



AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S STORIES OF WORK AND PLAY

by Janice Newton

ABSTRACT

In the 1920s and 1930s working-class people from the inner suburbs of Melbourne, Australia took to the foothills of the nearby Dandenong ranges on weekends and public holidays to enjoy a bush picnic or holiday. It was a time in both Britain and Australia when working people were able to take family holidays in greater numbers. Unstructured interviews with former female visitors began with the purpose of gaining an insight into the leisure of the time. Information obtained along the way about working lives reinforced the importance of thinking about work and leisure in association with each other. The incidents that some women remembered from their working lives presented a strong and autonomous view of themselves. While such power could be seen as a realistic view of their holidays in the bush, it appears that the context of the interview relationship contributed to the highlighting of an assertive and lively work identity.

KEY WORDS:
leisure; work;
women;
Australia

Serendipity often plays a part in the direction taken by a research project. The oral history discussed in this paper began with a personal association and interest in the period of bush holidaymaking between the wars. In particular the research focused on those (mainly) working-class people from the inner suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, who took to the foothills of the Dandenongs on weekends and public holidays to enjoy a bush picnic or holiday. Unstructured interviews with former visitors to this area began in 1993 with the purpose of gaining an insight into the leisure aspects of life in these times and attitudes towards the bush.¹ A collection of audio and video interviews, lodged in the local museum and in the archives of a former history project, was also accessed, giving a total of thirty-five fully transcribed interviews and several smaller, informal conversations. In the process of interviewing and reviewing former interviews, questions regarding the background and life experience of those interviewed divulged something of the everyday work life of women.

This paper looks at the short, remembered

stories of seven of the women interviewed in juxtaposition with general holiday memories of the larger sample. The meanings projected in the personal work narratives exemplify the conclusions that Passerini reached about Italian women in a similar time frame, and when considered in relation to the context of the interview process, suggest the need to keep work and leisure as intertwined concepts and to consider the implications of oral history interviewing as a deep, subjective exchange. This paper begins by setting the context of the period in relation to women, work and leisure. Some of the conclusions reached regarding the leisure activities of the women are then expounded before the detailed work incidents are related. This is followed by a discussion of meaning and exchange in the light of recent debates on oral historiography.

WOMEN, WORK AND LEISURE IN INTERWAR AUSTRALIA

Murray describes the 1920s and 1930s as a period in Australia's history when massive losses from World War One created a 'broad current



of idealism' and a determination to build a country 'fit for heroes'.² Manufacturing grew under tariff protection but lay-offs were common and discipline strict.³ As in Britain and elsewhere, there was a significant increase in the number of women working for wages, and considerable unease about this situation.⁴ The public world of work was opening up for women. By the 1920s two thirds of factory workers in Victoria were female.⁵ By 1933 twenty-five percent of the female workforce over fifteen was working full time⁶ and holidays became more of an option for the working class in Victoria as in Britain.⁷ Furthermore, it is likely that Australia mirrored Britain in that 'the period between starting work and getting married was one of the most prosperous stages of the life cycle for working-class people'. Single women were also noted as relatively privileged in this period.⁸

Interviews with men and women who visited Mt Evelyn, in the foothills of the Dandenongs, during the 1920s and 1930s as day-trippers, guest-house residents or shack-owners on the

cheap bush blocks, provided a series of anecdotes, photographs and personal memories which built a picture of a type of holiday experience in which normal life was suspended or somewhat overturned.⁹ Although most of those interviewed were from working-class origins, they were not factory workers or from the most depressed inner suburbs of Melbourne.

The town studied was popular for both its physical and economic accessibility. Only one station beyond the electric line ending at Lilydale, it was a steam train journey that was included in the Victorian Railways excursion fare rate. Ordinary people without cars could visit for a day or weekend. Furthermore a series of subdivisions in the early 1920s of small scrub and bush blocks, enabled working-class people¹⁰ to acquire a small block of land for £25 or £50 and to build a shack for regular holidays. The two to three hundred people alighting from the train on a Friday evening or Saturday morning, consisted of many of these block-holders, carrying crimped or corrugated kerosene tins and old timber off-cuts bound together with string or

A young working class woman, her girlfriend and her two brothers camp on their bush block in the Dandenongs near Melbourne, 1920s-1930s. Photo courtesy G Chrystal.



