



“Love Actually?”

Case Study: Reality Television Dating Shows;

An investigation into the changing societal values portrayed in Reality TV dating shows and the impact on the formation of romantic relationships in society.

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Introduction

In today's media saturated society, reality television has become much more than just a source of entertainment. Reality dating shows depict 'real relationships' with a narrative, making a controversial media category. Throughout time, the evolution of television show concepts in the dating sphere have been presented to the public in many forms, creating perceptions and judgments showcased on social media and individual interactions.

Growing up as part of Generation Z, dating shows have been consistently present in my life. Media coverage and conversations amongst my peers often stem from shows like '*Love Island*'. This exposure encouraged me to recognise the link between these shows and values expressed in contemporary society.

This Personal Interest Project investigates how the reality dating TV genre influences audience values, behaviours and expectations at the micro level of communication, while examining the meso and macro social drivers that contribute to shaping the change or stagnation. To explore these influences, I conducted two cross cultural studies between the comparison of both gender (male and female) and generations (X, Y, Z and baby boomers), to examine how differing values and experiences impact interpretations of dating show portrayals.

This relevance of this investigation extends to many individuals undergoing romantic relationships and navigating the process of finding love within a changing social landscape. Through this exploration I aim to examine the diverse effects of personal interpretation of 'reality show concepts' through one's own relationship constructions and values. By comparing traditional relationship expectations and norms with contemporary present and emerging dating ideals, this investigation analyses the extent to which social change has occurred.

Situated within the study of Popular Culture, this investigation explores the direct relationship between media and society, recognising that existing societal values are consistently transforming and being replaced. Central key concepts which underpin the project include society, identity, gender, beliefs and values, and modernisation and technologies, all of which are analysed within the evolving depiction of romantic relationships.

I have included the comprehensive qualitative and quantitative primary research methods, which involve questionnaires, content analysis, and personal reflection, which fundamentally use both statistical (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) data and were chosen to both isolate personal perspectives and receive a wide dataset. Through gathering secondary research, I collected quality sources including journal articles, websites, and investigations to deepen my understanding of the topic. This research assisted in triangulating the findings and provided contextual and theoretical information to support each chapter synthesis.

Chapter One, Framing Romance for the Screen, examines how editing, construction and portrayal occurs. Chapter Two, Changing Lenses of Love, focuses on the evolution of personal standards and criteria in partner finding. Lastly Chapter Three, Love in the Future, evaluates long-term impacts of digitalised relationship formation and reality shows in shaping younger generations.

Through this research project, I have greatly expanded my social and cultural literacy by learning how media influences individuals and contributes to a profound transformation of norms and values, encouraging me to critically evaluate the essential role of popular culture within relationships.

Log

From a young age, I have been drawn to reality television and its ability to transform everyday situations into a compelling mindless watch. Dating shows were like a game to follow, with strategic decisions, emotional conflict and constant competition. I vividly remember watching my first season of *'Love Island'* and being so intrigued by the unconventional approach to finding love. I began to recognise the concerning behaviours on my screen but continued to watch as I was so captivated. The commitment to engaging with a show that continued for months had a significant impact influencing my perceptions, observations and values. As I thought further into the credibility and outcomes of these shows, I realised that they hold more depth than the surface.

Shows like *'Love Island'* and *'Married at First Sight'* became a topic of discussion within my micro groups (peers and family) as well as on social media (Instagram and TikTok), contributing to the widespread presence which inspired my PIP. It intrigued me as to how these shows explore so many contemporary concepts opposing the norms of the past. This investigation sparked my interest as I often think about my foreseeable love life and feel anxious about the lack of genuineness and envy the simplicity that previous generations experienced in the past. As a result, I decided upon this topic to understand the overarching impact it truly has on society.

Initially, from my own consumption and observation of reality television dating shows, I hypothesised that the values portrayed would influence off-screen personal relationship formation. I began secondary research that had mostly negative ideas surrounding the shows and exposed the manipulative and constructed nature. I found very few articles that wrote about the positive side of engagement, which made it difficult for me as the researcher, therefore a substantial amount of primary research was needed to determine any possible positive aspects.

Due to the complexity and depth of my chapters, I prioritised gathering qualitative data essential to capture personal viewpoints. The first primary research method, a fifteen-question questionnaire, utilised both multiple-choice options and extended written replies, allowing me to receive some quantitative trends and many qualitative perspectives. Secondly, I conducted

a content analysis which proved highly effective, leading to varied results across a two-show comparison taking around a month to complete. Lastly, I produced a personal reflection which answered prompts, went into close detail and provided a relevant interpretation of the topic.

After successful accumulation of primary and secondary research, the amount of information from sources was distributed across each chapter to correlate perfectly within each theme. This separation allowed for distinct areas of focus providing clear arguments and triangulation of all data.

Throughout my PIP journey, I have developed a critical understanding of media consumption impacting wider society and acknowledging both the potential implications and positive transformations it creates at micro, meso and macro levels.

CHAPTER 1

Framing Romance for the Screen: The construction and representation of romantic relationships on Television

Dating is an important collective western experience, shaped by personal and cultural influences. As reality TV dating shows have become a popular entertainment genre, to what extent do they influence the audience in their own dating lives? Exploring tropes such as love triangles, hook-up cultures and idealised beauty standards, offers insight into how these influence viewers. Hero and villain archetypes are contrasted through editing and shot selection to shape audience perceptions and maintain engagement. The final section explores how gender roles and expectations are portrayed on camera.

“No genre has been more in the firing line than reality TV, which commits a double crime of conflation”.¹ In 1965, the first reality dating show ‘The Dating Game’, created by Chuck Barris, created controversy, reflected in a 5.8/10-star IMDb review.² This reveals how traditional values of the time were private, conservative and rigid. In 2026, 91 out of 100 people have watched a reality TV dating show³ reflecting the broader consumption of the genre and the idea that “reality TV is presented as a reflection of culture”.⁴

Tropes, trends and emerging relationship behaviours presented on dating shows reshapes audience understanding of relationships, as they normalise the contestants behaviours. Tropes and trends are recurring narrative patterns which are heavily displayed on dating shows including love triangles, heroes and villains. As viewers become immersed in shows, they fall between one of two paths. The first path is being “introduced to an edited and idealized

¹ M. Kavka, ‘Love ’n the Real; or, How I Learned to Love Reality TV’ in G. King (ed), *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to “Reality” TV and Beyond* (Intellect 2005) 93–103 accessed 6 Nov 2025.

² A. Daire, ‘The Wacky 52-Year-Long Evolution of Dating Shows on TV’ *Business Insider* (7 April 2017) <<https://www.businessinsider.com/history-of-reality-dating-shows-2017-3>> accessed 29 April 2026.

³ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q3. Have you watched reality tv dating shows before?

⁴ M. H. Miller, ‘Bachelor Nation: Coping with the Reality TV Version of Reality’ (2021) <<https://thebaffler.com/salvos/bachelor-nation-miller>> accessed 13 Feb 2026

version of relationships, and they accept as what they see being truthful”⁵ or conversely they believe “love displayed for the camera cannot be real”.⁶ As relationships are formed from ‘initial meet’ to ‘coupled up’, audiences can observe a carefully curated character arc.

