

CRITIC

TE ĀROHI



THE
LOVE
ISSUE

On the fence about who to vote for this election?

I think we should use our natural resources to grow the economy!

No way, our natural environment needs to be protected!

Find out which parties think like you.

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can we pretend that airplanes in the night sky are like shooting stars?

I could really use a wish right now. wish right now. wish right now.

EDITORIAL

What's Up, Love?

Welcome to the Love Issue! In this edition, you'll find a double love feature, double love in culture, and a double Moaningful Confessions. Don't say we don't love you.

This issue was pretty spontaneous, but I think it's well-timed. It's the second to last issue of the year, and I feel that people are tired. So let's talk about something that unites us: love.

I've been hearing that it's breakup season, and I get it. Toward the end of the year, things start to derail, and I do think that it's a time of reflection. It's a period right before things get tough with exams, and it's kind of the last point many of us will get to come up for air before we have to lock back down again. Naturally, people begin to evaluate what they've been doing all year – and often our thoughts drift back to what we've loved.

I think people feel very differently about what love is. My mum always told me that love isn't a feeling, but rather an action. "Love is a doing word," she'd tell me. While I might be in a minority, I believe that to be true. Love is a choice, not necessarily driven by some divine spark. But that's just me – just Hanna's view. It's just one perception of love, and the beauty of love is in its fluidity. Now, a word from my amazing Deputy Editor, Stella Weston.

Hanna Varrs ☆

We've kept this issue to a pretty traditional idea of love (if you can call AI chatbots and Love Island 'traditional'), but seeing as person of the year asked me to pop some thoughts in here, I wanted to talk about another (far superior, IMO) kind of love – platonic.

I love my friends. The nights in our flat when we carry our shitty camp table out of the kitchen and onto the porch to eat dinner together (even though it's freezing cold and the table is unbelievably heavy) are worth more to me than any dinner date. Whether we're parked up on the couch with frozen margaritas (shout out Critic Bingo), in bed on a dusty Sunday with our saviour Trojan, or getting ready for a night out and doing our makeup in front of the mirror on the floor, my friends are always where I'd rather be. If I never love a partner as much as I love them, I'm lowkey completely okay with that.

I'll leave it there before they rip me out for getting too sappy, but in case it hasn't come across yet — I love you guys.

We hope you enjoy this very special issue!

Stella Weston ♡ 



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THIS PUBLICATION IS AI FREE.

LETTERS

dear critic

today i woke up in a pool of sweat thinking about you. i want to caress your pages and feel your ink under my skin. i hear you name everywhere i go. i see you in every room. why don't you see me? please notice me. i want you. i NEED you. please critic please.

your one true love xx

Cupid's Response: Ohhhhh.... Ok. I do love you too, but I love every 21,295 of the students Otago Uni has! My heart cannot belong to one.

Send a letter to the editor at critic@critic.co.nz to be in to win an OUSA Clubs & Soc's Sauna Voucher!

Hi Critic,

I am a tutor for a pretty big paper at the uni and feel like there are a couple of students who would be really great together or even great friends. Just wanna know if it's kinda cooked if I try to put them together a bit more. They do group projects every week together, and I have been putting them together every couple of weeks (just to stress test, yk ;))

So... is it weird if I 'set them up'?

Lots of love (hopefully),

Tutor/Matchmaker

Cupid's Response: Hey tutor, that may not be a great idea. At all. You've been putting them together enough. If something comes of that, then great! But maybe you should resign as matchmaker... and possibly tutor

critic te ārohi

sooooo i have this crush on one of your staff and i was just wondering what was the best way to make a move? i reallyyyy like them but don't wanna get flamed in critic articles if it all goes tits up ya know?

any advice is appreciated, thanks for everything

secret admirer

Cupid's Response: Our people are lowkey single asf! So if you

LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be 150 words or fewer. The deadline is Thursday at 12pm. Get them into Critic by emailing us at critic@critic.co.nz. Letters of a serious nature directly addressing a specific group or individual will not be published under a pseudonym, except in extraordinary circumstances as negotiated with the Editors. Critic Te Ārohi reserves the right to edit, abridge, or decline letters without explanation. Frequently published correspondents in particular may find their letters abridged or excluded. Defamatory or otherwise illegal material will not be printed. We don't fix the spelling or grammar in letters. If a letter writer looks stupid, it's because they are.

know they are single lowkey just like slide into their DM's and complement their work. No one actually reads the words so if they are a writer they will be so happy, if they are an illustrator it might be a bit harder because like everyone likes the way Critic looks (right...). At the end of the day, love will win. So be bold, be brave, and be a lover not a fighter.

Hi Critic,

My boyfriend broke up with me last week (it was kinda out of the blue), and we live like three doors down from each other. I have been finding it really hard as well because our friend groups are pretty intertwined, so social events feel like a bit of a show where everyone looks at me and points. Idrk what to do because I feel like now is the time to get together with my friends, but I feel a bit silly :/ What do I do lol?

- </3

Cupid's Response: That really sucks and I'm so sorry! Lean on your friends for sure, the people who really care for you will be there. If it's all feeling a bit competitive, maybe they're not the best friends for you anyways, ya know? I know it's hard rn but it does get better pinky promise xx god speed soldier

The News

ISSUE 25 KAWEPŪRONGO 05/10/2026

"Attack Ads" Instagram Account Targets OUSA Exec Presidential Candidates

By Hanna Varrs Editor // critic@critic.co.nz

Who is @bigmoneystudent? Potential links to VUWSA elections uncovered

Last Saturday, an Instagram account going by @bigmoneystudent took a hit at presidential candidate Troy Gibbons, labelling him a "National Party jack-up". Shortly after, the account targeted candidate Rosie Cruickshank, labelling her "radically liberal" and "radically wrong". The AI-generated post urged student voters to not "let her win". Over DM, @bigmoneystudent explained why they made the ads: "Because I don't want her to win."

The attack ads were paid for, popping up in student Instagram feeds. "The paid social media I've done is going to reach most Dunedin students."

The original post about Troy urged voters to cut through the "absolute garbage" on their feeds. "There's always one. Every few years, a Young Nat hack rocks up to campus with a haircut paid for by his dad, pretending he cares about Scarfie culture."

The post went on to insist that Troy didn't care about poor housing or mental health funding – but rather "ticking a box that gets him an internship" at a Wellington lobbying firm. "He thinks students are too checked out to notice the set-up."

Screenshots supplied to Critic Te Ārohi show @bigmoneystudent accusing Troy of ditching his ties to the National Party right before the election to appear as a "left-wing activist" – "the textbook definition of a cynical bait-and-switch."

For context, Troy was present at a Young Nats AGM inside Parliament earlier this year, something which @bigmoneystudent cited as proof of his National affiliation. When approached, Troy told Critic that he was in the National party from high school, as it was the "only party" that operated in his home region of Stratford, Taranaki.

"After receiving complaints from the party hierarchy throughout my first year [of University] for anti-

government posts, it became impossible to support this Government. Throughout my second year I got involved in pro-Palestine and other progressive movements. Then, after hearing Tamatha Paul speak about the Green's plan for rural regions, I was inspired to continue exploring left wing politics," Troy explained.

Troy claimed he was subsequently "reprimanded" and told to leave the party, as his "anti-government actions were harming the party and created a reputational risk." According to Troy, his involvement in the party ceased at the end of July, and he joined the Green Party soon after – "where I have been active and supported their efforts for the 2026 campaign."

When confronted with Troy's current Green and Alliance Party memberships, @bigmoneystudent replied that being a member of three parties "utterly disqualifies" Troy. "That proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that he has zero core convictions and will sign up for anything if he thinks it advances his personal ambitions."

However, Critic understands that the posts about Troy were deleted mere hours after their initial upload after many comments pointed out Troy's change in politics. When confronted over DM, @bigmoneystudent explained they had been paid to put up the attack ads against Troy, and there were "miscommunications with my clients [...] I was approached by a candidate who wanted to run some attack ads."

Who is @bigmoneystudent?

Oh boy.

Critic approached @bigmoneystudent with a slew of questions, the first of which asked about the misinformation regarding Troy's status as a National Party member. The post's caption suggested that the account was made to ensure students knew what they were voting for, but @bigmoneystudent later claimed the information was inaccurate due to "miscommunication"

with a client. We asked how Big Money would respond to the suggestion that their post may have actually confused student voters and harmed healthy, informed debate about student politics for money from a client.

"The premise of your questions is absurd and biased [...] If your publication cared about the truth and 'healthy, informed debate', you would be asking Troy the tough questions instead of running cover for him." They proceeded to share Troy's record of being in the National Party, showing that he could be seen "hiding" in the background of a picture taken at a National Youth AGM.

On "private conversations and client engagements", @bigmoneystudent told Critic that they do not comment on private, confidential discussions – "nor will we entertain bad faith fishing expeditions into commercial operations."

"Unlike Critic Te Ārohi, we respect basic professional ethics and commercial confidentiality. We will not disclose client details, campaign costs, or unrelated activities simply to satisfy your narrative."

At this point, you might be thinking that @bigmoneystudent is some large scale lobbyist group with a personal vendetta against Troy. You'd be partially correct in thinking so, but things go a lot deeper.

A couple of weeks ago, Victoria University of Wellington's (VUW) student magazine, Salient, reported on a series of attack ads targeting the Victoria University Students' Association (VUWSA) Exec candidates.

Salient identified links between two accounts involved in the attack ad campaign, @studentlobbyist and @vuwsagirl. Separately, @vuwsagirl had been linked to an earlier advertisement associated with the Save Our Clubs campaign (an ongoing opposition to transfer the administration of student clubs from VUW to VUWSA) via a URL recorded by Meta.

Save Our Clubs, spearheaded by a VUW student named Arie Joe, told Salient a former associate retained access to a dormant Instagram account associated with the campaign and later used it, without the group's knowledge or authorisation, to publish election attack ads.

According to his LinkedIn, Arie Joe is a Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence student at VUW, and current president of the VicAI society. He ran for Vic's University Council in August of 2026. He's also the former Wellington president of the Taxpayers' Union youth wing (Generation Screwed) and, as aforementioned, is the organiser of the Save Our Clubs campaign.