Holiday shack owners enjoyed walking in the bush and collecting heath, 1920s-1930s. Photo courtesy B Carroll.

wire which were destined to be used to create walls or rooves for their holiday shacks. Come Sunday evening they returned by train to the inner suburbs of Melbourne, carrying large bunches of gumtree tips and pink heath.

There were three main types of visitor: the guesthouse resident, the day-tripper and these 'weekenders' on the bush blocks. Three guesthouses were operating in the 1920s and 1930s; two were substantial wooden houses with verandas. The other began with a basic cottage, but added bungalows and an old modified tram for additional accommodation. Young married couples or older couples with children stayed here and spent their time playing tennis, taking part in organised sing songs, dress up nights or euchre card nights. At Christmas and New Year there were public fancy dress dances in the local hall or silent movies run by a travelling picture showman. Bushwalking was, however, their main pastime, as it was with all holidaymakers. Day-trippers, for example, came by train or car and took short walks to a picturesque creek after stopping for a drink of tea purchased at a small kiosk.

Women were significantly involved with this leisure in the bush. Photographs and individual testimonies suggest that there were more female visitors at the guesthouses and big weekend gatherings than there were male visitors. When

we look in detail at the purchase initiation, ownership and spatial arrangement of blocks, women figure prominently. Gladys was only eighteen when her girlfriend's father persuaded her to buy a block as 'a good investment'. Her regular payments were 2/6d. Two single women clubbed with their brothers to buy blocks, one sustaining the payments when her brother was out of work in the Depression of the 1930s. Another single woman bought a block for her 'security', when aged twenty-nine, in case she missed out on marriage. Her sister and brother-in-law organised that she and her mother buy adjacent blocks. A middle-class woman bought a block from her sister and had her sons erect a basic cottage on it as a surprise for her husband (who would have preferred a beach to a bush holiday destination). Shire records demonstrate that around a third of the holiday blocks were owned by women, most single.¹¹ For those interviewed the need for security and for investment was, or became, secondary to the pleasure they gained from their weekend holidaymaking.

Women voiced the sense of freedom they felt when on holiday in the bush. It was a place 'to feel free to throw the tea slops out of the "window" without moving from your seat!'¹² Although mothers and aunts had a massive job cooking on open fires outside or on primitive wood-fuelled stoves inside for weekend guests

numbering up to fifty for some families, they appeared to do it willingly.¹³ The younger women seemed to be relieved of many chores and to have felt some sense of control and power in the bush.

In this leisure context, sport played a limited role. There were some irregular cricket matches set up where holiday-making men challenged the local men, and tennis was popular with both sexes. One block-holding family dug their own clay court on their small block, leaving room for only a small shack. In one area a sense of community developed amongst the holiday-makers, many of whom were linked through females, to relatives and workmates. They had parties and campfires where music from a tin whistle and mouth organ accompanied the singing. Some took the initiative and developed their organisational skills. Two sisters, part-time callisthenic teachers, brought their entire Melbourne class of young girls to the bush community to perform at the small public hall for a local charity. The young girls were billeted in two cottages and their mothers took rooms at the guesthouses.

The young women from Melbourne were comparable with their peers in Britain and Europe at the time in their love of dancing and open air pursuits such as cycling, rambling and hiking.¹⁴ They focused on the bush walks and dancing when they described their holiday activities. 'Bushwalking was the main thing'. 'Oh yes, that's all we did'. They enthused about the beauty of wildflowers. They collected the 'beautiful heath' and gum tips and took them home. They packed a thermos and sandwiches and went for walks to the creek and the nearby reservoir. They would sing and joke and sometimes lose their way. They arranged moonlight walks with the young men.