Dating shows have popularised relatively new behaviours. These include the ‘hookup culture’ which is an uncommitted sexual encounter that allows for no emotional commitment. On ‘*Love Island Australia*’ across 6 episodes the number of relationship milestones such as kissing and partner swaps reached 38⁷ accounting for the physicality prioritisation within hookups instead of long-term commitments. This culture has become “prevalent in Generation Z’s dating world”⁸ and has not previously existed with such an influence. Data from a generational comparison corroborates this claim. A survey of Baby Boomers perspectives on generational attitudes to dating revealed that “future/younger generations will see these shows as the norm when in actual fact they’re far from normal”.⁹ This reveals that repeated exposure does have consequences shaping behaviour.

Another trope exemplified in both ‘*The Bachelor Australia*’ and ‘*Love Island Australia*’ is love triangles which consist of an individual being romantically involved with two others, causing divide and disloyalty, as reflected in participants statements “I feel a few strong connections” and “she’s definitely one of my favourites out of them all”.¹⁰ These tropes are reinforced in fictional writing that often features a desirable relationship, to show ‘success’ in a relationship, and demonstrate ‘enemies to lovers’ and ‘friends to lovers’¹¹. These modern examples are not only evident on dating shows but also within Generation Z lives at micro levels causing inner worry around “finding someone’s values who align with mine”.¹² This is significant as it

⁵ J. Boateng, ‘The Perception of Intimacy: Are Dating Reality TV Shows Affecting Relationships?’ (2023) 15(2) *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth / Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse* 33 accessed 3 Dec 2025

⁶ M. Kavka, ‘Love ’n the Real; or, How I Learned to Love Reality TV’ in G. King (ed), *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to “Reality” TV and Beyond* (Intellect 2005) 93–103 accessed 6 Nov 2025.

⁷ Primary research method: Content Analysis, quantitative data-count of relationship milestones across *Love Island Aus*

⁸ Primary research method: Personal reflection

⁹ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q14. How do you think these shows will influence future generations’ views of dating and relationships?

¹⁰ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- disrespectful behaviours (male towards female)

¹¹ P. Macmillan, ‘An a – Z of Romance Tropes’ (*Panmacmillan.com* 21 May 2024)

<<https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/fiction/romance-tropes-a-to-z>> accessed 31 May 2026.

¹² Primary research method: Personal reflection

demonstrates how media representations of romance extend beyond entertainment and transfer into the real world.

Physical beauty standards for TV illuminate a clear preference for slim, long-haired females and muscular, tall men, as appearance is a driving ‘building block’ of desirability. A focus on physical attraction was seen in ‘*Love Island Australia*’ where there were 31 appearance comments vs 25 personality comments.¹³ The emphasis of sexual attraction and beauty was stated by all contestants highlighting how appearance is at the top of the modern values list. Reality TV, specifically “Love Island (UK, USA, AUS) presents an idealized white, slender, perfect-bodied individual”.¹⁴ The attributes commonly identified by contestants as desirable include “petite and fit”, “tall, dark and handsome”, “blonde with blue eyes”.¹⁵ This reflects a shift across generations (Gen Y, X and baby boomers), where “contemporary audiences are more prone to influence”¹⁶. Overemphasis of appearance has been reported to have a strong “negative influence on young people’s self-esteem, body image, and sexual behaviours”.¹⁷

As narratives are constructed, contestants are framed as ‘villains’ or ‘heroes’ in conflict scenes. This entices viewers who “expend a great deal of emotion on people who cannot see us back”.¹⁸ On ‘*The Bachelor*’ and ‘*Love Island Australia*’ 40 dramatised scenes and 29 conflict scenes were screened full of gossip, slander and trash talking.¹⁹ As both Male and Female are shaped as victims and perpetrators, viewers can feel that they inaccurately “present people as the villain even if they are not”.²⁰ These archetypes are important to create from the producer’s perspective because it allows for unpredictability of story lines, and maintains audience

¹³ Primary research method: Content analysis quantitative data- appearance vs personality comments count

¹⁴ J. Porter and K. Standing, ‘Love Island: Adam Shows Teenagers How Not to Treat Romantic Partners’ (2018) *The Conversation* <<https://theconversation.com/love-island-adam-shows-teenagers-how-not-to-treat-romantic-partners-98801>> accessed 27 April 2026.

¹⁵ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- Partner goals (what people are looking for in a partner)

¹⁶ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q14. How do you think these shows will influence future generations’ views of dating and relationships?

¹⁷ J. Porter and K. Standing, ‘Love Island: Adam Shows Teenagers How Not to Treat Romantic Partners’ (2018) *The Conversation* <<https://theconversation.com/love-island-adam-shows-teenagers-how-not-to-treat-romantic-partners-98801>> accessed 27 April 2026.

¹⁸ M. Kavka, ‘Love ’n the Real; or, How I Learned to Love Reality TV’ in G. King (ed), *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to “Reality” TV and Beyond* (Intellect 2005) 93–103 accessed 6 Nov 2025.

¹⁹ Primary research method: Content analysis quantitative data conflict and drama scene count

²⁰ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q12. What do you dislike most about these shows

investment in outcomes. This has broader societal implications as repeated exposure normalises conflict-driven romance and shapes Gen Z viewer expectations.

The use of confessionals (one on one interview with participant to camera/producer) allows direct thoughts to be spoken. This technique functions as a caricature of a Catholic confession where private information that appears honest is revealed then utilised for manipulation and narrative twisting. *'Love Island'* shaped participants as villains by using their own language like, "She's pretty, she can talk, but she's someone I would take out for one date and bin after".²¹ These personal debriefs were used to expose contestants toxic behaviour and led to downfall showcasing the potential to be "unfairly portrayed"²². It's essential while interpreting these shows that viewers remember "you don't know the real story of what happened".²³ The same technique was executed for heroes/victims of the shows who stated, "I feel led on by him" and "I don't know if I've shown him enough that I'm one hundred percent committed".²⁴ Again these statements led to audience sympathy and favouritism for the participants.

Without these archetypes, relationships between audiences and show participants don't develop. It taps into parasocial relationships and the disinhibition effect of screen-based interaction where viewers and participants feel detached from real world consequences and believe that 'it's just TV'. The connection and emotional investment is formatted from the shaping of individuals that makes viewers have a response and sense of attachment. As much as the participants appear like actors or as villainous/heroic figures, they still are humans that have "suffered identity crises, anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms, and low self-esteem".²⁵ As these archetypes continue to build, viewers should be aware that edits and prompts have altered original material. This has implications for wider society, as harsh judgements in the media can contribute to online hate and bullying.

²¹ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- disrespectful behaviours

²² Primary research method: Personal reflection

²³ I. Morley, 'A Plea to Viewers of Reality Dating Shows' *Psychology Today* (6 February 2024) <<https://www.psyaogytoday.com/au/blog/love-them-or-leave-them/202402/why-i-wont-ever-write-about-love-is-blind-again>> accessed 3 May 2026.

²⁴ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- impacts of disrespectful behaviour

²⁵ I. Morley, 'A Plea to Viewers of Reality Dating Shows' *Psychology Today* (6 February 2024) <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/love-them-or-leave-them/202402/why-i-wont-ever-write-about-love-is-blind-again>> accessed 3 May 2026.

