

**SOPHIE LEE'S SEX**

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An analysis of the public attitudes  
of ten, discrete, 'focus groups'  
towards one episode of the  
programme 'Sex' introduced by  
Sophie Lee, and broadcast on  
Tuesday 13 October 1992

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# **SEX: SOPHIE LEE**

An analysis of the public attitudes of ten discrete 'focus groups' towards one episode of the programme 'Sex', introduced by Sophie Lee, and broadcast on Tuesday 13 October at 9.30 p.m., by TV2, New Zealand.

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Research Project for  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **BROADCASTING STANDARDS' AUTHORITY PROJECT**

This project was funded by New Zealand's Broadcasting Standards' Authority to gauge public opinion on the acceptability of the various segments within the last programme of the first series of the Australian sex education documentary entitled 'Sex' - a programme made by Channel Nine and presented by Sophie Lee.

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## 2. ABSTRACT

This is a report prepared by the C A Watson A/V Consultancy for the Broadcasting Standards Authority. It comprises an analysis of the comments of participants in ten 'focus groups' who watched the final edition of the first series of the Australian sex education television programme 'Sex' which was prepared for Channel Nine and presented by Sophie Lee.

Each 'focus group' watched one episode without interruption and then were taken through the programme section by section with small 'trigger' extracts to remind them of the main stories. They were asked for their general reactions to each segment and then, their specific responses to certain issues raised by each story e.g. the language used; the level of nudity; or the sexual activity depicted. In addition they discussed their feelings as to the appropriateness - for themselves and for other groups - of each of the segments shown.

The objective was to obtain an over-all evaluation of the 'value' of the programme and reactions to the suitability of the time-slot in which it was broadcast.

In addition the groups with no members under the age of eighteen were asked for their reactions to three explicit sequences from *The Lovers' Guide* (an English popular sex education video-tape which Channel Nine had used as a source of several clips), to see whether they would object to the transmission of material even more explicit than that screened in the first series of 'Sophie's Sex' and similar to that cut by TVNZ before local transmission.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last programme in the series *Sex* was selected for consideration by ten 'focus groups' each comprising a collection eight to twelve people selected on the basis of some affinity of background. The programme was screened and the ensuing discussion guided by a facilitator to ensure that each group covered similar ground. The debate was minuted by a 'rapporteur' so that the responses of the different groups could be compared.

Five 'focus groups' were selected for the first stage of this project viz 'Late Teenagers', i.e. Polytechnic students in their late teens/early twenties; 'Young Ravers', i.e. Night Club Patrons, also in their late teens and early twenties; 'Mature Thinkers', i.e. a group of retired women who meet weekly to discuss current 'issues,' 'Parents of Teenagers' and 'Christian Churchpeople'.

Each group completed several questionnaires that elicited information about their socio-economic, educational, age, racial and gender composition; that checked their immediate and final reaction to the programme that they saw and that gave permission for their comments to be used.

Following analysis of the socio-economic, gender, age and racial composition of this first set of five groups a second set of five were recruited, in the New Year, comprising: 'Asians' (actually Indians, both Hindu and Moslem); 'Pacific Islanders' (from Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga and Fiji); 'Younger Teenagers' (aged 15 - 17); 'Lower Socio-Economic Respondents', and 'Maori'.

The main oral analysis of their feelings about the programme was based on a series of questions that were asked of each group. The responses to these questions were written down by a 'rapporteur' who had a tape recording to guide recall. Rapporteurs were chosen to match the ethnic composition of the groups under study. The questions themselves probed issues that had been raised by the literature and as reported in newspaper articles and 'letters-to-the-editor'.

In general the final edition of Sophie Lee's *Sex*, broadcast on Tuesday 13 October 1992 by TV2 at 9.30 pm, which was the episode chosen for the groups to watch, aroused much interest and little wrath amongst the focus groups of polytechnic students, nightclubbers and the parents of teenagers who watched it. There was nothing in it that they would have liked cut.

Most perceived it as essentially 'educational' and they believed that it was authoritative and factually correct.

They admitted to being entertained and informed. They were also amused by the lighter aspects.

They generally failed to see any hidden agendas - such as anti-religious or pro-feminist messages in any of the sequences which they watched. They also missed many of the cultural allusions to things Australian.

Almost all in these three groups would have accepted material of the kind that TVNZ cut (i.e. of genitalia) on the basis that it was 'educational' or 'informational', but only a few individuals would have been willing to see images of real sexual intercourse broadcast.

The mature ladies were rather more ambivalent. They too admitted to enjoying parts of the programme and most said that they had learned something new. A few even admitted to regret that they had not had the knowledge earlier in their lives. Some were also shocked at times although, generally, such shock did not lessen their interest in the didactic nature of the information. Only one would have cut the programme heavily. Three others would have made light excisions. On the other hand some would have permitted the images of a limp penis to be broadcast, more would have allowed the 'educational' depiction of an erect penis with condom to have been shown, but none would have permitted the images of real sexual intercourse to be transmitted.

Two of the three groups chosen on the basis of ethnicity, the Pacific Islanders and the Asians (Indians) were embarrassed by the subject matter, both for its frankness about recreational sex and its depictions of nudity. Both groups added that the objections that they had to this material stemmed from aspects of their cultures' approach to sexual matters. Both groups observed that their own children would have to adapt to the local mores and they acknowledged that they could not protect them from such depictions. The Maori also said that there were aspects of the programme with which they were not comfortable but they too suggested that there were educational aspects of the programme that might be of benefit to their young people. All three of these groups felt that the more graphic material taken from the *Lovers' Guide* video tape should not be shown on television - although in each group some observed that it was appropriate for controlled dissemination on the video format.

In contrast to those chosen as 'Christian Churchpeople' the people in the other nine focus groups who indicated that they were 'Christian' were generally of the same opinion as the non-religious on most issues. It was the group chosen because they were 'Christian Churchpeople' who were most opposed to the programme. Although, in the end, only one of the group would have banned it completely for they too saw that there were 'educational' aspects to the programme and they had also accepted, to a limited extent, the anti-Aids agenda.

This group's objection was strongly ideological. They believed that sex was essentially non-recreational; that it was not important for its own sake; that its expression should be confined within marriage. Portrayals of nudity and simulated intercourse were particularly offensive to them and 'fantasy' was seen as an excuse for evil. They also felt responsible for society as a whole. As a result they believed that since it would be for the 'good' of all that it would not be an unjustified imposition to expect broadcasting to abide by their values.

Nobody, in any group, objected to explicit (non euphemistic) language used to describe sexual matters although a few did not like the matters which were discussed. Almost all accepted the use of coarse language ('fuck') in the context in which it was used.

The various focus groups appeared to accept this programme as useful and valid television. Furthermore, they were prepared to accept more of the same and even some imagery that 'went further' than that which they had been shown so long as the 'educational' and 'medical' rationale was paramount. However, the evangelically religious people, which essentially comprised those in the 'Christian Churchpeople' focus group, and, to a lesser extent, those in the 'Pacific Islands' group, all of whom attended church regularly, were uncomfortable, and critical of the programme and most of that persuasion would not be sorry if no more were broadcast.

## 4. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 4.1. THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Three aspects of television particularly disturb the public. Violence has been the issue that has generated the greatest concern. The second area that worries many is the portrayal of sex and sexuality. On occasions swearing, especially when it has used words with an otherwise sexual connotation, has also been the subject of opprobrium. However, there is a growing tendency to group this aspect of behaviour within the broad area referred to as 'Taste and Decency'. This, the third area of concern, deals also with such controversial areas as the representation of minorities, of race, and of the disabled. In addition the broad heading covers the treatment of subjects linked to religious belief, especially those surrounding death and mourning.

The Broadcasting Standards Council of the United Kingdom has recognized this threefold division and uses each as a heading within its published 'Code of Practice' (1989:12). The U.K. Council set itself the task of reporting on the issue of Violence on Television in 1990; matters of Taste and Decency in 1991 and on Television and Sex and Sexuality in 1992 (Hargrave, A;1991:1). A very valuable volume, entitled *Sex and Sexuality in Broadcasting* was edited by Angela Millwood-Hargrave and published by John Libby for the Council in 1992.

In New Zealand the Broadcasting Standards Authority has followed a parallel path. The report on 'Television Violence' prepared by Massey University's Educational Research and Development Centre was presented to a conference on television violence organized by the Broadcasting Standards Authority in July 1991. (Watson C., Bassett, G., Lambourne, R., and Shuker, R.: 1991); A second report using the same data base examined the quantity and type of sexual material screened during the same week (Watson C.A. & Lambourne R.D.:1992). The Broadcasting Standards Authority is presently considering the ways in which it might commission research into 'Taste and Decency' during 1993.

