cut ankle-length dress could accommodate a jazz dancer and that the jazz as taught in Australia was considerably more refined than in America (Bisset 1979, p. 33).

The jazz dancing being discussed here was, in fact, the ballroom dances popularised by the Castles and already severely adapted from their black origin. McDonald notes that, in the early 1930s an Australian called Bill Mawson produced a set of dance steps for the jitterbug which he had learnt from black sailors. He set up a jive school in Sydney in the 1930s but, according to McDonald, he attracted few people interested in learning the step. The general conservative tenor of Australia's attitude to jazz dancing and the perils associated with its irrationality is well encapsulated in this extract from an article in *Freeman's Journal,* 5 March 1925, which was examining the problem of Catholic debutante going to such dances:

> No matter how strait-laced the dance committee may be, the cabaret atmosphere remains the same and enfolds the merry-makers. There is the sensual and barbaric music, the modern sexual dances, the alcoholic' (Stratton 1992, p. 131)

> *'refreshments, and a general acceptance of the standards and conversation that obtain among an irresponsible and jazzing generation. The young Catholic girl may attend one or more of these entertainments without suffering great moral harm; but she will hardly view life again with the same innocent eyes, and she may have some difficulty in reconciling the somewhat hectic scene about her with the ideals she held within the convent walls when she hoped to always model her conduct on the counsels of Our Blessed Lady (quoted in Robson 1980, p. 43-44).*

In general the social attitude towards the role of dancing in Australian life changed little until after the advent of rock'n'roll in the mid-1950s. Only then was there a major shift towards public dancing. It was not until the arrival of middle-class youth culture in the form of mod — and, to a lesser extent, surfing — in the early 1960s that public dancing in commercial venues became an accepted practice among the middle-class youth.

Connell *et al.,* in their study of Sydney youth conducted in 1951 give some figures for dancing but, unfortunately do not discriminate between ballroom dancing and jiving. Their figures suggest that, among young males the group who danced most in the week were youths with professional or commercial jobs (214 hours a week). Among girls the figure was highest for those in skilled employment (223 hours a week). We are told no more about the conduct of dancing. However what we do know is that public dances remained the domain of the working class throughout this period and up to the rise of the *mod* discotheque. During this time the battle was between those who

wished to return to the old pre-war ballroom dancing and those, represented by the bodgies and widgies who wanted to hear swing jazz and to jitterbug and jive.

It was the Americans who, in 1942, brought what was by then, for them, an established form of popular music and dance to a country still dividing its time between ballroom dances and the *old-tyme* progressive dances. In the pre-war period public dancing had become increasingly acceptable as evidenced by the building of the new, large public dance halls in the major cities. In Melbourne the St. Kilda Palais de Dance was opened in 1913, in Sydney the Trocadero was opened in 1936 and the Brisbane Trocadero in 1923. In Brisbane Cloudland, the other major public dance hall, was opened in August 1940 as part of Queensland's prospective equivalent to Sydney's Luna Park. Cottle notes that:

> … Sydney's working people invaded the Trocadero in its earliest years to foxtrot, samba, waltz, cha-cha, and rhumba (Cottle 1984, p. 38).

He is right in general, however the samba was not developed until the end of the Second World War and the cha-cha was evolved in the 1950s.

The country areas were not so advanced as to have the new jazz ballroom dances. Burke writes that when he used to play in bands around the country areas outside Brisbane in the early thirties they played tunes suitable for:' (Stratton 1992, p. 132)

> '… Mazinas, Lancers and Valetas for the English, Schottish and Allemands for the Germans, Polkas and Mazurkas for the Poles, Reels for the Scots, Kalamations for the Greeks, Pride of Erin Waltz for the Irish and Barn Dances and Waltzes for whom it might concern. Some even dared to do the Quickstep (Burke 1984, p. 20).

It is worth remembering that the dance described in the *Bulletin* piece on a public dance hall in the late-19th century was a schottish. The new acceptability of public dance halls went hand in hand with the new *mass* ballroom dances. Previously ethnic dances, such as the schottish had been taken up and adapted for more general use. The older dances retained their private, folk status or were recategorised as Old Time dances in the newly sanitised and institutionalised public dance halls. Burke, for example, writes that:

> Old time graceful art form of dancing which came with the immigrants lapsed in the thirties. The revival eventually came from the early forties onwards and spread throughout Australia. Old time teachers were mainly responsible with new names for old dances (Burke 1984, p. 20).

The acceptability of the public dance was a function of the formalisation introduced by the new dancing studios aimed at the working class. The bands in these dance halls played tunes set to formal arrangements appropriate for particular kinds of dance. The importance of arrangements can not be underestimated because they meant that a tune could be played, for example, as either a foxtrot or as a syncopated swing number for the jitterbuggers.

By the time of the Second World War there were, in Australia, a number of musicians who thought of themselves as jazz artists but who had to play ballroom dancing arrangements to earn a living.

The impact of the Americans changed this. They brought with them large numbers of swing records by a wide variety of artists and they brought jitterbugging as a standard dance form. Australian dance halls started to allow syncopated music to be played as a part of the effort to make the Americans feel at home. There was much advice as to how this could be done. One letter to a Melbourne newspaper in 1942 suggested that:

> … those seeking to provide relaxation for Americans should provide "gay parties with swing music and redheads, strawberry blondes and beer. …(quoted in Hammond-Moore 1981, p. 92).

Here again we can see how Americans became situated at the centre of a re-evaluation of leisure. The shift to jazz and jitterbugging not only occurred in the major cities, it took place wherever American troops were stationed. During 1942, for example, we can see the shift occurring abruptly in this list of advertised dances in Townsville:

March 16 — 1942 Townsville and District Waltz Contest.

March 25 — 50-50 Jazz and Old Time … this dance has been requested by many of the fighting forces on leave.' (Stratton 1992, p. 133)

'April 3 A complete evening of jazz.

(Hammond-Moore 1981, p. 107).

Actually it is not entirely true to say that the Americans brought over the jitterbug. In fact they seem, more generally, to have introduced the jive. A part of the problem here is with nomenclature. In reports of the war and post-war period the term jitterbug was gradually displaced by the use of jive — much as the term drape suit replaced zoot-suit. However the problem is complicated by the fact that in spite of attempts to formalise the jitterbug it remained a dance of basic steps with a high degree of improvisation.

The jive was a derivative of the jitterbug. As I have explained in the previous chapter it was essentially a toned-down version which did away with the female partner being swung on the hips or through the legs. When the basic jitterbug step was danced to rock'n'roll in the mid-1950s some of these movements were often put back in to form the basis of rock'n'roll dancing. In fact the rock'n'roll period marked the final acceptance by dance halls and the middle-class public of working-class loosely structured and improvisational dancing. The jitterbug steps had a continuity of mass popularity which, in Australia, stretched from the war to the early 1960s when they were replaced by the Surfie Stomp and similar mod dances which were even less structured and allowed more scope for improvisation. In Australia the jive acquired more popularity than the jitterbug because it was more sedate. Nevertheless such acceptance as it gained was, at best grudging. The spread of jitterbugging/jiving occurred mostly through American males teaching Australian girls. McDonald writes that:

> The chief centre for (jitterbugging) in Sydney was the Trocadero. There, both white and coloured Americans danced: Australian males copied them or learnt from the females with whom they danced (McDonald 1951, section VI, p. 6).

Hammond-Moore includes in his book a photograph of a G.I. teaching a girl to jitterbug. In the background another G.I. with an Australian girl seem to be ballroom dancing. In Brisbane Cloudland and other dance halls such as the Ritz provided similar opportunities. In Sydney the black serviceman's club, the Booker T. Washington club, was a favourite hang-out for Australian jazz musicians as well as a place where many Australian women learnt to jitterbug. In Brisbane black and white Americans were segregated by area, the blacks having to keep to the south side of the river. The only dance hall open to them was the Trocadero, which was finally closed in 1951.

In addition to their utilisation of the existing venues, which they often took over for private parties, the Americans built a dance hall in Brisbane at Newmarket. Described by Jim Burke who ran the house band there in the 1950s as: … two half-round roofed buildings. One was for dancing and the other was for grogging and storage (Burke 1984, p. 47).' (Stratton 1992, p. 134)

'It was an important dance venue for Brisbane bodgies and widgies during the early 1950s.

Jiving c. 1950

' (Stratton 1992, p. 135)

'After the Americans left the bodgies and widgies kept up the tradition of jiving. However all the major dance halls returned to their pre-war policy of playing music for ballroom dancing. What McDonald writes of the Trocadero was true of all the major dance halls:

> With the retreat of the Americans a group of bodgies remained but in insufficient numbers to demand their preferred music. Soon the band reverted from the loud, frenetic swing with a definite steady beat, as required by jitterbugs, to the gentler music incorporating conventional ballroom dancing tempo. The bodgies drifted away and the remnants were banned for six months in 1951 (McDonald 1951, section VI, p. 7).

It is unclear what the dance halls were trying to remove, bodgies and widgies or jitterbugging. In fact there was no difference. A person who jived was automatically labelled as a bodgie or widgie. In

many dance halls special sections would, either by official agreement or informal arrangement, be set aside for people who wished to jitterbug. At Cloudland this section was actually roped off. People learnt to jive from watching others and imitation. Sometimes steps would be picked up from American musicals.

> We would learn from watching movies and then somebody would try something and if it looked good people would start to copy them (interview with Stuart).

However it was a dance strictly forbidden at the school dances where most young people had their first introduction to dancing:

> Well, the school dances, of course a couple of the girls used to go with boys and we were so envious that they were being taken by a boy to the school dance. Most of the girls went in groups of girls. You know I had my girlfriends that we went to the school dance with, a group of us. It was interesting once we were there because we had reached the age where we wanted to jive. We weren't allowed to jive because that was considered wrong at school dances, I'm going back to '50/'51. It was fast, much too fast. The headmistress used to call:' ₀demonstrations thank you' and we used to have to do the barn dance and all these sorts of dances (interview' with Pamela).

Thus the *fast,* improvisatory jive, associated with Americans and a loosening of (sexual) inhibitions was relegated from acceptable society. Tolerated in some dance halls it had to be performed to arrangements designed for the foxtrot and the like by means of such strategies as doubling the beat. However in 1946 in Sydney a group of people, bodgies and widgies, who enjoyed jiving formed the *Gaiety Studio Music Club* in a hall behind a milk bar in Oxford Street. This hall could hold around 200-300 dancers and the bands, which were often pick up bands, would be comprised of those Sydney musicians who really wanted to play swing. I have heard of such people as Ralf Mallen, John Ferguson and Bill Weston playing there. This place taught jiving during the week and had a major dance on Sunday nights' (Stratton 1992, p. 136)

'when the musicians were free from their other engagements. In 1954 the hall burnt down.

Dancers at Sutton's Beach on the Gold Coast c. 1950

In Brisbane dancing in segregated sections of public dance halls was supplemented by Jack Busteed's in Adelaide Street. Busteed was the first ballroom dance teacher in Brisbane to begin formalising and teaching the jive. As jive teachers he employed bodgies and widgies and on Sundays there would be dances in his studio held by the bodgies and widgies under the name of the *Queensland Jive Club.* Around this time also groups used to go from Brisbane to the coast and hire a dance floor which had been built on the foreshore at Sutton's beach. At both Busteed's and Sutton's beach the music was provided by records. It is clear that these dances at the bodgie and widgie venues were much less formalised than those at the established public dance halls. One interviewee described a public dance like this:

> … they would have one band playing in the hall and the band would play about fifteen brackets of three tunes in each bracket…

> The band would play perhaps two or three numbers of generally the same kind of dance. It might have been three quick-steps or three fox-trots, and then the dance would be over and there would be a break … and then they would have the next dance which might have been a waltz, or maybe a Latin-American dance, samba or rumba and then they would normally have an interval (interview with Graham).' (Stratton 1992, p. 137)

'Through the early 1950s public dances became increasingly informal in structure. A quantum leap in this direction occurred with the spread of rock'n'roll. One thing which aided the increased informality was the standardisation of dancing to variations on one dance, the jive.

The venues which were most tolerant of jitterbugging tended to be those lower down the social scale. One interviewee described the Sydney dance halls where he used to go like this:

There were a couple of places where you always went. You always went to the Surreyville, which was a dance hall in Sydney Road near the Uni. Now it has been knocked down unfortunately. And there was another called the Albert Palais in Leichardt which we went to, in fact there was a dance we used to do called the Albert Crawl and it was just a simple three step. It was the quiet one where you gave the girl a bit of a cuddle while you were dancing. There was another dance that was called the Para Dance that was done at Parramatta. It had a reputation for being a pretty rough sort of dance.

We used to go there because we used to do that sort of dancing. There were other dances but they used to be pretty strict about things. They even used to check your breath to see whether you had been to the pub and you did all the old ballroom style dancing and there was none of the popular music and all this sort of thing so we used to give those ones a miss and go to the dances where they played the music you were interested in (interview with Stuart, pp. 3-4).

Here we have a good description of how what had arrived from America as an accepted and popular form of music and dance was relegated after the war to those areas least controlled by bourgeois morality.

The dance hall, as a place of entertainment, a site of leisure, was also a place of potential misrule. From the point of view of the middle class the normal working class youth behaviour in the dance hall was itself evidence of this misrule.

However, within the context of working-class culture, the dance hall — like the street — was a good place for larking about, for behaviour which challenged norms. The following account describes how a group of kids in the late 1950s disrupted a *respectable* social dance in a Victorian country town:
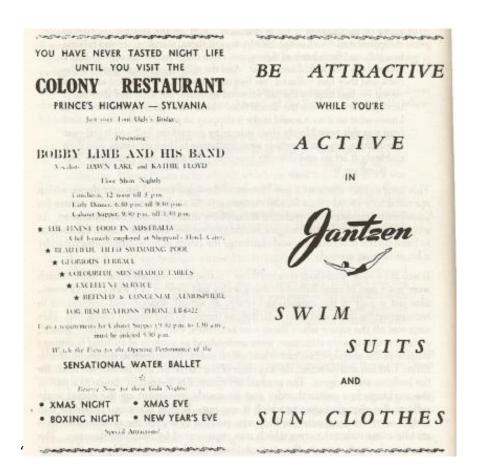
One night we went out into the sticks, way out to a place called Fernbank … to a dance … Anyway we went out to this dance and there was about ten or twelve of us and we went into the hall and paid our way in. And we were approached by the M.C. [Master of Ceremonies] who told u he didn't want any trouble, that we were welcome so long as we behaved ourselves. And it was a pretty take old dance with good honest farming type people. They were good folk. We didn't realise it, I suppose, but they were. Things got a bit tame. We were forever going outside and having a few drinks and' (Stratton 1992, p. 138)

'going in and having a bit of a dance. And all the fellows seemed to disappear and I was in the hall by myself there, standing around talking to a girl, and from back of the supper room there came this sort of clatter and a clank and a skid and a roar. And the silly buggers had gone out the back and they had collared this five or six-month old Hereford steer and young — had him by the tail screwed up round his back and they ran it through the door onto the dance floor which had candle grease and God knows what on it so it would make it slippery so people could dance. And here was this poor bloody steer skimming around the hall and it fell over two or three times and people were scattering to the four winds, and then suddenly it let go and done its business right there and then in the hall … (Graham W.).

This long extract gives us a good image of the semi-formal country dance which operated as a social event for the community. As such it was more an excuse for community interaction in a relaxed
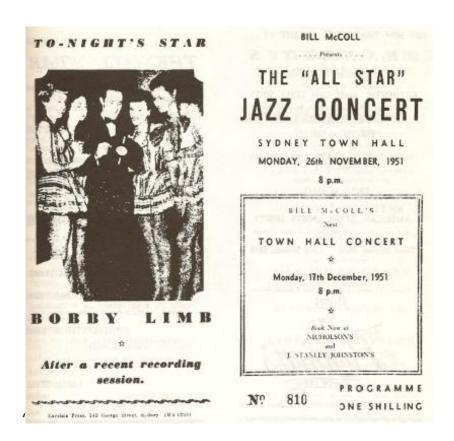
atmosphere than a place for entertainment. As a consequence the visiting bodgies, looking for excitement, took it upon themselves to liven up the proceedings, and challenge the limits of acceptable behaviour, by a bit of larking around.