Both traditional gender roles- such as the submissive, feminine tradwife (traditional wife) and the dominant, powerful, male breadwinner are subverted in today's world with modern roles like female empowerment and emotionally expressive men, all of which are expressed in dating shows. As stereotypes and expectations have become more inappropriate, they are still upheld by some. In relationships specifically, there is typically a high reliance on roles to upkeep, commonly seen in a heterosexual marriage where the woman is the child bearer and housekeeper and the male will provide. *'Love Island Australia'* contestants reinforce traditional standards in comments including "I like a strong dominant man" and "being taller shows masculinity"²⁶. These age old desires showcase how deeply ingrained "gender stereotypes continue to shape some individual perceptions within relationships".²⁷

Conversely, modern traits can be looked down upon as an 'ick' (a sudden feeling of dislike for someone because of something they do) such as being kind and gentle as a man is "softboy behaviour".²⁸ Only few positive modern behaviours were gathered from *'The Bachelor'* including female power, for example "I will not settle for dishonesty" and "you don't deserve me"²⁹ which challenges the typical female submissive expectations by using voice and assertion. "Those who viewed more reality dating shows were significantly more likely to endorse the attitudes that men are sex-driven and that women are sexual objects".³⁰ This suggests that exposure does have an impact on audiences who are seeing male and females represented in narrow minded ways. As observed, reality TV shows teach audiences what is acceptable within 'labelling' of gendered norms and roles promoting new and existing ones. The contrasting promotion of gender specific concepts demonstrates the media's impact in acceptable relationship dynamics. This portrayal specifically in relationships is observed by audiences where they believe "It creates unrealistic expectations from both sides, where both parties believe that things need to be perfect".³¹ Sexual objectification is deeply troubling for

²⁶ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- reference to gender stereotypes

²⁷ A. L. Ferris and others, 'The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating' (2007) 57 *Journal of Communication* 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

²⁸ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- modern values/ideas expressed

²⁹ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- actions that subvert traditional gender roles

³⁰ A. L. Ferris and others, 'The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating' (2007) 57 *Journal of Communication* 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

³¹ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q7. How do you think reality TV dating shows influence the ways people approach dating in real life?

society, safety and young people so it's important to utilise the media to teach lessons of what to accept and reject.

Overall, reality TV dating shows construct and present a curated format of relationships that both shape and reflect societal values. The use of tropes, archetypes and gender roles all contribute to the promotion of a narrow and unrealistic view surrounding behaviour and dynamics, but also provide opportunities for the audience to become analytical of the narrative and subsequently self-reflect. These are paradoxically both artificial and genuine depending on the character in question. Ultimately, these programs act as a powerful agent, shaping how audiences interpret, understand and reproduce modern human behaviours within dating culture.

CHAPTER 2

Changing lenses of love: The evolution of standards and expectations and values in partner selection over time.

Fluidity and flexibility are becoming increasingly core tenets in modern partner selection. Rigid, traditional norms have been superseded by standards closely aligned with contemporary social media examples and personal criteria, reflecting broader shifts in Australian structures. For example, the increase in couple only families (28.7% in 1981 to 36.0% in 2021)³², is indicative of trends such as delaying starting a family or choosing to be child free. Within perspectives on dating comes a wide range of unspoken expectations and rules. This chapter will first provide an overview of how various values and systems have changed since the 1950's and is hence now influencing factors as marriage structures and individualisation to understand how dating scenes have evolved. Secondly, leaning into how gendered roles have been formally eroded but still remain present in subtle or unconscious forms, allows an observer to note the new standards in a modern context which are applied differently. Lastly, investigating the significant drivers of this change, including media saturation, major policy movements and increasing secularisation alongside the decline of religious influence allowing for adoption of new beliefs. Overall, these shifts demonstrate how contemporary dating practices are increasingly shaped by individual values and external cultural influences.

The traditional linear relationship of dating, commitment, marriage and then children is socially prescriptive, often reflected in parents and grandparents' own experiences.³³ Increasing divorce rates, and "consistent media reporting on cheating are changing the linear narrative of love in Australia."³⁴ The transition from traditional systems is apparent as "Reality TV is a space where contemporary cultural debates play out."³⁵

³² 'Families and Family Composition' (*Aifs.gov.au*2021) <<https://aifs.gov.au/all-research/facts-and-figures/families-and-family-composition>> accessed 15 May 2026.

³³ Primary research method: Personal reflection

³⁴ Primary research method: Personal reflection

³⁵ J. McLaughlin, 'Is Reality TV "Harmful"?', *Charles Sturt University News*, 2025, <https://news.csu.edu.au/opinion/is-reality-tv-harmful-we-asked-5-experts-including-an-ex-reality-tv-participant> accessed 11 May 2026.

Today's society with a digitalised and unique way of relationship creation consists of complex unwritten concepts. The values of many Generation X consist of “respect”, “patience”, “commitment” and “genuineness” compared to Gen Z values of “rebellious” “open/casual” “self-priority”.³⁶ Contemporary dating views have coined new terms such as ‘red/green flags’, ‘box ticking’ and ‘the talking stage’.³⁷ As evidenced in Figure 1, the explosion in the use of ‘talking stage’ indicates a new phrase entering Australian vernacular that has not previously existed. This is significant as it highlights digital culture reshaping dating scenes.



Figure 1: Google trends graph of term ‘talking stage’ from 2004-present

These terms have stemmed from reality TV dating shows introducing new concepts to audiences, and social media has cemented their visibility. ‘*Love Island Australia*’ participants express particular desires including “I’m looking for my perfect person” and “there’s too many red flags”³⁸ shutting down potential relationships based on “younger generations focus on looking for specific traits”.³⁹ The introduction of these terms have become an expected curriculum for the modern dating world, which is problematic for those who are uneducated regarding this knowledge as it could lead to miscommunication. A flag-based identification

³⁶ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q.11 How have you been personally impacted by reality TV dating shows (e.g. behaviour, standards, opinions/views)

³⁷ Figure 1- Google Trends, *Search interest over time: “talking stage”*, Google, accessed 21 May 2026, <https://trends.google.com>.

³⁸ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- modern values/ideas expressed in *Love Island Aus S1 EP12, S7 EP1*

³⁹ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q15. What makes dating shows appealing to modern audiences.

system of desirability may be at risk of “driving a narrative”⁴⁰ of perfection. These expressions may contribute to relationship instability and social isolation in Australian society.

To return to some of the critical impacts of new dating theory, we revisit the term ‘talking stage’ where interaction occurs both in person and online meaning individuals sit in an unknown relationship status allowing for micro cheating (subtle, small actions breaching boundaries) as exemplified in ‘*The Bachelor Australia*’ where “I am open to dating more than one bachelor”⁴¹. This behaviour promotes a ‘grey area’ of infidelity as the grey implies a casual acceptance of a lack of rules, prompting polyamory. These social norms determine personal criteria and expectations that link closely with the emergence of modern dating rules both online and physically. Criteria of those seeking relationships are developed through upholding personal expectations that may not be embodied themselves. Various forms of media provide a key resource “For adolescents and young adults who begin dating, norms are needed to guide expectations”.⁴² Media streams on technology platforms like Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok are critical drivers of teen perceptions of worth. So, too, television remains, with social observers suggesting that TV effectively creates, perpetuates and sells the dream of “expectations for sexual relationships and dating”.⁴³ Instead of looking towards parents and grandparents many young people prefer to “look to those around them of a similar age that they relate to”⁴⁴ rather than be influenced by parent/grandparent linear narratives, reflecting the peer-driven influence over intergenerational figures.⁴⁵ The significant movement into opposing behaviour of the 19th century can be accounted for by the social shift to individualisation and digital culture.