The order of treatment reflects the ranking of concern given by the general public. The portrayal of violence is of greatest concern, followed by sex, followed by 'taste and decency'. Individuals may differ in the order in which they place them and in the degree of concern with which they address them but this appears to reflect the general consensus i.e. Violence comes first - even though the Broadcasting Standards Authority receives more complaints about bad language.

The Broadcasting Standards Council of Great Britain introduces the section of its Code on Sex and Sexuality with the comment that:-

"The treatment of sex in documentaries or discussion programmes and its portrayal in fictional programmes have been the subject of public debates since broadcasting began almost seventy years ago."  
(B.S.C.: 35)

However, the discourse is usually based around particular programme incidents that have caused concern amongst some members of the public sufficient to lead to some form of protest. There have not been the same attempts at quantitative analysis of the amount sex in programmes over a period of time as there have been of violence although one similar to that undertaken by Watson & Lambourne in New Zealand is reported in Andrea Millwood-Hargrave's book (1992: Chap 6). Neither has there been an on-going attempt to formulate a satisfactory definition of what exactly constitutes 'sex' on television in the way

that there has been to define violence (Gerbner, 1972; Gunter, 1985; Cumberbatch, 1988; Watson et al., 1991).

On the other hand much has been written about the portrayal (Patton; 1984) and effect (Cole; 1989) of sex on the video cassette format. Particular note has been taken of the involvement of children and such videos, especially those combining horror and violence with sex. Such has been the interest in this medium that it has spawned the term 'Video Nasty' and a 'moral panic' has developed around the fears that they might be extensively viewed by children. (Barker, 1984; Petley, 1984).

However, the studies of sex on video cannot readily be transferred to a consideration of sex on television for the subject matter and level of explicit sexual representation permitted on video is far beyond that tolerated for broadcast television.

Furthermore, it is more difficult to research the effects of sexual material on young people (and adults) than it is to research the effects of violence. One may question children about their exposure to violence; one may even set up laboratory experiments that provoke a violent reaction, but the ethics of asking questions about sex, let alone setting up laboratory experiments that elicit sexual behaviour in the subjects of study, is far more problematic. Thus there is no record of research into connections between sex on television and behaviour that would parallel the sort of research that has gone on for years into connections between television and violence.

Much of what has been written on the topic has been in response to various causes célèbres, to particular programmes that have been seen by some as 'disgusting'. Such writing is essentially critical of particular texts and commonly appears in magazines and the press. It is not often a matter for the academic journals. The Australian programme 'Sex' is currently giving rise to this kind of discourse ('Dannii', 1992) as has the recently found predilection for items of sexual news by TV3's *Nightline*. This kind of criticism is essentially generic i.e. it concentrates on the kind of programmes which contain sexual material. Music Videos (Goodwin, 1987; Sherman and Domininck, 1986), Soaps (Modleski, 1982) and 'Mini Series' have all aroused interest.

Another field of enquiry has concentrated on sexual stereotyping by television (Durkin, 1985; Gunter, 1986; Morgan, 1980). These, and other, researchers have studied the way that the sexes are represented and the way in which portrayals of masculinity and femininity are constructed. This is seen as being of particular interest for the way in which such programmes may help children formulate a system of values related to expectations of 'appropriate' behaviour for each sex. Since much of the imagery and narrative responsible for developing these ideas is not overtly sexual it could not be coded by the research assistants using the instrument devised for this study.

Although there is little quantitative research into the amount of sex on television and even less laboratory or empirical research into the effects of sex on television there is some anecdotal concern about the portrayal of sex in specific programmes and events. Those worried by sexual material might find reference to recent developments in qualitative research to be of interest. (Millwood-Hargrave, 1992; 14-59; Toksvig, 1992; Morrisson, 1992; Munt, 1992).

Working within the broader ethnographic tradition and heavily influenced by the Birmingham-based Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, observations of audiences watching television have demonstrated that programmes are subject to a variety of interpretations by their viewers; interpretations that are often at variance with the dominant or 'preferred' meanings of the text. Studies of the family dynamics of viewing (Morley, 1986), and the soap operas 'Crossroads' (Hobson, 1982) and 'Eastenders' (Buckingham, 1987) have made it clear that television is a social practice dependent on the location of viewers in terms of their class, ethnicity, educational background and family dynamics amongst other variables.

Studies such as these have demonstrated the value of watching particular programmes with viewers, and talking at length with them about the nature of their television consumption. Thus a project to watch viewers watching a complete programme like 'Sex' followed by a discussion as to what they made of it, how appropriate they felt it to be and what pleasure there was to be gained through attention to it proved to be a very valuable exercise and probably more beneficial than asking discrete groups to view a composite tape of the sexual episodes broadcast over a period of time.

## 4.2. THE COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATION AND THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE (i.e. Publicity and 'Letters to the Editor')

### 4.2.1. THE LISTENER & TV TIMES

*The Listener & TV Times* ran one full announcement in the magazine, for the first episode of the series. For subsequent programmes the listing was brief. The first is important because it suggests the way in which the programme is expected to be 'read' by the viewers. The listing went as follows:-

9.30 Sex

**STARTS TODAY**

Sophie Lee presents part one of a nine-part magazine-style series covering all issues relating to sex and sexuality. The programme looks at medical and psychological aspects of sex, examines the law, discusses what is considered normal and abnormal, and considers the part sex plays in our daily lives. A team of reporters includes Sallianne Deckert and Darren McDonald with medical expert Kerry Phelps and family therapist Brian Cade. (AO)

Exec producer TIM CLUCAS  
CHANNEL NINE

The key words in this promotion include 'magazine-style' which turns out to be a fair representation of the conventions followed by the programme.

The publicists could have said 'documentary' which would have had connotations of 'educational' but that was a word that they avoided using. However, respectability was given to the promotion by the use of terms like:- 'medical', 'psychological', 'law', 'expert' and 'family therapist'.

The paradigmatic approach of promoting the show as 'sexy', full of pictures, 'racy', 'controversial' etc., was avoided. It can be taken that this was a policy decision in the hope that the programme would be accepted as 'serious' and not prurient and that objection would thus be muted. The fact that each programme did include images designed to capture and titillate an audience was avoided.

*The Listener* ran one article and one letter about *Sex*. The article, written by Shelley Howells, consisted of interviews with the producer, Tim Clucas, and with a Dr Kerry Phelps, whom Ms Howells describes as the 'presenter' of the programme (actually Sophie Lee was the 'presenter' on screen, Dr Phelps was a reporter and 'expert' who appeared as such in various segments).

Phelps was quite open about the more entertaining side of the series. She said, in the interview:-

"If a dramatisation of a sexual fantasy can pull in a couple of viewers who will also, by chance, catch the item on STDs, then good. We don't make any excuses for it being entertaining." (Howells, 1992:56)

However, the main thrust of the article was centred around the fact that New Zealand viewers had been denied images which were broadcast in Australia. It seems that TVNZ had chosen to censor 'at least' two sections, one of which was devoted to a close-up of the clitoris and another to shots of the male penis which were required to illustrate the 'squeeze technique' (designed to prevent premature ejaculation).

In asking why any scenes should have been censored in New Zealand when they had been permitted in Australia she notes that:-

"There is nothing in the Codes of Broadcasting Practice for Radio and Television published by the Broadcasting Standards Authority, that specifically excludes such images." (Ibid)

She goes on to quote Michael Stace, 'the authority's advisory officer' who told her that:-

"There's no specific standard about how much body or not you can disclose... there's no pre-censorship whatever".(Ibid)

He then revealed that the cutting was the result of 'confidential in-house censorship rules' for:-

"TVNZ is bound by its own code which states that 'Intimate sexual encounters may be portrayed, provided they are not accompanied by violence and not gratuitously presented or exploitative. They should be representative without explicit detail or bodily exposure'" (my emphasis).(Ibid).

The article represents this as regrettable by reporting the following reaction by Tim Clucas as the article's final paragraph:-

"He says he feels sorry for the New Zealand viewing audience when he is told that some cuts were made to his show. "It's disappointing that the powers-that-be... don't give the viewing audience the benefit of the doubt as far as intelligence and maturity goes." (op cit page. 57).

The other questions dealt with in the article include whether or not the programme intends to be 'entertainment' and whether or not broadcasters should take note of religious objection to specific material.

The 'entertainment' question is handled by reporting the programme makers' contention that:-

"We can't really take the fun aspect out of sex. I think to an extent, traditional sex education has done that." (op cit p 56).