It was but a short step from viewing those youths, who dressed up in clothes which were not a part of established clothing styles and danced in a way and to a music also not a part of the established order, as simply strange and interesting to reconstructing them and their activities as threats to established social life. This step was all the easier when these new activities, part of the new mass-cultural, consumerism-leisure structure, were understood as aspects of cultural traditions outside of the middle-class moral and social order. Nevertheless the tradition was there. Clothes and dancing, the keystone of the larrikins, also formed the basis for the bodgies and widgies. The gradual acceptance of the public dance as a part of the working-class cultural order and its steady movement up the social scale reflects the changing uses to which it was put. Within this context bodgie and widgie were labels applied to kids who refused to accept the compromise with middle-class cultural norms which was represented by ballroom dancing. The emotional involvement, the stimulation, which was possible in the most improvisational and energetic jitterbug and jive echoed older peasant and working-class dancing practices. The jive threatened the increasingly hegemonic situation of ballroom dancing because it was more suited to working-class values of involvement, physical display and enjoyment through stimulation. The fight for the acceptance of jiving was made harder by the institutionalisation of dancing in dance halls which would try and establish their own dance venues outside of the system. The spread of public dance attendance of middle-class young people and, second, the elaboration of the category of youth in which many of the constituent parts, such as hedonism and sexual exploration, overlapped with many established working-class attitudes to young people enabling, as a consequence, working class practices to be assimilated into the behaviour of middle-class kids.' (Stratton 1992, p. 139)
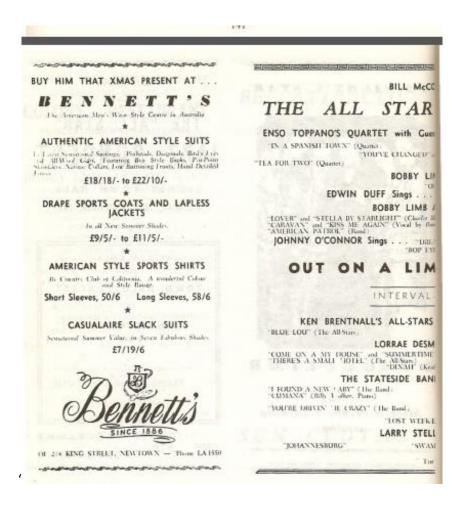
Music: from swing to rock 'n' roll

Dancing requires music and the music associated with the jitterbug and jive was swing music. However in the mid-1950s this music was replaced, over a period of time by the genre of rock'n'roll. I want, now, to say something about this replacement in order to show how, within the context of an increasing commercialisation and use of technology the reception of rock'n'roll demonstrates an ongoing continuity of working-class cultural values. The critical factor in the acceptance of rock'n'roll as an art form is not its commercialism but the working class values on which the rock'n'roll aesthetic is based. The middle-class concern with the devaluation of art through it commercialisation — a concern within the' (Stratton 1992, p. 140)

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PROGRAMME
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Arnold, **T.S. Eliot** and **Leavis** tradition of cultural criticism — can then be understood as a disguised critique of cultural forms which assert working-class values. It is in this context that we need to understand the generations of, predominantly, working-class kids who espoused first swing jazz and later rock'n'roll.

Swing jazz was popularised in Australia in the pre-Second World War period through two major channels, records and Australian jazz musicians who had travelled abroad. Very occasionally there would be visits by minor American jazz bands and a few American and English musicians would be engaged to play for' (Stratton 1992, p. 141)
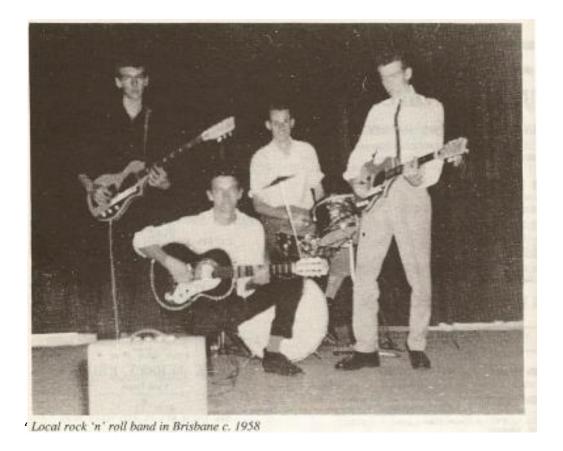
extended periods, normally about 6 months, in one or other of the major Australian dance halls. However, the post-war period saw the gradual development of the promotional concert tour by overseas musicians.

The first major post-war tour arrived in late 1954 and consisted of Artie Shaw, Ella Fitzgerald, Buddy Rich and included a comic, Jerry Colonna. Colonna's inclusion illustrates how the popular music industry was still locked into the tradition of the music hall and vaudeville. As late as 1958, a year after Bill Haley and the Comets toured Australia, without a comic, Johnny Mathis was given an Australian comedian, Ray McGeary, as the compere for his tour. Actually the Mathis tour harked back to the earlier post-war days in more ways than this. The tour included' (Stratton 1992, p. 142)

exhibition jiving by Lee Neilsen and Milton Mitchell. Mitchell, who was 31 in 1958, had been one of the original bodgies — he came from working-class Newtown — and had been legendary among the group for his dancing ability. His write-up in the Johnny Mathis tour programme describes how he had tried to turn his dancing into a career having appeared in demonstration shows in clubs and theatres and going to New Zealand as a teacher of 'Rock'n'Roll' (we can see how jive shaded seamlessly into rock'n'roll dancing) where he is credited, with some degree of hyperbole one would think, with having taught more than 50000 New Zealanders how to rock. According to Bob Rogers the Artie Shaw, Ella Fitzgerald show cost as much as 29/6d for a seat at a time when theatre shows at the Sydney Tivoli cost 5/- a seat (Rogers 1975, p. 11).' (Stratton 1992, p. 143)

' *Local rock 'n' roll band in Brisbane c. 1958*

There were, in addition, local jazz artists who came out of the 1940s and became touring stars. These were in addition to the artists who performed as house bands, night after night, in the same venue. It was from bands like that of Frank Coughlan, who had the residency at the Sydney *Trocadero,* that the *Gaiety's* Sunday night pick-up band would be made. The reason for band residencies was quite simple. Amplification systems and sound reproduction were still not good enough for records to be used for dance purposes. The lack of amplification systems was, as we have seen, one reason why dance bands tended to be quite large. In the early 1960s the spread of public dancing to middle-class youth, and the spread of *pop* dances for youth to country towns where they were held either in new, specially built dance halls or in older, general purpose halls was underpinned by a range of newly improved and rapidly improving amplification and reproduction systems. With the spread of this new technology bands could decrease in size and small rock groups could fill halls with dance music. The decline in size to a basic rock'n'ro1l4-piece group composed of drums, bass guitar, lead guitar and rhythm guitar with either one of the guitarists doubling as the vocalist or with a separate vocalist was not completed until the *beat boom* of the Beatles period. Many groups during the late-1950s retained a vestigial brass section.' (Stratton 1992, p. 144)

'In the late 1950s records started to be played at dances to supplement the older live band tradition. Len Austin who played in a local Brisbane band called *The Planets* in the late 1950s and early 1960s explained the situation like this:

> See, this may be only applicable to Brisbane. I don't know. But you couldn't buy high-powered equipment then. I mean a 10-watt amplifier was considered something … when we ordered a 200-watt bass amplifier from Tony, you know, he was able to make it. He actually became quite

well known throughout Australia. A lot of rock groups in the later years bought his stuff but the very first lot of equipment he made, the high powered stuff, was for us. Well Tony was experimenting of course. For our bass sound we had to get speakers sent over from Denmark, and we blew them. I think they were 18" bass speakers and they were theatre speakers in those days. The high powered thing was only just beginning then.

So Tony made a 200-watt P.A. system … which you could fold down and which was really quite transportable. This is still in the days of valves. When transistors came in Tony sort of gave it away, said he didn't like them (interview with Len).

Here we can see how the smaller bands of the late 1950s became increasingly reliant on a burgeoning electronics industry. We can also see how this industry evolved out of the needs of artists and the interests of local individuals.

At this time, as the above extract shows, much of the work was trial and error. It was not uncommon to demolish expensive imported speakers by way of the amplifying achievement of a local innovator. When the Beatles toured in 1964 Glenn A. Baker tells us that:

On stage, the three guitarists had a single Vox 60-watt amp each, and the drums were expected to be loud enough without any electronic assistance (Baker 1982, p. 94).

In many venues bands used the Public Address system already installed for other entertainments. The major Australian concert venues like the Sydney Stadium at Rushcutter's Bay and the Brisbane Stadium, pulled down in the late 1950s and rebuilt, for the same purpose, as Festival Hall, were boxing stadiums. Sydney Stadium had originally been built to hold the Jack Johnson/Tommy Burns world title fight in 1908.

The increase in the number of visits by overseas artists points up the complicated relationship between concerts and dances in the post-war period which was a product of the new link between popular sung music and music for dancing. As popular music became increasingly synonymous with dance music the problem became more urgent. There was, in fact, no solution to this problem. The authorities reacted by specifying the nature of the venue and employing ushers, more colloquially known as bouncers, to ensure that, if a venue had seats and a promotion was advertised as a concert, dancing did not occur. Patrons reacted in two ways. They would either try to dance at the front of auditorium near the group where the music was loudest or they would dance at the back of the hall where they' (Stratton 1992, p. 145)

'were less likely to be accosted by ushers or by non-dancing members of the audience.

The concert, like the dance, not least because of the similarity in the music provided, became an opportunity to meet members of the opposite sex. This interviewee is talking about the rock'n'roll concerts at Sydney's Rushcutter's Bay Stadium:

You could pick up women easily, especially if you were in the right gear.

It was probably through eye contact because what used to happen was there would be a group of women sitting together and a group of blokes sitting together and we would say: 'Come on,

let's go and ask them to dance and we would just grab them by the hand and jumped up and away you went, dancing in the aisles. A bit of flirting and a bit of eye contact, it certainly attracted you. You knew which ones were available that's for sure, available to get up and dance at least and from then on it was up to your prowess — if you knew the right words to say … (interview with Jim S.).

Here we can see well the attempt to elide the distinction between concerts and dances and, along with that elision, decrease the formal, middle-class properties associated with the concert.

Portable sound systems were an important development allowing improved sound through purpose-built equipment and also allowing bands to play at venues without Public Address systems. Such a development was particularly important for the spread of live rock music into country towns. By 1963 commercial electronics were beginning to make an impression on country areas. Here is one interviewee, who was part of a band in Shepparton, a town about 120 miles north of Melbourne, talking about the band to which the elder brother of a member of his own band belonged:

The elder brothers of this guy tried to learn the guitar and built their own amplifiers out of old radio sets — it was that kind of scene.

They were Albanians and the parents, well the mother never learnt to speak English and they were a very traditional family except the kids kind of assimilated to rock'n'roll in Australia so they built their own amplifiers and the like. I can distinctly remember the aura of the technology the first time I held an electric guitar plugged into this old kind of radio plus speakers kinds of apparatus (interview with Ian).

Here we can see the innovators at work again. This time, as band members more concerned with music than electronics, they were making use of pre-existing equipment. One more point can be made about this extract which illustrates a very important area to which we will return in the last chapter. This is that the new youth culture, the new mass-consumption-oriented culture, provided an important locus for cultural assimilation for immigrants. The very generality of the cultural forms,' (Stratton 1992, p. 146)

'which were not local folkways, made them all the more shareable. Indeed, as I have discussed in earlier chapters, it became possible to become a part of a community of consumption. This is the solution to a seeming paradox, that many of the bodgies and widgies of the late 1950s came from non-Australian and non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds whilst the bodgies and widgies, as a folk devil — and often as individuals — were quite racist in their orientations. The new youth mass culture, although often American in origin was nevertheless not localised. It existed *out there* and could be drawn on by any individual who could afford the money at the same time it was experienced and evaluated through established cultural traditions.

By the time the interviewee above and his band were good enough to be getting gigs, in the late 1963 and 1964, they were using expensive, bought, mass produced equipment which was bought by parents who must have viewed playing in a band as a hobby:

> … the initial capital outlay all came out of the parental budgets. Like, I got a set of Ludwig drums and cymbals. It was a magnificent kit and that probably cost my parents *then,* urn, pretty close to a grand, certainly 800 and something bucks, which was big money. And, the guy who played bass had a magnificent Vox foundation bass. That was the first 100-watt valve Vox bass sound with a huge, single *huge* 15-inch speaker in this cubic cabinet. Now that must have cost them 600 to 700 bucks at that stage so it was big money. And there is no doubt that, if that had not been given to you, in a sense free, the money you were being paid per dance wouldn't have paid back your instruments even if you had bought them on H.P. or something (interview with Ian).

The idea of playing in a rock band as a hobby shows how, as the facilities for mass cultural pleasure became commercialised they also became appropriatable. Kids playing guitars could, from a middle-class perspective, become the new version of kids playing the piano, that is gaining a musical expertise. However, whereas previously this had been a female concern which enabled women to provide entertainment in the home it now became a male concern. Now young males got paid for playing and entertained other kids at the new public youth dances. Another aspect of this development was that, certainly in the early 1960s, the expense of the new equipment meant that many of the mass of the new bands taking advantage of the ready-made equipment came from middle-class backgrounds. Here is another tie-in with the penetration of the new consumerist youth culture into the middle class. The early 1960s, the period from The Beatles' tour of Australia in 1964 and the subsequent spread of mod culture through middle-class youth, was the period when rock music and dancing were assimilated in Australia into middle-class youth practices.

Many working-class kids over the entire period from the small rock'n'roll group breakthrough in the mid-19S0s bought equipment on hire purchase and then struggled, doing regular day jobs and playing gigs at night, to pay it off. Indeed it would be fair to say that the majority of members of early rock'n'roll bands came' (Stratton 1992, p. 147)

'from working-class backgrounds. The music, as I have argued, was accepted and evaluated within the working-class, popular cultural tradition. Playing *pop* music became a way, similar to boxing, in which, if a working-class kid was good at it had a good manager and was lucky, he could make a lot of money. It is worth adding that one reason rock music has, historically, been a male-dominated domain is that, like boxing, it has a close association with street culture.

In contrast to the myth it needs to be asserted that rock'n'roll in no way caused the development of working-class youth culture. It is often forgotten, for example, that the music in *The Wild One* which, as we have seen, was an important film for working-class youth, is *hot* swing jazz. The impact of rock'n'roll was the impact of a musical form in a pre-existing cultural context. Rock'n'roll, as played by groups like Bill Haley and the Comets, was less formalised than the majority of white swing music, it was a more potentially involving music. Its audience was drawn from the same categories of young people who liked swing jazz but it had a greater importance for working-class youth. Here is one person's memory of the first time he heard the new music:

> When the film *Blackboard Jungle* came out, I heard from friends of mine that it was a great show and that the music was really good. So I went and seen it. I was really impressed, not with

the picture but the music. And then a series of Bill Haley films came out. One was called *Rock Around The Clock* and people used to flock into that. I saw it twelve times and we

Edwin Duff singing at a concert around 1950.

’ (Stratton 1992, p. 148)

‘used to dance up and down the aisles, really got the feel of it and got into it (interview with Jim S.). .

As we have seen with dance one of the major contrasts between middle-class and working-class culture lies in their differing emphasis on the formal and the analytical as compared to the involving and the unreflective. The latter qualities are now securely embedded as an important aspect of the cultural artifacts purveyed through the mass media. Rock'n'roll is as formalisable as jazz was. However, like jazz, it had to be appropriated first and, like jazz, one of the tensions in its development lies in the complex relationship between commercialisation, formalisation, middle-class acceptability, middle-class ideas of artistic purity, working-class values of improvisation and the working-class cultural concern with direct, rather than rational, involvement. Bill Haley's white rock'n'roll was cleaned up and formalised as compared to the black rhythm'n'blues from which it came but it was still more emotionally involving than the swing jazz of the period.

Because suitable amplified reproduction equipment did not come into common use until the early 1960s the main purpose of bands was still to present dance music, and this involved playing known songs. In the 1930s and 1940s when records were still relatively expensive and had to be played on big electric radiograms or *portable* wind-up machines there was still a great demand for sheet music so that bands could learn and play new music. Even so some artists were already learning music

from records. As early as 1916 Freddie Keppard is reputed to have told his Original Creole Band when Victor Talking Machine Company approached them to make a record:

> Nothin' doin' boys. We won't put our stuff on records for everybody to steal (Leonard 1962, p. 96).

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s both jazz and rock bands were required to play the current hits rather than their own material:

> (We played) whatever was in fashion, still covered versions of the Top 40. Current Top 40 and we used to learn them off the record. I didn't read music very well at all actually. I didn't learn to read music until I had to when I got into the Army band (interview with Len).