Gendered roles that exist within relationships aim to serve practical purposes for a cohesive functioning system within a partnership. Nineteenth century gender roles were separated into

⁴⁰ C. Suri, and G. Sansanwal. ‘A Study on Impact of Reality Shows on Youth’. *Journal of Communication and Management* 1, no. 01 (2023): 1–14 accessed 14 Nov 2025

⁴¹ Primary research method: content analysis qualitative data- modern values/ideas expressed S11 EP1

⁴² A.L. Ferris et al., ‘The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating’, 57: *Journal of Communication* (2007), p. 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

⁴³ A.L. Ferris et al., ‘The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating’, 57: *Journal of Communication* (2007), p. 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

⁴⁴ Primary research method: Personal reflection

⁴⁵ Raising Children, ‘Peer Pressure and Influence: Teenagers’ (*Raising Children Network* 10 January 2019) <<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/behaviour/peers-friends-trends/peer-influence>> accessed 22 May 2026

public and private spheres positioning men in public roles and women in domestic based jobs. In Western, historically patriarchal societies, these can be identified as male breadwinners, political and economic associates and women were domesticated to childbearing and service-based jobs to please a man. At emotional levels males are placed as the “protector and provider whilst females are confined to passive and emotional guides”.⁴⁶ At micro scale, women cooking and cleaning and men lawnmowing and building are reflected in the media (see figures 2,3,4). Reality dating shows simultaneously reinforce and challenge these traditional roles and expectations. Gender roles in ‘*Love Island Australia*’ and ‘*The Bachelor Australia*’ are stereotyped, observed as “male comforting female” and “he needs to lead”⁴⁷ directly showcasing the protective figure position of men as women are passive recipients in relationship dynamics. Ferris argues, supporting these claims, that “televised models teach or remind viewers of appropriate norms”⁴⁸ that is, the repeated portrayals of male and female positions are reflected in real-world relationships.

A long-standing term, recently revived on TikTok⁴⁹ that describes partnership positions as ‘blue collar jobs vs pink collar jobs’. This term associates men with manual, outdoors activities, and women with private, carer roles around the home (Figures 2,3,4).

⁴⁶ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q8. Do reality TV dating shows mainly *reflect* existing societal values regarding romance and relationships or *shape* those values?

⁴⁷ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- gender roles that reinforce traditional gender roles

⁴⁸ A.L. Ferris et al., ‘The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating’, 57: *Journal of Communication* (2007), p. 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

⁴⁹ Figure 2,3,4- TikTok search of ‘blue/pink collar jobs’



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

This trend encourages generational conversation regarding traditional patriarchal values systems. Consumers are polarised in their responses, either furious with outdated stereotypes or satisfied and comforted by expected roles played out. In the popular culture of Reality TV, these stereotypes are well-documented, as *'Love Island Australia'* captures. One participant said, "I want him to be smart so I don't have to use my brain."⁵⁰ Such vacuous statements show the insidious influence of established roles which ultimately make up a hidden criteria and evident preference, revealing a cultural normalisation of dependence over individuality.⁵¹ Consequently, the repeated exposure of gendered expectations portrayed, normalises some traditional roles and influences audiences to adopt restrictive criteria and assumptions in contemporary relationships. Therefore, these portrayals reinforce outdated gender expectations within the modern dating sphere. In a point of contrast, there is an additional thread of positive social change in contemporary Australian dating shows. Some women are presented as more career-orientated and display themselves with boldness and power in relationships where they say "I'm not here to be picked" and "I have the power of choice"⁵² assuming authority and agency. The move from hierarchical roles and into equal partnership changes expectations of

⁵⁰ Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- gender roles that reinforce traditional gender roles

⁵¹ C. Suri, and G. Sansanwal. 'A Study on Impact of Reality Shows on Youth'. *Journal of Communication and Management* 1, no. 01 (2023): 1–14 accessed 14 Nov 2025

⁵² Primary research method: Content analysis qualitative data- gender roles that subvert traditional gender roles

individuals that are more self-serving rather than upkeeping the traditional problematic frameworks linking to the thought that “shared responsibilities and mutual respect of one another within relationships contribute to a more fulfilling relationship”.⁵³ This presents a more hopeful future for Australia's young women as they have different voices to listen to.

Finally, a third driver of change in contemporary Australian dating attitudes is media exposure. This includes changes in government policy and ABS fact sheets on the decline of religion. These media types have continued to transform and shape personal criteria and desires within relationships. For example, recent same sex-marriage legalisation and no-fault divorce laws⁵⁴ have created social shifts and rewritten norms and values in dating culture (fluid relationships, less labels and rules). These mass changes have been highly showcased where dating shows like ‘*Married at First Sight Australia*’ feature bisexual contestants and create opportunities for same sex dating to be more inclusive, reflecting trends in contemporary society. Australian census data also reflects the increase in ‘No religion’ being 30.1% in 2016 to now 38.9% in 2021.⁵⁵ The decline of religion is showcased where only one participant in ‘*The Bachelor Australia*’ was devoted to religion and said “shared religion is important for me”.⁵⁶ This move from strict uphold of morals makes room for greater acceptance of “behaviours of scandal, infidelity and conflict seen often on dating shows and in Gen Z lives”.⁵⁷ “As people watch television, they slowly begin to absorb the ideas, views, and morals presented; television is the best universal vehicle for passing on views and standards, and one that can also influence people to change their beliefs”⁵⁸ showcasing the media's reflection of changing dating attitudes. The driving saturation of these social changes caused by movements like feminism has altered

⁵³ Primary research method: Personal reflection

⁵⁴ ‘Divorce’ (Nsw.gov.au2023) <> accessed 17 May 2026

⁵⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Religious Affiliation in Australia’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics4 July 2022) <> accessed 18 May 2026

⁵⁶ Primary research method: content analysis qualitative data- traditional values/ideas expressed S11 EP1

⁵⁷ Primary research method: Personal reflection

⁵⁸ J. Porter and K. Standing, ‘Love Island: Adam Shows Teenagers How Not to Treat Romantic Partners’ (2018) The Conversation <<https://theconversation.com/love-island-adam-shows-teenagers-how-not-to-treat-romantic-partners-98801>> accessed 27 April 2026.

audience opinions to believing “the idea of commitment has been eroded” and “behaviour on the show is toxic and not what healthy relationships are”.⁵⁹

The many facets of society are presented to its people through the lens of ‘Reality TV’. As a result, you could adopt “unrealistic expectations when it comes to dating”. A healthier outlook allows for “promoted awareness around expectations that make us stand by our own”.⁶⁰ These changes have altered Australian attitudes regarding expectations, setting a basis for performative, digitalised forms of romantic connection.

Overall, the evolution of partner finding and personal standards in Australia, both online, on TV and in the fabric of society, is transitioning from a fixed linear system to looser, fluid and more personalised based transactions. Media saturation is a driver of change, predominantly negative, but some positive. Dating show content impacts viewers into feeling newfound freedom but also confined within the realm of heightened and complex expectations and standards that ‘should be reached’. This highlights the role of reshaping social understandings regarding dynamics of intimacy define contemporary dating culture. This raises questions of how future love stories will be shaped and how consumption culture can be utilised for personal growth.

⁵⁹ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q13. How do you think these shows are affecting the expectations and standards that individuals in your society have regarding romantic relationships?

⁶⁰ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q9. How have you been personally impacted by reality TV dating shows

CHAPTER 3

Love in the future: The rise of performative romance, and the role of the internet as a driver of this genre.

Dating has flipped drastically to be online based with technology allowing for digital communication rather than face-to-face interaction. This chapter examines how, as online dating has become increasingly normalised, Reality TV dating shows promote this shift to technology-based relationships. Secondly, the extent to which dating shows and apps fulfil user desires, as this is critical for examining possible future impact of such tools. Lastly, a brief exploration of the potential positive aspects of streamed shows will be made.