At a time when the dance hall was a central site for leisure and courting in both Britain and Australia, the public dances enjoyed by hundreds of visitors and local youth were a site for romance and the display of finery.¹⁵ Young unmarried women took the initiative and were allowed more freedom, often benefiting from the presence of male cousins as chaperones. They took risks in attending dances where they might not know anyone and felt in control when being walked home by strange men. At one dance a couple of shop assistants from Melbourne met a lot of British boys, the 'orphans' sent out to Australia and billeted with farmers. They allowed themselves to be walked home by the young Britons but took them by the main road and giggled at the youths' bemusement as they announced they were 'home' and disappeared quickly into the seemingly uninhabited bush, down narrow paths to their shacks.¹⁶



Two young women working at a boarding house, not holiday makers themselves but whirled away by the holiday atmosphere, staked a claim on a couple of young male visitors who visited for a Christmas dinner. (One put money in the slice of pudding of the young man she wanted and said, 'He's mine'). At the general store later, they were asked by some young local men if they were going to the dance. The girls turned to the two young male visitors whom they had served earlier (they were seated outside the store), and said, 'Will you come with us?' They set off, flaunting contemporary behavioural norms. They did not inform the parents and proprietors of the boarding house and arrived home very late . . . with their husbands-to-be.¹⁷

Leisure is recognised as a space and time set apart from the mundane and can be viewed as a liminal, in-between state when norms might temporarily be suspended and roles inverted. Another common leisure activity among the block-holders was to have a mock engagement or wedding. The young men and women dressed up, often as the opposite sex, to have a photograph taken. Costumes were not elaborate: a sheet, a shirt on back to front for the parson, and so forth and there was no performance or play as such. The arrangements for the frozen tableaux appeared to mock the institution for

Guesthouse residents and owner's family in the 1920s. Photo courtesy H Luke.



Mothers and aunts appeared to enjoy their bush leisure in spite of the more difficult cooking conditions, 1920s-1930s. Photo courtesy D McCormack.

which almost all were destined. The bride for example in one case was the tallest and gawkiest man.

Women in the 1920s mostly wore their best frocks to visit the holiday town and there was an element of courting display and promenade in some of the popular bushwalks, comparable with what Melbournians called the 'chicken walk' (down High Street Preston) and what Davies and Langhamer termed the 'monkey parade' for Manchester at the same time.¹⁸ However by the 1930s jodhpurs had become fashionable for bushwalking and shorts were also common holiday wear. The bush visit was an opportunity for women to wear trousers in reality, as well as in the cross-dressing fantasies of the photographs.

In short, the train trip from Melbourne to Lilydale, then transposition onto a steam train on the Warburton line, appeared to take young women to a different world, a world where they had more freedom and control. Women were often numerically dominant, owned bush blocks, and were sometimes the links between clusters of related or friendly owners. On holidays they wore shorts or jodhpurs and took the initiative in relationships with young men. They sometimes dressed as a male for a joke. They were freer to neglect household chores, to walk around in the day and night, alone or with a group of girls.

LEISURE AND WORK

To understand leisure and the power of women within this context it is both interesting and theoretically important to have a sense of their work experiences. Leisure is often understood in opposition to industrial, waged work and the notion of women's leisure has therefore been difficult to theorise.¹⁹ Langhamer, on the basis of oral and archival history research in Manchester, argues that work and leisure are 'historically shifting categories, which gain meaning only if they are

fully contextualised within women's everyday lives'.²⁰ For older women there is no sharp distinction between work and leisure as they take place in the same physical space and can occur in the same time. The concept embodies overlapping meanings for ideas such as spare time, pleasure, enjoyment, social life and youth itself.²¹

In spite of this general thesis, Langhamer acknowledges that for the young waged labouring women this may have been less so.

The experience of earning a wage and being engaged in clearly defined hours of work does seem to have engendered an assumption among young women that they were entitled to time for themselves...the paid work of a woman's youth endowed her with a notion of 'earned leisure'.²²

The women interviewed all had experience of waged work at the time of their holidaymaking and the holidays were bounded by the time constraints of their work. The interview material from seven women reveals aspects of power and autonomy in this strictly disciplined workforce. Young girls were expected to defer to parents and to bosses in a rigidly segregated workforce.