The fact that it is intended as 'educative' and that many intimate shots are 'medical' runs through the reportage of the comments made by the makers throughout the article.

The final emphasis is on the popularity of the show; that people watch it:-

"The show was up against an Aussie cop show (*Phoenix*) and an American sitcom (*WIOU*) on its first screening. *Sex* thrashed 'em with 18% of the audience in three-channel homes (*Phoenix* got 9%; *WIOU*, 1%)." (op cit p 57).

The one letter printed about this programme does not support the liberal tone of this article. Vicki Cumber, of Paihia, is not pleased with the programme and writes:-

"So far, *Sex* has been just another "show all" picture full of brainless content.... I would like to know where our censor was when *Sex* slipped onto our screens." (19 Sep 1992 page 60)

#### 4.2.2. THE TV GUIDE

*The Listener* has a long history of representing itself as a thinking persons critical guide to broadcasting - a claim that has diminished in recent years as the journal has struggled to find a broader audience in competition with other publications. For years only *The Listener*, which was then 'owned' by the Broadcasting Corporation, had access to the programme times. Now all and sundry may reproduce programming details. *Truth* newspaper and the *NZ Women's Weekly* give it away as a supplement.

The populist magazine devoted to broadcasting that challenges *The Listener* most directly is the *TV Guide*. They published one article and twenty-seven letters about *Sex*.

The article, which was unattributed, opens with information about the youth and background of its key presenter (the *TV Guide* aims at a younger readership than that attracted to *The Listener*) :-

**"A WIDE range of issues relating to sex and sexuality will be covered in a candid new series simply called *Sex*, starting Tuesday August 11, at 9.30 pm on Channel 2.**

Flying Doctors star and former Australian Bugs Bunny host Sophie Lee will host this series, which follows in the wake of the controversial Australian documentary *Sophie's Sex Special*. (which was screened on TV2 on May 19)

The series is the latest project for the attractive 23-year-old, who not only acts and presents on television but also sings with her band, *The Freaked Out Flower Children*. (*TV Guide*, 31 July 1992 p23)

The code words here are 'candid', 'controversial' and 'attractive'.

A subsequent paragraph goes on to link the programme to the discourse about Aids. In the name of countering this virus all sorts of previously taboo words and images have become legitimate material for the media:-

"Issues like Aids, abortion and safe sex need to be talked about. I thought that it would do some good. I'm worried about Aids. Who Isn't? If I can do something to heighten awareness - good." (Ibid)

She then goes on to make the mitigating 'it's educational' plea:-

"Sophie also hopes *Sex* will provide a forum for discussion between parents and teenagers" (Ibid)

Although in the light of a subsequent comment and the results of our discussions with the focus groups she might have been unduly optimistic:-

"...she believes that many teens are too embarrassed to discuss sex with their parents.... A lot of them said they couldn't talk to their parents because... they didn't think it was their parent's business." (Ibid).

A revealing comment within the article indicates that there is a possibility that the programme sees itself as in opposition to conservative groups:-

"..what does concern me (Sophie Lee) is the sinister backlash of conservatism in the nineties" (Ibid)

For 'conservative' read 'religious' or 'Christian fundamentalism'. Such groups did seem to be the target of some of the material in the episode which was studied for this report.

The final paragraph used the presence of 'experts' to legitimate the content in much the same way as did *The Listener*:-

"Backing up Sophie in this new series is an experienced team of producers and researchers with expertise in the areas of medicine, psychology and journalism." (Ibid)

As far as the letters to the *TV Guide* were concerned fifteen were 'for' the programme and twelve 'against'.

The initial reaction appeared to be negative with most of the letters disapproving of the programme. Those that approved of it started to come in (or at least, be published) towards the end of the series.

A letter from a twenty-four-year-old Wellington woman published on the 4 September outlined one populist view which produced a reaction and several published replies. Dannii wrote:-

"REGARDING Sex on Channel 2. (Tuesdays at 9.30 pm). I feel there is a need for teenagers and young adults to have readily available information on sex and sexual relationships but fail to see what the excessive amount of both male and female nudity on this programme would do to enlighten and educate. Apart from the fact that showing close-ups of male genitalia (my husband and I were stunned at that) and naked females is totally unnecessary on TV, I also feel the subjects covered are of no relevance to sex education, i.e. strippers and lingerie. Intimate relationships, whether between married, unmarried or straight or gay people should be kept just that - intimate and private, between two lovers, not splashed across our TV sets. Obviously the 'war of the ratings' has a lot to do with Channel 2 screening this series but I thought they would be above the 'nudity brings viewers approach. I consider myself to be very open minded about such matters but I really do think Sex is going a bit far."

A reply from Frank Macskasy Jr of Wellington expresses opinions voiced in similar fashion by others i.e. that those opposing the programme were narrow-minded and that Sex would go part way to correcting the problems brought about by Victorian frustration:-

"I WAS astounded by the sheer naivety of Dannii regarding her criticism of the Channel Nine series, Sex. As for keeping sex private between two lovers; this is just the sort of recipe which we, as a society, have been following. The result has been sexual hangups, neuroses, dysfunctions and misconceptions. By failing to discuss sexuality, we have promoted ignorance over enlightenment; frustration over confidence; and empty 'morality' over happiness. More than ever, Australians and New Zealanders urgently need to come to terms with their sexuality. Our Victorian attitudes, a leftover from our colonialist heritage, have achieved nothing except broken relationships and many unhappy

people. Dannii is not open minded, as she claims..... The saddest part of her letter was learning her age, 24." (TV Guide, 25 September 1992 p 35)

As it happened, when age was stated, and when the respondents were young (13,16,18,& 22) they were , on three out of four occasions, in favour of the programme as was one woman who said:-

"I am a 55-year-old woman. At last we can learn and see something useful on TV. Thank you for the Sex programme. ...." (TV Guide, 18 September, 1992 p 34)

#### 4.2.3. THE NEWSPAPERS

In a review of three sexy programmes then being broadcast on TV1 and 2 Colleen Riley of *The Dominion Sunday Times* felt that the sexual content of all three was not worth all the fuss. She said of Sophie Lee's *Sex*:-

"..it's not about sex. This programme is about 'issues'; it's an offspring of the Aids era. It.. comes accompanied by a warning, which is... unnecessary. The naked bodies and the phallic bananas are about as exciting as the building tools on *Open Home*".

(6 September 1992, p 26)

It may well be that her low key approach and the relative paucity of complaints to the Broadcasting Standards Authority in contrast to the 'more than one hundred complaints received about the series' (Listener, op cit p 56) in Australia would indicate that Television's censors could have been unduly sensitive when they made their cuts to the material broadcast in New Zealand.

Alternatively, the lack of complaints might indicate that they judged the public mood correctly. This issue is addressed in section 8.7.

### 4.3. A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE (by Tracey Watkins & Michelle Lunn)

Put very simply, the feminist perspective on sexuality can be divided into two polarised positions, represented by the 'Libertarian' and 'Radical Feminist' perspectives.

"Libertarian Feminists' such as Kate Ellis (1986), Carol Vance (1984), Anne Snitow (1985), Sara Diamond (1985) and Pat Califia (1986, in Ellis, 1986) conceive of sex as a site of pleasure and exploration for women. They wish to affirm women's sexual pleasure and diversity. For them sexuality has a multiplicity of possibilities which have been historically repressed, leading to their support of exploration and a belief in 'different strokes for different folks'.

At its most extreme Libertarian Feminism accepts a wide range of sexual practices. However, at the more conservative end of this liberal spectrum, moral boundaries of sexually acceptable behaviour are drawn. It is from this liberal-conservative tradition that *Sophie's Sex* emerges. *Sophie's Sex* makes an attempt to liberate female sexuality and provide women with more choices. This includes addressing women; being able to say 'no' to sex; education on 'safer sex', and enhancing women's pleasure in sex.

Radical feminists Andrea Dworkin (1981,1987), Catherine MacKinnon (1987), and Susanne Kapperler (1986) conceptualise sex as a site of danger and oppression for women. For them, male sexuality is defined as being inherently aggressive and violent, male pleasure being 'inextricably tied to victimising, hurting and exploiting' (Dworkin, 1981:69). In comparison to this, women's sexuality is regarded as gentle, loving and relationship orientated. Thus women's sexuality may only be liberated when male sexuality is contained and women have sexual autonomy.