However, through this period one effect of the increasing availability of records was that bands started to be valued as performers in their own right rather than as a medium for the transmission of music. It is usual to date the first teenage fan syndrome to Frank Sinatra in America during the later years of the war. The development of the bobby-soxer required not only the finding of a suitable person to serve as an iconic image but depended first on the successful establishment of a consumerist youth cultural category the values of which could be embodied in the image of the *star.* In this Frank Sinatra was precursed by the Hollywood film stars who embodied in their persons the connection of fantasy and desire, illusion and reality, articulated, as I discussed in chapter 3, in their films.' (Stratton 1992, p. 149)

'the *sweet* swing of Glen Miller whose music was even more highly arranged than that of most swing bands. In Australia the increasing popularity of swing meant a corresponding increase in the importance of records which were becoming the major means for the dissemination of new music. In the war and post-war period while American youth was beginning to listen to the first solo singers like Frank Sinatra and Frankie Lane using the new microphones, Australian bodgies and widgies were still trying to buy swing records. The more advanced were listening to Stan Kenton and be-bop. During the late 1940s and, early 1950s there were a number of popular solo Australian jazz artists like Edwin Duff, Dawn Lake and Bobby Limb. Previously listeners had no standard by which to judge a performance of a tune other than other performances which they had heard. The spread of records meant that artists' performances of tunes could be measured against the performance on the record. Artists therefore came to be valued in their own right. Increasingly, from the 1940s onwards, this meant a focusing on the artist who recorded the song. However this shift in emphasis took place over a long period of time and could not really be said to have been completed until the late 1960s when the association of artist and song reached a peak with bands' preoccupation with recording their own material.

From the 1940s to the 1960s there was a very gradual. shift in the role of the band. Len Austin, when asked what he thought was important to people coming to see his band, *The Planets,* around 1960 said:

> Especially in the early days when … it's not like today where you can go to a disco and hear exactly the record. This was the first chance they could go to hear something live. We tried to

make it like the record. It was a lot louder than a record and they didn't have good equipment to play records loud in those days. And there were people on stage, the band.

It sounded close to the record. I really think that's all it was, and there was the show (interview with Len).

Increasingly, learning music from records, bands could reproduce the improvised passages of records. At the same time bands struck a balance between being important in their own right as artists and providing a service by acting as a medium for the provision of dance music.

As recorded music started to take over at dances so bands became more and more concert-oriented. The rise of the popular music concert in the post-war period corresponded to an increasing emphasis on the artist. This has been most obvious in the case of tours by foreign, in pre-Beatles period, American artists. One effect of records was to familiarise people not only with songs but with the performers of those songs. It is in this context that we must understand the rise of the concert tour in Australia, and the corresponding rise of tour promoters such as Lee Gordon and Kenn Brodziak.

It was Gordon, an American himself, who brought out Artie Shaw in 1953 and reputedly made a loss of £30,000. It was Brodziak, who brought out the Beatles' (Stratton 1992, p. 150)

'in 1964 who, in 1954 brought out Gene Krupa. (For a popular introduction to the rise of the popular music concert promoter in Australia in the post-war period see Oram 1966, p. 22-29). During this period Australian youth began to appreciate both the concept of the tour and the idea that artists, available on record, could visit from America. Local artists toured and sometimes girls were let in free on condition they screamed at the artist. Johnny Ray toured first in September 1954 and returned in March 1955. It does not seem to have been until his second tour in 1955 that the Australian tradition of meeting visiting stars at airports was initiated. This practice reflected and asserted the image of America, and later of Britain, as the Other, the foreign place from which embodiments of the new youth culture came. On Johnny Ray's first tour it had been hard to sell tickets, on his second tour Ray was mobbed wherever he went.

The advent of rock'n'roll in Australia saw the introduction of a new musical form at a moment when a number of changes were being consolidated. It formed a part of a new youth cultural image which at one level was constituted in the media in a new inflection of the bodgie and widgie folk devil. At a more material level rock'n'roll operated as a part of a much wider youth cultural formulation than swing had done. The increasing importance of the music industry was reflected in the new visibility of the artists, their music and the dances at which it was played. This new visibility, a part of the complex redeployment of popular culture through the new mass media, through radio, records, film and the like, entailed, as we have already seen, a new awareness among the middle class of working-class traditions, a change which the middle class reacted to as a threat to *established* morality and art — theirs. It was not, however, an instant transformation. Consumerist cultural form, as I have remarked in an earlier chapter, is constituted in image and the late 1950s articulated an image of youth as rebellious but usually within a set of acceptable parameters. Rock'n'roll was understood as

one of the key facets of that image. However the change, through the mid-1950s, was much more gradual than this. Two moments in Johnny O'Keefe's career are worth mentioning in this regard.

Johnny O'Keefe started his career doing impersonations of Johnny Ray in 1952. These impersonations included the use of a pair of glasses which had a rubber tube attached leading to a bowl of water. As Ray used to cry when he performed the song so O'Keefe would squeeze the bulb and also appear to be crying. When O'Keefe was called up to do his compulsory military training he was put in the entertainment unit. His main task was the organising of concerts which were put on every 3 weeks. O'Keefe used to perform his Johnny Ray impersonation and a dancer called Keith Drew used to give demonstrations of jitterbugging (Bryden-Brown 1982, pp. 20-22). Here we can see how Johnny O'Keefe's beginnings were a mixture of the post-swing solo singer tradition, which had a pop following in Australia but was not identified with in any strong fashion, as well as the working class tradition of vaudeville. Unbeknown to the middle class the roots of Australian rock'n'roll were firmly placed in the working-class entertainment tradition.' (Stratton 1992, p. 151)

'O'Keefe was introduced to rock'n'roll, like many young people, through the film *Blackboard Jungle* released in Australia in the latter half of 1955. In America Bill Haley and the Comets had already had hit records with *Crazy Man Crazy* in 1953 and *Shake, Rattle and Roll* in 1954. Incidentally *Shake, Rattle and Roll* was written by Joe Turner who toured Australia with Haley in 1957. However in Britain and Australia it was *Blackboard Jungle* which brought Haley and his faster, cleaner version of rhythm 'n' blues to audiences outside America. In fact the relationship between music and film here was, as we have seen, nothing new. The formula dated back to the pre-war musicals. What was new was the theme of the film. Rather than dealing with fantasy, wealth and happiness *Blackboard Jungle* was concerned with juvenile delinquency, the breakdown of order in schools and the breakdown of communication across generations. Put simply, if the older musicals had incited a wish for the new consumerism as a way of achieving happiness, *Blackboard Jungle* and the earlier youth *problem* film *The Wild One* invited an identification with working-class kids for whom the fantasy of happiness through consumption was no longer a believable option.

In effect the films began what, in America, was a 20-year tradition of reinterpreting class conflict as generational conflict and, in the process, completing the construction of the ideology of youth culture as a cross-class phenomenon. The 19th century working-class juvenile delinquent became the 1950s mixed-up kid. Mass culture was turned back on itself and presented as the purveyor of dreams which helped break down the established values of the family.

In *The Wild One* the dominant image is of Marlon Brando as the directionless rebel, in the more middle-class *Rebel Without a Cause* it is made clear why James Dean is so mixed up. It is because his father will not accept his responsibilities as a male parent. In the more working-class films youth is reconstituted as an almost *sui generis* problematic period, an extension of the idea of adolescence. It is this thematic link with rock'n'roll which exists in *Blackboard Jungle.*

As the tradition progressed rock'n'roll was domesticated into more classical film musical forms such as the bulk of Elvis Presley's output. In these films rock'n'roll was constituted both within the hedonism of youth culture and the accepted limits of middle-class morality. However Presley's earlier films often reasserted the link between rock'n'roll and non-middle-class morality. Perhaps

the most obvious in this regard was *Jailhouse Rock.* Because of this Presley enjoyed a large working class following. One interviewee who lived in a small town some way from Melbourne said:

> … I remember travelling all the way to Melbourne in late 1957-58 to see *Jailhouse Rock.* That was really something else. Good picture that was. Then when Elvis went into the army, I don't know, things just weren't the same (Graham W.).

It was not the going into the army which caused the problem, after all many Australian working-class males were familiar with the army through National Service which had been introduced in Australia in 1951. It was rather Colonel' (Stratton 1992, p. 152)

'Parker's successful attempt to reconstitute Presley as family entertainment, subscribing to middle-class values, which meant dealing in love lyrics (rather than sex) and acting in films asserting middle-class values often in the context of fantasy themes of happiness through wealth. In this way Presley moved away from his working-class, street cultural origins.

In *Blackboard Jungle* rock'n'roll was linked with a reformulation of the juvenile delinquency idea in which a generational cultural gap, the teacher's jazz and the kids' rock'n'roll paralleled a class gap between the middle-class teacher and the working-class kids. Rock'n'roll evolved out of American black and white working class musical traditions. Its original marketing registered more generalised working-class values. Hence, it is not surprising, then, that in Australia, and England, with their working-class traditions coming from the same source, rock'n'roll became in these places also a working-class music. In his earliest days as a rock performer, for example, O'Keefe and the Dee Jays used to play at a dance they organised themselves in Coogee. Later they moved to the Balmain Workingman's Institute. At both places there were many fights. Finally the band moved to the Leichhardt Police Boys Club and subsequently were also playing at the Paddington Police Boys Club. It is clear that their audiences were inner-city working class.

In Australia Johnny O'Keefe seems to have related traditional working-class values to rock'n'roll rather more than did Col Joye, the other major singer of the period who moved rapidly towards becoming an *entertainer* and towards middleclass acceptability. Sometimes Johnny O'Keefe would play the open air auditorium at Manly. Here is a memory from a girl brought up in Manly:

> … we absolutely loathed Johnny O'Keefe. As a matter of fact at Manly on the beach there used to be an open air auditorium outside the surf club and every Sunday afternoon there would be a concert there and it would be a shilling to go in wearing your swimsuit to sit in deckchairs and the surfies would sit on one side and the city mobbers would sit on the other. Johnny O'Keefe would be on but we had paid our shilling to go in and watch the city mobbers, not Johnny O'Keefe.

> He was rude. The city mobbers — he used to gyrate and do things with that long microphone and we would sit there with our mouths open, the boys from the surf club too, we couldn't believe it. It was not part of our rituals so we used to watch the city mobbers reaction to what Johnny O'Keefe was doing.

We used to love rock'n'roll. Before rock'n'roll came in you had only Johnny Ray (interview with Pamela).

This same woman said later on in the interview that she had thought *Blackboard Jungle* was stupid and that she could not relate to it. In her discussion of Johnny O'Keefe we can see an acceptance of the dominant moral standards, most obviously in respect of displays of sexuality which forces her to reject Johnny O'Keefe. She goes on to say about *Blackboard Jungle* that her crowd would never' (Stratton 1992, p. 153)

'have dared to behave like the kids in the film. Nevertheless she emphasises that she liked rock'n'roll. However the rock'n'roll she liked was the *sweeter* rock'n'roll of Col Ioye in which the music was less frenetic. Joye often played old, accepted *standards'* and he, himself, behaved in a more *correct* manner.

The cultural continuity between jazz and rock in Australia was very developed. Les Welch, the prominent jazz band leader, was even billed as the *Original King of Rock 'n'Roll* (Bryden-Brown 1982, p. 41) and by the end of 1956 Johnny O'Keefe and the Dee Jays were appearing on the same bill as Frank Coughlin's house band at the *Trocadero* in a show billed as 'Rock Around the Troc' (Bryden-Brown 1982, p. 42; Rogers 1975, p. 22). The cultural origins of Australian rock'n'roll were a combination of the new American acts and the established pop tradition. Bob Rogers puts it like this:

> For at least a year, the sound of local rock was like a cacophonous cross between Bill Haley and Elvis Presley, with a bit of Johnny Ray and Frank Sinatra thrown in for added effect (Rogers 1975, p. 22).

The social positioning of rock'n'roll, however, gave it a continuity with swing and jiving which few of the older bodgies and widgies would have recognised in their rejection of the new music in favour of swing and be-bop.

The new, more general, youth culture had a much higher profile because the industries related to it — such as the music and dance hall industries — were much more developed. The public dance, for example, had already gained a significant degree of acceptance from the middle class as a meeting and relaxing place for working-class youth. The latter part of the 1950s saw this acceptance completed and the corresponding development of a spectrum of acceptable behaviour at such places. As an example of this *PIX,* in 1961 published an article headed *Dance- Hall- Pure Fun* which suggested that with:
No liquor, no toughs, today's dance-halls are the teenagers clubs *(PIX, 25* February 1961).

The article describes a dance at the Paradance, Lidcombe. The dances are ballroom dances and the reporting sets out to show that young working-class people can behave acceptably — by middle-class standards — and that the public dance need not be like the rock'n'roll dance described at Merrylands hall in 1958:

> "I thought I had cigarette ash in my hair, but it was chewing gum. You'd think they'd have more sense than to stick chewin' gum in your hair". The speaker was blonde. She was no more than 16, and attired in white matador trousers, a sweater and no shoes.

In the background Johnny O'Keefe's band throbbed out a rock'n'roll number, the words lost in an off-key twang of guitars and the thumping of platform sales and bare feet against the dance floor (*PIX*, 29 November 1958).' (Stratton 1992, p. 154)

'In comparing these two scenes we can understand how rock'n'roll came to be constituted as a part of a highly visible threat to a hegemonic moral order rather than as a part of another way of life lodged in a long working-class tradition. This occurred in the context of an acceptance of the public dance as a place for working class youth activity and the related attempt to impose a set of criteria for *proper* behaviour at these dances.' (Stratton 1992, p. 155)

CH6 Ordinary young people: making sense of the family, sex and alcohol STRATTON

'On 16 December 1955 the *Sydney Daily Mirror* published a story headed *Bodgie 'Saints' come marching in.* The story told how authorities in Wagga Wagga were attempting to keep out the threat of bodgies and widgies. A couple of paragraphs will give the atmosphere of the story:

> During the past few weeks representatives of a group of Sydney bodgies known as 'The Saints' have visited Wagga to recruit members for a branch here.

> Some youths in the town claim bodgies have already initiated a number of Wagga girls in immoral rites.'

In this chapter I want to discuss of what this *threat* really consisted, focusing on alcohol use and sexual behaviour. Mr Duncan, the Child Welfare Officer for Wagga was in no doubt. He thought that the bodgie-widgie cult was likely to bring with it:

> ... a complete breakdown in the morals of those who come in contact with it.

Instead of this apocalyptic scenario this chapter will look at how the rise of media interest in bodgie and widgies in the mid-1950s, and their production as a folk devil, coincided with the articulation of a youth leisure industry and mass-culture which brought working-class youth into increasing literal visibility to middleclass society through the mass media, in particular newspapers, the cinema and radio, but later television. This increased visibility meant a new awareness of working-class customs and an atmosphere of threat as such behaviour was taken out of context and perceived as a series of breakdowns in an accepted moral and social order.' (Stratton 1992, p. 157)

'In earlier chapters I have touched on the development of music, dancing, clothes, hairdressing and transport industries as they affected youth and were integrated as part of a distinctively *youth* culture in the mid-1950s in Australia. In this chapter I want to examine how the consolidation of the category of youth culture was coupled with the attempt to produce a unitary youth culture of middle-class values and morals. In the above quotation we have a literalisation of the spread of

youth cultural forms. Youth clothing styles and leisure interests are here collapsed into forms of behaviour and bodgies are represented as a kind of anti-societal conspiracy which is a version of the middle-class myth of the organised threat to order which we have already looked at in the context of images of gang structure. In the majority of instances the spread of youth styles and activities was a complex process in which the underlying cultural practices of working-class youth remained relatively stable, being transformed rather than reformed by a combination of police pressure and the commercialisation of leisure. At the same time the mass media made an intervention into the, previously local, production of youth clothing and amusement preferences, an intervention which overlapped with the elaboration of the category of youth and the deployment of a consumption industry which has young people, as well as the image of youth, as its focus.

In some cases it is possible that the new mobility available to working-class young people enabled the folk devil, incarnated, to appear in communities which had not yet accepted the new understanding of youth. In some cases then, as in the Toowoomba example mentioned in chapter 1, the spread of *the teenager* incarnated in the new clothing and entertainment preferences was literal. The increased availability of private transport during the 1950s allowed for increasing mobility, and, therefore, increasing visibility. However this literal form of cultural spread which was a spread of clothing and music preferences rather than, as the Wagga report suggests, behaviour, was less common than a spread of such things based on a complex interaction of word of mouth and mass media commentaries or products, such as films or records played on the radio, which illustrated such products. For the media the literalisation of the cause of the changing leisure preferences of working-class young people provided an easily understood solution to a complicated cultural change and had the virtue of being one which fitted well established middle-class images of Otherness as a threat to social and moral order.