Emma worked as a domestic help as a young girl. She was annoyed that her mother took almost all of her wage. Two of the women interviewed were ecstatic when they were allowed to leave school and work. Nancie described it thus:

A friend of Nina's father came in one day and said there was a vacancy in the bookbinding department at Sands and McDougalls. 'Right! Can I go? Can I go?' I had to have my hair cut, have my plaits cut off. Wonderful! And that's where I started work... The fact that I'd got out of school, which I hated, and I was mixing with these older girls... I thought it was quite exciting. It was interesting for a while then it became rather boring. We had a terrible boss there. She used to sit on a raised platform at her desk and look over her glasses at us...The only men were the engineers who would come up from below to fix the machines. Otherwise it was all women. We were not allowed to talk while working. The boss was like a school monitor. The desks were arranged so she could see them all. She kept tabs on how long you were out in the loo.²³

The women were constrained by their parents, low wages, strict discipline, and the possibility of sexual harassment at work, but incidents they recalled suggest that even in the harder times of the Depression young women

sometimes stood up for themselves and gained 'small victories'. Molly who worked in a guest-house resented the butler who shirked his work to join guests in a game of tennis, so proudly stated that she left the dishes for him to finish. Gwen really enjoyed working with the girls at Myer's store. They joked and sneaked under the counter to eat cakes when they were hungry. Joan, although allowed to take some broken chocolate home from the grocer, sneaked extra on occasions.²⁴ Nan left school at fourteen in 1924 to work in a cake shop:

I went and worked in a cake shop in Thornbury somewhere for a lady and she was an old tiger too. She made you work for next to nothing. I got sick of it one day so I just told her I was going to leave. I got paid a few shillings and she had me doing everything. She was a very ladylike person and perhaps had been used to servants and she treated you just like that, so I just stood up. Mother said, 'You don't have to stay there you know', so I upped and walked out and came home. I thought that was marvellous.²⁵

Doris said she did not feel under the 'control' of others when working at the bookbinders. But she was 'hardly wild' at home either, as she behaved there too. She got on well with workers and was willing to do difficult and dirty jobs. 'It was Depression time and you were frightened of losing your job. You did your level best to keep it – coming to work when exhausted or a bit sick. There were no false sickies.' As Doris often missed breakfast she ate her lunch at morning-tea time. Sometimes, without notice she was asked at lunchtime if she would work without a tea break through to 8pm on a concrete floor. She said to her boss, 'Are you having your tea? Well, if you are, I will too. I'm a person, you're a person.'²⁶ At the end of that week she was given a five-shilling pay increase.

Nina went to night school to learn to use the comptometer, an adding machine.

Once I got my certificate I wanted to test my wings. I got a job at a paint firm. Up to a point I had the same feeling of control as in the bookbinding place. But one was a factory situation and the other was the office of a factory situation, slightly freer. Well, I didn't last very long there. There was a lot of overtime and I was the youngest, about 18. The guy in charge... used to have a girl back to do overtime and he was a real ladies' man. He was very slimy. He'd put his arm around your shoulders. He'd be leaning over your desk giving you something to do. Well, I wasn't

having a bar of that either so I got the shove from there. I got put off because I wouldn't go along with his things. So then I was out of work... Hmm... very hard to get a job.²⁷

As stated, the young women discussed were not interviewed specifically in relation to their work history or their life history *per se*, but most appeared to remember a story when they resisted power over them. There were strong cultural and structural constraints operating against their autonomy at work, and in life in general, but the incidents related suggest some small spirit of resistance that reveals that their behaviour on holidays was not entirely out of character. They insisted on their person-hood, they rejected attempts to impose a 'servant' status on them and were capable of minor sabotage against colleagues or bosses. It might be suggested that the bush space and the holiday time gave the context for a greater exploration of a potential for autonomy that was already incipient in work contexts. Before concluding in this way, it is important, however, to consider recent historiographical debates concerning the meanings in oral history and the significance of the process of interviewing.

PASSERINI AND SYMBOLIC REBELLION

Earlier forays into oral history rejoiced at the possibility of history from below and, somewhat naively, saw oral history as a vehicle for attaining a more 'real' or factual history. The development of the Italian school of oral history and recent collections such as that by Perks and Thomson has encouraged a more sophisticated view.²⁸ Theoretical interest in agency and the active subject has encouraged a deeper understanding of the processes involved in memory-making, in indicating individual diversity or collective representation.²⁹

Passerini says that 'interviews reveal contradictions between myth and reality, between statements and actions. The raw material of oral history counts not just in factual statements but is pre-eminently an expression. Inconsistent answers, jokes and silences are a clue to a more sophisticated interpretation of the interview in which all things that are said can be seen as true in one sense or another'.³⁰ Studying working class life in Turin between 1886 and 1920 she notes that women's life stories bring out their rebelliousness. The narratives are not structured by chronology and have collective aspects as they are retold in families and become 'conventionalised traditions'. Passerini suggests that stories about irreverence, rebelliousness and woman being able to overturn gender roles may have a more symbolic value rather than the credibility of true versions of the past.