A radical feminist critique of *Sophie's Sex* would argue that it fails to challenge existing constructions of femininity and masculinity. Radical feminists do not object *per se* to the portrayal of sex, but rather the way sex is "portrayed and the attitudes associated with it.... Women learn that in order to be appreciated they must be sexually available all the time... sex is seen as a commodity, as the measure of her worth..." (WAP in Morris et alia, 1989). The conceptualisation of women as sexually available is not adequately problematised within *Sex*. While *Sex* attempts to portray women with independent sexuality, women are still presented as the object of the male gaze, Sophie Lee being the ultimate heterosexual icon.

*Sex* attempts to redefine sexuality but heterosexuality is still regarded as the norm. Male homosexuality is superficially addressed, while lesbian sexuality remains invisible. Additionally, the text *Sophie* offers us, of a liberated, independent sexuality for women contradicts the image of ideal femininity presented in the programme.

Thus whilst *Sophie's Sex* is presented as attempting to redefine sexuality, it is, in fact, reinforcing existing feminine norms. Women remain the objects of male gaze and their sexuality is defined in relation to men rather than to themselves. From both a radical and libertarian feminist perspective, the educational value of *Sex* is limited. *Sex* remains firmly located within accepted liberal standards and never strays far from mainstream media portrayals of female sexuality.

## 5. CHOOSING THE PROGRAMME

### 5.1. CHOOSING THE EPISODE

It was decided to screen one entire programme rather than a composite tape made up of extracts from several programmes. This is the preferred practice of the video and film censors who insist on screening an entire film or video when they wish to seek lay comment. It is their contention that this approach allows particular incidents to be considered 'in context'. Even a compilation of extracts from the series, made by the producers themselves and entitled *The Best from Sex* was rejected as atypical and unlikely to produce a considered response.

All nine episodes of the first series of '*Sophie's Sex*' to be broadcast in New Zealand were recorded and watched. It was decided that the last of the first series was 'typical' of those broadcast and that as it contained 'controversial' elements such as coarse language, nudity and simulated sex, it would be a suitable example for close study. (See the following section for a full synopsis of the selected episode).

### 5.2. AN ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE PROGRAMME

#### 5.2.1. THE PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

SOPHIE LEE'S SEX - 9.30 p.m. TV2 Tuesday 13 October 1992

5.2.1.1. Opening Sequence:- Introduction to the contents by Sophie

5.2.1.2. Story #1:- Sexual Assault on Children

- \* Statistics
- \* Comments by a 'Counsellor'
- \* Australian (?) television 'commercials' for child sex abuse awareness.
- \* Interview with a sexual abuse victim (Maria)
- \* Interview with a sexual abuse victim (Darryl)
- \* Comments by a Social Work lecturer
- \* More Australian (?) television 'commercials' for child sex abuse awareness
- \* Summary comments by victims previously interviewed.

5.2.1.3. Story #2:- The Dating Game

- \* Comments by a 'psychologist' about 'being single'.
- \* Interviews with men/women in a bar about women asking men out
- \* '0055' numbers - a telephone dating service
- \* An Introduction Agency
- \* Radio Dating Programmes
- \* Computer Dating
- \* Reprise of the 'psychologist' on 'being single'

5.2.1.4. Insert #1: 'Wild Sex' (part of on-going series on animal sex)

- \* Statistical 'facts' re the habits of the praying mantis scroll down the screen.

5.2.1.5 Story #3:- What Australians Wear to Bed

- \* Interviews with 'famous' people about what they wear to bed
- \* Sophie's Introduction
- \* Nightwear through the ages
- \* Interview with a nightwear designer
- \* Models display his range
- \* Shot of couple wearing nothing in bed
- \* 'Vox pop' interviews with the public on what they wear to bed
- \* More models wearing night attire
- \* Interview with two actors from the erotic soap opera 'Chances'
- \* Another model in night attire
- \* Interview with Clive Robertson
- \* Another model in night attire

5.2.1.6. Story #4 :- Men speaking about what its like to be male

- \* Host at a male dinner party asks 'how has the dating game changed in the post-feminist era?'
- \* 'What would a woman learn if she became a man for a few days?'
- \* 'What do men want from sex?'
- \* 'Are there any fantasies that you would like fulfilled?'
- \* 'Describe your ideal woman'.

5.2.1.7. Insert #2: 'What do you think is sexy? - vox pop interviews

5.2.1.8. Story #5:- How having a baby affects your sex life

- \* Introduction
- \* Interviews with new mothers (a discussion group)
- \* Interviews with new fathers (a discussion group)
- \* Interview with a 'marriage guidance counsellor'
- \* Scenes of a couple having sex
- \* Class for women to strengthen their pelvic muscles
- \* Scene of couple with their baby
- \* Comments by new parents

5.2.1.9. Story #6:- Prostitutes in Kings Cross

- \* Introduction (includes a warning about 'language')
- \* Story focuses on two prostitutes who work to get money for drugs - it intersperses interviews with the two women (Chloe and Nadia) with various street scenes.

5.2.1.10. Story #7:- How to 'spice up' your marriage

- \* Comedy scene of a couple having bored sex
- \* Interview with a 'psychologist'
- \* Scenes of varied sex positions and the introduction of a bright pink vibrator.
- \* Statistics
- \* Interview with another 'psychologist'
- \* Scenes of a couple entering a motel for a 'dirty weekend'

5.2.1.11. Conclusion:- *Sophie Lee wraps up - credits.*

5.2.2. A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SEXUAL CONTENT

In August 1992 an analysis of the sexual material to be found in all the programmes screened on television during one week in February 1991 was presented to the Broadcasting Standards Authority (Watson C., & Lambourne R; 1992). The analysis used an instrument developed for the purpose. It comprised a form designed as a matrix on a single sheet which could be completed for all sexual material screened. The definition used was 'any action or image of a sexual nature including activity; nudity or sexual language'. The main classification was of 'Sexual Images'; 'Sexual Events'; 'Sexual Sequences' and 'Sexual Language'. Each example was then analysed in detail (see Appendix 6). In 1991 there were only 287 such entries in total (ibid:27).

In the U.K. a survey which covered only the hours between 18.00 and 24.00 found '57 scenes of sexual activity' in one week of January 1992 (Millwood-Hargrave, 1992:66).

An earlier edition of *Sex* had already been analysed using this form in order that a comment might be made in the August report as to the effects of a single programme devoted especially to sex. In that example there were seventy two examples. Since the edition looked at for this programme contained seventy-six it would seem that there might be an average in the seventy range.

The difference between 'images', 'events'; and 'sequences' was as follows:-

an 'image' covered 'bodies in a sexual pose which were shown without connection to a specific act or sequence'

an 'event' was used for a single act - such as a kiss or cuddle.

a 'sequence' 'may be composed of several sexual acts scored as one where the series of acts (1) stem from the same initiation and (2) are joined together as one event and (3) happen in the same location (4) to and by the same participants'. This definition avoided an inflated count where every kiss and caress could be counted as a separate act despite the fact that if all happened as part of essentially the same occurrence.

'language' might be 'explicit' or 'euphemistic' and consist of a single word ('event') or several ('sequence').

In the episode of *Sex* broadcast on Tuesday 13 October 1992 of the seventy-six examples analysed in detail the vast majority were noted for the use of sexual language. There were sixty-one entries made for this reason. Forty-nine were for single words (an 'event') and twelve for a series (a 'sequence'). Fifty-one of the words were 'explicit'. For example the word 'sex' was used on twenty-four occasions and 'sexual assault/abuse' seven times. In addition to these common words there were twenty-three other explicit words including 'oral sex'; 'vagina'; 'penis'; 'masturbate'; 'nipples' and 'intercourse'. Euphemistic language included 'buns' (for bottom) three times; 'bum' twice 'come' (or 'coming') - meaning 'ejaculate' - three times, and the strongest of swearwords:- 'fuck', once. The use of 'fuck' was coded as 'very likely' to cause a complaint to the B.S.A.

There were nine 'sexual images'. All were of nudity. Twice it was male; twice female and five times 'both'. Five times women's breasts were seen and twice men's whole back and twice male 'bottoms'. Three times it was limited to their chests. Most of these 'images' were, in fact, one of the programme's two logos. A photograph at the left edge of the screen shows a standing, naked, couple embracing. Statistics slowly scroll upwards from the bottom right of the screen. During this episode there was no image of male or female genitalia.

Seven of the nine 'images' were depicted in an 'erotic' style and twice they were 'humorous'. Mostly the images were coded as 'gratuitous' and always as designed for the television viewer's 'gaze' rather than for some other actor in the drama.