Usually rather than travelling into areas where the new youth styles were unknown, the earlier bodgies and widgies would travel to other cities meeting with, and staying with, young people with similar concerns. On these trips they tended to travel by train, this being before young people could afford to buy second-hand cars. Brisbane bodgies and widgies often, when they could afford it, went down to Sydney to be where the real action was and to go to the more numerous jazz concerts given by local and visiting artists. For similar reasons Melbourne bodgies and widgies also visited Sydney. Sometimes, but less often, Sydney bodgies and widgies would travel to Brisbane and Melbourne. This was the first time that young people, outside of the mainstream, had an awareness of others with common interests appropriated from the consumerist culture *out there,* albeit a culture based,' (Stratton 1992, p. 158)

'to a significant extent, on common working-class popular cultural values. One woman put it like this:

> We used to travel interstate and see the other bodgies and widgies all over the place. Down at St Kilda, there was a group down there. I'm just trying to think of the coffee lounge down there. The Ritz, The Ritz I think. That was in St Kilda Road. We used to all meet down there, and they'd look after you (interview with Irene).

Increasing travel by working-class youth meant an increase of literal visibility. This, plus the pervasive and double-edged media impact in the form of a spreading of *mass* cultural products coupled with, often critical, news reporting and cultural commentaries in the form of film and record reviews, entailed an increasing awareness among the middle class of elements of working-class culture which had previously been unknown. As is exemplified in the Wagga report new cultural preferences which were considered to be a threat were collapsed into claims about changing behaviour practices. At the basis of the middle-class image of social order lay the ideology of the family consequently it was the breakdown of the family which was the most common reason given for the spread of the bodgie and widgie so-called juvenile delinquents.

The family

The images of the bodgie and the widgie were constructed along two main axes. One was the folk devil image itself founded on the apparently *sui generis* forms of behaviour and the *mass-cultural* clothing styles and entertainment practices which, between them, were claimed to represent a threat to social order. The other axis was constituted in the idea of the delinquent. Historically the elaboration of the family as the site of social order, and the elaboration and deployment of an ideology of the *good* family, has counterpointed the argument that unruly young people are the product of *bad* family situations. The 19th century focusing on preventative policing and the eradication of street activities which, as we saw in chapter 2, was an important factor in the deployment of the concept of juvenile delinquency, occurred at the same time as the establishment of the *family* as a safe domestic haven. To quote Coventry Patmore from his poem *The Angel in the House,* the family was a 'tent pitch'd in a world not right' (one outline of the ideological formation of the middle-class family is to be found in Zaretsky 1976).

From the 19th century on, the juvenile delinquent has been characterised as a product of a failed family situation. The standard of the proper family has been taken from the middle-class nuclear family. In this way traditional forms of working-class behaviour which did not come within middle-class norms could be represented as individualised breakdowns of acceptable behaviour and the perpetrators classified as delinquent. The delinquency would then be attributed to *failings* in the family background of the young person which, in turn, was measured against the generalised and reified bourgeois family ideal. This presumes a unitary set of expectations about the structure of the family and its functions as a reproducer of behaviour acceptable to middle-class standards,' (Stratton 1992, p. 159)

'rather than accepting the possibility of plurality of family types and a variety of assumptions about the role of the family as an institution and about what traditions of behaviour it would reproduce.

Manning (1958), in his study of the 'psychological abnormality' of bodgies and widgies, is typical in his assumptions of the central role of the family in the production of delinquency. For example here is his description of one of his sample's family background:

> When he was six his father announced at breakfast that he was leaving home for good. It came as a bolt out of the blue for the boy. He saw his mother going about her work slowly and silently, the tears flowing down her face. (He wept violently at the recollection of it.) His father kissed his daughter goodbye and, ignoring his wife and son, walked out of the house. The little

boy ran after him, calling "Kiss me, too Daddy." and received the angry instruction to "Go to _!"
The patient again wept. "I never saw him again alive" (Manning 1958, p. 53).

Manning argues that:

> Much more important than the absence of one or both parents is the effect of family conflicts
> that lead to the shattering of the home (Manning 1958, p.82).

Manning's assumption here seems to be that the 'proper' family, constituted in the bourgeois ideal
of an enduring and untroubled partnership of a man and a woman based on marriage, will
reproduce acceptable behaviour. The implication of this generalising and reified use of the concept
of the family is that acceptable behaviour is also historically and culturally generalisable because it is
a concomitant of the 'proper' family. What we need to appreciate is that not only was working class
young people's traditional behaviour at variance with the normative ideal of the middle class but
that male/female relationships were also conducted in ways very different from the middle-class
family ideal. Consequently the attempt to trace working-class young people's *juvenile delinquency*
back to *bad* family backgrounds was successful only because working-class 'families' were,
themselves, constituted differently from that of the middle-class ideal.

Characteristically during the 19th century:

> The breakdown of family life was … described as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution,
> and working mothers were another source of moral outrage (Pearson 1983, p. 165).

The working-class family was seen as failing to live up to middle-class standards. Young and
Willmott, in their seminal ethnography of post-war life in a working class London suburb, argued
that a significant change had occurred from an earlier period when:

> … we cannot ignore the historical evidence, all the more so since the notion still survives that
> the working-class man is a sort of absentee' (Stratton 1992, p. 160)

> 'husband, sharing with his wife neither responsibility nor affection, partner only of the bed
> (Young & Willmott 1957, rev. 1962, p. 19).

They go on to write:

> The one aspect of that family which has been amply described is its failure. Study has been piled
> upon study of all the things that have gone wrong, of juvenile delinquency and problem
> families, broken homes and divorce, child neglect and Teddy Boys … (Young & Willmott 1957,
> rev. 1962, p. 19).

Again, in Young and Willmott's work, we can see their desire to rescue the working-class family, not
by accepting it, and the working-class traditions surrounding it, on its own terms but rather by
recreating the post-war working class family of their ethnography as a substantially different entity
from its predecessor and, in fact, as something approaching an idyll of harmony in the context of
which even the middle-class family appears to have failings. The new image of the working-class
family, however, is fundamentally an inversion of the old image and it is still articulated in relation to

assumptions about the normative correctness of middle-class values. Delinquency, which is not discussed in *Family and Kinship in East London* but which Willmott does discuss in the later *Adolescent Boys of East London* (1966), is still viewed as deviant behaviour which places the perpetrators outside of tradition and acceptance.

Willmott, in fact, admits himself unable to account for why some individuals should engage in 'serious crime', as he puts it, and suggests that psychology might hold the answer. Manning, we should note, was a psychologist. When confronted by generalised delinquency Willmott resorts to 'adolescence' as a solution: How, finally, is the relatively trivial delinquency of the majority (of adolescent boys in his study) to be explained? It can, I think, best be interpreted as part of the process of working out adolescent tensions and adolescent resentment against adults (Willmott 1966, pp. 161-62).

Family and Kinship in East London, and Young and Willmott's associated works may be summed up as a conservative defense of post-war English working-class life taking issue, to quote Elizabeth Wilson, with:

> … both the conventional moralists who were agitated about rising divorce and juvenile delinquency rates, and with the existing pessimistic accounts of working-class life in post-war Britain (Wilson 1980, p. 3).

In fact Young and Willmott's defense was based on assertion of working-class community in which working-class life was a site for richer social interaction, a more human existence than that enjoyed by the more geographically mobile, nuclear, family-based middle class.

In this richer, more organic community with its echoes of a transference of Romantic, 19th century sociological notions of a pastoral *gemeinschaft* (to use Tonnies' term) to an urban setting, the working-class culture was described as an' (Stratton 1992, p. 161)

'increasingly problematic version of the middle-class culture. Willmott and Young, in their later study of a middle-class suburb, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (1960), lay great emphasis on the effects of isolation on the middle-class family. The book has, for example, chapters with titles such as *Generations Apart* and *Are the Parents Deserted?* Such a position overlaps with the more common arguments about the failure of working-class families to measure up to middleclass moral standards. In criticising the middle-class family Young and Willmott do so from a humanist rather than a moral standpoint. They cannot accept the fundamental importance of the family as the site of social and moral order and go on to examine the consequences of life in the middle-class nuclear family.

If the rise of full employment in both England and Australia in the post-war period had given working-class families a degree of financial security and the lowering of the number of hours in the working week had increased the time available for leisure then, equally, the relative decline in middle-class income had done away with cooks and maids and, in addition, there was a steady movement of middleclass wives into paid employment. In addition in both classes the household, as we have seen, became increasingly the site of consumption, class differentiation being locatable more and more in expense limitations and choice. Increasingly the middle-class family was structured into the social order in a way very similar to the working-class family and, as the family

itself became more visible, so also there was an increasing concern with the apparent decline of the family as a part of modern life. In such a situation the heightened visibility of the behaviour of working-class youth which was characterised as delinquency was represented as a breakdown in conventional morality which threatened the entire social fabric, especially when middle-class young people started to adopt many of the same customs. In Australia in 1957 A.P. Elkin, the same professor of anthropology who we encountered earlier saying that teenagers needed to settle down and face up to being Australian or English, edited a book on the family in Australia. *Marriage and the Family in Australia* looked at the problems caused for the family as an institution by such developments as the rise in the divorce rate. Elkin's solution to the changes which were taking place in the structure and function of the family was to reassert it as the basis of social order. He wrote:

> If we are to see a reduction in divorce and separation, if less and less homes are to be subjected to marital stress, if fewer and fewer children are to be deprived of the nurture of a good home, then those that marry must be prepared for the state of life they enter at marriage and for the role they will thenceforth have to play (Elkin 1957, p. 215).

In the same volume Marven Brown argued for the family's stability in the face of the actual changes occurring in the Australian family (Elkin 1957, p. 112). The new visibility of variations from established middle-class norms such as single parent families coupled with the shock and confusion caused by the new youth culture, led to concerted efforts to preserve what was considered to be the basis of social order, the family.' (Stratton 1992, p. 162)

'Working-class youth did behave differently to middle-class youth. Gillis, discussing England again, has shown how around the turn of the 20th century it is important to discriminate between the skilled life cycle where young males went into apprenticeships and then into *men's work* at about 18 and the unskilled workers' life cycle in which having left school at 14 he moved gradually into full independence from the home (Gillis 1974, pp. 127-28). By the post-war period the distinction between skilled and unskilled working-class youth was diminishing as apprenticeship declined and more and more young males found themselves in unskilled, semi-skilled factory production line jobs. Instead the important distinction became that between middle-class males who stayed in education until they were 18, and who therefore had less money to spend and less independence in their relationships with their parents, and working-class youths who left school at the minimum age which, during the 1950s was 14 in all states except New South Wales where it was 15 and Tasmania where, since 1946, it was 16. These working class males were able to get jobs and had a significantly higher disposable income than middle-class males of the same age.

With the advent of an increasingly consumption-oriented society *independence* came to be measured more and more as a function of possible expenditure. This relates directly to the rise of institutionalised and commercialised leisure activities. As Gillis notes:

> Even before 1900, observers detected a change in the social habits of (the skilled) class of youth. Their leisure pursuits were becoming detached from the traditions of the urban youth groups and becoming more commercialised, centring on the music hall, the local pub, and, as 1914 approached, on the cinema and spectator sports (Gillis 1974, p. 129).

The post-World War II period saw his shift spread, first to the entire working class and, subsequently, to the middle class.

The shift to consumerist, institutionalised leisure pursuits did not alter the moral order of working-class culture. Throughout the 19th century the *rise* in delinquency was blamed on the mythical breakdowns of family life. The lack of marriage, which was considered a cornerstone of the middle-class family, in 19th century working class communities implied, for the observer, a lack of family structure and, by implication, of all social and moral order. **Andrew Mearns**, for example, a middleclass social investigator who published *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, An Inquiry into the Abject Poor* (1883) wrote this:

> 'Marriage,' it has been said, 'as an institution is not fashionable in these districts.' And this is only the bare truth. Ask if the men and women living together in these rookeries are married, and your simplicity will cause a smile. Nobody knows. Nobody cares. Nobody expects that they are. In exceptional cases only could your question be answered in the affirmative. Incest is common, and no form of vice or sensuality causes surprise or attracts attention. Those who appear to be married are often separated by a mere quarrel… (quoted from Keating 1976, p. 97).' (Stratton 1992, p. 163)

'Even where some kind of family was thought to exist the domestic influence which, it was thought, would produce *well-behaved* young people was often missing because of the mother going out to work. One commentator wrote in 1847:

> Young children are left at home under very inadequate conduct and almost without restraint, left to play at will, and to expand into every lawless form.

In 1953 the same argument was being made:

> The withdrawal of woman's attention from the care of her offspring and from domestic duties (was) an unnatural arrangement (and) a stigma upon the social state (quoted in Pearson 1983, p. 165).

With the spread of consumerist culture the traditions of working-class life came under increasing scrutiny.

Simultaneously changes in the structure of the middle-class family provided an environment for growing up much more similar to that of working-class youth. One major change was the increasing emphasis on commercial entertainment and the rise of mass cultural forms which youth from all classes could opt to indulge in. By the mid-1960s this was precisely what was happening, along with a certain homogenising of the cultural and moral order. There was still a split; young people from different class backgrounds tended to like different rock music and go to different kinds of public dance, for example, but overall there was an increasing homogeneity of leisure practices which led to a change in the behaviour of middleclass young people. Many of the ways of life of working-class youth had moved upward in the social system and become more general elements of youth culture as middle-class young people started to accept *youth* as a consumption-oriented phenomenon.

With this context in mind we can return to the early bodgies and widgies travelling to Melbourne. We find, as we would expect, that these working-class young people in their late teens and early twenties were treated, in many respects as adults. However from a middle-class point of view in which young people in their late teens were often still in educational institutions and certainly not considered as responsible adults such *lenience* would have appeared as indiscipline. The regular recourse of the police to the use of the Vagrancy Act against young people may be understood as an attempt to impose middle-class restrictions on working class kids who were, seemingly, out of control. In fact working-class young people had freedoms which would only later become available to middle-class *teenagers:*

> About fifty of us used to go at a time. We stayed within the group usually. The girls used to stay with the girls and the boys with the boys. In Melbourne, they've got a quaint system down there. Say at the back of the house, they'd have a little shed at the back and they called it a bungalow and a lot of the kids used to live in these bungalows. So when someone came down from Sydney or Brisbane they'd all go in the bungalow. They's share. They'd all sleep on the floor. If there was double beds, three or four would get in a double bed. Didn't matter if you were male or female. They' (Stratton 1992, p. 164)

'weren't interested just because you got into bed with a fellow. It didn't mean you had to do something. It was a case of convenience. If you were from Sydney someone would put you up (interview with Irene).

Increased mobility necessitated the development of accommodation practices outside of the expense of hotels. There developed the pattern of informal accommodation with friends which spread rapidly in the post-war period. One feature of such accommodation practices relates to the living conditions of the people concerned. The kind of family organisation described in this extract suggests a loose family structure in which young people, treated by their parents as independent adults were allowed to live in separate accommodation within the confines of the family home. Parents do not seem to have worried about middleclass social niceties but rather let these *adults* sort out their own lives.

One reason why parents tended not to worry about their children going away was because the children grew up in a community situation in which their friends tended to be both local and long-standing. One interviewee, who described driving from Sydney's western suburbs to the coast for the weekend in the mid 1950s described it this way:

> No (my parents didn't really mind) they knew my fiancé very well. He was down every night. I insisted he come down every night so they got to know him very well. … (My parents) certainly knew Colleen and Wanda because we had grown up next door to one another. They knew Laurie, they knew Tony, it was a sort of family affair (interview with Margaret).

The description of the group as being like a 'family affair' is a very apt one. In an important sense the family as a conceptual construct here is not limited to the domestic household but involves other people who are known through being established members of the local community. Not only are

these young people 'adults' but their behaviour is guaranteed through the operation of community consensus, in this case they guarantee each other's behaviour.

In the post-war period when there was a large housing shortage (see e.g. Spearritt 1978, pp. 83-87) it is difficult to know how many bodgies and widgies or, indeed, young people in general, lived away from their parents. In the past it was not a normal occurrence but certainly some of the people about whom we are talking did live away from their parents' home, for one reason or another. Connell *et al.* in *Growing Up in an Australian City* estimates that, in 1950, by the age of 18 only just over 1% of boys and girls lived in their own flats, and under 3% of boys and 2% of girls lived in boarding houses. (Connell *et al.* 1957, p. 28). Unfortunately no class breakdown is available but it would seem safe to assume that the majority living away from home came from the more working-class end of the class spectrum, furtherest away from the influence of the ideology of the middle-class family.