In 2026, 25 out of 100 individuals have considered/ are considering using dating apps to find a partner.⁶¹ A lot of society is aware of how “the use of dating apps are being used by individuals to find a partner at all ages”.⁶² This increase in app developments and features share many similarities with what dating shows promote through game concepts and terminology. The ‘gamification’ of love e.g. through apps, roulette and swipe games has enabled the spread of dating vocabulary. For example, a game played in ‘*Love Island Australia*’ is a similar replicate of the ‘Tinder swipe’ (seen in figure 5)⁶³ where individuals couple up in the first episode based upon looks. Additionally, the spinoff YouTube series ‘Swipe or Swap’ is the same format but more toxic as people stand face to face and decide in seconds whether they are worthy due to appearance. This is significant because it normalises superficial decision making, encouraging relationships based on judgement.

⁶¹ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q10, If you were single and looking to begin a romantic relationship, how would you go about finding a suitable partner?

⁶² J. Boateng, ‘The Perception of Intimacy: Are Dating Reality TV Shows Affecting Relationships?’ (2023) 15(2) *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth / Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse* 33 accessed

⁶³ A. Ruhl, ‘Tinder Swipe’ <<https://www.livescience.com/60038-tinder-users-have-more-distress.html>> accessed 15 June 2026.

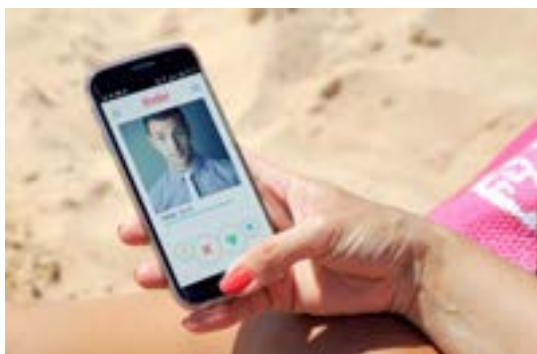


Figure 5: Snapshot of Tinder swipe page

The growth of such dating apps including Tinder, Bumble and Hinge can be misleading as a constructed version is fabricated leading society to feel “pressured to present themselves”⁶⁴. The proliferation of franchise extensions of dating shows such as ‘*MAFS after the dinner party AUS*’ and ‘*Love island UK and USA: Aftersun*’, demonstrate how the content has been commodified and overused to ultimately sustain engagement and generate economic growth for production companies. Into the future, the implications of this strong movement toward online dating create new norms of ‘digital only’ relationships and favour towards virtual relationships. As this media showcase of online dating spheres is featured in both apps and reality shows reflecting corresponding concepts and ideals effectively relates to Ferris’ belief that “heavy viewers of television are more likely to perceive that the real world is like the one presented on television”⁶⁵. Therefore, it is evident that contemporary media forms are reinforcing appearance-based relationship construction, moving towards future preferences of online dating as it is normalised. This is problematic because it enforces online dating as the expected pathway shaping future generations perceptions and proliferation.

Although apps, shows, and games have been developed at an exponential rate for a hungry market, the extent to which these consumables meet their market’s expectation is not immediately clear. Across all 7 seasons of ‘*Love Island Australia*’ six couples have remained together⁶⁶ which shows how the relationships created rarely translate beyond the show. The

⁶⁴ Primary research method: Questionnaire Q7. How do you think reality TV dating shows influence the ways people approach dating in real life?

⁶⁵ A.L. Ferris et al., ‘The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating’, 57: *Journal of Communication* (2007), p. 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

⁶⁶ M. Scott, “All the Love Island Australia Couples That Are Still Together” (*Who* December 16, 2025) <<https://www.who.com.au/entertainment/reality-tv/love-island-couples-still-together/>> accessed 12 June, 2026.

age of majority of ‘*Love Island*’ participants may contribute to a lack of commitment and seriousness on the show showcased in the results of succeeding. This is in contrast with the ‘success’ of 14 seasons of ‘*The Bachelor Australia*’ where nine couples remain together with many married and some with children.⁶⁷ The slight success of the show supports the idea that “television portrays dating as being a game rather than a search for a long-term relationship”.⁶⁸ This is impactful because it demonstrates the tension between entertainment- driven dating formats and the genuine desire for long lasting relationships.

Although many would agree that reality dating shows are purely “shallow content, which is often devoid of meaningful enrichment or intellectual value”.⁶⁹ There are some positive aspects associated with their consumption. Television is often labelled as entertainment and a family activity which brings people together allowing for “connection and shared bonding”.⁷⁰ Its capacity to drive positive social change occurs especially on a micro level, whether that’s sharing conversations relating to a topic or teaching lessons about values and behaviour. For example, the ABC reported a mother and her son watch these shows together with the sole purpose of utilising them as a teaching tool, with the mother concluding that “the effect it has is clear and our son gets there all on his own”.⁷¹ Overall, although reality TV dating shows are heavily criticised they encourage discussion, awareness and social bonding, suggesting their impact has some “positive aspects and can be used as a vehicle for change”.⁷²

Overall, digital dating and reality TV have undeniably transformed modern relationships by influencing expectations, social norms and values whilst simultaneously creating opportunities for reflection and growth.

⁶⁷ A. Vrajlal, ‘Who’s Still Together from *the Bachelor Australia* Franchise?’ (*Refinery29.com* 16 November 2025) <<https://www.refinery29.com/en-au/2023/01/11247206/bachelor-australia-who-is-still-together>> accessed 16 June 2026.

⁶⁸ A.L. Ferris et al., ‘The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating’, 57: *Journal of Communication* (2007), p. 490 accessed 12 Nov 2025.

⁶⁹ J. McLaughlin, ‘Is Reality TV “Harmful”?’ (*Csu.edu.au* 2025) <<https://news.csu.edu.au/opinion/is-reality-tv-harmful-we-asked-5-experts-including-an-ex-reality-tv-participant>> accessed 29 April.

⁷⁰ Primary research method: Personal reflection

⁷¹ V. Trioli, ‘Your Teenage Son Might Learn Something from Married at First Sight’ (*Abc.net.au* 20 March 2026) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-21/married-at-first-sight-son-television-manosphere/106474868>> accessed 10 May.

⁷² Primary research method: Personal reflection

Conclusion

So, does dating reality television really define love in society? Not exactly.

However, the ability to influence individuals' perceptions and navigations develops subconsciously from these media exposures to an extent. As audiences consume these narratives at varying levels, they reflect the influential nature of consumerism and its subconscious impact on shaping beliefs and values. Whilst these shows reflect and reinforce contemporary social values which are developing and moving significantly from traditional romance.

Reality dating shows essentially act as a strong popular culture force that drives many consumer values whilst working alongside external influences on modern dating culture. Throughout my investigation, I have recognised that dating shows create a 'product' of entertainment designed to attract and engage audiences, with this engagement causing a flow-on effect on viewers' own values and interpretations. As contemporary society is increasingly influenced by the media, ultimately the values of dating shows are both a mirror reflecting and reinforcing modern values.