On a five point scale of 'seriousness' where 'five' means that a complaint to the B.S.A. was virtually certain to ensue and where 'one' meant that nobody was likely to be moved to object four of the nine images scored 'three'; three, 'two'; two 'one' and one, an image of a television set showing a bedroom scene from a 'good' pornographic movie (albeit a small picture of a nude couple but without any genitalia visible), received a relatively concerned 'four'.

There were six 'sequences'. All were of couples making love. Actually, there were three occasions but each was interrupted and then returned to which resulted in two forms each time. The intercourse was 'loving' and couples said to be 'married'. Full nudity featured each time although the camera angles obscured the genital areas. However, the woman's breasts were visible in four of the sequences at the same time as the male's full back. The last two sequences concentrated on the chest of the man and the full back of the woman. The coders saw the first two scenes (four 'sequences') as almost certain to be a cause for complaint and the last two, where the nudity was more circumspect, as only at the mid-point of the scale.

The first 'intercourse sequence' was in a story about resuming sex after childbirth. A couple were shown making love on their side. The scene was romantically lit with the blue back-lighting chosen for film romances like *Nine and a half Weeks*. The next scene was in a section on *Spicing up Your Marriage* and included lovemaking in a humorous vein as the couples thought about something else and a second in a more dedicated fashion as they tried a 'new position'. These sequences were fully and brightly lit in the style of 'adult videos'. In both cases 'simulated sex' was printed across the couple at the bottom right of the screen but this was not enough to stop the coders from being sure that each would be almost certain to result in a complaint.

## 6. CHOOSING THE 'FOCUS GROUPS'

'Focus groups' consist of a number of people selected on the basis of some affinity of background to look closely, together, at a given topic. The discussion is guided by a facilitator to ensure that each group covers similar ground and is minuted by a 'rapporteur' so that the responses of the different groups can be compared.

At first just five 'focus groups' were selected for this project. After analysis of their responses a further five groups were recruited to re-dress the perceived bias towards middle-class pakeha culture.

At the beginning of the session each participant was handed Document #1 that set out the details and objectives of the research. (refer Appendix 1) Then, they were handed Document #2 which asked them questions necessary to construct a 'personal profile'. This they did under a false name supplied as a name sticker. The names were given in alphabetical order - Ada, Bea, etc., in order to make it easier for the rapporteur to record their comments (she could just use the initial in her notes).

From the 'personal profile' it was possible to construct a summary of the common characteristics within each group.

### 6.1. 'LATE TEENAGERS'

'Late' teenagers were chosen, rather than younger teenagers for whom the programme undeniably has great appeal, in order to avoid the ethical problems that would arise from showing and discussing sexual material with people under eighteen. Twelve young people; six male and six female aged eighteen to twenty (two were actually in their early twenties) were located at a local Polytechnic where they were all part of the same course. Thus all were 'students' and in educational terms four had reached School Certificate level; five University Entrance and two had a diploma qualification. All were pakeha and all had been born in New Zealand.

Most were not religious. Four were 'atheists'; two 'agnostics' and only two professed a religious affiliation - one was a Catholic the other an Anglican. Four 'preferred not to answer' the question. Only one attended church regularly.

Like many students busy with assignments and a social life, most were light watchers of television. Seven indicated that they watched 'some evenings and/or daytimes' (to a total of 1-4 hours per day) and three said that they watched 'most evenings' (to a total of 5/6 hours per day). The other two did not answer the question.

It is becoming common for many homes to have more than one television set. Half of those replying had one in their own bedroom. This is a question that would have had a special relevance had we been able to interview children and younger teenagers.

All indicated that they would probably choose to watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy' and all had seen at least one edition of *Sex* with ten having seen 'some' or 'all'.

## 6.2. 'MATURE THINKERS'

This group consisted entirely of twelve women who meet every Friday morning to discuss issues of current interest. For the most part they comprise retired professional people who had worked in areas such as education and health. There was one younger woman (in the 41-50 bracket); three were between sixty-one and seventy and the majority (eight) were older (71-80). All were pakeha and four had been born in Europe. Six were widows, one was divorced and the rest had live husbands. They had had thirty-five children between them. Apart from the younger woman whose sons were teenagers all the other 'children' were over thirty - most were in their forties.

As might be expected from their professions this was a well-educated group. All but one had School Certificate or University Entrance (or their equivalent) and half of them had a tertiary qualification as well.

Of the ten who answered the questions on the second page of Document #2 five professed to be 'Christian' and detailed their church affiliation. Four listed themselves as 'agnostics' (one 'preferred not to answer'). However, only two attended church regularly; seven said that they went only to weddings and funerals.

A third were very heavy television watchers, as are many retired people, watching television 'every evening and, at some time during every day (8hr +)'. The rest were relatively light viewers at one to four hours per day. Four (of the ten) had television sets in their bedroom and eight said that they would 'maybe' watch a programme promoted as 'to do with sex' (Two said that they would be sure to!). However, only five had seen any of the *Sex* programmes and those had only watched one.

## 6.3. 'YOUNG RAVERS'

This group was recruited by one of the research assistants who works in a night club. The management made a room available and provided refreshments for participants. All were regular customers.

There were eight in all; four male and four female. All but one, who was nineteen, were in their early twenties. Two were married and each had a baby. All were pakeha and all born in New Zealand. Three quarters of the group had some educational qualification, which, in three cases amounted to a university degree. All but three were employed and of those two were students and the third a young mother who was partly trained as a nurse. Half of them (4) said that they were 'Christian' (2 Anglican; 1 Catholic and 1 Baptist) but only one attended church 'often'.

They were not heavy television viewers (after all they were chosen because they had a social life!) but half of them had a television set in their own room and most would chose to watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy'. All but one had seen at least one of the *Sex* programmes and one, the youngest woman, had seen them all.

#### 6.4. 'PARENTS OF TEENAGERS'

This group was recruited through a PTA member and the meeting held in the seventh form common room of a local secondary girls' High School. The teenage children of the participants totalled twenty (an average of three per family) There were ten adults present; five male and five female but three came with their partners. Although contact was through a girls' school the ten parents representing seven families had eleven boys and nine girls.

Nine of the ten parents had school leaving qualifications - four at School Certificate level; five at University Entrance or tertiary level. There were three teachers, two nurses, two women-at-home, a Real Estate salesperson, a Sales Rep and a Civil Engineer.

All declared themselves to be 'Christian' although one added that he was 'not committed' to a 'denomination'. The rest were mostly Anglican (4) or Presbyterian (3). There was one Roman Catholic couple. On the whole these Christians were not regular worshippers. Three attended church often, one 'weekly or more'. Most (7) attended only occasionally and for weddings and so on.

They watched relatively little television with eight claiming 'some evenings and or daytimes' averaging '1 - 4 hours a day' and two acknowledging 'most evenings and/or daytimes' averaging 4 - 6 hours per day'. This proportion mirrored that of the 'Young Ravers' and 'Late Teens' which is a little surprising as many surveys show that married couples are generally heavier viewers for they do not have the social or study commitments of the young. Perhaps it is because these people serve on committees, like the P.T.A., that they have less leisure time than the average. Six of the seven families represented had more than one television set and five of these had a set in their bedroom. This may seem surprising as it is commonly thought to be the children and individuals in flats who have a bedroom set. It might be interesting to explore what is watched in the bedroom. It is presumably the late programmes (although only one indicated that he watched '*Late Night Studs*' ).

All indicated that they might, or definitely would, watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy' and all but one had seen 'more than one' of Sophie Lee's Sex programmes.

#### 6.5. 'CHRISTIAN CHURCHPEOPLE'

This group was recruited from a Presbyterian church that has a reputation for the strong witness of its people. The minister's wife agreed that they could be described as 'mainstream evangelical'. It was felt that a church with its origins in the tenets of Knox and Calvin would be likely to have members whose morality was 'traditional'. An elder of the church arranged for a group of twelve people to meet at his home.

There were six males and six females (unfortunately, one female did not complete the 'personal profile' document so that her comments had to be dropped from the report). Thus, there were six men and five women in total. All were Pakeha and all born in New Zealand. They ranged in age from eighteen to fifty. Three pairs were married couples. Four of those present had eleven children in total (three had two and one had five).

They were well-educated. Five had a University degree; the 'lowest' qualification was University Entrance; the highest a Masterate. Most worked in the service sector i.e. they were teachers, nurses, youth workers etc. Two were unemployed and two 'home-makers'.

As expected, all were practising Christians. They all worshipped 'weekly, or more'. Although the group was recruited through a mainstream church and seven listed themselves as 'Presbyterian' two chose to classify themselves as 'Charismatic' and two as 'Pentecostal' which indicates that the particular church is strongly 'evangelical' if not 'fundamentalist'.