Within the middle-class ideology for children to leave home without being married and therefore able to set up another *home* was viewed as sign of family dislocation' (Stratton 1992, p. 165)

'and a step towards disorder — the street expanding its domain at the expense of the home. This view dominated in the Press. For example in the *Sydney Sun* for 18 June 1956, there was a report headlined *Bodgie widgie 'nest' raided.* The account told of a police raid on a Cronulla weekend cottage:

> More than 20 teenagers of both sexes were in the cottage when the police arrived at 2 a.m., but many escaped into the bush.
>
> Six bodgies and five widgies were arrested.
>
> Following this morning's raid three girls aged 13, 14 and 16 were charged with being exposed to moral danger.
>
> Five youths, aged 17 to 19, were charged with carnally knowing girls and one youth was charged with offensive language.

During this period, at the height of the moral panic, this press report, in common with ones we have already discussed, asserts the theme of bodgies and widgies being an organised group. The report claims that:

> The raid followed several weeks of secret investigations and police believe it broke up one of Sydney's most active sections of the cult.

The use of the cottage then becomes a seemingly deliberate attack on the moral probity of the city, if not the nation. In fact, as we are told later in the report, *the group* had been renting cottages regularly at weekends for between $8 and $10. From the point of view of the young people one suspects the renting of a cottage enabled them to have a break from their weekly activities and gave them some privacy. From the point of view of the Press and the police, unsupervised young people renting houses was clearly a major step on the way to the breakdown of social order because, as an image, it was opposed to the position of the conjugal home as the site of order. The house in this

story has not become a home but a nest, a place of resort by birds and animals and insects, by using the term *nest,* then, the newspaper report opposes this form of *non-family* living, and the lack of social and moral order which seemingly accompanies it, to a taken-for-granted image of the middle-class conjugally-based family and the moral and social order with which it is associated.

With less importance placed on the working-class household as the family home it was correspondingly more common — though still not very common — to leave it before marriage. Here is one person's story of how she left home in Manly:

> I left home when I was 16 and moved into accommodation which only took ladies — and I had a boyfriend.

> It wasn't a flat. It was a house that was owned by a nice old lady that rented out rooms to single ladies and, of course, that's where I wanted to go. It was safe. I was with other women — there were about half a dozen of us there.' (Stratton 1992, p. 166)

> 'Yes, it was unusual to leave home, I was the first of my group to leave home. I was very young. I did it because I was self-sufficient, self-supporting. My parents were divorced and I was living with my mother and I wanted to get out. As with all mothers and daughters we didn't get along. We were quite a normal family (interview with Pamela).

I have made the point before about this interviewee that she came from a more (lower) middle-class background than many of the bodgies and widgies. Here, again, we can see the effect of this in the type of accommodation she found for herself. A lady's rooming house was much more respectable than a bed sitter on one's own. It suggested a moral *correctness* with the owner keeping an eye on the behaviour of her tenants.

The separation of the woman's parents was also, as we shall see in a moment, not an unusual state of affairs even though it was rare enough for this woman to have been the only one of her group in this situation:

> Yes, I was the only one of my group that had divorced parents. It didn't affect me in any way whatsoever. It didn't affect my friends. It was no big deal except that my sister's girlfriend said to her one day 'Is Pamela an orphan?,' which was very odd. I mean the child obviously didn't understand what a divorce was.

In fact it would not have been odd for the girl not to know about divorce because divorce *per se* was still quite hard to get. Major divorce reform, as I discuss below, did not occur until 1959. Even then, of course, divorce for Catholics remained extremely rare. But it is clear from this passage that divorce was not frowned on among this group. More, it seems that single parent families were relatively common. In discussing working-class family structure we need to remember that the ideal of the permanently together married couple was very much a middleclass preoccupation which took the married couple as the basis for social and moral order. In Sydney the original bodgies and widgies used to live around Kings Cross and one complicating factor in clarifying a life style for a social construct like the bodgies and widgies is the shading off into other groupings.

Spearritt, when discussing Kings Cross, writes that:

> The Cross has been a central image of city life in Sydney for many decades. Sydney writers claimed it as all that Australia knows of Bohemia while Sydney cartoonists depicted it as 'no place for a Melbourne man' (Spearritt 1978, p. 244).

St Kilda has always seemed to lag a little behind the Cross. The Cross, in the immediate post-war period, as now, was home to a large bohemian population; many groups, often overlapping, lived there such as homosexuals, artists and prostitutes. McDonald describes how:

… the Bodgies were looked upon as colourful exotics by many of the [Kings Cross] local non-Bodgies and were often specifically invited to the non-' (Stratton 1992, p. 167)

> 'Bodgie parties in the district, which were attended by, to use informants' designations, "socialites" "bohemians", and "homosexuals" (McDonald 1951, section VIII, p. 108).

In this milieu bodgies supported themselves in a variety of street-based ways. Some bodgies, like some of the larrikins whom Murray describes, lived off the earnings of their girlfriends who worked as prostitutes. Equally some bodgies worked as male prostitutes or sold parts of stolen cars or worked more generally in the black market (see McDonald 1951, section VIII). However, as we have seen, the bulk had conventional, legal jobs and lived in the parental home. There were many gradations away from the middle-class imposed norm.

The concept of the family as a stable and permanent institution based on the *lifetime* union of two people in marriage is, I have argued, a middle-class ideal which has historically been striven for in middle-class domestic order and which the middle class have attempted to impose on the working class over the past 150 years This imposition corresponds to middle-class campaigns to *regularise* the domestic conditions of working-class life. The overwhelming significance of the permanent family, mapped onto the domestic household, for the middle class is epitomised in their construction of prostitution as a part of the threat to the family and therefore to social order. As Sturma (1978) has argued in his article on women convicts sent to Australia around the turn of the 19th century:

> While upper-middle-class people labelled any woman who cohabited outside marriage a prostitute, among the British working-class cohabitation was prevalent (Sturma 1978, p. 8).

Prostitution, then, was during this period, a term used to label women involved in any form of relationship that deviated from the middle-class norm. Although marriage *per se* seems to have become increasingly common among the working class in Australia, as elsewhere, during the last 150 years, the acceptance of the ritual has not altered working-class understandings of relationships which, although seemingly significantly altered by middle-class pressures appear, to some degree, to have been preserved.

One very important historical reason for domestic instability in the late 1940s was the effect of the Second World War. The war produced a large number of broken homes either as a result of death, subsequent incompatibility or many other reasons. As one interviewee said:

> I think the most relevant point to the bodgie cult was what attracted people to it. For myself, I came from a broken home. I was born in 1942, and my father done a runner and left my sister and myself to be brought up by my grandparents who were in their fifties. There were a lot of fellows around the area in the same situation. Their fathers had died, being killed in the war, and they were dumped on their grandparents as well (interview with Graham).' (Stratton 1992, p. 168)

'Here, in addition, we can see how the middle-class pathology of broken home and delinquency was assimilated and became, in a transmuted form, a part of working class 'common sense' knowledge.

Connell *et al.* (1957, p. 28) estimated from census figures that, by the time they were 19 between 5% and 10% of Sydney adolescents would experience parental estrangement or divorce. In real terms the Australian figures for divorce jump from 3575 in 1942 to 8 791 in 1947. After this peak, caused one assumes by wartime dislocation, the figure evens out to between about 6 500 and 7 000, climbing gradually along with the increasing population. (Borrie in Elkin 1957, p. 19). It was not until 1959 that divorce was made somewhat easier in all Australian states by the decision to include 'separation for five years' as a basis for divorce under Federal law. The difficulty and expense of divorce, as well as the opprobrium attached to it, means that the number of separations and subsequent *de facto* relationships during the 1950s is likely to have been considerably higher. Once again the effect of conventional morality would have been to concentrate such families in the working class.

Some young people seem to have found it necessary to rent accommodation because of the breakup of the parental home. One interviewee who had been a bodgie and who was living in Toowoomba in the mid-1950s having ridden his motor bike up there from Sydney estimated that most of his friends lived communally in six rented or deserted houses. Overall he estimated that around 50% of his associates in Toowoomba had no parental home to which they could return.

Sex

Perhaps the most emotive area of working-class youth life to come under the spotlight of the moral panic was sex. In many of the newspaper accounts of the late 1950s liquor and sex go together. Here is part of a typical story again filed from Adelaide:

> At the court hearing of charges against two girls this week, one of the girls, a trim 16-year-old, admitted sleeping naked all night in bed with a bodgie.
>
> She admitted to intimacy.
>
> The girl said she drank liquor when she was with a crowd of bodgies and widgies but had never been drunk *(Truth,* Sydney, 10 April 1955).

The first significant thing here is to notice the linking of these *deviant* activities with the terms bodgie and widgie.

At the end of this chapter I will discuss alcohol usage in relation to bodgies and widgies. Here I want to concentrate on sexual behaviour. Sexual activity outside of marriage has, historically, been a

recurring theme in the middle-class images of social and moral disorder which underlie moral panics. The reason for this is plain. If, in the middle-class world view, the family forms the basis of social and moral order and if the basis of the family is marriage then, since in this world view the possibilities for, and limitations on, sexual access are constituted around marriage, then sexual activity outside of marriage must, to a greater or lesser' (Stratton 1992, p. 169)

'constructed as a part of the domestic environment, but are also images of it, extramarital sexual activity by them, be they married or not, is seen as more threatening, and therefore more shocking, when compared to similar behaviour by males. In this there is another correspondence between middle-class ideas and working class ideas. As we saw in chapter 4 working-class street culture excludes women. However whereas middle-class ideology ideally limits all sexual activity to marriage in the working-class context sexual activity often forms the bridge between street culture and domestic life.

During the 1950s the theme of sex formed an important element in the moral panic generated around bodgies and widgies. It appeared sometimes in the context of the theme of conspiracy as in the idea of bodgie gang initiation rites for women wanting to be widgies which is present in the newspaper report about Wagga quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Most often, though, the theme of sex appeared in the context of newspaper reports, such as the story from Adelaide above, in which the horror of the sexual activity stems from the decontextualising of the girl's behaviour. This enables it to be read first in terms of the dominant middle-class understanding of non-marital sexual activity and second as an act with no legitimating context and therefore as yet another piece of behaviour evidencing the social and moral disorder from which the family protects us. What I want to do now is to provide a working-class context for the girl's behaviour through a discussion of the place of sex in working-class young people's lives during the 1950s.

The shocking fact about the girl in the *Truth* report is her admittance to intimacy with a bodgie. In fact, in the report it gets worse — from the point of view of middleclass morality — for in addition she admitted having had intimacy with five other bodgies and there seemed to have been others but' … she could not remember how many more.' In this instance, given that her companion was in bed and, one assumes, also not wearing anything the designation of him as a bodgie seems to have been provoked by his behaviour. What I want to suggest is that this sexual behaviour needs to be understood in the context of a long working-class tradition in which sex before marriage was an accepted phenomenon which operated within a well understood set of conventions about what was and what was not appropriate or acceptable and which led, in practice, to a classification of girls who indulged in sexual activity.

It is hard to gauge just how prevalent pre-marital intercourse was among working class young people. One problem, which relates to the earlier discussion of marriage and the family, is that pre-marital intercourse can only be said to occur in a situation where marriage is a normative activity. In Australia it is likely that marriage became an increasingly common working-class ritual during the middleclass drive for respectability after 1850. However marriage was superimposed on established practices. Hollingshead, in his study of *Elmtown's Youth* (1975), an ethnography of a community in the American Midwest in the early 1940s, sums up his discussion of youth sexual activity in that community by writing:' (Stratton 1992, p. 170)

> '(The) figures (of young people in the study who admitted to sexual intercourse) confirmed a general impression that the sex mores were violated far more frequently by adolescents in classes IV and V (the lower classes) than they were in class III, and more in class III than in class II (Hollingshead 1975, p. 177).

Rather than talking about sex mores being violated it would be more correct to see a conflict between the imposition, and in many ways the acceptance, of a middleclass preoccupation with the connection between sex and marriage and a traditional working-class acceptance of sex as a normal pre-marital activity. Such an acceptance, which once again links working-class culture in England, America and Australia, stretches back some hundreds of years.

> The logic of the behaviour leads from sex to pregnancy to a domestic liaison which was, increasingly, marked by marriage. Shorter, for example, who considers that there was an *illegitimacy explosion,* as he calls it, which began in the 18th century in Europe argues that:

> The illegitimacy explosion and the pre-marital sexual revolution began first among the lower classes (Shorter 1975, p. 117).

Laslett (1977, pp. 128-33) argues from a more detailed study of relevant statistics that the tradition of pre-nuptial pregnancy, and therefore of course, of pre-marital intercourse, stretches well back into the 16th century at least and that apparent fluctuations are a product of changes in attitude and changes in record keeping. In the construction of the street as a place of disorder, sex has become one more element in male dominated street culture in which the stake, for the female, is her continued acceptance as a part of the domestic-centred home culture. Measured against this is a male attitude towards sex as a part of the male (street) status structure. Again, to quote Hollingshead:

> The class IV and class V boys place a high value on "making a girl". Thus .a boy achieves status in his own eyes when he makes a girl the first time he takes her out (Hollingshead 1975, p. 315).

In Australia the situation would seem to have been similar. One informant, who was discussing the mid-1950s, commenting on the Melbourne working-class youth's practice of drawing the blinds on trains wrote this:

> We always went home on the last train to Williamstown. We'd take up the whole carriage, pull the blinds and bar the doors.

> Wild newspaper reports about the gang bangs on that train flew around. .. Of course there was a fair bit of fondling and heavy breathing but it was all done fully clothed. The main reason for pulling the blinds was alcohol (letter 21.11.83).

The question we must address is not how many people engaged in pre-marital intercourse but what was the context for any sexual activity among working-class young people.' (Stratton 1992, p. 171)

'One Brisbane interviewee remarked that:

> … it wasn't if you were going steady you weren't taking part in sexual relations. You were. You didn't talk about it. It was kind of secret. What you did talk about was booze (interview with Marie).

Sexual relations were intricately bound up with the tension between male street culture and female domesticity. Single women, as we see in chapter 4, walked a tightrope between the two domains. If, for males, intercourse raised their status in the street culture of single males, for women it distanced them from the image of domesticity. The normative situation, then, was intercourse in the context of a long-term relationship ('long-term' itself being a period subject to local interpretation) in which the male was visibly pair-bonded enough to be distanced from street culture and the female was visibly pair-bonded enough to remain associated with the domestic. In this ideal normative structure intercourse operated as a rite of passage leading towards marriage and setting up home together. Attitude towards intercourse was, therefore, an important way of classifying women.

Women were divided by men, and divided themselves, into basically three categories. One male interviewee, talking about sex for the teenage male in the mid 1950s put it like this:

> I mean it's an old saying "I like the girls who do, and I like the girls that don't and I hate the girl that says she will and then she says she won't, but the girl I like the most — and I think you'll say I'm right — is the girl who says she never does but looks as though she might" (interview with Jim).

There were the girls who would not have sexual intercourse until they got married, those that would only have sex with a regular boyfriend and those who would have sex with various males in short or very short relationships. Then there was a fourth category of girls who would have sex more or less openly with virtually any male or group of males. It was these, last girls who became known as *town-bikes* or *bags* This three category form of classification — the fourth category is usually perceived as an extension of the third category — is by no means unique to 1950s Australia. Parker, for example, in his study of working-class kids in a Liverpool, England, inner city area during the late 1960s writes this:

> Since The Boys almost always see women in sexual terms…. Basically girls are divided into three categories — 'somebody's tart,' 'dirty tickets' and the 'not having anys' (Parker 1974, p. 135).

The fundamental threat to a girl's status caused by sex is epitomised here in the use of the term *tart.* In an earlier section I quoted from an interview which used the term *bikie moll. Moll* and *tart* both have the same meaning of prostitute and, in this context, their usages demonstrates the important role a girl's decisions about intercourse played in the way the male culture classified her. Girls walked a narrow path between domestic respect, street acceptance, their own desires and their chances of landing a respectable boy for a husband.' (Stratton 1992, p. 172)

'The shading of the third and fourth categories together is a function of the girl's loss of *feminine,* including domestic, status through her preparedness to have sex with a number of boys. As a consequence a distinction between a girl prepared to have sex with a number of individual boys and one prepared to have sex with a number of boys together tends to be lost. The institution of the

gang bang is one of long standing. **Thrasher**, for example, in his account of Chicago gangs during the 1920s describes what he calls the 'gang shag':

> The gang shag includes boys from sixteen to twenty-two years of age. It is a party carried on with one woman by from fifteen to thirty boys from one gang or club. A mattress in the alley usually suffices for this purpose. This number of boys have relations with the woman in the course of a few hours (Thrasher 1927, p. 237).