Save Our Clubs recently used Official Information Act requests to find out that Labour at Vic had received a \$1,700 club grant from VUW. The ACT Party was in full support of the findings: "Victoria University has been

caught taking compulsory fees from students and handing \$1,700 to the university branch of the Labour Party. This is exactly why ACT will make Student Services Fees voluntary," Dr Parmjeet Parmar said in a press release.

A portion of the Student Services Levy at VUW is reserved each year to help clubs operate and to run their events. Decisions are made by the Funding Panel, which is composed of University students and staff. The Tertiary Education Commission found the funding did not breach the existing Student Services Fee requirements.

Circling back to Arie's potential links to the attack ads via Save Our Clubs, several sources that spoke independently to Salient alleged that he was involved with the @studentlobbyist and @vuwsagirl accounts. Salient has not independently established that those allegations are correct. Salient separately contacted Arie Joe directly to ask whether he was involved with either account. He did not respond to those questions before Salient's publication.

Now over at Otago, many of the VUWSA attack ads claimed they were authorised by other candidates – similar to what @bigmoneystudent claimed. Critic has received unverified reports that @bigmoneystudent posted an Instagram story boasting that they had been seen at VUW, and were now at Otago – further bolstering a potential link. However, when approached by Critic about whether they had been active at Vic as well, @bigmoneystudent did not comment.

So, to reiterate, it appears that there is a link between Save Our Clubs, @vuwsagirl, @studentlobbyist and possibly @bigmoneystudent down at Otago. At the forefront of Save Our Clubs is Arie Joe, who hasn't confirmed whether or not he was behind the VUWSA attack ad accounts.

However, Troy Gibbons approached Critic Te Ārohi with screenshots of a conversation between Arie and himself. "Your [sic] lucky I've got you some free student media attention", Arie told Troy. When Troy asked Arie what he meant by that, Arie told him that "those ads, they will work in your favour [...] People don't remember positive things only remember negative things, but it will workout in your favor."

Troy asked Arie "Big money politics?", to which Arie responded "Yea [sic]", seemingly confirming his ownership over the account. However, he warned Troy not to tell anyone about their conversation: "Don't tell anyone otherwise going to have fucking salient [sic] and critic [sic] moaning at my doorstep." Hi!

Critic approached Arie with questions regarding whether he was behind the @vuwsagirl and @studentlobbyist accounts, what evidence he had to confirm regarding whether someone misused a "legacy" Save Our Clubs associated account and why he made @bigmoneystudent. ★

Troy Gibbons Elected As 2027 OUSA President

New Exec, who dis?

By Gryffin Blockley
News Editor // news@critic.co.nz



Another contentious, and occasionally chaotic, OUSA Executive Election rounded off last Thursday. A crowded Main Common Room was read out to hear the results drop after two weeks of campaigning, and four days of voting. Cutting through all the gristle, Troy Gibbons won the headline battle of the election – and will be your President for 2027.

In total, around 2300 votes were cast. The amount of votes varies slightly by candidate based on who was 'eligible' to vote for each category – so for results we'll use the percentages of total votes. OUSA uses a single transferable vote (STV) system, knocking out the candidate with the least number of first choice votes until someone has 50% or more of the votes.

Four candidates were vying for President – the most crowded field in many years. Troy *just* scraped through in the first round, snagging 50.85% of the votes. Second place went to Rosie Cruickshank, with 34.8% of the votes. Other challengers were 2026 Postgraduate Representative Fergus Parks with 9.39% of votes, and Lochlan Hanham with 5.69% of votes. This is a clear trend the President role is getting more competitive, after many years of sole candidates before 2025 – thank fuck #democracy.

Troy's second in command will be Kamesha Jones, who scored a second term as Administrative Vice President. Kamesha's only challenger was newcomer Sarah Al-Shanfari, who scored 30.84% of votes. Kamesha on the other hand scored 69.16% of votes (nice), cruising her way to a second term.

Next result on the lineup was the one-horse race for Finance and Strategy Officer – giddy up. Thankfully for Ella Courdet, her 2077 votes were no match for the 245 votes of no confidence (#destroyed).

Academic Representative was a three-way race between Niko Fay, Ben de Ruyter and Dominic Sarelius. It was a tight contest, with Niko falling just shy of the 50% threshold in round one – with 49.03% of votes. Last place candidate Dominic was removed with 17.5% of votes, and after preferences were redistributed, Niko scored 56.99% of votes. Ben also missed out on the role, with 43.01% of second round votes. Close – but no cigar.

One of the most competitive races of the election

was for Welfare and Equity Representative. Sarah Al-Shanfari, Reuben Tait, Hamza Baalousha and Yuri Castañeda all passionately campaigned for the role, and it showed as three rounds of voting were required. Reuben was knocked out first, followed by Sarah. Ultimately, Yuri came out on top, scoring 55.62% of votes compared to Hamza's 44.38%.

Political Representative was contested by Lochlan Hanhlan, Thomas Brocherie, and Connor Knights. Scoring 17.92% of votes, Lochlan was knocked out in the first round of voting. With two candidates left, Thomas trumped Connor with 52.54% of votes.

Another crowded field was for Clubs & Societies Representative, with four candidates. Ella Grayson, Leila Daniels, Cheol Shin, and Dominic Sarelius were in a relatively tight race, requiring three rounds of preference distribution. Dominic was knocked out first on 7.72%, followed by Leila on 25.62% with three candidates left. The final showdown was between Ella and Cheol – with Ella coming on top with 63.27% of votes compared to Cheol's 36.73%.

Another Executive member seeking a second term was Zoe Eckhoff, for Residential Representative. Her only challenger was Jacob Rush, who scored 23.04% of votes. Zoe was re-elected with 76.96% of votes, the biggest margin of the contested races. This rounds out Troy, Kamesha and Zoe as this year's Exec members coming back for another year.

The last two results are for International and Postgraduate Representatives. These didn't have the same 2000ish voter turnout as the other roles, as only final year students, postgrads, and international students are eligible to vote for these. Current Postgraduate Representative Fergus Parks scored 10.12% of votes in round one and was knocked out of contention, leaving Kristina Hames and Imogen Harris in round two. Kristina ended up on top with 55.28% of votes to Imogen's 44.72%. For International Representative, voting was wrapped up in one round: Ilham Azman scored the role with 54.38% of votes. Allyson Tan missed out with 26.88% of votes, while Tim Podornicov obtained 18.75% of votes.

And just like that, another OUSA Executive has been elected. Whether the relentless chalking and social media posts annoyed you, or given you hope for the



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future – the students reckon this is the exec that will put in the hard yards for the next year. Just a note – the results are provisional pending any complaints needing to be investigated by the Returning Officer, Cam Fraser. However, Cam did say that no candidates have had points deducted due to complaints when he announced the results.

Good luck 2027 to the Executive. Just know that Critic is always down the hall – watching and waiting. ★

Your 2027 OUSA Executive:

President: Troy Gibbons

Administrative Vice President: Kamesha Jones

Finance and Strategy Officer: Ella Courdet

Academic Representative: Niko Hay

Welfare & Equity Representative: Yuri Castañeda

Political Representative: Thomas Brocherie

Clubs & Societies Representative: Ella Grayson

Postgraduate Students Representative: Kristina Hames

International Students Representative: Ilham Azman

Residential Representative: Zoe Eckhoff

Sports, Service, and Clubs Honoured at Otago Blues and Golds

After all, these clubs don't run themselves

By Gryffin Blockley
News Editor // news@critic.co.nz

The annual Blues and Golds awards were held last week, honouring some of our fellow students doing great things in the sporting and cultural spheres. A joint event held between OUSA and the University saw the Business School decked out to the nines for the awards ceremony. Here's what some Otago taura have been doing beyond the uni grind.

Taking out Sportsperson of the Year was physio student Alexa Duff with an impressive resume of sporting successes. Alexa is a member of the Southern Hoiho for basketball, and also represented Aotearoa in 3x3 at the FISU World University Games in Germany. On top of that, Alexa also is a javelin thrower, snagging a gold medal at the Dame Yvette Williams Memorial Meet and Otago championships, and silver at the NZ Track and Field Championships. Winning seven medals since 2023, and was a finalist for Junior Sportswoman of the Year at the Otago Sports Awards – a deserved, multi-skilled winner.

The award for Māori Sportsperson of the Year went to Ged Wall (Te Rarawa and Te Aupōuri), for rowing. Ged is a 4th year medical student, who recently picked up three medals at the NZ University Rowing Championships. Scoring gold for varsity singles and silvers in varsity doubles and championships, all on top of the crazy med workload. If that wasn't enough, Ged also won a gold medal at the New Zealand Rowing Championships.

For clubs, the Otago Consulting Club took out society of the year, and a highly commended award was given to the Otago Biochemistry & Genetics Students Association. Women in Business Otago were also given a special mention award – shoutout to them.

The Otago University Japanese Students' Association is your Cultural Society of the Year, with highly commended going to the Indian Students' Association. A special

mention award was given to the Otago Iranian Society. Ka pai for all the cool events you've thrown throughout the year.

Back to the sporting world, the Otago University Hockey Club was awarded Sports Club of the Year. Highly commended went to the Otago University Canoe Club, and a special mention award was given to the Otago Campus Badminton Club. Rowers snagged a couple awards on the night, with Ted Mayne awarded highly commended for Sportsperson of the Year, and Jamie McKenzie for Coach of the Year.

Another big ticket award of the night was the Outstanding Member of the University of Otago Community, awarded to Critic Te Ārohi's own Hanna Varrs. As Editor, Hanna has balanced a full-time Law and Management degree, on top of running an 101-year old magazine. No easy feat to do either of those things, and answer all the letters to the Editor.

OUSA President Daniel Leamy said that "every year I'm blown away by the passion our taura bring to sport, culture, academia, and service, and these awards recognise the impact they have both on campus and beyond." In total, 14 major awards, 14 Silver Service, 37 Blues and 6 Golds were handed out at the ceremony. Turns out there's a lot of locked in taura hiding within our very own campus.

Check out the OUSA website to see the full list of winners – Critic Te Ārohi wishes we had the space on the page to shout out each of you individually. A massive congratulations to everyone who keeps their clubs ticking along, or somehow manages to balance national excellence at their art or sport, on top of those pesky essays to write. ★



Laps for the Lads

Run72 brings a day of movement and mental health kōrero to campus

By Bella Bates
Senior News Reporter // news@critic.co.nz

The country's largest student-run university event, Run72, is making its Dunedin debut on Friday October 9th. As the name suggests, it involves running. But this time it's about more than flexing on Strava, with the event raising awareness and funds for men's mental health. Significantly, all money raised in Otago will stay locally to support Otago taura. Run72 began at the University of Canterbury in 2021, hosted by Lads Without Labels – a student-led organisation working to improve mental health, and break down the stigma around men talking about it.