... the rebel stereotype recurrent in many women's autobiographies would not primarily aim to describe actual behaviour, but would serve a markedly allegorical role. It could be the means of expressing identity in the context of a social order oppressive of women, but also of transmitting awareness of oppression and lack of integration, and hence of directing oneself to current and future change.³¹

Women, unlike many men, do not base their identity on work in a simple fashion. Factory work, less skilled, less secure and low status is a means for independence rather than self-esteem. Women and men have different strategies for recounting their life stories and their self-image. But the division is not simple and invariable. Gender 'acts as a pole of reference along a continuum where male and female stereotypes can be chosen and combined... The guiding principle could be that all autobiographical memory is true; it is up to the interpreter to discover in which sense, where, for which purpose.'³²

Passerini is interested in different levels of 'meaning' rather than one 'truth'. I have tried to take account of some of the subjective processes involved in memory recall. When considering the small vignettes gained from my interview material (not taken in the context of a life story) we can see that they, too, have drawn out and privileged extracts of memory which might focus on their rebelliousness. Molly noted the time she paid back a lazy male colleague; Doris confronted the boss on issues of equality; Nina risked unemployment rather than tolerating sexual harassment. Before women achieved education, higher pay and more autonomy at work, it was likely that their notion of self was less hinged to their work than that of men. The memory could indeed have symbolised recognition of an unequal social order with some possibilities for transformation. Society was changing and new potentialities in society, gender roles, leisure and work were opening up. Unlike Passerini's Italian informants, it is unlikely that the narratives I have collected were used in such a social context. Having said that, it is possible that some of the small items may have become family stories, which were passed down, retold and gradually subjected to an evolution into a structured story with current meanings attached.

It could be held that the stories recorded in this research were true, in that they really happened, but that they were also operating symbolically. They were privileged pieces of memory so are likely to have symbolic signifi-

cance in the lives of the interviewees. They have been recounted ahead of many other possible memories, when the women were probably without autonomy, were controlled and submissive at work. They symbolised a potential greater autonomy for their female selves. In this we can see a link between the world of work and the world of leisure. Just as narrative structure and an enhanced, or privileged, memory relating to work can reveal potentialities for change, so also can behaviour in a liminal, leisure space operate in the same way.

According to anthropologist Victor Turner, marginal transitional spaces and times, such as the liberating holiday experience, are liminal-like and can often be seen to be proto-structural, imagining different futures, alternative social orders.³³ The holiday experience memories of actions anticipating structural change may have articulated with the memories of work to produce a more heroic and empowered gendered landscape for women than history would usually argue. It may be that the experience of the twenties and thirties for young women encapsulated new freedom, leisure and a future vision of greater personal autonomy, glimpsed only fleetingly in the workplace. Structural and cultural impediments like the Harvester Judgement of 1911, codifying in legislation economic dependence on a male breadwinner;³⁴ the compulsion for most women to resign from full time work on marriage; and the persistence of powerful motherhood ideologies³⁵ were to make the potential for power, freedom and equality unrealised in full for most women.

There is another level at which these interviews can be analysed: that associated with the process of the interview and the relationship between the interviewer and the person interviewed.

EXCHANGE AND PROCESS IN THE INTERVIEW

Recent debates on oral history interviewing highlight subjective and exchange elements in such a personal transaction. Thompson argues that the relationship between history and community is a series of exchanges.³⁶ In the individual interview there is also an exchange going on. The social formation of memory is 'a ceaseless, dynamic activity'.³⁷ The narrative of memory is predicated on an active human relationship between historians and their sources.³⁸ The process of recording an oral history involves an interaction and a tension between the historian with their background of written history and the participant who may want to tell another story.³⁹ Grele sees the interview as like a performance as the interviewer is ultimately