Parker, in his study, likewise describes gang bangs usually involving four or five boys. In the mid-1950s one ex-bodgie from a northern New South Wales town commented in passing:

> I mean, there was a fair bit of gang-banging going on in those days but I could never get into it (interview with Jim).

Often the women involved in this activity had some real problem socially which marked them out and sex became a way of gaining some acceptance. Thus, for example, there was a woman who had only one arm. She, I was told, used to go past public bars, in a Brisbane suburb, in the late 1940s and shout in the window:

Hey fellas, how many am I having tonight.

Lette and Carey, in the semi-autobiographical novel *Puberty Blues* describe how an English migrant girl tried, similarly, to win some acceptance for herself in Sydney's surfing scene during the mid-1960s:

> If you were overweight, pimply, a migrant or just plain ugly, you couldn't get a boyfriend. If you couldn't get a boyfriend, there were two options. You could be a prude or a moll. Being a prude was too boring. If you were a moll, at least people knew who you were. Like Freida Cummins. She was fat, untanned with red hair and freckles. To make it worse she was a Porn. Most of her time she spent flat on her back (Lette & Carey 1979, pp. 74-75).

It was women like Freida who got involved (as Freida did) in what are most generally known as gang-bangs, though in some circles they are called *back-ups.*

One woman described how she observed a gang-bang in the late 1940s one night by accident. She had ridden to a remote spot with her steady boyfriend for some private sex when her boyfriend said:

> 'When the boys come on their motor bikes, go skedaddle' and we couldn't get out in time so we just had to keep quiet and hide ourselves and there was one of the town bikes and she was there with 15 blokes. 15 bikies were with her. One girl. That wasn't rape, it definitely wasn't rape. That was consent (interview with Marie).' (Stratton 1992, p. 173)

'Women who indulged in this kind of activity were relatively rare because it required a sacrifice of the ascribed position which gave them status in the society. Those who did usually felt distanced from that status for some reason in any case. However, again one must acknowledge a spectrum of behaviour. A girl might, for example, engage in a limited form of sexual behaviour with a number of boys. In this way she could, to some extent, retain her domestic status as a female:

I can remember there was one girl in Coogee… (She was) a widgie and she was a fairly worldly sort of a girl and we used to call her the Woolly Paw because she had a reputation for taking blokes up to the north headland at Coogee and masturbating them with an angora glove on, so she was called the Woolly Paw. She had a bit of a reputation (interview with Stuart).

Nevertheless, as this interviewee goes on to emphasise, intercourse usually occurred between couples in a lengthy relationship:

But most guys had a fairly steady girlfriend, I don't say they weren't getting sex from them … (interview with Stuart).

I have said nothing about girls who did not indulge at all in what is colloquially known as *sex before marriage.* The very term itself suggests the middle-class values which provide a basis for the association. Such women were doubtless common in post-war working-class society, however it was not they who were written up in newspapers, designated as widgies.

One of the complexities of discussing the question of long relationships during the 1950s is the confusion concerning their nature. The problem here lies in the American middle-class evolution of *the date* during the 1920s. As I have noted in chapter 1 **Fass** (1977) gives a historical background to this development. Put simply, the date evolved on American campuses during the 1920s when there was a large influx of middle-class students. It developed as an alternative to the increasingly impractical chaperone system. The basis of the date was that it involved no commitment by either party either to the possibility of a relationship or, concomitantly, to any physical contact of a sexual nature whatsoever. Both males and females could date around with impunity because the date simply gave them an opportunity to meet one another. Further dates with one particular person could in time lead to some expectation of commitment and some graduated degree of sexual contact.

The impact of the concept of the date has been two-fold. Firstly, American middle-class researchers, and subsequently researchers outside of America, have tended to accept the date as the normal basis for pre-marital social interaction between the sexes. Secondly there has been a tendency for aspects of the date to be exported from middle-class America as a part of *acceptable* teenage behaviour. Usually in a less elaborated form than in America the date has been incorporated into middle-class teenage behaviour in both England and Australia. In all three countries there have been attempts to impose the date on working-class youth practices as a part of the ongoing process of moralisation. This process of' (Stratton 1992, p. 174)

'moralisation is not necessarily conscious or deliberate but occurs in the context of claims to the existence of a unitary culture underpinning the whole society.

To take the first point. Hollingshead, for example, tells us that, in Elmtown:

Slightly more than four girls in five (81 %) report that they dated in April in contrast to 69% of the boys. The girls likewise have on the average more dates than the boys. The mean number by sex is: girls, 3.6, boys, 2.9 (Hollingshead 1975, p. 169).

Dates, in the middle-class context, may lead to *going steady* where a degree of commitment, and of sexual intimacy, is involved. Hollingshead, with a remarkable lack of understanding of the two different traditions about which he is writing, explains:

> Going steady is interpreted as courtship in classes IV and V. Moreover, these classes presuppose that it will lead to early marriage … (Hollingshead 1975, p. 319).

Here Hollingshead is applying the middle-class cultural idea of the date to an entirely different working-class cultural practice.

In Australia the idea of the date was introduced through American films and, later, magazines and television programmes. *Women's Weekly,* for example, in its *For Teenagers* monthly section, 19 January 1955, had a full-page article addressed to boys entitled *First Date.* This explained that:

> The first thing you have to do when you are taking a girl out is to ask her.
>
> This sounds easy but it can be difficult. The ideal way is to telephone.
>
> We are then told, among other things, that the girl should tell the boy to wait on the phone while she asks her mother's permission. Four years later, *Teens Today,* in its July/August 1959 issue, had a section entitled: *Boys agree: we ask for a first date because …*

In the next issue Ellie described her *Perfect Date:*

> My first big dance, the boy brought me a bracelet of little, tiny roses. Another time when I wore this dark-yellow strapless, my date sent three little brownish-green orchids with a dingus on the back so they fastened to my bare shoulder. On dreamdust! I mean orchids, and me sixteen then! Its a wonder I recovered my strength to dance *(Teens Today,* September! October 1959, p. 22).

All the girls' perfect date was the formal ball. One girl described going to what the article calls the 'ex-student's ball' which we may assume was the graduation ball. There is no explicit account of class background here — teenagers are, after all, just teenagers — but it is clear from the emphasis on the formal ball, the mention of students and the amount of money needed for such formal dresses and for corsages that these are not working-class kids.' (Stratton 1992, p. 175)

'The assumptions surrounding the date were very different from those surrounding the working-class arrangement to meet. The formality of dating represented an attempt to enable young people to meet a variety of possible partners before going steady. In the first place the date was always to go somewhere, the making of the arrangement was not, itself, considered a meeting. By contrast in working-class culture the street and other public places were sites where young people met. Meeting a boyar girl in the street, the dance, the cinema or wherever, itself constituted an opportunity to decide on the desirability of another meeting and the agreement to meet again constituted the beginning of a commitment.

The apparent integration of the date into Australian working-class cultural life could occur because, in some ways, it resembled already established practices. Of course working-class parents did try to

regulate their children's relationships. Here is a good example of parents literally taking their daughter out of the street:

> I remember that I was standing (in the street) when I was still at school, about 16, and I had gone to the pictures with my sister as a cover. And I met this fella there. He didn't bring me home but I got off the bus with my sister and sent her home and I was standing at the corner about four houses along from where Mum and Dad lived in this flat. One of my aunties was staying and she got up and peeped down and saw me talking to three or four boys and she got Dad out of bed and sent him down to bring me home because I was on the street corner talking to boys. That was considered a very bad thing to do. I was at terrible moral risk apparently (interview with Marie).

As we have seen the street was a jeopardous place for a young working-class woman. Her parents will have thought she was at moral risk. Nevertheless this was the danger working-class girls had to face because girls and boys met in this space. As I remarked before working-class girls had to walk a moral tightrope on the street.

The date, with its more formal structure, had great appeal to the middle class. It meant, for one thing, that parents could keep a check on who their children's friends were. One Australian woman remembers her first date, in the late 1940s, like this:

> I had my first date when I was 16 and I was taken out on my own with a boy that picked me up from home and took me to the movies and took me home. And then there was the dread of kissing him goodnight at the door.

When asked how she knew this was a date, Pamela replied:

> Because he asked me to go out with him and I told him to ask my mother, which he did, and mum said it was alright so I went out with him (interview with Pamela).

A part of Pamela's dread about the kiss on her date had to do with knowledge that it was *expected.* Her dating behaviour was learnt from American films:' (Stratton 1992, p. 176)

> 'Oh yes, (the kiss) was the pay-back for being taken out. Because we knew from the movies that the girl kissed the boy goodnight after the date. We would never discuss it among ourselves or with our parents or anything. It was just instinctive through being fed all this stuff through the movies. We thought we were supposed to (interview with Pamela).

This woman was not alone in feeling anxious about kissing on the first date. It was a vexed issue. *Women's Weekly,* in the article on the First Date held the position that one should not kiss on the first date. In late August and early September of the same year (1955) a letter on the issue in the *Women's Weekly's* letters page for teenagers provoked a large number of other teenagers to write in. The *Women's Weekly* reiterated the advice it had given in January that kissing on the second or third date was acceptable but not on the first date. In middle-class culture there is a tradition of the sexless kiss — the *peck* on the cheek or lips — which denotes greeting or farewelling. The problem seems to have arisen because kissing, as a first stage in the traditional working-class hierarchy of

sexual activities, represented the meeting point between the ideally sexless date and a traditional working-class link between 'going out together' and sex.

The working-class tradition was constructed around the twin images of male *freedom* in the street and female *domesticity* in the home. Having a steady girlfriend was one step away from marriage and a girl might become a steady simply by asking her out. Indeed it was not unusual to marry the first boy one went out with. One woman, looking back on her youth in the mid-1950s had this to say:

> You were definitely on the outer if you didn't have a steady boyfriend by about fourteen. You were definitely on the outer. I wouldn't call it falling into a rut but you just became that involved over the time and it was almost a, it wasn't a peer pressure, but a pressure which kept you going steady with this guy... Most of the girls I knew married their first boyfriend (interview with Margaret).

In this traditional system one meeting leads to another. The pressure, as this interviewee terms it, is built into the cultural pattern. Such a trajectory, then, of marrying one's first boyfriend, may itself be considered normal, if not normative, behaviour. In this context the possibility of sex was an important bargaining counter for a girl and one can understand why girls who were somewhat free with their sexual favours were not popular with other girls.

The discussion of sex leads us into the question of contraception. The first thing that needs to be said about attitudes to, and the practice of, contraception during the post-war period is that the pill was introduced for use for contraceptive purposes by Australian women in January 1961. The introduction, and gradual acceptance down through social class, of a form of contraception which could be taken by a woman outside of the situation of intercourse both necessitated a change in attitude towards intercourse by turning contraception into a premeditated issue. It also effected, to a certain degree, a change in power relations between the sexes by changing the person responsible for contraception. Nevertheless, as' (Stratton 1992, p. 177)

'the recurrent debate over the use of the pill by girls under 16 illustrates, its usage among the groups about whom I am writing is still relatively limited. Unfortunately the discussion of the connotations of its usage, for example, the idea that an unattached woman is sexually loose if she is *on the pill* as compared to the use of the pill as an aspect in constructing a *permanent* relationship, is outside my ambit here. I am concerned with contraceptive practices in the period before the pill. Discussion of contraceptive methods before the pill centre around three main methods, coitus interruptus, pessaries and condoms. In his 1965 study of *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People,* based on a survey conducted in England, Schofield was able to construct the following table of use:

	Boys(%)	Girls(%)
Sheath	84	78
Diaphragm	8	14
Chemical	7	9
Douche	0	0

Withdrawal	24	40
Safe Period	6	19
Other	7	9

(Schofield 1965, p. 107).

Schofield's figures are for sexually experienced young people over all classes. My impression, and it is only an impression, from talking to ex-bodgies and widgies, in other words working-class young people, is that pessaries were rather more popular than indicated by Schofield's English study, and that withdrawal was probably, in intention anyway, more popular than condoms. This would accord with older, turn of the century attitudes towards contraception. Writing of England Thompson notes that:

> … the fact is that for most Edwardians the only acceptable contraceptive techniques were either withdrawal during intercourse or complete abstention. Mechanical techniques were known, both through covert advertising and through talk at work, but they suffered from their association with prostitutes (Thompson 1975, p. 71).

The increasing acceptance of contraception as a part of the sex act during the 1940s and 1950s seems to have increased the use of the sheath over this period. Among unmarried couples such acceptance intervened in the traditional structure, which I outlined above, of *steady* relationship, intercourse, marriage where marriage was often precipitated by pregnancy. In the working-class scheme of things it was not pregnancy which was the problem, rather it was the baby which needed feeding, clothing and looking after which was the problem. This is one reason why abortion remained, for a long time, the most popular form of birth control. In' (Stratton 1992, p. 178)

> 'Australia, for example, Allen describes abortion as the primary means of birth control during the period between the two world wars (1982, p. 119; more generally on the working class and abortion see Finch & Stratton 1988).

Schofield remarks that:

Many girls feel that birth control is the man's business … (Schofield 1965, p.l07).

and certainly this was the case in post-war Australia. There was, for example, the story I was told of a bodgie who, when asked by his partner just before intercourse what protection he was using, tore off one of his shirt buttons and claimed he was putting in a pessary. One woman remarked to me that:

> It was (my boyfriend's) responsibility when I was going steady. Sure. It became my responsibility after I was married. And I always felt that it was a real burden. I became more and more depressed after that. It was my responsibility (interview with Marie).

The shift in responsibility for contraception points to another important shift. Sexual intercourse moves from a location as a potential part of street culture, dominated by the male, to a part of the domestic sphere where responsibility lies with the female. When it is a part of street culture intercourse has the potential, depending on the social context and on whether or not the woman falls pregnant, to change the status of one or other of the couple involved. The irony of the middleclass attempts to spread knowledge of, and acceptance of, contraception was that, in making intercourse outside of marriage safe from pregnancy, it made the situation of unmarried working-class girls more, rather than less, perilous.

Condoms were bought from chemists, once a boy got over the embarrassment, but not all chemists would serve young people who they thought were unmarried and where they thought a person under the age of consent might be involved. During this period the age under which a girl's consent was no defence against a charge of rape was 16 in New South Wales, the A.C.T., Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, 17 in Queensland and Tasmania and 13 in the Northern Territory. One male interviewee noted that chemists tended to keep condoms under the counter:

> … and you had to get to know which chemist you could go into and ask for them. Some chemists wouldn't serve you. … In those days there wasn't any restriction on (sex) but if you were younger than 18 it was considered that you were too young to get married and, you know, you probably couldn't afford to get married anyhow. And some chemists would sell them, others wouldn't and some guys, probably a little bit older than others, would buy three or four for their mates (interview with Stuart).

The area of contraception highlights well the dilemma of the working-class male when it came to sex. Using an artificial form of contraception, as opposed to withdrawal, involved, in the main, the use of condoms. Not only would these have to be bought, often involving awkward negotiations with unhelpful chemists, but' (Stratton 1992, p. 179)

'they would have to be put on, often in cramped circumstances and under the influence of alcohol whilst worrying that one's partner might change her mind. It is no wonder that many males chose withdrawal or nothing particularly as, in premarital sex, the responsibility not only lay with the male but the woman would often not consider it important that the responsibility was fulfilled. The awareness of sex did not involve a consideration of contraception. This, as I have noted above, is an important reason why abortion has tenaciously remained an important form of working-class birth control.

The kudos attached to sexual intercourse was balanced by the responsibility of a forced marriage due to pregnancy. It was in this way many bodgies left the street culture of single males. One male summed it up like this:

> People used condoms or premature withdrawal, which was referred to as 'blowing on the tail feathers,' or some damn thing they used to call it. But there was a lot of bodgies and widgies ended up getting married because they were in the family way and some of them settled down and others went on to thinking they were married bachelors and were still going down the pub and still getting into fights … (Graham W., p.18).

And, as this interviewee points out, many males were reluctant to leave the street culture of the single male.

One woman summed up her attitude towards sex and contraception in the late-1940s like this:

> Yes, but you don't think (coitus interruptus) is risky business because it's the only thing you've got and you don't know about anything else. And he tells you that it's alright and you're pretty gullible and naive and you think, 'Well, that'll be alright.' And that was alright for about three years although I did a lot of worrying (interview with Marie).