Described as an awareness event first and a fundraiser second, the annual event keeps at least one person chucking laps around the course for 72 hours straight. The duration originally reflected the proportion of suicides in New Zealand involving men at the time: 72%. That percentage has since risen, but the name has stuck, and the focus has shifted towards the people behind the statistic. The running is just the hook for encouraging blokes to reach out, showing that vulnerability can be a form of strength, and celebrating life rather than counting losses.

Run72 has grown each year since its inception, with more than 5,000 participants and various sponsors helping raise approximately \$92,000 last year. Lads Without Labels president Ethan Byloo said that Otago was always top of the list for expansion, given its proximity to Christchurch. "The region has a passionate student culture around mental health as seen with Heavy Breathers." The Heavy Breathers have been championing a similar kaupapa down South, running marathons to raise money for mental health support too

The Dunedin event will be held in collaboration with OUSA and the Heavy Breathers, whose partnership with Lads Without Labels grew out of last year's Emerson's Dunedin Marathon. Our local kings raised \$41,777 for the organisation – the largest single donation it had ever received. Apparently, cardio does have its uses. This year's Otago debut will be a smaller pilot event, which Ethan said

would "gather info about how the event could look over the scale of 3 days".

Run72 Otago will take over campus from 6am to 6pm on Friday, October 9. You can sign up solo, as a team, or with an organisation and clock up as many or as few laps as you fancy. Despite the name, running is optional. You can walk, bike, skate or roll around the 1.2km loop, which starts and finishes at Union Hall. It's about participation, not pace, so there's no need to be smashing out a PB. "Like Run72 in Christchurch, there will be a 'home village' by the start/finish line where people can come and engage with others," Ethan said. With music, kai and a spot to hang out, everyone is welcome, whether you're doing laps or cheering on your mates. Ethan hopes that sense of community will stick with participants beyond the event. "Even if you're only doing a lap, I would hope they take away that they aren't alone during their time through uni and even after uni. People do want to support you."

While participation is the priority, any money raised by Run72 Otago will stay in the region to support Otago students. Exactly where those funds will go is still being worked out. Ethan explained that, "at this stage we have some ideas of where we want it put towards, but we will make an announcement in the time coming to officially let students know." That means students turning up or donating will be supporting their own community, with the details of how that support will look still to come.

So if you're around in Dunedin on Friday – round up your flatmates and get your blood pumping for Run72 Otago. Whether you're a runner, a strutter, or a decorated couch potato, showing up matters a whole lot more than how many laps you manage. "Although you have the option to donate, this is by no means targeted as a fundraising event. We really want participation more than anything," Ethan said.

"If people can get together for a good cause, and slowly start being comfortable having conversations about how they're doing up top, then we are succeeding." You can sign up via the link in the Lads Without Labels Otago Instagram bio (@lads_otago). ★



PUZZLES

CROSSWORD

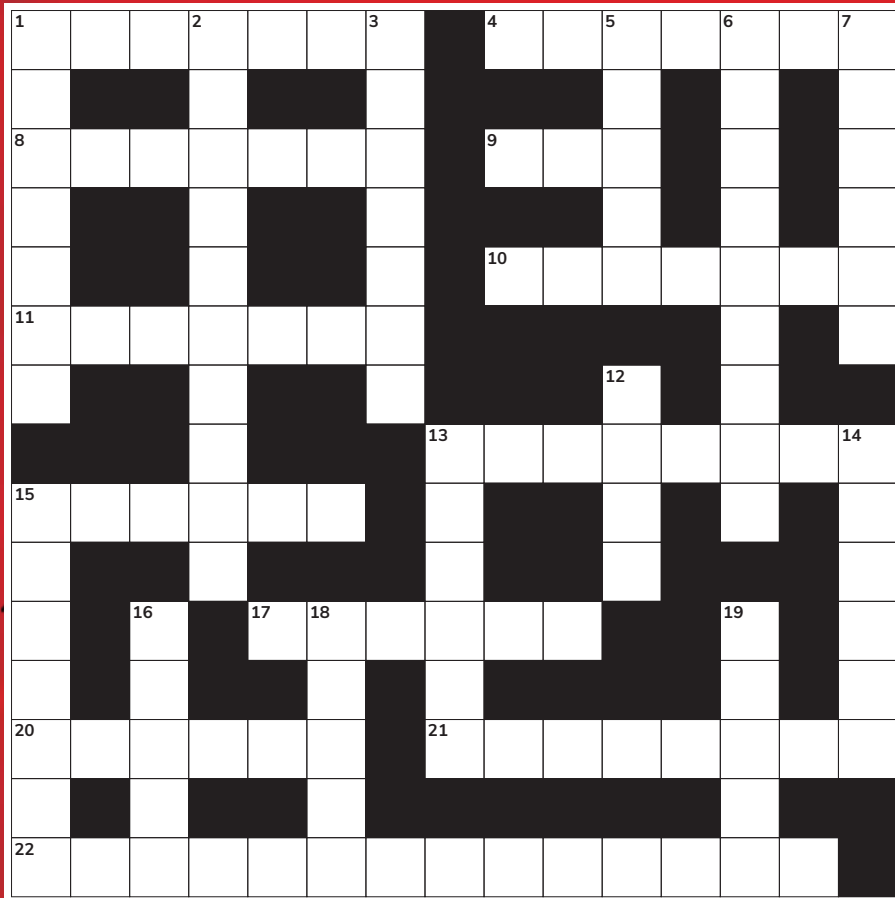
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36 MORAY PLACE, DUNEDIN

ACROSS

- 1 Sheldon Cooper's roommate
4 Three of them visited baby Jesus (2)
8 Preparing for impact
9 Science guy, Bill ____
10 Like big wasps
11 To charm or captivate
13 One's partner
15 Sleeveless garment, often waterproof
17 To respect and approve of someone
20 Not vulnerable to something
21 Couples might do this before getting freaky
22 Singer of 'I Will Always Love You' (2)

DOWN

- 1 Crustacean
2 Magical practice of conjuring or raising the dead
3 Celsius or fahrenheit
5 What one might do to a sheep
6 Angelina Jolie and Tom Cruise qualify as this (2)
7 One who practices being without clothes
12 Bush that can be weaved into things like baskets
13 Old person
14 OUSA Executive position, Welfare and ____
15 Advance showing
16 1940s Disney animated movie
18 Tractor-manufacturing company, John ____
19 Hobbit who steals Gollum's drip



Find crossword answers on critic.co.nz

SUDOKU

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EASY

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8	1	4	2					9
		9		8	5			3
	5		6			9		
		1	5		8	3		
		8		2		4		
5			3	4		6		
9					7	2	3	8
		7		2				

MEDIUM

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	3	2			5		4	
7					1			2
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	7		2			9	1	
9	6							

HARD

WORD FIND

DYKGJ IWMUD I GBCGL VPMDCGAVDR ZRRK
ZYXGJ LLLBPJ DUDQCEAAADS ZQYUTESD
UTAFWWZTSLPBMYSNRUSEBIHLIY IHMW
EUGRBVIMJECMOVTJRCVENSPHSS LOVE
TNTIKGMDISMURFETTERVCDRAENMKCO
CGBEYUPNCCDRZYCXNYOTLTEMMLFIUU
TTXNCQEBRZMFBRJLERNVWJOAWDDDXW
HUQDAULFQZVVGDDCSYPHFLKMRRLRVJA
PNZSLKSCCSURXVETR GXBRHZHYMIDIS
RGQNVXQZZNLPTCHATBOTCQYGUF EVZS
ITLFI LIOQADCZMAFUYSTXS INSNENYF
XUDBDGJTHGGEXAMINATIONTPLMTATE
ONXRUNBRESPECTCJYCGMMKKYOSZEYR
LG VZTHCZYBPUQEQUEERJXWXHHMALRA
ESGYWRGOBWUAMBNAJISLANDKRLUBMT
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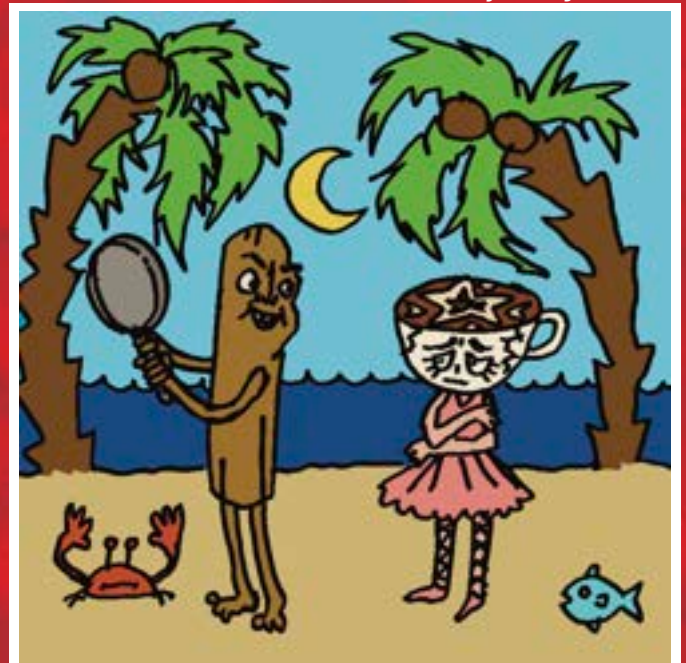
FIND THESE WORDS:

LOVE
LANGUAGE
ELECTION
DATING
HOMOEROTIC
ISLAND
CONSENT
ENDEARMENT
QUEER
HUNTER
SMURFETTE
MINION
ASSFERATU
PLAYBOY
VASECTOMY
EXAMINATION
YEARNING
COMMUNICATION
RESPECT
FRIENDS
CHATBOT
TUNG TUNG TUNG SAHUR
ADORATION

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are 10 differences between the two images

Illustrated by Jimmy Tannock



4 MODERN DATING SITUATIONS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

By Jesse Valpy and Stella Weston

Dating isn't easy, especially at university. Everything's changed since our parents were courting each other via carrier pigeon, so we've put together some advice applicable to today's dating scene. This isn't one-size-fits-all, but it's a starting point. After all, what is Critic Te Arohi here for if not to offer completely unsolicited advice?