They watched television much less than any of the other groups. All but one chose the lowest level of involvement i.e. '1-4hrs per day' and several wrote in 'not every day'. The 'heavy' viewer only watched 'most evenings or daytimes' which was the mid-point on the five-point scale. This was also the only group where not one had a television in the bedroom.

In view of their later comments it was rather surprising that eight of the eleven said that 'maybe' they would 'choose to watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy' or 'to do with sex'. Only two said that they would not. Most of them had seen one or 'some' of the Sophie Lee Sex programmes. Three had seen none of them.

The first of the second set of five groups to see the programme were the:-

#### 6.6. 'ASIANS' (in fact all were:- 'INDIANS')

This group was very well educated. Of the ten taking part five had a PhD qualification. Most worked as scientists or university lecturers. On the six point Elley-Irving socio-economic-status scale they had the top average of all the groups at 1.6. To an extent this reflects the fact that non-refugee immigrants from Asia have to have a high level of wealth or education in order to gain admittance to New Zealand. It may also be due to the fact that the rapporteur and her husband are part of the local university milieu.

All had been born in India; in nine out of ten cases in large towns. This is important because the Indians themselves assert that those coming from the villages are likely to be more conservative.

Although they had grave reservations about parts of this programme none indicated that they would avoid programmes promoted as 'sexy or to do with sex'. In fact six out of ten said that they would choose to watch it and the rest said 'maybe'. One had seen all of the Sex series and six had seen some of them. Only two had seen none.

As intelligent and thoughtful people they drew a distinction between the mores of the society in which they had been brought up and the one in which their own children were now living. Although they had said that depictions of nudity and sexual discourse were not for public consumption they indicated 'amusement' (3); 'enjoyment' (4) and 'interest' (8) as being the most common immediate reaction to the programme. Only two ticked the box marked 'embarrassment'.

Amit, a male scientist aged 31-40, said that:-

*'Indians attitude to sex is very different (from New Zealanders).. We do not see sex in terms of enjoyment. We see it more in terms of creating a family.'*

He was challenged by Saul, a university lecturer aged 51-60, who asked:-

*'What about all those erotic statues showing numerous sexual poses outside sacred Indian temples? India is the country of the Kamasutra'.*

To general agreement Amit replied:-

*'Temple achitecture with sexual poses was carved in ancient times and was part of worship. However, during the Victorian colonial period everything was clamped down on. That is the main reason why I am saying this'.*

However, despite these reservations eight out of the ten would have allowed the programme to be broadcast as it was; only two would have required cuts; none would have banned it.

### 6.7. 'MAORI'

There were only six in the Maori group (and one was actually Samoan) but they offered some lively and pertinent comments. The group was related and all belonged to the same Marae. There was a generational mix with a range from 21 to 70. They had a lot of children between them. The five families represented averaged five children each.

They had not had as much formal education as some of the other groups (one had School Certificate; one University Entrance and the other a Diploma (probably in Nursing). Five of the six were employed:- two in the meat industry; the other three in the medical/social work areas. This averaged out at 3.86 on the SES scale.

All but one had two or more televisions in the house (four of the six had one in the bedroom) and they watched quite a lot of television (four reported 4-6 hours per day).

All stated that they were Christian and five of the six worshipped 'often' or 'very often'.

The most common reaction to the programme was one of 'interest' and all would have allowed the programme to have been broadcast as seen although there was some concern expressed at the final segment on 'spicing up one's marriage'. The 'educational' aspects of the programme were important to them but they were not prepared to go along with the extracts from *The Lovers Guide* that showed how to install a condom.

### 6.8. People of 'LOWER ECONOMIC STATUS'

The seven people in this group were recruited by the organizer of a local food bank. Five were unemployed; one of the others was a storeman and the seventh a 'statistician'. The resultant '5' average on the 6 point Elley/Irving scale indicates that in economic terms the right people had been targetted. However, they were articulate and thoughtful. Three had no formal educational achievement but two had School Certificate and two University Entrance; one was currently a tertiary student.

One might have expected that they would have had the time to watch a lot of television but most (5) reported in the lowest box (other than 'never') averaging 1-4 hours a day. Despite this half of them had more than one television set at home and half had one in their bedroom.

Their immediate response to the programme was 'amusement' (5 - of 7); and 'interest' (6 - of the 7). All thought that TVNZ had done well to broadcast it in the form that they did. None would have banned or cut it. Three of the seven described themselves as Christian but only two of them attended church often (many times a year)

## 6.9. YOUNG(ER) TEENAGERS

These teenagers were marginally younger than those recruited through the Polytechnic. In this case they were obtained from an 'Outreach' drop-in centre and interviewed in a seminar room at the YMCA next door. Seven were male and two female Two-thirds were Maori and all but one was unemployed. The 'process worker' who had a job was university educated and acted as a 'youth leader' for Outreach. The senior youth worker, in charge of the club, also attended but did not take an active part in the discussion.

Two were fifteen (hopefully, present with care-giver approval); two were sixteen and the rest eighteen (apart from the Youth Worker in the 31-40 bracket). Because of the presence of young people under the age of eighteen the extracts from the *Lovers' Guide* video, which carries an '18' label, were not screened.

Six of the youngsters had no school qualification; two (a girl and a boy) had School Certificate. Four were Christian and four preferred not to answer - a couple said they were 'nothing'. Four of them attended church. They were not particularly heavy viewers. Five picked the lowest category. Of course, this group was into the social scene at the Outreach club which offered companionship, games and other activities as an alternative to television. They had all watched one or more of the *Sex* series.

Although they expressed 'amusement' (7 of 9) at the programme they were also 'bored' (4); 'surprised' (4) and embarrassed (3). Furthermore four of the nine would not have allowed it to go out as broadcast. Three of them wanted cuts - of 'flesh'; 'porn' and the vibrator and one would have banned it altogether. Those requiring cuts were three of the Christian, regular, church attenders although the one who wanted it banned altogether 'preferred not to answer' but had ticked that he 'never attended church' so presumably was not religious.

## 6.10. PACIFIC ISLANDERS

There were nine Pacific Islanders, all women and mostly over thirty. They had twenty-four children between them (an average of three each). They came from various Pacific Islands and had all been born outside this country. Five listed themselves as housewives and four had jobs; two as 'clerks' and one as a nurse and another as a 'community worker'. All stated that they were 'Christian' and all attended church 'often' or 'very often'.

They were busy women and did not watch a lot of television. Two-thirds listed the lowest level of viewing option.

As a group they offered the highest level of embarrassment recorded with seven of the nine ticking the embarrassed box. Indeed many did not tick any other. 'Amusement'; 'Interest' and 'Disgust' each attracted three responses. As with the Indians they indicated that people in their culture were not happy talking about sex, especially in mixed groups, neither did they like looking at sexual imagery together. Also, as did the Indians, they said that they were

aware that their children were growing up in a different world. Nevertheless, a majority was opposed to the screening of this programme in the form that it had gone out in October. Initially, four would have allowed it to be shown uncut; five would have preferred that it was not broadcast 'as seen' (three would have cut it; two would have banned it). Following the discussion the response was even more negative. By the end of the session only two would have approved of the programme being seen as it was shown; two still wanted it banned and five now wanted it cut.

The disapproval was most marked in regard to the 'simulated sex' scenes. These, together with the attendant nudity, they wanted out.

However, they did seem prepared to accept the importance of the educational rationale and four would even have allowed the condom fitting sequence from the *Lovers' Guide* to have gone forward.

In view of the almost universal opposition to the images of recreational sex in the programme itself the final scene from the video of 'real' sex was not screened for this group.

## 7. THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Three research assistants were initially recruited as rapporteurs. Ms Watkins is a graduate assistant from the Sociology Department working in the area of sexuality research; Ms Davies is a graduate assistant from the Education Department who has worked on three earlier projects for the B.S.A. and Ms Combs is a tutor and marker in the area of Educational Media.

During the second phase it seemed appropriate to recruit rapporteurs from amongst the ethnic groups represented. Accordingly, Ms Auta, a Samoan and a University student helped with the Pacific Group; Dr Chatterjee with the Indian and Ms Skipper with the Maori. An unemployed secretary Ms Oliver was engaged to report for the 'Lower SES' group. An advantage in employing people from the same group as those being interviewed, apart from the ease of communication which it induced, was the opportunity that it gave to the respondents to reply in their own language if they wished.

Although groups were offered the option of also taking on the role of facilitator none wanted to do so.

No training, other than a briefing and a run through with the documentation was required.