This woman ended up getting pregnant and getting married to the man she had been going out with for 3 years. Such a situation was both very common and very horrifying to parents, presenting the opportunity for much gossip to neighbours. Once again middle-class ideas of respectability were in conflict with traditional working-class practices. The alternative to marriage was a trip to another city- Melbourne was popular from Sydney, Tasmania and Victorian country towns otherwise Sydney — in order either to have the baby and have it adopted or else to have an illegal abortion.

The advent of motor bike ownership among predominantly young males in the late 1940s onwards meant that there was an increase in mobility. We have seen how this affected distance travel but, in addition, it meant a greater degree of local travel was possible. It is from this period that we can date the shift from the traditional *lover's lane* to the rise of accepted, more remote areas which were known as places for private sex. As one woman said:

We used to carry a rug on the motor bike. We used to park around the lagoon, or in the bush. You always had a rug with you. It certainly wasn't' (Stratton 1992, p. 180)

> 'in a home, it certainly never was in bed. Never that comfortable. We used to get shifted along by the police. The police would come and shine torches on us and say "Go home" (interview with Marie).

Sex for these working-class young people was an accepted part of their lives, a part which they were aware was inconsistent with the bourgeois morality which dominated the cultural universe:

> Oh yes sex. Individual sex. You didn't have to [pack-rape] because the girls were agreeable. Sex wasn't looked on with horror, even though it should have been in our day. In our day it was a terrible thing for a girl to go to bed with a fellow. But we didn't feel that way. We didn't feel bad about it. It was outside influences that made us feel bad. But we didn't feel that way (interview with Irene).

Here is a woman with a good understanding of how the accepted sexual practices of her group were in conflict with the dominant moral order. Within this social order, however, the male domination was very clear. Women's sexual access was used in power relations between males:

> If a guy had a girl, and someone else liked her, he'd … to be top bodgie he'd probably say "Oh, you can borrow her for the night". The girl would be so scared of losing him that she'd go along (interview with Irene).

The rise in youth car ownership in the late 1950s, then, did not change conventional morality by providing a source of privacy. Rather it simply made established practices easier. In the mid-1950s people who rode motor bikes were still carrying rugs in their saddle bags. One ex-bodgie of the period described the use of a car like this:

> Well, there were particular spots. At the back of the meatworks hill was the big one in Casino.
>
> Everyone used to have a blanket in their saddle bag.
>
> But, well, not much fucking down on a wet night for the bike boys. There wasn't much bike riding. I mean the tyres were just not up to it in those days.
>
> Interviewer: Must have been the advantage of having a car, I mean you had somewhere enclosed you could fuck.
>
> Interviewee: Yes, it was. That's why I got one. I got a Volkswagon, and a pretty snazzy machine it was too.
>
> I got the gear stick which I'd seen in the car races which you could lift up and drop down (interview with Jim).

Teenage Parties

The 1950s saw the rise of the specifically teenage party. One woman who had been a widgie in the late 1940s described parties like this:' (Stratton 1992, p. 181)

> '· .. sometimes after a dance someone would say 'Oh, they're having a party at my place, who wants to go?' So whoever wanted to go would go. It wouldn't necessarily mean you'd be looked down on if you didn't go. It wasn't a social event (interview with Irene).

This woman is talking about young people who had access to their own accommodation. The point that parties were not social events for these young people is important because this is precisely what they later became. By the mid- 1950s one assertion of the new teenage independence took the form of viewing parties as a place for meeting and interacting with other young people. Alternatively the new teenage parties might be viewed as another consequence of the forced retreat from the streets. For males in particular parties became places for striking up possible sexual liaisons.

Once again. we can trace one source to the working-class tradition of treating people in their teenage years as adults. Thus, historically, working-class parties integrated people of all ages in activities such as drinking and smoking, as well as sexual negotiations, which, in middle-class households, would have been frowned upon for teenagers not yet considered to be adult.

We have already seen a situation, travelling, in which there was little parental interference in behaviour outside the home by young people who middle-class norms would have designated as still requiring supervision by parents or adults *in loco parentis.* Here, located in the context of the party, is another example of working-class assumptions which were different from middle-class morality, this time as that morality was inscribed in legislation:

Oh, we had parties in the homes. The mothers and fathers were quite happy to have these parties. There would be booze there of course. Another point is that parties didn't go on till three in the morning as they do now or even dawn. They all ended about 11ish or 12ish so you could get the trams and buses home (interview with Rex).

Here we see evidence of youthful working-class drinking — another sign of young people, not yet 'teenagers' being treated as adults — at a time when the legislation in force forbade drinking in hotels until the age of 18 years. In Queensland the age for lawful drinking was 21 years. Eighteen is a median age in relation to the construction of a category of youth. Those states such as Queensland and Western Australia that had established the age of legal drinking at 21 years reduced this age in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Here is another example of how the established working-class practice of treating young people as adults interlocked with middle-class recognition of the new category of *youth* to produce an effect which appears, to many middle-class observers, as a loosening of standards. I will return to the question of alcohol consumption towards the end of this chapter. In middle-class families the tradition of observation of young people during a period of potential licence was already in place since young people, because they were not yet adults, were consequently not regarded as responsible and had to be' (Stratton 1992, p. 182)

'overseen by the family. As I have already discussed, the police, from the mid-19th century used their powers to extend this supervision outside of the home and outside of the middle class. In the late 1950s as teenage young people were recategorised as partial adults this observation took on a more complex form. Simultaneously working-class parents were confronted with their *adult* children wanting to have parties without their presence. In this way both classes learnt to allow young people to have parties without their presence, the parents often leaving the home and returning to finish the party about 11.00 p.m. or midnight.

More generally, one might see the teenage party as, increasingly, a time of potential licence and misrule and, in this sense, a shift of street culture into the domestic home. It is no wonder, then, that the party was an activity fraught with problems. As early as 1952, well before it developed its monthly teenage section, *Women's Weekly* ran a *Special Supplement* describing how young people's parties should be organised and including a list of party games which, as the article said 'help to break the ice' *(Women's Weekly,* 9 July 1952). In its November/December issue for 1959 *Teens Today* took up the vexed question of parties. Putting itself in the position of a teenage girl wanting to know what a teenage boy looked for in a party it asked "a teenage member of its staff", Bob Rutledge:

"Okay," he shrugged, "but remember — you asked for it. I'm eighteen now and my idea of a perfect blast is no chaperones, a sky-high pile of food, some cool music for dancing and romancing".

After the staff got over the *shock* of Bob Rutledge's desire to have a party without chaperones, and having established that the presence of someone to keep an eye on the party was necessary, they asked Bob to describe the best party he had been to with chaperones:

"It was a backyard barbecue," Bob told us. "And, seriously, it was the best party I've ever been to — period. $_0$ kidding, that deal began to swing right off the bat. For one thing all the boys were real relaxed and comfortable. We were in sports shirts — always a blessing — we were outdoors so we didn't .have to worry about breaking or spilling stuff, we had two great chaperones who minded their own business." Bob smiled dreamily. "The food was fine — charcoal-grilled stuff — a radiogram was hooked up in the garage, and later, one of the boys got out a guitar and sang some folk songs".

Bob went on to suggest that about 12 people, 5 or 6 of each sex, made the best party.

This format was the one which *Teens Today* was, not so subtly, advocating as appropriate for a teenage party. In it we can see that there is a compromise with middle-class convention: boys shouldn't have to dress up and chaperones should be unobtrusive. In the 1952 *Women's Weekly* article the photographs show the boys wearing suits with bow-ties and the girls wearing off the shoulder, flared party frocks. Such formality helped to keep the potential disorder at bay. However as the party took on more of the functions of the street, now allied to the new image of the teenage consumer, such formality seemed increasingly out of place.' (Stratton 1992, p. 183)

'The reality of the working-class teenage party emphasised the value and traditions of street culture:

Yes, we used to have parties, my word we did. They always used to try and organise them for when their parents would be away. Mainly the girls used to organise the parties. There was one girl that lived at Kingsford. She was renowned for her parties. She was called the 'hot box.' … She used to throw pretty good parties but her father was dead and she was brought up by her mother for a number of years (interview with Stuart).

This interviewee is talking about the early 1950s and we can see the shift from working-class parties with a mixed age range to parties being held when parents were, for some reason, not present. One constant, however, is that it was usually the girls who threw the parties. This applies across classes and Bob Rutledge went so far as to claim that parties were given by girls for girls with boys, one assumes, a necessary but unwanted extra. Certainly the role of women as the mainstay of the home seems to have been important in the new teenage girl's role as party provider. Parties not only mostly took place in the (parents') home but, again, provided a context in which girls could met boys though in, again, potentially jeopardous circumstances. Misrule, and particularly sexual licence, could replace respectability.

In the extract above, from the nickname of the girl we can tell that it already has. During this period the novelty of teenage parties meant also a lack of an accepted format. This is clearly illustrated in the shifts in recommended etiquette between the *Women's Weekly* article of 1952 and the *Teens Today* piece of 1959. Experiments with form tended to occur most freely outside the highly restrictive middle-class format. This was because the concerns of the newly independent *teenager* overlapped with the concerns of the working-class young adult. The interviewee went on to describe the parties he went to like this:

I don't suppose teenage parties these days are very much different. We used to start off, everybody in one room dancing and then in most cases we would have our grog stashed outside

the house in case the parents came home and we would go out and have a few beers and then come back in and do a bit more dancing. And eventually the lights would go out and one by one the couples would disappear either into bedrooms, into other rooms or out into the backyard or maybe up the park up the street or something like that. They sometimes used to go quite late too. On occasions I have got home from a party at 4 o'clock in the morning after partying on and taking the girl home eventually (interview with Stuart).

In this newly evolving aspect of potential misrule the threat lay in the relaxation of restraint imposed by parental presence or parental return. The folk devil status of the bodgie or widgie in this context lay in their refusal to accept restraint, claiming instead the party as a sanction for the misrule of street culture emphasising the party as a time outside of day to day life and therefore as a time of potential licence and disruption. In this, also, the new image of the teenager and traditional working-class street cultural practices again overlapped' (Stratton 1992, p. 184)

Alcohol

'I want, now, to turn from the rise of the teenage party to the question of alcohol consumption. From the point of view of the middle-class image of social and moral order alcohol consumption poses a threat because of the loss of rationality involved. In this alcohol falls into that 19th century category of the *stimulant* which we have looked at in chapter 4. The crucial difference being that alcohol remained legal in Australia. We saw in an earlier newspaper extract, the trim 16-year-old found in bed with a bodgie by police admitted drinking alcohol. I now want to contextualise this form of licence with reference to working-class culture. This woman is remembering the normal practice around Brisbane in the early 1950s:

> The men drank, the girls did drink but this is the funny way they drank. The respectable-type girl didn't go to a lounge and, of course, she couldn't have gone to a public bar. So the men, the young men would go to the public bar, or in cars, and the men would bring them out a shandy (interview with Marie).

These young men would, most likely, have been under the legal drinking age in Queensland.

In the extract from the newspaper concerning the 16-year-old girl drinking alcohol the consumption of alcohol is constructed as an exceptional deviation. Exceptional in the sense that the press report implies that all drinking was unusual for girls of her age in the society in which she lived. This was not the case among working class young people. Alcohol consumption by young people of both sexes who were viewed by their parents, and viewed themselves, as adults was experienced as a normal occurrence and was constituted as a normal part of the working-class cultural order. Again, if we got back to the interviewee from Manly we can see, once, more, an acceptance of the imposed moral order in relation to drinking:

> When we started drinking at about 18, 18 for me, we only used to drink the ladies and girls had Pimms No.1 cup. Anywhere we went we only had Pimms No. 1. We didn't drink beer, sometimes we would have a shandy. But it was Pimms No.1 cup that was the big ladies drink in those days. The fellows drank beer. Vodka and orange juice was too fast for us (interview with Pamela).

Alcohol consumption has traditionally been one of the signs of adulthood in Australian society. This woman, starting drinking at 18, was showing an acceptance of the legally imposed age. In addition she implies the existence of a spectrum of drinks, distinguished by their associations with one or other sex.

Beer was a male's drink and the more fruity, cocktail-oriented the drink the more acceptable it was as a female's drink. Only women of dubious character went into hotels as a matter of course in the immediate post-war period. One woman in Brisbane remembers how going to the hotel with the boys in the early 1950s involved staying outside:' (Stratton 1992, p. 185)

'Someone had a car and about six or seven of us would sit in the car. But mostly we sat on the motor bikes on the pillions up on the stand and drinks were brought out (interview with Marie).

More generally this same woman remembers:

> The men drank, the girls did drink but this is the funny way they drank. The respectable-type girl did not go to a lounge(the only bar in Queensland hotels where women were allowed to go. Men were only allowed if accompanied by a woman.) and, of course, she couldn't have gone to a public bar. The girls would sit on motor bikes outside the public bar or in cars and the men would bring them out a shandy. Lemonade and beer. occasionally …. The only (women) who went in lounges … were the pickups and prostitutes. So you didn't go into the lounge because you didn't want to be seen as being like that.

Hotels were a male domain and, as such, had a close association with street culture. Women in hotels, like women in the street, forfeited their claim to protection through their association with the home. The increasing acceptance of women in hotels did not occur until the late 1960s and early 1970s. Queensland did not legislate to allow women into public bars until 1965, 8 years before the age for legally drinking in pubs was lowered.

In general, however, the milk bar, which had much less threatening overtones than the hotel, was the place to meet. Here the young would drink milkshakes. There even developed two drinks, one called *Bodgie's Blood* and the other *Widgie's Blood.* The former contained strawberry cordial, soda and ice cream. The latter, which seems to have been originally called a Javana Flinge, contained raspberry cordial, soda and ice cream. The effect was of a red drink with a froth on it.

The 16-year-old girl in the *Truth* article quoted from above is said to have told police:

> "I like beer, sherry and advocaat".

Sherry and advocaat were very much female drinks and point to a socialisation into the *correct* moral order. Apart from her age what damns this girl as of dubious character when it comes to alcohol consumption is her alleged liking for beer. Only women of low moral calibre, or alternatively, women not subscribing to the middle-class spectrum of alcohol acceptability, would drink beer, beer being the basis of the hotel trade. Again, then, we can see how the modern acceptance of woman drinking beer can be understood not only as a breaking away from conservative middle-class conventions but also how these conventions are reflected in established working-class distinctions

which associated particular drinking practices with particular types of women. As a Sydney interviewee from the late 1940s remarked:

> No, women didn't drink much at all. It was the guys that drank. Women did drink, but they drank the lighter drinks, the more feminine drinks. They'd drink gin or some of them would drink beer but not many (interview with Irene)' (Stratton 1992, p. 186)

'This, then, is the real context in which we need to place the Adelaide girl's statement about drinking. Her liking for sherry and advocaat suggest that, within the context of her own cultural background she is perfectly respectable, only her liking for beer is a little suspect.

I would like to sum up this discussion of sex and alcohol in the culture of working class young people by discussing this ex-bodgie's story of his first sexual experience. In this story we can see many of the themes I have been outlining brought together:

> I suppose I lost my virginity when I was about 16 years old to a 19- or 20- year-old widgie. Up until then it had been masturbation and that, and I'd been shown by my uncles and my grandfather the local eccentric wandering up and down the road in broad daylight with a lantern going. And I was told if I carried on in that manner and kept on doing that, I'd end up like that, go nutty, or blind. Grow hair on the palm of my hands, I don't know… Anyway this widgie and I got together after a party one night and she was pretty drunk and so was I. And it was terrible, a terrible thing to happen to me. I thought, she's scared of becoming pregnant and I'd brought with me a couple of condoms that were in my pocket for about two years, that I had carted round and had been transferred from one pocket to another so my mother wouldn't see them. And I had premature ejaculation and God knows what else, and the rotten little cow- she went and told all her mates and they shit-faced me in the street: 'Why don't you tie a knot in it?'; 'What sort of a fella are you, you can't even get it up' and God knows what else (interview with Graham W.).

Here we find first — the complete lack of any intimation of the American idea of a date, second — the street cultural context of the party, third — the use of alcohol, fourth — the presence of a woman of somewhat liberal sexual attitudes and, fifth — the assault on the boy's masculinity by a woman who was self-consciously positioned within street culture after his *failure.* Altogether the image, taken out of context, could be from a newspaper report, such as the one I have been commenting on from *Truth,* documenting the *evils* of bodgies and widgies. It was, in fact, one Australian working-class male's introduction to sex in the mid-1950s.