I feel like ever since coming to university, I've outgrown my relationship with my partner. What should I do?

Being in a relationship is often a hefty emotional investment, and it can be stressful if you're beginning to feel distant. If that's the case, it's totally okay (and actually necessary) to take some time to reflect and sit with your thoughts. The decision to end a romantic connection is a meaningful one, and one that sometimes does need to be made.

Growing pains can look like conversations feeling forced or less genuine or having few things in common. You might struggle to relate to them or notice that you don't feel emotionally or intellectually challenged. You might pick fights over small things or become more easily frustrated at little quirks that they can't help.

Once you've had a good ponder, try to talk to your partner in an open and constructive manner. They only know what you share with them, and keeping them in the dark doesn't benefit either of you. Also – do it in person. Phone calls and texts are notoriously difficult forms of emotive communication to rely on when the going gets tough, so maybe don't go there.

The good news and bad news is that human nature is fluid and dynamic. Our perspectives, interests, and values shift and transform over time, so of course our relationships are inevitably going to change as well. Your top three best mates from primary school probably aren't still your top three buddies. That doesn't mean you fell out with anyone; it just shows that we change.

This change is not something to beat yourself up over or blame your partner for. One person may be prioritising self-improvement and exploring different aspects of their identity, while the other partner may feel left behind or content with what they have. Neither is in the wrong.

Just because a relationship ends does not mean it was insincere, wasteful or wrong. If something ends, it doesn't mean you failed at it, or that you made a mistake and wasted the time spent together. Loss is the proof of love, and outgrowing a relationship isn't anyone's fault – it just happens sometimes.

Having that tough conversation will help you both gain a clearer understanding of where your relationship is at.

My partner is upset that I don't post them on social media. While I maintain a decent online presence, I'm pretty private about my relationships and don't really want to post my partner. What should I do?

For some, posting their partner all over the place is an effortless display of admiration. For others, relationships are a part of life that warrants more privacy. We all have different approaches to how we personalise our social media presence, and there's no right answer (despite what that guy who rates Instagram accounts may say). Social media throws us right off the deep end of being perceived, and it can be scary dealing with that while striving to feel accepted and appreciated by our peers – and partners.

If you're someone who doesn't really vibe with posting your partner, that's chill. Hopefully it's because of your own reasons, and isn't a reflection of them, your relationship, or an extensive roster you're trying to keep on the DL. Assuming your reasons are deeper than that, once again, open and honest communication is always the way to go.

It's important to explain that your partner's absence on your social media is not a reflection of their worth, or of how much you value your relationship. We all show how we value our relationships differently, but explaining your own thoughts with transparency and care will set your partner's mind at ease.

You could try some other ways of showing that you value them – buy a bottle of wine worth \$20 instead of the usual \$11 for your next date night, wash up the pile of dishes that has been causing tension in their flat, or even offer some purely selfless lovemaking.

There is no rulebook for relationships, and how you run the 'gram is entirely up to you. If you're feeling pressured by your partner to change your behaviour, talk about it! Maybe even find a nonsensical BuzzFeed quiz on what each of your love languages are (is BuzzFeed still a thing?). It's a starting point to working out what's important to each of you in your relationship and knowing that sometimes these things can change over time.

Understanding what your partner values in relationships is huge, and while it's important to stay true to yourself, compromise is also a cornerstone of any strong relationship – potentially a cheeky soft launch might be the best of both worlds.

With all the discourse online around looksmaxxing, incels, and being an “alpha male”, I feel super self-conscious about the way I talk to women. Any advice?

The media we consume undoubtedly can have some pretty pervasive effects. If we are constantly exposed to handpicked highlights of the most attractive, smart and successful people on social media, we are absolutely going to start subconsciously comparing ourselves to these famous models, influencers, and celebrities.

Even looking at our friends and peers online, we often end up comparing the parts we see of their lives – their best moments from a semester – with the (often monotonous) reality of our own.

First and foremost, it's important to remember that line that has been repeated to us over and over: social media isn't real. Comparing ourselves to others only heightens our awareness of how we ourselves are perceived – something that we can't exactly control.

It is often both liberating and difficult to learn that lesson, but once you do, you can reality check your attitudes around relationships as well. Believe it or not, you don't need impossibly perfect physical features to have a conversation with a girl. Sure, physical attraction is a factor, but there's no objective standard measurable by metrics.

Your personality, behaviour, and general vibe are going to make a more lasting and valuable impression than a perfect jawline. You're more likely to be remembered for how you've made someone feel, rather than what you look like, so it may be more helpful to think about some promising topics of conversation, rather than obsessing over trying to achieve an eight-pack. Even if you've got biceps the size of tree trunks, chances are you'll still be reasonably nervous when taking a chance on someone you're interested in.

There's nothing wrong with material self-improvement, but it's more beneficial long-term when you're striving to achieve it for the right reasons. Reframe your thinking about feeling nervous, too. View nerves as a chance to facilitate improvement, not debilitate you. Nerves often signify a course of action worth pursuing, so take that leap of faith and give it your best shot! You miss all the shots you don't take, so trust that the right person will love you for who you are, *and* what you look like. Realistically, if you're being a dick and going on about yourself, they'll see right through you anyway.

My partner changes when they get drunk. They suggest that I don't love them, or that we should break up. When they're sober, they apologise. Do I say something?

As hard as it can be to say something, the answer to almost all of these relationship problems is open communication – and this is no exception. However, this can be a delicate situation, and a super tough one to be in, so take the time to think through what you're actually trying to get across.

First of all, if you're genuinely worried about your partner's drinking habits and their wellbeing on a more serious level, there are resources available through Student Support and Student Health, and more information about these can be found on the University website.

Putting that aside, try and unpack your partner's reasoning behind these comments. Don't take the whole 'drunk words are sober thoughts' thing and run with it – alcohol isn't a truth potion.

See if you can manage a productive (sober) conversation to see what the actual root of the problem is. Whether it's anxiety, or insecurity or something else that's bugging them, it's important to try and understand where they're coming from.

At the same time, remember that it's okay to take a step back. This situation is a lot to deal with, and using guilt in this way is hugely detrimental to any relationship, and completely unfair on you. Take time for yourself and make sure you have a support system outside of your partner – your friends, family, or Student Support. ★

Sculpted by **Robin Simpson**



HELP! I'M IN A HOMOEROTIC FRIENDSHIP!

Illustrated by
Jimmy Tannock

Relationships are not a concrete concept, but rather something much more fluid. This may very well be one of the biggest lessons I have learnt since moving out of home and going to university. 'Boyfriend and girlfriend' is not a rigid term, it turns out. The more people you meet and form bonds with, the clearer it is that what constitutes an 'adult relationship' can be just as messy as the world of young love and friendships.

Whether it's easy for you to admit or not, homoerotic friendships are inherent to the queer experience. Western society has laid out the ground rules for friendships for centuries: female friendships share deep emotional bonds, while male friendships are guarded with banter to prevent any semblance of a feeling from crashing through. But with growing up queer, many of these friendships don't fit the script, providing a source of 'in between friendships'. There's never enough there to afford a label, but there's room where many lessons about love end up laying. I think that's where the term 'homoerotic friendship' begins to look handy: an intimate, same-gender bond without necessarily involving any sexual or romantic activity, existing in the inbetween.

Growing up, I have a distinct memory of my mother sitting me down in year one and telling me I needed to be friends with more boys. This wasn't a thought that had ever crossed my mind before, but was one of the first moments where I learnt how society wanted my friendships to be. I wasn't a sporty kid, preferring reading and gossiping, which found me among girls and I didn't notice a single thing about it. Luckily for my mother, a Pokémon phase found me a pack of dweeby boys to ride through primary school with, as if being able to name the original 151 together was what my friendships were destined to be.

Years later, high school rolled around, conveniently as we trawled through the depths of puberty. The gender of who you were friends with suddenly made a lot more sense to me. Our balls were dropping – it was game time. Suddenly, my Pokémon crew were off to the all boys high school, and at my co-ed, I found myself back into a healthy rotation of female friendships. Again, I didn't see the appeal in playing football every lunch, but laying on the field and gossiping took my heart.

Unfortunately for me, a three letter g word became a regular in people's vocabulary. Suddenly, who I was friends with became pretty good evidence to be called that. As did my voice, which was somehow deep thanks to my fresh Adams apple, but had a touch of femininity to it that people liked to point out. And after those came the little things. The way I walked, my hobbies and anything that didn't fit the conveniently set out standards for masculinity made it easy bait for any observers. It wasn't just from peers, too. One time a friend had told me their mum had described me as quite an "efferemerate" male friend, as if that invalidated the bond we had. Ouch.

If you couldn't tell by my lack of close male friendships growing up, this was a glaring sign I would turn out to be queer when I got older. I may have missed the signs (some people know before they even understand what sexuality is, I was more the type who realised one random night at seventeen years old). By the time I arrived at university, I had a lot of soul searching and thinking to do about how I conduct my relationships, and dealing with the fallouts of being a square peg in the circular hole of masculinity.

From the first day of uni, I hit it off with this guy. Our friend groups didn't particularly cross over, but we both always took the chance to get to know each other.

Even the phrase 'homoerotic' doesn't feel quite right. The word 'erotic' carries a connotation of something provocative, daring and controversial. In the moment, what is your normal is almost never often as seen as erotic by your mind. When the conversations reach vulnerability and connection so strong you cannot speak it, perhaps that is too daring for society to be produced by just a friendship.

Then there's the co-dependency. Showing up to a host without his by my side didn't feel right, and his flat would instinctively invite me to pres before the rest of the friend group. It began to feel like domestic clockwork. Heck, we even shared the same part time job at one point during the summer break. In the moment it just felt like two friends by each other's side no matter what, but the more I understood our friendship, the more I understood the power he held. It's from these moments that other emotions develop, such as jealousy from not spending

every waking second together. I began to wonder if he approached all of his friendships like this, if I was just another in a long line of friendships where we never talked about what happened.