A questionnaire shell was prepared for each rapporteur and for each focus group. It matched one held by the facilitator. A second, clean copy, was provided for transcription from the rough notes and a recorded tape was supplied as a back up for comments that proved difficult to transcribe at the time. The time-scale for the project did not allow for a complete transcription from the tape but the rapporteurs were satisfied that they had accurately noted all major comments and that the tape had helped them to verify passages where the debate was hectic.

## 8 THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### 8.1. PREPARATION OF THE VIEWING ENVIRONMENT

The room was set up with chairs in an arc facing the television set (a monitor with built-in video recorder). A tape recorder was placed to one side with an amplifying microphone facing the group. The Rapporteur sat to one side in an unobtrusive position but where she could see all participants and read their name tags. The facilitator sat to one side of the television, facing the group. Drinks were provided.

### 8.2. INTRODUCTION (DOCUMENT #1 - see Appendix 1)

The facilitator welcomed the group and spoke about the information contained in Document #1 (see Appendix 1). He then gave each participant a name sticker with their alias for the purpose of recording comments anonymously. These were affixed where they could be read by the rapporteur.

### 8.3. PERSONAL PROFILE (i) (DOCUMENT #2 - see Appendix 2).

Group members were then invited to complete a questionnaire giving personal details about their socio-economic status; educational level; family composition; religious and television watching habits, all under their assumed name. The following is a summary of the responses from all five groups:-

8.3.1. GENDER:-           MALE     39  
                              FEMALE  55     n=94

*There were more women than men largely because two groups; the 'Mature Thinkers' and the 'Pacific Islanders' consisted entirely of women. Most other groups had equal numbers of either sex.*

8.3.2. AGE:-               (15-16)   4  
                              (18-20)   15  
                              (21-30)   19  
                              (31-40)   18  
                              (41-50)   14  
                              (51-60)   10  
                              (61-70)   6  
                              (71-80)   8     n=94

*No attempt was made to recruit younger teenagers as the requirement for a quick response did not allow sufficient time to go through the procedures required to consult an ethics committee which is required if younger people are to be used as subjects.*

8.3.3. ETHNICITY:-   PAKEHA     62  
                              MAORI     12  
                              INDIAN     10  
                              PACIFIC IS. 10     n=94

*At first all were Pakeha. Each group was responsible for selecting its own participants and at that stage no attempt had been made to recruit groups by ethnicity as the requirement for a quick response did not allow*

sufficient time to go through the necessary protocols. However following an extension of time for the project specific groups were then sought out producing the composition indicated above.

|                         |            |    |      |
|-------------------------|------------|----|------|
| 8.3.4. PLACE OF BIRTH:- | NZ         | 67 |      |
|                         | EUROPE     | 8  |      |
|                         | PACIFIC IS | 9  |      |
|                         | INDIA      | 10 | n=94 |

|                         |                    |    |      |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----|------|
| 8.3.5. MARITAL STATUS:- | (SINGLE)           | 31 |      |
|                         | (ENGAGED)          | 1  |      |
|                         | (MARRIED/DE FACTO) | 53 |      |
|                         | (DIVORCED)         | 2  |      |
|                         | (WIDOWED)          | 7  | n=94 |

8.3.6. CHILDREN? 50 families were represented - average number of children = 3

8.3.7. EDUCATION:-

|                                 |    |      |
|---------------------------------|----|------|
| No school leaving qualification | 23 |      |
| School Certificate              | 19 |      |
| University Entrance             | 12 |      |
| Diploma                         | 15 |      |
| University First Degree         | 14 |      |
| University - Masters            | 6  |      |
| University - Doctorate          | 5  | n=94 |

The level of Educational attainment is higher than the national average. The 'Late Teenagers' had been located at a Polytechnic and had the entry requirements necessary for a competitive course; the 'Mature Thinkers' were retired professional women who had needed qualifications for their careers. Even three of the 'Young Ravers,' located at a Night Club, had a first degree as had five of the 'Christian Churchpeople' and the Indians were particularly well qualified. Apart from the Indians the second set of five focus groups tended to re-dress the balance.

8.3.8. OCCUPATION:- using the 'ELLEY/IRVING SCALE' (1977;1985) where '1' = 'top professional and '6' = manual/labourer.

|    |    |             |
|----|----|-------------|
| 1: | 15 |             |
| 2: | 23 |             |
| 3: | 17 |             |
| 4: | 9  |             |
| 5: | 3  |             |
| 6: | 20 | n=87        |
|    |    | average=4.1 |

The 'Indians' had the highest status occupations with an average of 1.6. the 'Mature Thinkers' had had the next highest status occupations, before they retired with an average of 1.9; the 'Christian Churchpeople' were next with 2.2; the 'Parents of Teenagers' and the 'Late Teenagers' both averaged 2.5 (since all the 'Late Teenagers' were students it was their parents occupations that were scored); The Young Ravers scored more modestly at 2.9. However, even they, who had not had long to climb the corporate ladder, were above the scale's mid point of 3.5.; The Maori were just below, at 3.86; the Pacific Islanders and the 'Lower SES' groupings reflecting their unemployed status averaged '5', and the younger teenagers, none of whom were in employment, scored only 5.8.

**8.3.9. RELIGION:-**

|                                |    |      |
|--------------------------------|----|------|
| Prefer not to answer:-         | 9  |      |
| atheist                        | 7  |      |
| agnostic                       | 8  |      |
| Christian (state denomination) | 54 |      |
| Hindu                          | 8  |      |
| Moslem                         | 1  | n=87 |

*All the 'Christian Churchpeople' were 'Christians' and all the 'Parents of Teenagers' listed themselves as such. as did the Pacific Islanders and Maori. The athiests and agnostics were most strongly represented amongst the 'Young Ravers' and 'Late Teenagers'.*

**8.3.10. DENOMINATION:-**

|                 |    |      |
|-----------------|----|------|
| Presbyterian    | 16 |      |
| Anglican        | 9  |      |
| Roman Catholic  | 5  |      |
| Pentecostal     | 5  |      |
| Charismatic     | 2  |      |
| Mormon          | 2  |      |
| Ratana          | 2  |      |
| Methodist       | 1  |      |
| Baptist         | 1  |      |
| Lutheran        | 1  |      |
| Spiritualist    | 1  |      |
| 'Not committed' | 1  | n=46 |

*The large number of Presbyterians resulted from the recruitment of the 'Christian Churchpeople' through a Presbyterian minster's wife.*

**8.3.11. WORSHIP:-**

|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| never attend church/temple etc         | 7  |   |
| attend for weddings/funerals etc.      | 24 |   |
| attend occasionally (few times a year) | 15 |   |
| attend often (many times a year)       | 16 |   |
| attend very often (weekly, or more)    | 27 | n=89. (five people did not turn the sheet over) |

*The regular worshippers were almost all found amongst the 'Christian Churchpeople' and the 'Pacific Islanders'. The other 'Christians' did not often attend. Even the atheists indicated that they attended for 'weddings/funerals' etc.*

**8.3.12. TELEVISION HABITS:-****Watches television:-**

|  |    |      |
|--|----|------|
| every evening and at some time every day (8hr +) | 6  |      |
| every evening and some daytimes (6 - 8hrs/day)   | 3  |      |
| most evenings and/or daytimes (av 4-6hrs/day)    | 20 |      |
| some evenings and/or daytimes (av 1-4hrs/day)    | 50 |      |
| never...   | 0  | n=89 |

*The heaviest viewers were found amongst the most elderly. On the whole the participants watched relatively little television - less than the national average. This will probably be because the focus groups were recruited*

from amongst active people willing to participate in an enterprise that took them away from television.

8.3.13. Has a television set in the bedroom:-

|     |    |      |
|-----|----|------|
| YES | 32 |      |
| NO  | 57 | n=89 |

Private television sets were common amongst young people who were flattening. On the other hand seventy percent of the 'parents of teenagers' had one in their bedroom. Conversely none of the 'Christian Churchpeople' had one there. As much of the sexier material is broadcast late it may be supposed that a set in the bedroom would mean that one was more likely to be exposed to such material.

8.3.14. Participants who would choose to watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy' or to do with sex:-

|       |    |      |
|-------|----|------|
| MAYBE | 53 |      |
| YES   | 28 |      |
| NO    | 8  | n=89 |

Surprisingly, all groups, even the 'Christian Churchpeople,' answered 'yes' or 'maybe' to this question. Perhaps advertisers know something after all!

8.3.15. Participants who had watched any of the Australian series entitled 'Sophie's Sex':-

|      |    |      |
|------|----|------|
| NONE | 17 |      |
| ONE  | 17 |      |
| SOME | 50 |      |
| ALL  | 5  | n=89 |

72(80%) of those taking part had already seen the programme that was chosen for study. Only seventeen had never seen any of 'Sophie Lee's Sex' before.