speaking to the wider community and its history.⁴⁰ For Sangster there is a need to contextualise interviews and to work out the social and personal agendas which are operating. 'The researcher and the informant create the source together' in a process. It is vital to keep the notion of the interview as an interactive process continually in our consciousness.⁴¹ Portelli sees oral history as both an intellectual and a social endeavour. There is a cooperative process of mutual discovery. It is 'multiauthored' and 'multivocal'. Portelli uses the term 'deep exchange' to represent the interview as an 'exchange of gazes', a 'situation where two people look at each other.' There is 'revelation and confrontation of both differences and common grounds', both necessary to research.⁴² The ideal interview allows 'thick dialogue' with space for answers and a context in which social and personal relationship play a role. The form of the interview can depend 'on the extent to which the interviewer belongs to the reality under investigation'. The 'native historian' will get more analyses than basic facts.⁴³

The context of the interviews done for this research warrants some preliminary exploration. As stated in the introduction, interviews were collected in a variety of contexts but had in common the fact that all, in the current research, came about because of personal primary or intermediated links. The interviewers were educated working women in their forties and those interviewed were married or widowed and in their seventies or eighties, of the same sex, class and Anglo Celtic ethnic origins. In almost all cases participants knew

and had some respect for the fathers and/or mothers of the main interviewers.⁴⁴

The interviews took place in the interviewee's own relatively modest homes and usually terminated with an afternoon tea. In my case they were sometimes punctuated with some sharing of information or the imparting of some shared memory concerning my deceased father. During the whole research process this was a pattern. There was an apparent need to locate the interview relationship with me, through the memory of a relationship or an incident relating to my father.⁴⁵ I was partly an insider and partly an outsider. There was revelation and confrontation around differences and similarities. There was not a clear exchange of information from A to B. It was a reciprocal relationship in which more than personal factual memory seemed to be being offered and in which the interviewers may have been asked to return something just as intangible. As well as giving me the gift of information, they imparted a gift in the form of memory 'substance' of my father. In return it might be argued they were given an opportunity in their final years to represent themselves in comparison with the working, independent and educated women interviewing them, as strong and high spirited and once beautiful (through their photographs). I may have been asked and, without knowing it, I complied, in giving them in return, respect and admiration.⁴⁶ In other words, the interview relationship may also have contributed to the recounting of stories that highlighted a particular life history and an identity as assertive and lively young women.

A mock wedding on the hand-dug tennis court at a bush block, 1920s-1930s. Photo courtesy A Calnin.