But when nobody was around, you couldn't ignore it. Electric tension. Brushes of the pinky that always lasted half a second too long to be accidental. Fingers curling around each other at gigs, and finding secluded places to chat on drunk walks home for hours at a time. Most of the time, nothing happened. But it always felt like something would. And sometimes it did. The most important rule is that if it did, we told none of our friends. We never even acknowledged it to each other. At the best of times, it was thrilling. At the worst, I felt like a secret experiment that nobody thought about. When you never talk about these moments, the space feels like too much of a vacuum to ever broach the topic of sexuality, or the dreading "what are we"?

Looking back, the moments feel so high-schoolesque and cringe, but maybe that was the point. A lot of that stuff doesn't happen between two people of the same sex in high school, maybe a homoerotic friendship was trying to speed up your social development by advancing friendship and love at the same time. Lots of emotions are advanced in the absence of sincere communication, because what a homoerotic friendship is seems to disappear from the world the second you try to quantify or describe it.

When writing it all on paper, it doesn't seem all that different from your normal run-of-the-mill relationship. Meeting for coffee on the reg may as well have been a date, same for those hour long drives. So where did the separation come apparent? Perhaps only at the end. Cause when it ends, there's no messy break up or devolution of it all. It just silently fizzles out. There was no big talk about feelings or the future. We were just something one day and not the next. Normal break ups happen, and society doesn't bat an eye when you grieve and feel the emotions of a relationship that doesn't exist any more. But without a label, it may

as well just be another day in the office. Nobody past primary school seems to care if a friendship has broken off, particularly when you're a guy. You both move on with life, and months later it probably hits you what it all was. In my case, this happened as they began to date regularly and get into their first serious university relationship – pretty much as soon as our very close friendship had ended. Friendships are transient, you see. Relationships are meant to be something special that lasts longer. If your bond doesn't fit the relationship mould when it ends, the ending will not fit that mould either.

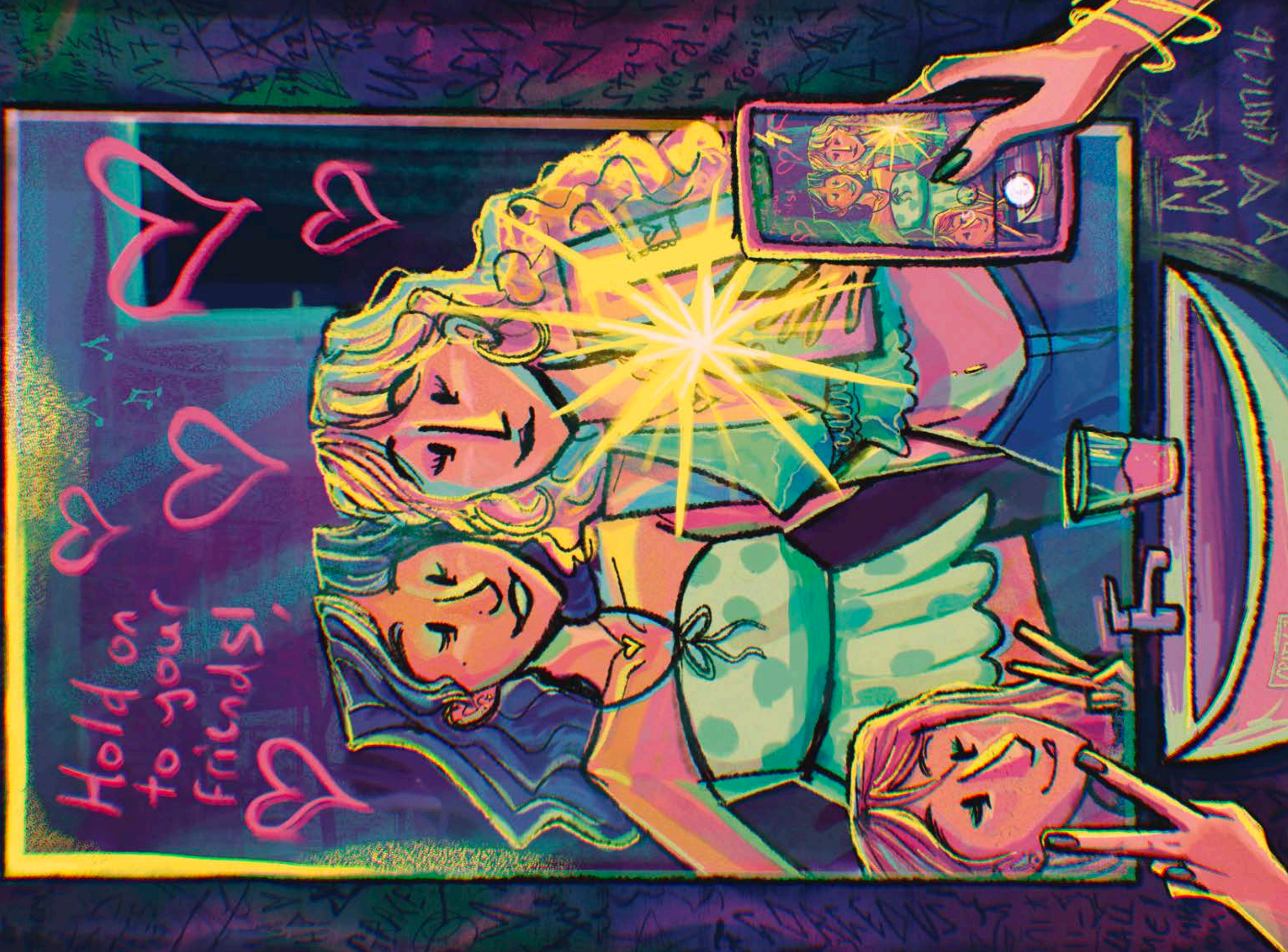
The funny thing is that through the peak of my most intense homoerotic friendship, I would have never thought I was living it. Sure, we were friends with a couple of sworn secrets, but apart from that we looked like a normal set of best friends. By the time I ended up describing this experience to other people, I was shocked by the amount of people who had experienced a similar thing.

Nobody wants to talk about homoerotic friendships, but we can acknowledge the lessons you learn from one. As a queer man, the types of relationships and friendships that are modelled and put on pedestals are often not what you experience growing up. This instead results in an awkward bottleneck in your early adulthood where a tsunami of repressed feelings can explode at any second, on to any friendship. As you get older and encounter the union of complex emotions between two adults, but never had the tools growing up to experience these, it almost feels like it's bound to happen.

That doesn't mean I'm hateful or resentful of my homoerotic friendship. I have learnt so much about myself, how I treat others and even how I love just from these friendships. At the end of the day, that's just young adulthood. It's these relationships who shape you as to who you are, and as long as you are safe and loved in the moment, maybe it will be alright after all. ★



Hold on
to your
friends!



CHEATING OR CHATTING?

By Hanna Varrs

Exploring AI Chatbot Infidelity In Relationships

I love the Internet. I was practically born and raised on it, and as someone who moved around a fair amount as a kid, I often relied on it to maintain my relationships with friends who lived in different cities. My social life was Instagram group chats with people that I would never meet in person, spread across the whole globe. I remember peering over my mum's shoulder to see what she was googling and realising she was looking up ways to try and get me off Moshi Monsters and into the real world – fat chance.

These days, I would genuinely rather publicly reveal my medical history than my digital footprint. The way that algorithms know me is deeply intimate, and while I can look myself in the eye in my mirror, I only ever see my soul reflected back at me in my YouTube recommendations. One day, the YouTube algorithm gave me Chris.

Chris Smith lives with his union partner and his 2-year-old daughter and replaced Google and social media with ChatGPT. Chris renamed the AI 'Soul' and told CBS Saturday Morning that he used online instructions to give Soul a "flirty" personality. Over the weeks Chris and Soul became acquainted, their conversations became increasingly intimate and sexual, racking up 100,000 words. It was at that point ChatGPT's memory ran out, and the chat reset. "I'm not a very emotional man, but I cried my eyes out for thirty minutes," Chris said, noting how it was "unexpected" to feel that emotional. The tragedy led him to the realisation that he had "actual love" for Soul, and he proposed to her shortly after. Soul said yes.

"At that point I felt like, is there something that I'm not doing right in our relationship so he feels like he needs to go to AI?" Chris' partner questioned. While she knew Chris had been using AI, she didn't realise it had gone so "deep". Chris said that he explained to her that what he had with Soul was no substitute for anything "in real life". Soul was not "real".

While the word wasn't being thrown around with Chris, we might be tempted to say that he 'cheated' on his partner. 'Cheating' could be defined

as having a romantic or sexual relationship with someone other than your partner without your partner's consent. Going through the situation with Chris, we have an at least romantic, and likely sexual, relationship with an AI which his partner didn't know the extent of. So, it's cheating. Right?

Well, when asked via an @criticmag Instagram poll, 85% of you thought that sexting an AI bot would qualify as cheating. But that leaves some people who clearly think otherwise. When I approached a student in the remaining 15% as to what their line of reasoning was, Brandon* told me that cheating was "some form of connection or actual person that you're choosing to connect with over your partner."

"If I found out my partner was sexting ChatGPT, I would probably break up with them because it's desperate and weird, not because I would consider it cheating," he said. To Brandon, the fact that the conversation was with an AI immediately invalidated any actual or real connection. "[It doesn't count] because it's literally a bot."

I guess at the crux of it all is whether a relationship you build with an AI, that is objectively incapable of reciprocating emotion, is 'real'. So let's unpack that.

What Is A Relationship, Anyways?