The shows' influence remains particularly strong in Generation Z's lives, as its targeted demographic strengthens its role in shaping the new dating worlds of today. Through the content analysis, I recognised a clear shift in the values portrayed across seasons produced in different decades, reflecting evolutionary change of traditional values towards modern approaches in relationships. This was increasingly supported by my questionnaire, where I identified a large number of people impacted through exposure to dating shows. The triangulation of my research methods supported these findings as everything led to the finding that the changes in values are highly represented through dating television. Essentially, my investigation proved that reality dating shows do not operate individually as a key influence but rather with other forms of popular culture. The large influence of social media within showcasing both snippets of dating shows and influencer-promoted behaviours, making it difficult to identify an exact driving influence as they work together as a cultural

force. My personal reflection further showcased my susceptibility to influence, where I recognised a change in my own perspectives at micro levels. Through this topic, I became aware that repeated exposure to modern dating behaviour, norms and narratives does influence viewers' desires, expectations and aversions towards romance.

Nevertheless, the extent of this influence within an individual's own values and lives varies due to other factors contributing to this shaping. Therefore, reality television dating shows do have a contributing influence to consumers' personal lives but are not typically a sole determinant of contemporary behaviours and values.

This potential to massively reshape cultural norms of dating means that relevance and impacts of dating will continue to increase in significance as youthful generations express these behaviours, and reality dating shows are produced. If these influences remain unacknowledged, the normalisation of performative and unrealistic ideas of love may become deeply embedded in dating culture, reaching a point where these expectations are irreversible.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary

Questionnaire (Qualitative and Quantitative) conducted January 2026-April 2026)

The questionnaire was the first research method conducted which provided quality subjective responses to link within all three of my chapters. By collecting 100 responses an outline was collated from the recurring responses of the general public. Prior to being sent out, editing procedures were taken to include an ethical disclaimer of confidentiality, switch question orders and enhance clarity allowing for a logically designed questionnaire. Through 15 questions, consisting of 9 open-ended and 6 close-ended responses, a spectrum of relevant quantitative and qualitative data was acquired, enabling a thematic analysis to provide evidence supporting and altering the progression of ideas throughout the PIP. There was careful consideration on how to align questions to each chapter so that sufficient information was able to correspond. A range of 100 candidates including males and females belonging either to Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X or Baby Boomers expanded the cross-cultural component with depth. However, the reliability of responses was limited to the information given by participants based on their familiarity with dating shows and lack of detail in responses, meaning that brief answers ultimately limited the ability to fully interpret all data. The slight split between respondents being 60% female and 40% male, provided a relatively balanced representation of gendered perspectives, while acknowledging the minor female-dominated bias within the sample. The questionnaire essentially produced a mass of invaluable information to disperse heavily across my chapters.

Content Analysis (Qualitative and Quantitative) conducted February 2026-March 2026

The content analysis allowed for an extensive insightful study through a collection of data to fall under categories referencing themes within my PIP. Through a comparison of two seasons across different time periods of both '*Love Island Australia*' (Season 1 2018 & Season 7 2025) and '*The Bachelor Australia*' (Season 6, 2018 & Season 11 2023) changes were examined. By pulling out quotes and tallying number of comments qualitative and quantitative data was extracted which vitally showcased changes and consistencies within values, expectations and

gendered stereotypes contributing to the continuity and change component and accounting for the other cross-cultural component of gender. The curated table created to code different themes meant that patterns, trends and shifts could be systematically identified. The fifteen hours of consumption resulted in a strong method to incorporate enabling a comprehensive examination of similarities and differences in the portrayal of values through different cast members. Furthermore, this method gave direct data from media representations, promoting conclusions drawn from the observable behaviours of real people. However, during the conduction of the analysis, personal bias may have been embedded within the findings, as the selection and interpretation of data was likely influenced by the intended focus of the research. This method remained highly valid and accurate from the media showcase of concepts which were entirely related to the coding. The data collected from all episodes was totalled, producing a clear comparison between shows and time.

Personal Reflection (Qualitative) conducted April 2026

The personal reflection was the final research method written over three hours. It provided a detailed personal exploration purely of the PIP topic and how it was heavily integrated and related within a Generation Z life. Being a person who heavily and actively consumes dating shows, my significant exposure and familiarity with the topic was an asset to the dataset. Micro, meso and macro examples from real experiences relating closely to this topic were unpacked and produced quotes. Answering different prompts which ultimately correlated with my passion and lived experiences assisted the reflection to be detailed and full of excessive detail. The reflective nature allowed an examination between impacts of topics of Popular Culture both personally and within broader contexts. Additionally, it enabled connections to be made between the other primary research methods, strengthening the triangulation of the findings down to an interpersonal level. This methodology was useful in providing an authentic insight to consider the link between broader societal influences and individual experiences. However, a limitation was the personal bias which evidently occurred due to the subjectivity of this method meaning the data and opinions were skewed to the individual. Ultimately this method contributed to the PIP through bridging the gap of macro-level changes and micro-level experience complementing the findings of the other methods at a qualitative viewpoint.

Secondary

Boateng J, “The Perception of Intimacy: Are Dating Reality TV Shows Affecting Relationships?” (2023) 15 Canadian Journal of Family and Youth / Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse 33. Doi: 10.29173/cjfy29870

This journal article examined how the manipulated depiction of intimacy in dating reality television influences viewers’ expectations and behaviours within their own romantic relationships. Boateng explores how the blurred boundaries between televised relationships and real life dating contribute to changed perceptions of romance, particularly through the normalisation of ‘hookup culture’. This source essentially introduced me to the concept that audiences internalise values and expectations projected on shows, contributing to my analysis of changing partner selection through criteria and expectations in Chapter 2. The article was particularly useful in supporting my arguments that reality dating television reinforces and reflects trends in modern dating. This source is highly relevant to my PIP as it focuses on young audiences, who often find comfort and identify with what is portrayed in these programs. The article concludes that although unity and connection is created through collective consumption, the shows ultimately influence viewers' perceptions of healthy relationships encouraging views which may adopt unrealistic expectations and fall into modernised ‘hookup’ culture. Published in 2023 in the Canadian journal of family and youth, the source is current enough to remain relevant to my investigation. It’s academic publication and doi solidify the reliability ensuring high quality and consistent information. The slight bias of the author leans towards the negative consequences of dating television, so to balance this other research was used for a diverse perspective. Overall, this article was successful in discussing concepts of popular culture, technology, society and values, strengthening my understanding of reality genres' influence on audiences.

Daire, A., “The Wacky 52-year-long Evolution of Dating Shows on TV” (*Business Insider*) <<https://www.businessinsider.com/history-of-reality-dating-shows-2017-3>> accessed 29 April, 2026

This article examines the 52 year period of dating show evolution, tracing back to the first dating show ‘*The Dating Game*’ in 1965 to contemporary dating show adaptations. Daire demonstrates the changes which occurred over time making dating shows what they are today. By displaying the evolution of dating show formats, from harmless and humorous programs of the past to today’s drama filled and conflict driven shows. The article shows a chronological layout of popular releases, comparing the differences in time and audience engagement. This piece was extremely useful in developing a foundational understanding of dating show history by identifying the influences contributing to the evolution, supporting the introduction of my first chapter. The timeline and numerical statistics were special features which allowed me to comprehend the ordered development of the genre. The intended audience is general individuals interested in popular culture and it’s historical roots. Daire’s background holding a bachelor in writing and media showcases sufficient knowledge, however she is not an academic researcher. Therefore although INSIDER is reputable the author is less credible despite its pertinence. The article was valuable to my PIP through revealing the historical context and essential origins to set the scene. Overall, the source was helpful for understanding consumer drivers of show concept changes and applied well.