NOTES

1. This research was aided by several small grants from the University of Ballarat, encouragement from former Head of School, the late Dr Kevin Livingston, interviews by Alex Morris and interviews and early analysis by Joan Knowles and David Collett. This paper is based in part on a paper delivered at the Australian History Association Conference, Melbourne University, July 1996.
2. Robert Murray, *The Confident Years: Australia in the Twenties*, London: Allen Lane, 1978, p. 8.
3. Murray, 1978, p. 48.
4. The between the wars threat of working girls asserting their independence was, according to Langhamer, nullified by the post-war tendency to marry young. C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 55.
5. Marilyn Lake & Farley Kelly, *Double Time: Women in Victoria 150 years*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1985, p. 257.
6. Belinda Probert, 'The Riddle of Women's Work', *Arena Magazine*, no. 23, 1996, p. 39.
7. In Britain the 1920s has been recognised as a time of changing attitudes and shifting experiences in relation to leisure. Rising living standards and the increasing phenomenon of paid holidays (culminating in the 1938 Holiday Pay Act) saw half of London's working people take a holiday away from their home by 1935. Langhamer, 2000, pp. 3 and 37.
8. Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester 1900-1939*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992, chap. 3, p. 82.
9. For more detail see Janice Newton and Joan Knowles, 'Women in the bush: subject or object?' in F. Vancly (ed), *With a Rural Focus*, Charles Sturt University: Wagga Wagga, 1995, pp. 7-20.
10. Occupation of men and suburb of home residence were used to establish that at least half of the block holders, and probably more of the regular visitors, were of working class origin.
11. Prior to the area becoming a destination for holidaymakers in 1901 13% of land lots were owned by women, mostly wives of resident farmers.
12. Interview with Gladys Chrystal, born in Melbourne 1908, Myer shop assistant; recorded by Janice Newton, 15 August 1993. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, transcript p. 1.
13. In Manchester, England Langhamer noted for the same time that participation in a family holiday was an ambiguous experience for many women who had to perform the same domestic tasks under more difficult circumstances. Langhamer, 2000, p. 23. In this case the interviewees claimed that their mothers enjoyed the experience.
14. Langhamer, 2000.
15. Langhamer, 2000, chapter 4; Davies, 1992, chapter 3, p. 89; Karen Twigg, 'The role of the "local dance" in country courtship of the 1930s', *Oral History Workshop*, Melbourne: Victorian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986, pp. 17-27.
16. Interview with Gladys Chrystal 1993, p. 1.
17. Interview with Bonnie Neilson, born in Melbourne 1922; guesthouse worker, recorded by Janice Newton, 27 July 1993. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, p. 1.
18. Interview with Alan Calnin, born in Melbourne, 1915, butcher; recorded by Janice Newton, 11 December 1993 and 18 February 1994; Davies, 1992, p. 102; Langhamer, 2000, p. 119.
19. Betsy Wearing, *Gender: the pain and pleasure of difference*, Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996, p. 179.
20. Langhamer, 2000, p. 8.
21. Langhamer, 2000, pp. 16, 22.
22. Langhamer 2000, p. 50.
23. Interview with Nancie Knowles, born in Melbourne c1920, bookbinder; recorded by Joan Knowles and David Collett, 3 October 1993. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, transcript p. 2.
24. Interviews with Gene Stroud, born in Melbourne, 12 December 1920, shop assistant; recorded by Janice Newton, 10 February 1996. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, transcript p. 1-2; Gladys Chrystal 1993; Millie Peake, born in Railton, Tasmania, c1911, guesthouse kitchen hand; recorded by Janice Newton, 23 July 1993.
25. Interview with Nancy Yaxley, born in Melbourne, 3 February 1910, Myer shop assistant; recorded by Joan Knowles 9 December 1993. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, transcript p. 2.
26. Interview with Dot Millard, born Birchip, Victoria, 1913, bookbinder; recorded by Janice Newton, 2 October 1995. Mt Evelyn Oral History, Lillydale Historical Museum, transcript p. 1.
27. Interview with Nancie Knowles, 1993, p. 4.
28. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, London: Routledge, 1998.
29. Joan Sangster, 'Feminist debates and the use of oral history', in Perks and Thomson, 1998, pp. 89-90.
30. Luisa Passerini, 'Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism' in Perks and Thomson, 1998.
31. Luisa Passerini, 'Women's personal narratives: myths, experiences and emotions', in Personal Narratives Group (eds), *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narrative*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 191.
32. Wearing, 1996, p. 177.
33. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*, London: Cornell University Press, 1982, pp. 20-70.
34. Claire Williams, *Beyond Industrial Sociology: the work of men and women*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992.
35. Katie Holmes, 'Making time: representations of temporality in Australian women's diaries of the 1920s and 1930s', *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 102, 1994, p. 8.
36. Paul Thompson, 'The voice of the past: oral history', in Perks and Thomson, 1998, p. 28.
37. Thompson 1998, pp. 2 and 6.
38. Perks and Thomson, 1998, p. ix.
39. Bain Attwood, 'Oral narratives, autobiography and history', in Bain Attwood, Winifred Burridge, Alan Burridge and Elsie Stokie, *A Life Together, a Life Apart*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994, p. 15.
40. R. Grele, 'Movement without aim: methodological and theoretical problems in oral history', in Perks and Thomson, 1998, p. 43.
41. Sangster, 1998 p. 88, 94.
42. Portelli, 1997, pp. xiv, 24-5, 52, 73, 77.
43. Portelli, 1997, p. 11.
44. Two of the interviews cited at some length, were carried out by a colleague and peer from childhood and for each there were richer multiplex associations than a stranger/professional interview situation. One was her mother and the other was my father's sister, previously unknown to her. Of the interviews cited which I completed, one took place on the telephone and involved the grandmother of a former neighbour, one was the wife of my father's former employer, one my former play leader at kindergarten and later well-known for much community activity, another the bridesmaid of my father's sister and the other the classificatory aunt of my colleague, previously unknown to me.
45. During an interview, in mid sentence, a woman exclaimed how much I resembled my father.
46. It would be premature to make too much of this, given that I was not the interviewer for two of the strongest work stories, those of Nan and Nina.