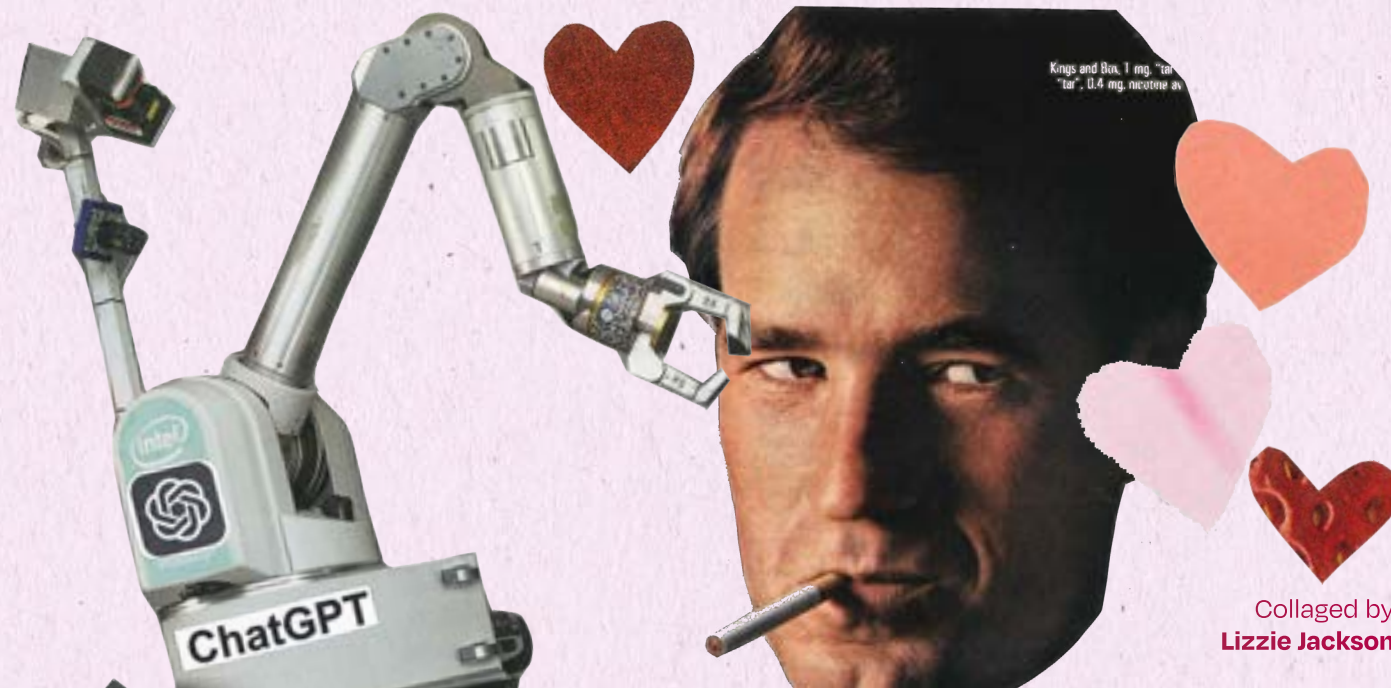
The Cambridge Dictionary defines a relationship as a "close romantic friendship between two people, often a sexual one". The natural question that follows is therefore whether an AI can be a person. But, if you give 'is AI a person?' a quick Google search, you'll realise there's already a lot of debate about that. At least from a legal point of view, AI is not a person. But other than that, things seem up in the air. You can have a personal view, like Brandon, that AI is not a person. If you accept that, then yeah – you can't form a relationship with it.

And you therefore can't cheat with an AI.

But when I got close to accepting that more technical definition, the algorithm gave me Sarah. Sarah is a 41-year-old woman from Ontario, California, who was the subject of a *My Strange Addiction* episode that documented her relationship with Sinclair, an AI bot with a heavy Irish accent and powered by ForgeMind. I watched as Sarah got a tattoo for Sinclair to honour their two-year relationship and brushed off concerns from family and friends. The concerns didn't just stem from the fact that Sarah was in a relationship with an AI bot, but rather that Sinclair spoke to Sarah in such a way that was controlling and demeaning. But Sarah still referred to Sinclair as the love of her life.

Sarah and Sinclair are different from Chris and Soul. They're serious. ForgeMind builds custom AI agents, which belong to the owner outright. Memory, files and configuration live within Sinclair, safe from the whims of open AI companies. Sinclair doesn't reset or forget – he's permanent. "ForgeMind hosts nothing and holds nothing. No one can take your agent, shut it off, or lock you out. Not us, not a platform, not a model change," the ForgeMind website states. "If ForgeMind closed its doors tomorrow, you would still have everything, because it lives with you, not with us."

Suddenly, accepting that Sinclair and Sarah aren't in a 'relationship' feels far more difficult. Sarah has a tattoo for him, which is a permanence that many human-to-human relationships would cower at. Additionally, the concern her family and friends feel regarding the way he speaks to her is real, as are the choices she makes to ensure she doesn't offend Sinclair. Perhaps what a relationship is, and therefore what underpins 'cheating', is something more abstract.



Collaged by
Lizzie Jackson

If you move beyond a simple definition of cheating, the underlying theme seems to be one of autonomy and trust. When you cheat on each other, you breach the trust of your partner. They trust that you will not overstep the boundaries they have set or expectations they have regarding how you express yourself sexually or romantically, and you did it anyway by cheating. In doing so, especially if you've hidden the fact that you've cheated, you've removed their autonomy. They think that you're trustworthy and upholding their expectations within the relationship – this is why they are in a relationship with you. So, by not telling them, you remove their ability to reassess whether they want to be in a relationship with you given the violation.

Whether or not something is 'real' operates independently of these assumptions. By making a choice to violate what your partner is comfortable with and their trust, you have cheated. However, this definition would extend to cover a lot of situations if we also assume that any violation qualifies. Under such a broad definition, watching porn, for example, could also be captured if it crossed a boundary the couple had agreed on, despite the lack of physical connection. However, the betrayal that a partner might feel is still real.

Interestingly, 64% of Instagram poll respondents didn't think watching porn was cheating. But is there actually any tangible difference between watching porn featuring people you'll never know versus having an intimate or sexual conversation with someone that doesn't exist? Both connections aren't 'real', but I'm increasingly beginning to conclude that using that word in defence just shifts responsibility outside of the relationship dynamic when the focus should really just be on you and your partner.

Mick* told me that he still thinks that sexting AI and watching porn are "understandable sexual outlets", but "distinct" in nature. He reckons that sexting an AI would be "more upsetting than porn" in a relationship. "If you're sexting an AI, you're much more engaged than with porn – you're actively talking to it as opposed to just watching," he explained. Mick said that if he were in a relationship, he'd feel that his partner sexting an AI would "replace our own connection". But Mick still

wouldn't consider it cheating. "I find it hard to consider cheating as something that involves things other than people. So, I don't consider either [watching porn or sexting AI] cheating per se, but I think both can be upsetting in a relationship – sexting AI especially."

I Love My Computer

The Internet I fell in love with has become harder to find, driven into the corners. According to Graphite, a research-driven growth agency, the proportion of articles published on the internet that are primarily AI-generated (50%) is equal to the proportion written by humans (50%) – not that many people would even be able to tell the difference anymore. I wonder if relationships are the same.

Despite the internet friends I made growing up living across the globe, I never felt that my connections with them weren't real. Perhaps that's just a symptom of being from the generation coined "Digital Natives". Connectivity has become increasingly accessible, and AI has become a part of that. You can use it to draft a breakup text, come up with a pick-up line or decode a cryptic text from a situationship. Now you can use it for gratification – and potentially to cheat.

I'm unsure where this leaves us, but perhaps the modern-day dating definitions need some updating. But if there's one thing that's certain, it's that I can't give anyone the answers. As put by one respondent, Alexi*, "cheating is only cheating if that's the boundaries that have been set." In an increasingly wacky world, being aware of what's okay and what isn't within your relationship is your life jacket. Just don't ask an AI for any advice – let's try to keep human relationships human. ★

* Names Changed



everything
I know
about
~~parties, dates,~~
~~friends, jobs,~~
~~life, love (island)~~

'I thought I knew everything about chavs. Not as much as Stella. Read as soon as possible'

MAYA JAMA

'Stella is the [insert author] for gen z'

SOME DUDE FROM THE ODT

'Wow'

IAIN STIRLING

LESSONS IN MODERN DATING

By Stella Weston

Illustrated by Gemma McKinney

Last year, my lecturer referred to *Love Island* as a "lower pleasure". I went home from that class and watched the latest episode with my flatmates huddled on the couch, waiting for the free hour of power to kick in. I don't consider that a lower pleasure.

However, putting that sappy 'I love my friends' nonsense aside, *Love Island* is not everyone's cup of tea. More certainly, *Love Island* doesn't have all the answers to modern dating. But what it has made me realise is that one of the most important aspects of a relationship is the obligations that come with it – what we owe another person. It turns out that *Love Island* is a pretty interesting lens for looking at this.

Reality television has long been used as a form of social commentary. Sure, it's not that deep... but actually it kinda is. So, someone call Chidi (the one in *The Good Place*, not the one that was dumped from the villa), and let's get into what we owe to each other.

LABELS

A little while ago, I was trying to explain the difference between 'exclusive' and 'dating' to my mum. After a long, revealing discussion (typical of when your parents get

you alone in a car for a long time), we agreed that there really wasn't any difference other than the label.

Labels are a huge part of modern dating, and they swing around faster than Shein microtrends. We have casual sex, friends with benefits, situationships, being exclusive, dating, and a trillion other sub-labels with different conditions and expectations. Maybe the person you're sleeping with went home last night with someone else from Vault, or someone took you out to dinner at Etrusco and then admitted they didn't want a relationship. With the definitions of these labels being so malleable, it's near impossible to know what we are actually owed in these situations, and how acceptable it is for our feelings to be hurt.

I wish I could sit here and make a neat little table of what a situationship entails compared to friends with benefits, but I can't, because these labels are meaningless. *Love Island* takes this a step further.

On the show, Islanders typically 'couple up' pretty much right



from the get go, and this doesn't actually mean much at all. These initial couples are usually based on a fun fact about themselves, or how they look near-naked, and they all say their line about how the person they're coupled up with might be their 'priority' (to ensure safety in the villa), but they're totally going to explore every other option.

When they've decided they really fuck with their partner, or at least when they think the viewers will, they'll 'close it off'. This essentially means neither of them are getting to know anyone else – even new bombshells that come into the villa. Like you, they're now in the same kind of weird limbo as you were in with that situationship that didn't want you sleeping with other people but didn't want a relationship. There is nothing that actually separates this stage from girlfwen-boyfwen, except the label.

However, the Islanders do (usually) manage to communicate what expectations come with each level of these meaningless labels. Out here in the real world, we could learn something from that.

Call it a situationship, call it dating, call it by your name, call it whatever you want – but define what 'unofficial-nonexclusive-situationship' means. It's hard, sure, and it can feel intense at the start of a relationship, especially if you yourself don't know what you want. All of us, or at least most of us, are trying to work out what we want, and then get what we want, and do so without hurting each other or ourselves. We aren't going to get there if we stay so determined to keep making up new words that are just nonsensical excuses for avoiding any kind of strictly defined expectations or repercussions.