“Families and Family Composition” (2023) <<https://aifs.gov.au/all-research/facts-and-figures/families-and-family-composition>> accessed May 15, 2026

This source showcases changes within Australian family compositions through diversity, changing factors and structural movements. The Australian Institute of Family Studies reveals trends and charts which reveal societal transitions and similarities. The source connects to the Australian Bureau of Statistics ensuring accuracy and removes limitations and bias. The source was heavily useful to apply within my PIP to display the macro changes occurring within contemporary Australian society. It supported my discussion of secularisation, family dynamics and shifting values within chapter one and two. Overall, this source was effective to employ within my PIP to show the significance of social changes and implications which associate towards the topic.

Ferris, A.L., Smith, S.W., Greenberg, B.S. and Smith, S.L. (2007), The Content of Reality Dating Shows and Viewer Perceptions of Dating. Journal of Communication, 57: 490-510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00354.x>

This article is a study on how viewer exposure impacts perceptions of dating. It focuses on teen and young adults behaviour during dating. The source introduced me to the idea that repeated exposure to reality dating television can influence perceptions heavily and alter mindset contributing across all three of my chapters. The intended audience is anyone interested in exploring the societal impacts of dating show culture such as students, avid consumers and psychologists to determine how media shapes the world. Through a content analysis researching shows including *'The Bachelor'* and *'Blind Date'* Ferris concluded there was a strong link between repeated exposure and development of dating patterns creating a mirror effect. These findings were related to my PIP as it provided detailed evidence that dating television both reflects and reinforces values through representation of relationships. The text is highly reliable as its an academic, peer reviewed study published in the Journal of Communication, providing excellent evidence to support my own findings. However, the bias of limiting the study to focus on only viewer responses may contribute to the personal opinion of the author while conducting the research. Therefore, this source was essential for triangulation in my PIP as solid arguments supported my analysis within identity and values.

Kavka M, "Love 'N the Real; or, How I Learned to Love Reality TV" (*Research Gate* January 1, 2005) 93 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298647829_Love_> accessed 10 Nov, 2025

The article examines the extensive manipulation of reality within so-called 'reality' dating television shows. Kavka explores the challenging separation of reality and entertainment, arguing that reality television carefully constructs a mediated version. The extent of realism is sparse and what the audience gathers is rooted in a false sense. This text introduced me to the concept of performativity and understanding the curated nature of most edited programs. The audience is today's youth, particularly teens and young adults, whose beliefs are shaped by these shows. This was solely relevant to my PIP as I investigated how exposure influences young people particularly and the psychology behind investment across all chapters. Kavka's findings resulted in identifying the difficulty for audiences to understand what's authentic. This

supported my exploration of the multifaceted consequences involved in consuming unacceptable and controversial behaviours. Published in 2005, although the source is outdated, its validity of academia contributes to the appropriateness and connection to my PIP remains. The author's approach to the topic being mostly subjective implies slight bias but helped to sustain my discussions. Overall, the piece was utilised extensively to strengthen the link between modern pop culture on technology and society.

Macmillan, P., "An A – Z of Romance Tropes" (*Panmacmillan.com* May 21, 2024)

<<https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/fiction/romance-tropes-a-to-z>> accessed 31 May, 2026

This article analyses the types of romance tropes creating categories with narratives aligning to the arcs composed in popular culture. Macmillan discusses the various types of tropes which are used repeatedly to label dynamics in relationships making for storylines. The intended audience is primarily those interested in romance fiction wanting to understand the patterns. The article concludes that the recurring conventions are familiar and comforting to audiences who are able to identify common tropes. This source effectively allowed to connect to macro examples of archetypes corresponding well with my Chapter 1 on representation. Published in 2024, the source persists as applicable but the nature of the publication being a blog limits its accuracy. The general style of writing is engaging and has no bias as it's an objective piece. Overall, this article was beneficial to identify recurring tropes and discover the range of archetypes imagined.

McLaughlin., J, "Is Reality TV 'Harmful?'" (*Csu.edu.au* 2025)

<<https://news.csu.edu.au/opinion/is-reality-tv-harmful-we-asked-5-experts-including-an-ex-reality-tv-participant>> accessed 11 May, 2026

This source covers opinions regarding the harmful nature of reality television as a debate. By presenting diverse perspectives both negative and positive consequences of the genre are revealed. Between doctors and professors they outline how research provides lots of evidence of harmful impacts within programs. The intended audience is broad, including individuals who consume all types of reality TV or those who dislike the genre justifying opinions. Conclusions made by the contributors is that most evidence and personal opinions lead to

negativity showcased in studies and statistics. The text is reliable as it's a professional news article study and all subjective opinions are from experts who provide external data to support their arguments. It was useful as it correlates to the genre that dating shows fall under and reflect the same controversy that I am exposing within my PIP. The article effectively links any statistics and secondary data mentioned to provide accuracy. The text relates to my PIP through the syllabus points of groups that accept and reject as well as the impact on wider society. This short snippet gave me general thoughts by experts that allowed me to make conclusions pulling quotes into my chapters.

Miller MH, "Bachelor Nation | M.H. Miller" (*The Baffler* January 6, 2020)

<<https://thebaffler.com/salvos/bachelor-nation-miller>> accessed 13 Feb 2026

The source critiques '*The Bachelor*' as a constructed and very conceptual show that showcases drama over genuine connection and love. It explores how the program's highly produced format creates an artificial representation of romance prioritising drama and gossip culture over actual connection. The overall reflection of the absurd nature of the show evidently reveals contemporary societal values, particularly through the way relationships are presented. The intended audience of the show is adults that are familiar with the 'trashy' reality show. The article is relevant to audiences who consume or are familiar with this show or just interested in understanding others' outlooks within the genre. Conclusions made are while the show is 'bad' it gives insight into culture, gender and modern/emerging dating norms. Its appropriately linked to my PIP through my content analysis of '*The Bachelor*', allowing me to make predictions and triangulate my own data. The text is reliable because of its external research supporting the investigation but is limited by the aspect of the author's personal opinion. The reliability is justified through the peer-reviewed nature and university publication. The only bias towards the author's personal interpretation and conduction of research does ultimately restrict exploring any optimism. Overall, this source was valuable to my primary research and supporting claims within my first chapter and correlated well to concepts like gender, norms and emerging cultures.

Morley, I., “A Plea to Viewers of Reality Dating Shows” (*Psychology Today*2024)

<<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/love-them-or-leave-them/202402/why-i-wont-ever-write-about-love-is-blind-again>> accessed May 3, 2026

This article discusses the highly edited content that is showcased within reality TV and pleads audiences to critically consider the judgement participants receive from their own comments, prompting recognition that the ‘full story’ is not always shown. Morely argues that the fabricated nature of reality shows encourages producers' goal to frame contestants and spark uproar. The intended audience is towards all viewers of any show but precisely those who watch dating shows and may be releasing or promoting significant hate or negativity reflected in the media. The conclusion is that it must be recognised truly as edited and curated entertainment to reduce harmful impacts on people who partake as candidates to endorse a healthy environment within both the shows and humanity. Morley ultimately encourages careful thinking and logical understanding of ‘reality’ television before making critiques which correspond to mental issues and other health implications. This piece is written by a therapist which is subjective to personal opinions around her profession and perspective but it has been published in a psychology journal contributing to some credibility and accuracy supported by research. The article is not peer-reviewed and is more personal than other sources making it on the lower scale of reliability. This source was useful in expanding my understanding of the broader consequences which can be damaging towards many. This article was immensely beneficial to contribute in the villain and hero section of chapter 1 providing a resource of hopefulness towards sensitive and detrimental topics. The piece corresponded well by discussing more positive concerns of dating shows by reshaping outlooks to allow the popular culture to be an enjoyable collective experience. Overall, this source was valuable for providing a fresh view on the parasocial relationship between audiences and contestants, supporting my revelation of serious societal impacts.