Looking generally, then, at attitudes to alcohol and sex we can see that there was, indeed, a continuity of tradition through the post-war period — and, one presumes the pre-war period also. In this sense the media were right to run the two generations of bodgies and widgies together. What was really producing the moral panic of the late 1950s was the new visibility of old established traditions which were now being practiced by young working-class males and females who were, for the first time, buying into an institutionalised, leisure-oriented mass consumption industry. It was not, as is often suggested, that the media images produced these real-life imitations but that the media images gave prominence to established, but previously unseen by the middle-class, traditions

and practices. *The Wild One* was watched by pre-existing bikies, it did not create them. At the same time we must remember that in decontextualising the behaviour of working-class young people the media was able to create a folk devil.' (Stratton 1992, p. 187)

'BLANK' (Stratton 1992, p. 188)

Conclusion

'In this book I have wanted to show how many of the activities ascribed to bodgies and widgies can be recognised either as practices which are a part of traditional working-class culture themselves, or else as novel practices manifesting traditional working-class values. The second part of my argument has been to describe the process by which many of these activities which, in working-class culture, were associated with adulthood because a person of about 17 years was in many ways regarded as an adult were, through the 1950s and 1960s, assimilated into the set of practices deemed appropriate to the new cultural category of *youth.*

The category of youth, or *the teenager,* is, as I explained in chapter 3, a category built on the late-19th century middle-class category of adolescence. The underlying themes of adolescence located around individual disruption — apparently irrational behaviour and the like — were a discursive product of the attempt to reconcile the image of the child as essentially natural and the image of society as having a learned naturalness. As .a part of the development of a consumption-oriented social order emanating from America in the early part of this century and spreading to other developed countries in this period following the Second World War, the period of adolescence was invested with a new set of ideological determinations — such as hedonism and leisure — which formed the thematic basis of the new consumerism. Adolescence was, and is, understood as an individual experience. Youth, however, is a societal category which mobilises the *unnaturalness* of adolescence as the site for an ideological structure which is the inverse of that upon which capitalism is founded. It is in this context that the category has preserved and institutionalised the disruptive quality of adolescence, which, as we have seen, was itself a transformation of a much older image. It is not that ideological terms such as thrift and work have been replaced, rather their place as the rational basis of capitalism has been supplemented by the legitimisation of' (Stratton 1992, p. 189)

'an irrational complex which lies at the basis of the consumerism which modern, mass-production capitalism requires to survive.

The irrational values of consumerism corresponded to the values of emotion and involvement underlying working-class leisure and entertainment. Because the new category of youth was based on these values many working-class practices were incorporated as material elements in the new category. Simultaneously these practices, and the values attached to them, became more visible and

adherents to the established ideology of rational recreation and High Culture fought, and are still fighting, a strong rear-guard action against what they consider to be the proletarianisation and superficialisation of the socio-cultural order.

The production of youth culture as a distinct category realised in the idea of the teenager allowed for the possibility for the existence of classifiable groupings within the cultural category of youth. Up until the 1960s the teenager and a culture associated with youth was not generally recognised and accepted in Australia. As a consequence the terms bodgie and widgie were used to apply to any, and all, behaviour by young people which was perceived by the established, and middleclass- originated, cultural order as non-normative. By non-normative here I am referring not only to the new possibilities opened up by the new leisure industries but also that variety of working-class activities which I have been discussing which appeared non-normative by the standards of established middle-class morality.

The teenager, as the vanguard of the consumer-oriented society, developed first in Australia from within working-class culture. In Australia the *jazz age* of the 1920s, which had drawn most of its participants from the middle class, was, like the immediate post-war bodgies and widgies, not classifiable as a youth culture because the cultural category had not yet been articulated, that is to say the individuals involved were labelled using other categories which usually involved seeing them as high-spirited young people led astray by bad American influences. As a consequence jazz, jazz dancing, the new clothes fashions and the like were viewed in a more general context of deviance and moral decline.

From the position of the middle class, the new consumption-based practices of working-class youth were not simply a manifestation of *young people enjoying themselves* but, combined with the new visibility of working-class behaviour which was not acceptable to middle-class morality, presented a threat to the moral order. From the point of view of the dominant Australian cultural order in the 1950s 'bodgies and widgies,' then, were discussed not as a group within the category of youth, but, rather, as, at one and the same time, a more individually-based and yet a more generalised threat to the social fabric. The leisure activities and consumption decisions of some working-class young people were not seen as a part of the advent of a consumption-based society focused on leisure, in which the category of youth, and its image, would be of crucial importance. Rather they were seen as a manifestation of a wave of predominantly working-class deviance among young people. At the day to day level of the preservation of social order people who indulged in these activities were classified as delinquents.' (Stratton 1992, p. 190)

'It needs to be asked whether or not there was ever an identifiable youth subculture which we could call bodgies and widgies or whether the people so identified were, simply, the earliest Australian teenagers. This is, in fact, an intractable problem. The cultural image of bodgies and widgies was coterminous with that of the evolving societal category of teenager in Australia until well into the late 1950s whilst in the late 1940s there was no cultural understanding of youth as a separate category.

The confusion about teenagers, which is actually a confusion about the category of youth culture, runs through many commentaries of the late 1950s. We can trace it briefly through the development

of magazines aimed at *teenagers. Women's Weekly,* well ahead of its time, seems to have been the first Australian magazine to recognise that the position of young people was changing. *Women's Weekly's* concern was not with the newly evolving teenage leisure and entertainment culture but with problems of correct social behaviour of etiquette. In its issue for 9 July 1952, *Women's Weekly* carried what it described as the 'First of a series of articles' entitled *Youth Sums Up.* This particular article was, in style, remarkably similar to that adopted by *Teens Today* in 1959. In it a boy and a girl each describe proper behaviour and dress for parties.

By 1954 *Women's Weekly's* irregular articles for young people became institutionalised in a regular monthly feature called *For Teenagers.* The first issue, 19 May 1954, included advice on which records to buy to start a record library. That the ones suggested were all classical, including works by Purcell, Hayden, Rossini and Delius among others suggests that an awareness of changes in the social behaviour of young people did not yet extend to a recognition of — or perhaps just the acceptance of — new entertainment patterns. By early 1955 the monthly section had declined back to a regular letters and advice page. That the innovative section did not last long may be traced to two reasons. First there was an emphasis on forms of behaviour and etiquette which won only a limited acceptance by working-class young people. Second, the consumer goods discussed by the articles, from the *dinner clothes* suggested in the 1952 article for boys going to a formal party or a dance held in a public place, or the dark suit for a private party, to the list of records mentioned above which were supposed to form the basis of a teenage record collection did not fit with the material and cultural consumption goods which formed a part of the new category. *Women's Weekly* seems to have wanted to construct the new Australian teenager in terms of middle-class values and practices and middle-class rational High Culture.

The first magazine to cater solely for the teenage market in Australia was *Teens Today.* The first two issues came out in July/ August 1959 and September/October 1959 were, respectively, about what *Boys* think and what *Girls* think. In the main these thoughts are about the opposite ex. As in the earlier *Women's Weekly* monthly sections the line of concern seemed to be to delineate *normal* forms of teenage behaviour, which would be within the constraints of middle-class values and practices. The strategy was to give Australian teenagers a standardised and' (Stratton 1992, p. 191)

'middle-class basis from which deviance to teenage conventionality could be judged. One significant aspect of *Teens Today* was the high level of American colloquialisms used, terms such as dope (for idiot) and the description of an important dance as a 'big blast,' and the like are very common. One reason for this was the importance of American imagery in the developing Australian teenage culture. However it is clear that *Teens Today* was going further than this. The conventionalising pressure was not simply that of the imposition of an acceptable American activity but rather a more general class-related preoccupation with what the middle class, in both America and Australia considered to be improper working-class teenage conduct. What the magazine was constructing was acceptable behaviour for the teenager. Implicit in the acceptance of youth as a cultural category was the construction of a range of patterns of behaviour and consumer goods which would be appropriate for the new Australian teenagers. *Teens Today* not only attempted to describe what was acceptable but tried to constitute itself as a part of the new, acceptable teenage culture.

During the post-war period there was a spread of American comic books. Connell *et al.* (1957) devoted a chapter to adolescent interest in this literature as a part of their survey of Sydney young people. They found the post -war popular comic book literature among boys aged between 13 and 18 years to be what they classified as superhuman, that is to say stories concerning the adventures of characters, such as Superman, with superhuman powers. The most popular comic book literature among girls in this age range was that defined as romantic. For both boys and girls — though slightly less so for girls — the least popular comic book literature was that defined as teenage. Connell *et al.* comment on this finding like this:

> Though many of these (comics with teenage themes) are humorous and well drawn, they obviously deal with teenagers in an environment of which the customs and sentiments are sufficiently different to prevent their Sydney counterparts from identifying themselves in many ways with the characters or the situations, and thus they cannot find in them the special interest which may make them more popular with American adolescents (Connell *et al.* 1957, p. 160).

It would be more true to say that, in the period around 1950-51 when this survey was conducted, the idea of the teenager was alien to both Australian young people and to the culture as a whole with the consequence that, unlike in America, in Australia these comic books did not fit into a market.

In Australia 1959 was the crucial year for the introduction of an acceptable and institutionalised formulation for the Australian teenager. In this year *PIX* started a *Platter Chatter* column for discussing new records — though rock'n'roll was still not an acceptable form of music because John Hayes spent his first (20 June) column discussing records by Sammy Davis Jnr, Mitch Miller and Tony Cabot. *PIX* was moving carefully as can be seen in this choice of records to review.' (Stratton 1992, p. 192)

'However in this same year it ran its first pin-up which was of Kookie the *teenage* figure who embodied American teenage culture, including a *flat-top* haircut, and who appeared in the American television series then being shown on Australian television called 77 *Sunset Strip.*

Teens Today was not the only magazine recognising and constructing the teenage market, and culture, in 1959. That same year another, short lived, magazine was started called *Teenage Topics.* The editorial of this magazine was very clear about the magazine's contribution to an acceptable teenage culture:

> We do not propose to moralise, that is the prerogative of others. We do realise, however, that there are amongst teenagers some, as there are adults, who do get into trouble. This is often the result of not having some interesting occupation in their spare time. We hope that by showing the many and various ways in which other Teenagers fill in their time, we can show a way of life, which may be helpful, pleasant and enjoyable, and, in due course, make better citizens of those Teenagers who do find trouble *(Teenage Topics,* August 1959, p. 1).

Such clarity of purpose is understandable when we realise that the magazine was *The Voice of over 200000 Teenage Club Members.* The magazine attempted to redefine the role of the youth club as an

important element in the constitution of a teenage culture. It accepted that the teenager existed and attempted to place itself as a part of *good* youth culture. This was, as we have seen, in the face of a steady decline in youth club membership as young people transferred their allegiance to the new teenage culture.

In accepting the existence of teenagers both these magazines recognised the existence of an acceptable teenage youth culture from which there could be deviations. It is also clear that, in Australia, the acceptable youth culture would combine middle-class morality with some degree of American-originated consumerism. The acceptance of, for example, the institution of popular music produced the possibility of a spectrum of acceptability. Thus *Teens Today* also had an article entitled *Teenagers knock the Rock* (March/April 1960) in which, whilst not being overtly critical of rock'n'roll, the magazine quotes teenagers who do not like the music, in the process implying for the 'teenager' an acceptable alternative:

> It appears Frank Sinatra is the yardstick most anti-Rock'n'Rollers measure others by. Whoever said Sinatra had had his day with the younger generation was being a bit hasty. He holds pride of place in many record collections, even with the most devoted of Elvis Presley and company *(Teens Today,* March/April 1980, p. 7).

It should now be more understandable why, from 1958 onwards, newspaper reports of bodgies and widgies start to tail off. From this period we can date the acceptance of youth as a category in Australian life. Simultaneously, with the acceptance of this category and its associated youth culture, the practices which formed part of the tradition of working-class culture but which had been taken out' (Stratton 1992, p. 193)

'of context and used to emphasise the disruptive and disorderly qualities of bodgies and widgies once more became almost invisible. Without the focus of bodgies and widgies the behaviour of working-class youth was not, in itself, of interest. The very lack of reporting of those traditions reasserted the underlying assumption of a commonality of cultural practices from which the bodgies and widgies had deviated.

What remained to be done was to mark off those forms of behaviour — and consumption — which were not considered acceptable. Obviously this had always been an important constituent in the moral panic of bodgies and widgies. However by the late 1950s this was complicated by the need to establish parameters for what was acceptable as distinctively teenage behaviour. This development occurred through the 1950s. Connell *et al's* book *Growing Up in an Australian City (*1957*)* which described young people's lives in Sydney based on research conducted in 1951, talked in terms of the *adolescent.* They wrote, for example, that:

> By the time his adolescence has passed the youth needs to be accepted as an adult by other adults. Most difficult of all is his acceptance as an adult by his own family (Connell *et al.* 1957, pp. 23-24).

They viewed adolescence as a period of transition and saw the new films and radio programmes aimed at youth primarily in terms of their relationship to young people's problems in growing up. For the academic the category of the teenager does not yet seem to have been a useful analytic tool.

In 1956, *PIX* ran an article based on the as yet unpublished book under the same title *Growing Up in an Australian City.* The report, either not thinking the 5-year time lag important, or else not realising its existence was headed *Report on Teenagers* with a subheading which asked: What is it like to grow up in an Australian city? A recent survey shows that our teenagers are normal human beings not bodgies and widgies (6October 1956).

Here one can see clearly, even in the headings, the beginnings of a recognition that teenagers should not be classified as bodgies and widgies. The new importance of youth as a category with its own culture and consumption habits was being separated out from the *deviant* youth culture of the *real* bodgies and widgies. In the *PIX* article the idea of adolescence as simply a period of transition was replaced by an attempt to delineate how *typical Australian teenagers* spend their time. In other words there has occurred a shift of emphasis from adolescence as a temporary period with no identifiable cultural form except disruption to the teenage period which does have specific cultural practices. *PIX* asks rhetorically:

> How does Judy (their typical female teenager) dress? We don't seem to have teenage fashions much in Australia. If there are such fashions, they are worn by women of all ages. There is certainly nothing very distinctive in Judy's dress. One visiting American professor said he got the impression there weren't any teenagers in Australia.' (Stratton 1992, p. 194)

A page from the PIX article Growing Up In An Australian City, 6 October 1956.

(Stratton 1992, p. 195)

'The 'visiting American professor' was right. The teenager, as a conceptual category, was just becoming accepted in Australia but there was not, as yet, an established consumer goods industry to replicate the new segmentation. In 1959 *PIX* ran an article entitled *Dressing on a teenage budget* (12 September 1959) which claimed that:

> Dressing is becoming less and less of a problem for the young woman of the family.

> With the expanding cotton goods industry in Australia, a teenager, living on a limited budget, can be well dressed for every phase of the week.

The article suggests that it would cost *today's teenager* about £25 to buy herself a wardrobe which would be up-to-date and last her all summer. This signals the development of a mass fashion industry in Australia.

Nevertheless as late as 1961 *Weekend* and *Woman's Mirror* were combined into a new magazine known as *Everybody's* which, according to is first editorial, was:

> … a magazine for men and women, old and young. It is for married people and single people, people who are well-off and those who are not (2 August 1961).

The editorial goes on to emphasise that it is the first Australian magazine to be produced for both men and women. However it is clear from the articles on such people as the Kennedys and the youthful age of the fashion models that the magazine was aimed at an area around the young marrieds. In fact the magazine was clearly attempting to ignore the teenager as a separate category incorporating what it considered to be 'respectable' aspects of young people's culture, such as a discussion of music with Bobby Limb, into a new undifferentiated youthful cultural synthesis.

The problem with discussing Australian youth culture during the 1950s is that it was not located within an already established category of the teenager, or youth. A young person was a bodgie or widgie simply because they indulged in, to the middle class, certain novel activities, wore clothes unlike those of their parents and enjoyed entertainment founded on values fundamentally distinct from those on which middle-class leisure activities were based.

The 1950s saw a new visibility given to working-class young people which related to their gradual reclassification as teenagers with a leisure consumption industry as a part of that reclassification. In addition, in the later part of the 1950s the Australian working class became increasingly restless as a consequence of a general disillusionment with the effects of the new economic and industrial order. As the category of youth culture, in the guise of the teenager, was integrated into the Australian cultural world-view so many working-class young people combined long established working-class youth practices with the new teenage consumer goods and institutionalised leisure pursuits. The effect was to give a new visibility to many working-class youth activities which, taken out of context and combined' (Stratton 1992, p. 196)

'with the confusion over the *teenager,* became the source of a moral panic in which the lead characters, the mythical bodgie and widgie, became folk devils of truly demonic proportions who

seemed to strike at the very basis of the (middle-class) social and moral order.' (Stratton 1992, p. 197)