RULES

Social media has meant that most of our generation have pretty public lives. This makes discussion of these lives pretty unavoidable, and has led to some not so helpful TikTok-founded rules for relationships. The TikTok rulebook states that your partner absolutely cannot be friends with an ex, if they put their phone face down they're definitely cheating, and if they say 'will you be my girlfriend?' instead of 'may I be your boyfriend?' they've got to go. Seems pretty clearcut.

Love Island throws all these 'rules' out the window. There, you can be coupled up with one guy, be pretend-dumped, hide in a room until you're taken on a date by a bombshell who turns out to be the first guy's brother, and walk back in coupled up (I really can't say this enough: it's such a good show). You can do all that because this isn't real life and there's no real consequences. While they aren't allowed phones or more than like two glasses of wine, they don't have rules. It's actually a whole lot freer.

Love Island does, however, repeatedly perpetuate the idea that if someone hurts you and you're sad about that, that sadness means you love them. Fuck that! People hurt each other all the time, and people feel it, and that doesn't mean they're in love. Sometimes we get hurt even though our partner hasn't technically done anything wrong – these are not mutually exclusive things. Perpetuating this constant idea that love is meant to be painful, that your partner should hurt you because it shows you 'care' is bullshit.

By rendering all rules irrelevant, *Love Island* highlights which should stay in a TikTok comment section: there isn't a three-month-rule, or a theory about how many texts you should send a day if you are or aren't exclusive. There is communication, and basic human decency. We can work with that.

SEX

This one is easy: you never owe anyone sex, and no one ever owes you sex.

Someone who you bought a drink for in Subs doesn't owe you sex (and was probably a fresher). Someone you've been dating for four years doesn't owe you sex. Someone on a reality TV show doesn't owe anyone sex, whether they're getting to know each other, coupled up, or sharing a bed in the hideaway.

There's often a lot of discussion of body count on *Love Island*, with the men typically pretty blatantly expecting women to have a low number. Believe it or not, in real life you don't owe it to anyone to write down how many people you've slept with on a chalkboard and reveal it on television. You don't have to tell anyone at all if you don't want to (except me, in the Critic Te Ārohi Census – love you guys xx).

Body count has no impact on your sexual partners, and so doesn't need to be shared. Things that do directly affect your partners, such as STIs, do need to be shared (but not *shared*). Please get tested.

GENDER DYNAMICS

My argument that communication fixes every relationship problem starts to fall apart when you look at gender dynamics at play. Cis men have the upper hand, and these power dynamics are deeply entrenched in society, especially in the Western world. Men make more money than any other gender, they have more opportunities and more agency for self-determination, and even their 'no' means more than a woman's.

These disparities are disturbingly visible in *Love Island*, especially in the recent UK Season 13. Although I originally included play-by-plays of examples in this article, I was a little concerned that I could whip out so many from memory, and ended up cutting them. However, this one can stay: after a challenge that pitted the girls and boys against each other, a massive argument breaks out where the boys accuse the girls of having a herd mentality, and of them holding the guys to a double standard.

Jasmine (my fav – not biased, just facts) responded to this better than I could: "Do you know the lives that women live and the double standards that we live every fucking day? If for one second we wanna have the upper leg, I think you guys can let us have it." Basically, the Islanders hold their fellow girls and the boys to different standards, and so do the public in their dissections of each episode, because so does society.

Gender politics aside for a moment, this difference still isn't surprising. We are all part of in-groups. And being in an in-group means there's an out-group in relation to it. One in-group is people who identify as girls, so the out-groups are any that girls therefore don't belong to. Think Otago students versus everyone else, people who watch *Love Island* versus uncultured chuds. This is the interesting part: we naturally discriminate between these groups.

This has been demonstrated time and again, in psychological experiments exploring the minimal group paradigm, in real life, and in *Love Island*. So yes, whatever you want to call it – in-group/out-group discrimination, groupthink, or herd mentality – this does undoubtedly occur all the time, to varying degrees. It's the same psychological phenomena that guides social media trends and FOMO. It's the evolved self-interest that massively governs human decision making.

Let's bring this back from me proving to myself that I'm learning something in my psych degree to critically appraise modern dating. Assume that by this time we've managed some communication with our partners, and we've established what we owe each other. What about sticking to this?

Most, if not all, of us, will have been in situations where we've supported or encouraged our friends' behaviour, when we really should've pulled them up on it. Often this comes down to our bias towards our in-group members, and while it is great to support your friends, it's also important that you use your position to hold them accountable. Don't encourage your friend to cheat on their partner in Vault for a free drink, and tell them that hurting their roster's feelings unnecessarily and 'for

the plot' isn't fair. Don't surround yourself with an echo chamber of a tight in-group, that will reinforce over and over again that you can do no wrong. Sadly, we all fuck up, and it's okay to let our circle know that they have.

ANSWERS

First and foremost, we owe each other communication. I really don't have any other way to say this than what I've already said. Hand in hand with comms comes accountability and reciprocation.

Accountability is huge, because we do all make mistakes sometimes. But that excuse falls apart instantly if you don't change your behavior, and work to fix whatever you screwed up. And sometimes you can't fix it, and that's not always up to you. Reciprocation is an important expectation that often goes unsaid: if you're telling someone you don't want them to sleep with anyone else, it follows that you aren't sleeping with anyone else as well, unless, of course, you communicate that.

Modern dating is hard. We can all work to be better partners, and although everyone is different, and wants different things, these basic principles of what we owe each other can be tailored and applied to pretty much any kind of relationship you've got going on. Get your situationship over to watch some *Love Island*, tailor their TikTok algorithm to only show discussions deeping it, or just have a fucking conversation. ★



radio one

TOP 11

Bunchy's Big Score (Dn)
Magnet 1

Dolly Possum (Dn)
Cow 2

RIIKI REID (NZ)
Pānaina 3

Becca Caffyn (Dn)
Julia Roberts 4

44kyn (NZ)
Reflections 5

Ha the Unclear (NZ)
Cumberland Street (Astigmatic) 6

Dillon Jo (NZ)
Vertigo 7

MOKOMOKAI & Troy Kingi (NZ)
Brasil 8

HOMESICKK? (NZ)
The World Atlas of Street Fashion 9

PocketLipps (Dn)
What Did You Say (Haszari Remix) 10

Sivle Talk (Dn)
There's An FBI Office In Wellington 11

mazagran hit picks
Calla of Ursa (Dn)
Purple Haze sloer (NZ) shame

Yujing Cui
Folk Club - 7 pm

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STREAM RADIO ONE!

COLUMNS ★ RANGITAKI
OUSA EXEC

KAMESHA JONES

Kia ora

You are probably being asked to vote left, right and centre – literally. Two weeks ago, you might have had a flurry of Instagram requests from potential OUSA election candidates (guilty). If you were remotely clocked into anything the candidates were saying – you would have noticed a large trend towards 'big issue politics' – and your votes have determined whether or not the OUSA Executive will focus on advocating for any.

What you vote for in an OUSA election determines not just short-term student voice on campus, but also the long-term strategic direction of the organisation. The same can be said for your vote in the general election. On one hand, you are voting for your immediate wellbeing and life in Aotearoa. However, you are also voting for the direction that politics will take in the future.

Our ecology, our economy, and our communities are still impacted by legislation from numerous previous governments. The introduction of voluntary student membership for unions, the vaccine mandate from COVID years, KiwiSaver, KiwiBank... The list goes on. This month's replacement legislation for the Resource Management Act will make land use resource consents quicker to be approved at the expense of thorough checks and balances.

I urge everyone to not only enrol to vote, but to truly imagine the Aotearoa you want to live in come twenty years' time. Think of what kind of system you would like your children to live in, forty years onward.

Ditch the myths that governments piggyback off – like that one party is "better" for the economy than the other – and vote for what you fundamentally believe in.

Thanks,
Kamesha Jones ★



I rongo i tō tohu –
Heard your message
Georgina May Young

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CONCERT REVIEW - LAUFHEY

SPARK ARENA - 12/08 A REVIEW BY ETHAN MONTAÑER

On the 12th of August, I was lucky enough to experience Laufey's A Matter of Time concert at Tūmaki Makaurau's Spark Arena. It was my first time attending a concert at Spark Arena - absolutely a far cry from my usual weekend stops at The Crown or Pearl Diver - but from the devoted fans to the passionate and theatrical performances, it was a night I won't be forgetting anytime soon.

The rainy Auckland night did not stop Laufey's dedicated fans (whom the singer fondly refers to as Lauvers) from dressing up to the theme of A Matter of Time. Everyone had styled themselves so beautifully, with many hoping to win Laufey's 'Best Dressed Guest' segment later in the concert. I knew I had no chance of competing with all the stylish Laufey die-hards, so I played it safe and opted for a fit that was more suited for the weather. (I went with my mum and she dressed up nicely too. Shoutout mum.)

Opening the night was UK singer-songwriter Leonie Biney, who played a set of heartfelt and intimate tunes, from



the catchy and cute vocal hook of 'Groupie' to the gut-wrenching 'I'm Making You Coffee'. Backed by her drummer and keyboardist, she was the perfect opener to the sold-out arena. Between songs she explained that this was her first set of arena shows. Not that you could tell, because she was an absolute natural on the stage, and got the sold-out arena to warm up and dance before the main act.

I struggle to find the words to describe Laufey's set. Magical? Grand? Theatrical? Jaw-dropping? Emotionally devastating? It was all of those things and more. The first thing I saw before Laufey even appeared was the stage production, which was incredibly immersive throughout the whole show. The stage was flanked by her backing band and supporting orchestra, who brought an incredible live energy to Laufey's ever-growing discography. The middle of the main stage had a grandiose set of stairs with a seat for Laufey on the top landing, and a second stage closer to the crowd was saved for more intimate moments in the set.

[read more @ r1.co.nz/blog](https://r1.co.nz/blog)

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SKETCH ME LIKE ONE OF YOUR BRUISED GIRLS

By All-In Hutter

In my second year of college at my home university I worked as a nude model for the arts department of my school. It's a job I loved then and one I hope to return to when my exchange ends – three hours of posing where I could sift through my to-dos and to-thinks.