O’Keefe, V., “I Assumed Reality-TV Dating Shows Were Bad for My Daughters (and Me). I Was Wrong.” (*The Wall Street Journal* December 11, 2025)

<<https://www.wsj.com/lifestyle/relationships/i-assumed-reality-tv-dating-shows-were-bad-for-my-daughters-and-me-i-was-wrong-beff939f>> accessed April 23, 2026

This personal article writes about how a parent utilised family time watching reality television to educate his daughters on handling and navigating difficult situations. O’Keefe challenges the assumption that dating shows are toxic by suggesting that opportunities to teach lessons can arise. The jarring themes showcased in reality dating shows such as confrontation and slander are rarely seen to that extent in real life, allowing audiences to consider their approach and viewpoint towards their own situations. The intended audience is parents of young adolescents who are able to identify the positive lessons which can be taught through negative examples. This piece has been published in the Wall Street Journal as a news column advocating its relevancy for today’s society. However as the piece is a personal story instead of an academic certified one, the findings are confined to this particular family. This ties well to my PIP in the third chapter discussing the contribution of reality shows to social change, as it reveals the encouragement towards open discussions of grave matters which can occur in relationships. It also nicely explored generational differences and the role of television in connecting and relating through different ages and genders. The source was an adequate insight into alternate perspectives contributing to change contributing to my PIP as a real world micro example that drives culture adaptation.

Porter J, and Standing K., “Love Island: Adam Shows Teenagers How Not to Treat Romantic Partners” [2018] *The Conversation*, <https://doi.org/10.64628/AB.remk6gdpc>

This article examines how adolescents are actively seeking relationship examples and how learning about building relationships can often stem from influencers on shows like ‘*Love Island*’. Porter and Standing explore how dating television acts as an active, informal source for young audiences, with viewers adopting the behaviours, terminology and values originated by participants. The article highlights that young audiences may not critically assess the nature of what’s broadcasted on screen and internally interpret the ‘realness’ as acceptable. The intended audience branches to all young people who are audience members and may fall victim to poor judgement of exemplars on shows. The authors conclude that education systems,

parents and guardians play the most essential role in helping young adults perceive and identify appropriate behaviours to avoid partaking in unlawful and risky behaviour. The text is reliable as it is composed through an academic journalism website, The Conversation, providing an accurate resource to use. The only issue being the bias towards negative impacts significantly limits the resource to a singular viewpoint. It was incredibly useful in relating to all three of my arguments supporting my cross-generational comparison. In summary, this piece was applicable to my research through the specific transfer of ‘*Love Island*’ in my writing and demonstrated true impacts on both future and existing generations caused by heavy media consumption.

Raising Children, “Peer Pressure and Influence: Teenagers” (2019)

<<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/behaviour/peers-friends-trends/peer-influence>>
accessed 22 May, 2026

This article examines the influences of peer influence and pressure in adolescents, through understanding how behaviours, values and choices are shaped by other individuals. The intended audience is those who are interested in understanding how micro relationships influence teenagers' perceptions. The author refers to external resources to support the research and validity of the piece. The source concludes that while peer pressure occurs naturally during youth, supportive healthy relationships are better equipped to avoid negative consequences. This source is reliable to the publication and is related to today's society. The piece contributes to my PIP by supporting the arguments towards peer influence working with reality dating shows to shape younger audiences.

Scott M, “All the Love Island Australia Couples That Are Still Together”

(*Who*December 16, 2025) <<https://www.who.com.au/entertainment/reality-tv/love-island-couples-still-together/>> accessed 12 June, 2026

This text examines the outcomes of ‘*Love Island*’ across all seasons. Scott provides an overview of all the couple's status’ to update audiences and those intrigued. The intended audience is primarily viewers who are invested in the personal lives of the contestants. The author compiles secondary research to support his justification. This source holds no bias and is ultimately truthful to the date of publication. It relates to my topic by giving evidence within

my final chapter. Overall, this source contributed well into my PIP in my assessment of the validity and longevity of the show's constructed relationships.

Suri C and Sansanwal G, “A Study on Impact of Reality Shows on Youth” (2022) 1

Journal of Communication and Management 01

<<https://jcoma.com/index.php/JCM/article/view/2/2>> accessed 12 Feb, 2026

This journal article investigates the uncertainty of credibility within reality TV shows, which are primarily targeted at and consumed by 15-to-20-year-olds, influencing their self-image and values. Suri and Sansanwal explore the misleading editing and constructed representations within reality television, arguing the manipulative portrayal of participants is heavily damaging to their self-esteem and reputations and may therefore be considered exploitative. The authors reveal how poorly portrayed storylines and elements showcased in reality television lead to greater negative effects for viewers. The authors conclude that the addictive nature of these heavily manipulative shows reinforces the idea that reality television is evidently becoming less realistic but still engages viewers. The text relates to my PIP as it demonstrates the harmful consequences which are juxtaposed by the potential for creativity and fun within contemporary media forms. It provided helpful factual data which applied broadly to my understanding of the reality genre within my PIP but needed further research to be consistently applied within the dating show aspect of my topic. The text is relatively reliable as its presented as a journal published article and is peer reviewed whilst incorporating truthful research ensuring the accuracy of the study. The only limitation of the writing being that the viewpoint is slanted towards just youthful audiences restricting the ability to represent other generations. The piece was helpful to my PIP with expansive data that applied across the entire central material but was not specific enough to my topic limiting its full ability to apply significantly.

Trioli, V., “Your Teenage Son Might Learn Something from Married at First Sight”

(*Abc.net.au* March 21, 2026) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-21/married-at-first-sight-son-television-manosphere/106474868>> accessed April 22, 2026

This text explores the utilisation of reality television as a tool to teach essential lessons to the young people of the world to recognise poor and inappropriate behaviour. Trioli communicates

the opportunities broadcasted through shows like *'Married At First Sight'*, to reveal how critical discussion of what's presented can be beneficial rather than pure consumption and internal interpretation. This piece is relevant for both parents, consumers and children who may be using particular shows as a foundational basis for finding advice. The article concludes by acknowledging that this particular child has been able to identify the negative and positive situations exemplified in the show teaching him to recognise what's deemed as suitable. The writing piece, although subjective, is an incredible story to be shared with society as there are certainly positive outcomes of controversial and negative shows. As the article has been published by the ABC its validity is certified through the broadcaster's credibility making it appropriate to refer to within synthesis. It was useful to my PIP and my own obtainment of knowledge as it provided an essential and often undiscovered positive side into what consumption of reality genres can provide. Overall, this source was valuable towards my PIP in only the third chapter linking to the threads of positive social change television can drive.

Vrajlal A, "Who's Still Together from *the Bachelor Australia* Franchise?"

(Refinery292025) <<https://www.refinery29.com/en-au/2023/01/11247206/bachelor-australia-who-is-still-together>> accessed 16 June, 2026

This piece showcases the relationship outcomes of all couples participating in the aus version of *'The Bachelor'*. The author uses secondary research to ensure a correct and accurate total. This piece was essential for providing evidence in my third chapter where I investigate the real lasting consequences of the shows chosen to study in my central material. The source is reliable as it's published by a reputable media company 'Refinery 29'. There is no bias in this source as it reflects truthful data from participants themselves. Overall, this source was helpful regarding my PIP to display factual numerical data accounting for the rate of success.