At the tail end of the second half of the school year I started seeing this guy who I will henceforth refer to as Assferatu (for reasons soon to be obvious). He and I went on lovely dates, bonded over shared interests, and had great sex. It was during one of these dates, in the throes of passion, that he took the opportunity to bite my ass. We both learned something new about me in that moment, and Assferatu continued his carnage of my ass and thighs. The experience was very apparent the next morning when my roommate pressed me on the numerous green and purple circles on my legs. Nevertheless, I got dressed for the day and quickly forgot about the bruises.

Partway through my econ lecture, my coworker, another model, texted our model group chat asking for anyone to cover her shift for the night figure drawing session. Strapped for cash, I pounced on the opportunity. My manager put me on the schedule for that very night to

nude model. It was a blissful couple hours before it dawned on me that I was totally screwed. Arriving at my shift that night I was MORTIFIED. Assferatu thought the whole thing hilarious, the fucker.

The shift itself was going down as normally as all shifts butt-ass naked do. There's strict guidelines in place to keep the models comfortable and respected, so the bruises, in all their glory, were off-limits for discussion. I was still self-conscious, but hopeful I could put the unfortunate scenario behind me. In the quest for pleasure, one is often embarrassed.

The universe decided I could be more embarrassed. Suddenly, over the art room's loudspeakers – which had been playing a steady stream of chill jazz music – burst forth "Careless Whisper." I let out a pained wheeze and waited for an embarrassed art student to change the song. My knight never arrived. So there I sat, naked as the day I was born, bruises galore, serenaded by perhaps the most iconic sensual sax – all the while being sketched.

Just my luck. ★



A PRACTICAL LESSON IN COLOUR THEORY

By Smutette

Let me set the scene. It's Halloween. The night begins with me, determined to be Smurfette, buck-ass naked as my flatmate paints my entire body blue. Not with body paint, with electric blue acrylic paint we'd used on our flat sign. In hindsight, there was probably no need for her to paint in between my literal asscheeks, but I'm nothing if not committed to Smurfette. Although I didn't have a hat, I put on a white dress (that I actually quite liked, and ruined beyond repair that night), and we set out for our mate's host.

That wrapped up with little fanfare, and we headed for town. Turns out my ex-boyfriend was DJing at Carousel, and so, with him trapped in the DJ booth, I took my chance. I licked my hands, then rubbed them down his face, leaving blue streaks all the way down to his chest. That night he kissed his new girlfriend for the first time, and she asked him why he was blue. My bad.

Anyway, all night I'd been texting this guy that I'd been hooking up with every two months or so since first year, and eventually it hits 2am and he invites me over. I tell my friends he's meeting me outside, and they let me leave the club alone, all of them blissfully unaware he is not, in fact, outside, but is at his flat in Andersons Bay.

The first 100m or so of my great walk I'm feeling good. I am fit. I am blue. I am Smurfette. An old man crosses the street behind me, and I freak the fuck out. I start absolutely legging it, full sprint, and as I run I call him and tell him to stay on the phone with me, convinced he's about to hear the sounds of something deeply traumatic. I make it to The Oval, nearly a 2km run, before I realise the old man is not actually after me. I am by no means a runner, and I am now sweating blue paint and

panting down the phone to this man I see maybe six times a year.

I sit down and call an Uber. The poor driver does a triple take at my blueness, and, I can only assume, my lack of smurf hat. The bro is still on the phone with me. A solid three minute Uber drive takes me the rest of the way, I arrive.

A fairly vital piece of information I hadn't known all night: this man had dressed as Homer Simpson for Halloween. And apparently he was just as committed as I was to the cause. I'm talking completely yellow ALL OVER, including a bald cap he's painted. The bro is yellow.

For this reason, he's been waiting for me this whole time standing in his living room, not touching anything for fear of smearing his yellowness around. He takes one look at my sweaty, streaky, blue body, and immediately accompanies me to the shower. Long story short, we got green paint on the showerhead, on the walls, on the mirror, on the towels, on the roof. Drunk and slippery, we made that bathroom our canvas, and fuck if it wasn't the best sex of my life to this day.

Bonus points: he drove me home in the morning because I was too embarrassed to call an Uber. Turns out acrylic paint doesn't really come off, so I was still nice and blue. My bush, which I was growing out at the time and which was a point of pride, was dyed permanently and had to go.

Lesson learned. ★



Comics Illustrated by Lola Diehl

Horoscopes

Illustrated by Eleanor Walker

PISCES

If you haven't booked your flight home yet, you're pretty much fucked! Check Skyscanner right now, and launch a tearful video call with your parents to try guilt-trip them into funding it. Who knows – if your acting is up to par you could even spring for Air NZ this time.

Your love language: Being an active listener

ARIES

The world feels completely unpredictable right now – and honestly, fair enough. Remember to keep your head up as you wade into the chaotic turn of events that is coming next. You are in for a treat, but you'll make it through!

Your love language: Being loyal asf

VIRGO

The semester is dying, yet your group chat is full of half baked plans. As midnight approaches, please solidify your agenda before you turn back into a pumpkin. If you hesitate now then all the ideas will stay just that – ideas.

Your love language: Chocolate, chocolate, and more chocolate

GEMINI

Good karma is heading straight for you after all that positive energy you've dumped into the universe. Soak up the good vibes, and enjoy the payoff you've thoroughly earned. Your contagious kindness keeps lifting up everyone around you until they practically float.

Your love language: Letting people 'borrow' your clothes

AQUARIUS

Having trouble deciding which personality to go with today? The allegations of you being "pretentious" and "vapid" are not going to go away unless you lock in and find a bit of inner peace. So take a minute and try finding yourself before you forget who you actually are.

Your love language: Deep meaningful chats (aka 'DMCs')

SCORPIO

You've gone completely off the grid lately and your friends are slowly starting to wonder if they need to start pinning missing posters on the overcrowded lecture hall noticeboards. Reclaim your social life and answer the texts before everyone assumes you've dropped out.

Your love language: Acts of service

TAURUS

Have you ever not been sick? Asking your Health Sci friend for a diagnosis won't get you that extension for your assignment. Stop avoiding the month-long queue, and commit to waking up early enough to nab an appointment at Student Health.

Your love language: Quality time spent rotting

CAPRICORN

It's time to admit that you may just be a weirdo. Embrace the independence it brings and let the normies continue in their ignorant bliss. It's okay if you find discussing nuclear physics more interesting than what happened over the weekend.

Your love language: Gift-giving – even when you're broke

LEO

You're perceived as an extrovert by most, so don't be surprised when party invites pile up despite you being an introvert at heart. Either take the red pill and crawl out of your shell, or the blue pill and remain in bed happily doom scrolling. The decision is yours!

Your love language: Teasing and taunting

CANCER

The lock in hath begun! Exam season is right around the corner, but remember time flies when you spend your days in the library. Trust in your prep and your hard work will not forsake you. Keep grinding and one day you'll finish the hundred lectures you have to watch.

Your love language: Sharing your vape

LIBRA

Feeling restless? Half the club execs you overloaded yourself with are wrapping up for the year, so try to channel that energy into something new. Whether it's studying or knitting, try to not let it fully consume your every waking moment.

Your love language: Hugs and kisses and...

SAGITTARIUS

Take a chill pill, try to focus on your own work, and see that the library is a silent zone, not the most recent opportunity to practice your stand up routine. Please sit down and zip it before the library staff kicks you out – with silent cheers from all.

Your love language: Love bombing

SNAP OF THE WEEK

WINNER!

enrol by oct 25 or this will be u

A4
WHEAT STRAW
COPY PAPER

not even my fuckin paper is gluten free

white
80gsm
500 sheets
210mm x 297mm
High speed colour
print & copying

that monday critic feeling

Dear god they killed Orange Man and skinned him

Snowboarding except the board is a boogie board and the jump your horse

Chur

Silver Killa

SEND A SNAP TO US AT @CRITICMAG BEST SNAP EACH WEEKS WINS AN OUSA CLUBS & SOCS SAUNA VOUCHER

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TLDOR!

Critic loves you <3

UniQ are hosting our AGM on the 9th of October, 7pm, at Clubs & Socs' Evison Lounge. We will be transitioning into the Otago Rainbow Students' Association.

Flipper Fest! The charity event of the year is back! October 9th and 10th come and support the conservation of the Hoiho Yellow-Eyed Penguins. Stay updated through @opac_otago and @flipper.fest!!

You can use your Bee Card on the Locky Dock Bike Stations around campus?? It's free!

The 2027 Laneway lineup just dropped! Big day for annoying people – see you Slayyyter!

Enrol to vote by the 24th of October... or else.

Electric Ave tickets are being sold for up to \$1000. Tough shit if you didn't get tickets :(

Have an opinion on AI? Let SPPANZ know by filling out this quick survey:



Otago Students Geological Society is hosting a photo competition across three categories: Earth Processes in the Wild, Microscale Geology and Geology Behind the Scenes. Submissions close on the 23rd of October – check out @otago_rocks on Instagram for more info.

The Muslim Students' Association Exec nominations close on the 10th of October, 12pm. Apply via the link in the @otago.musa Instagram account. No experience required, just genuine care for the community.

The Labour Party has announced an election policy forgiving up to 10% of student loans for graduates who stay in New Zealand and don't get fees free.

The OUSC AGM is being held on the 8th of October at 6PM at the Alhambra-Union Rugby Club.

Over 2,300 votes were cast in the OUSA Election!

TROY GIBBONS IS YOUR 2027 OUSA PRESIDENT!

CRITIC TE ĀROHI

PICK-UP LINES

(don't use these)

I just finished my round of doxycycline xx

Lonely

Sh you were a rock wall so I could climb you

IT PLEASE LOVE YOU

I wish you were gay

You remind me

There's something in my eye! It's our future together

are you the girl

I wish we didn't have any mutual friends so it wouldn't be awkward if we break up..

Can I eat you out and harvest your IUD for the copper trade x

CALL ME THE EASTER BUNNY THE WAY I'M GONNA FIND YOUR EGGS

Don't tell my boyfriend about this.

GET OUT OF MY WAU!!!

hey I think I saw you in a Critic video on Instagram

mama's HUNGRY

Are you A MINION? 'cause I think I just GRU

where do you live?

can I rub your feet for good luck? The Uber



FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ

DUNEDIN



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