## 8.4. THE SCREENING - SPONTANEOUS RESPONSES

### 8.4.1. REACTIONS TO THE FIRST, UNINTERRUPTED, SCREENING.

After the first of the personal profile forms had been completed the programme was screened right through and without interruption. The advertisements had been removed. This left forty-three minutes of material. The rapporteurs noted down the general response to the programme as it progressed, as well as any spontaneous comments made by people in the groups.

The opening clip of 'things to come' included a shot of a woman, in a hard hat, on a building site, whistling at men and calling out "show us your wobbly bits" this evoked laughter from all groups.

Equally all were silent during the first 'Child abuse' sequence although two males in the 'Late Teenagers' group scoffed when the male victim of child abuse said that he found sex 'gross' now.

When the full 'role reversal' women-dating-men sequence came up all groups greeted it with hilarity. Laughter was recorded when the woman called out at building construction workers and in a nightclub scene where women were asked their pick-up lines. Most groups found the extravagant acting of the woman reporter hugging the dating agency manager as she opened the door, and later, miming concern at the insinuation that she had a tattoo on her bottom, to be amusing. Even the 'Mature Thinkers', for whom such behaviour would have been unthinkable visibly enjoyed this sequence.

The 'wild sex' clip consisted of printed information about the cannibalistic mating habits of the praying mantis where the female eats the male during sexual intercourse. The details scrolled down the screen and were found to be amusing by all groups although there was a different timbre to the male and female laughter. There were general comments during this sequence along the lines of:- 'ooh'; 'oh, what'; 'this is kinky' and 'yuk'

The sequence on 'what Australians wore to bed' evoked mild laughter especially when one man announced that he wore a bra to bed. The image of a man jumping on the bed in boxer shorts and at the comment that the most sexy thing to wear to bed was 'another woman' also evoked laughter, from both males and females. There were only a few audible remarks made. One, female, 'Young Raver' said 'that's nice' when she saw a model in bikini pajamas.

Most groups were obviously interested in the sequence on 'sex after childbirth.' Several whispered to each other about various aspects. One young married couple in the 'Young Ravers' group, with a nine month old baby of their own, talked to each other about the sequence. The wife laughed and nudged her husband at one point where the woman on the screen says that her husband touching her when she gets into bed is the last straw after a day of being pummelled by a baby.

The 'Mature Thinkers' and some in the ethnic groups found it hard to hear the conversation during the sequence on 'What Men Think of Women'. The men were talking around a dinner table and it was not always easy to make out the details of the conversation. Participants in several groups became restless during this segment. Young people were particularly bored.

The 'Christian Churchpeople' and the 'Mature Thinkers' audibly displayed their disquiet with portions of the segment on street prostitution, especially when the women described some of their practices. There were cries of 'yuk' from people in half of the groups when they described coprophagia.

There was general amusement at the intercourse sequence, where the male is thinking about rugby, which opened a piece on 'How to Spice up Your Marriage' During the segment which showed a bright pink vibrator stroked against the woman's breast the 'Mature Thinkers' group began to chat amongst themselves for the first time. Even groups who later suggested that this section should have been cut expressed amusement during the actual screening.

### 8.5. THE IMMEDIATE REACTION - PERSONAL PROFILE (i) (DOCUMENT #3 - see Appendix 3).

Immediately after watching the programme, and before any discussion, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that tested their first reactions to the programme. They were also asked whether they believed that the programme should have been transmitted in the form that they had seen or whether it should have been 'cut'. Finally, their attitude on the appropriate place for 'sex education' to take place was tested.

#### 8.5.1 Just one of the participants, an Indian lecturer indicated that she believed that:-

There is no place for sex education on television  
There is no place for sex education in schools

but three other people ticked the box that said that:-

Sex education should take place only within the family

.....which, in effect means that they also agreed with the first two propositions. Two were 'younger teenagers' (both male, Maori, one a declared Christian, the other preferring not to answer the question about religion). The third, a female Maori in the 'Lower SES' group, aged 31-40 also said that she was a Christian.

Interestingly, the two young teenagers were consistent in that they thought that the programme should not have been broadcast, even if cut, whereas the Indian and Lower SES woman would have permitted the programme to be broadcast. In the case of the latter, she would have been happy for it to have been shown uncut.

#### 8.5.2. THE IMMEDIATE REACTION OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE SCREENING OF THE PROGRAMME WAS:-

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Interest      | 72 |
| Amusement     | 63 |
| Enjoyment     | 32 |
| Surprise      | 24 |
| Embarrassment | 24 |
| Boredom       | 21 |
| Disgust       | 12 |
| Anger         | 8  |
| Horror        | 2  |

*(They were allowed to indicate as few or as many as they wished and 'write in' any that they felt should have been included) The following were added:-*

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Sadness     | 5 |
| Educational | 4 |
| Compassion  | 1 |

*Only two of the 'Christian Churchpeople' registered 'enjoyment' and they together with two of the younger (Christian) teenagers and three of the Pacific Islanders were responsible for all but one of the 'disgusts' (the*

twelfth was a 'Mature Thinker') In retrospect 'Educational' (or 'informed') should have been two of the options offered.

**8.5.3. TO THE QUESTION:- "Do you think that it should have been broadcast (as seen)?" :-**

YES 70  
NO 24 n=94

*All the 'Late Teenagers'; 'Young Ravers' 'Lower SES Group' and 'Parents of Teenagers' thought that the programme should have been broadcast as it was screened i.e. in its entirety. The belief that it should have been censored came mostly from the 'Christian Churchpeople' of whom only one would have allowed it to be broadcast uncut. The 'Pacific Islanders'; 'Indians' and the Christians amongst the 'Younger Teenagers' who also thought that it should be cut. As noted in section 8.5.1. three of those who felt that it should not have been broadcast at all identified themselves as Christians only one of the four declined to express any allegiance to religion.*

**8.5.4. TO THE QUESTION:- "If you answered 'No' do you think that it could have been broadcast if cut?"**

YES 19  
NO 4 n= 23

**8.5.5. TO THE QUESTION:- "If your answer was 'cut' what would you have deleted?" THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED:-**

*'Most of it except for the excellent section on child abuse' (Mature Thinker)*

*'How to Spice up Your Marriage' (MT; Young Teenager: Indian; Pacific Islander)*

*'Some of the More Intimate Moments' (MT)*

*'I would like it altered rather than cut' (MT)*

*'Sex scenes' (Christian Churchpeople: I: P.I: Y.T)*

*'Explicit sex scenes - not necessary at all - young children do watch' (CC)*

*'All simulated sex scenes' (CC)*

*'Some of the simulated sex scenes' (CC)*

*'Prostitute part - not constructive' (CC)*

*'No need to broadcast the explicit descriptions of what a prostitute does with her clients' (CC)*

*'sex (simulated scenes) and nakedness and they shouldn't give advice to have oral sex (CC)*

*'people being shown actually having sex' (CC)*

*'the porn' (YT)*

## 8.6. DETAILED DISCUSSION BASED ON 'TRIGGER' EXTRACTS FROM EACH STORY IN THE PROGRAMME - SEX - TV2 9.30 p.m. Tues 13 October 1992

### 8.6.1. What did you think of the programme?

All groups seemed to watch the programme with interest. Nobody walked out at any stage.

The first response to this question was generally one of approval ranging from:- *'It was very well done'* (Beryl, mother of two young men, 'Parent's Group') and *'fun'* (Eva, mother of three teenage girls, 'Parent's Group') to *'It was informative...there were statistics coming up, and that looked like it backed up what they were saying in a lighthearted way'* (Stan, a student in his early twenties, 'Late Teenagers Group').

Many participants agreed that it was informative and suggested that 'educational' should have been included in the options offered in Document #3.

However, there were some who quickly voiced their opposition to the programme. Most negative responses came from the 'Christian Churchpeople' and from some of the 'Mature Thinkers':-

*The programme made me angry - it's biased - all about the mechanical aspects of sex and no attention to commitment* (Edna, Charismatic mother of two young children, Christian Group)

This feeling was echoed by Delia, one of the Mature Thinkers, a retired Medical Bacteriologist in her seventies who said:- *'I know it was a documentary with a concentration on sex but other factors make a marriage a success - mutual interests - being friends'*

Another in her group added:- *I don't like the separation of sex from the rest of human life and the process of living. It shouldn't be isolated like that* (Ellen, Retired University Teacher).

Although one of the 'Churchpeople', Denise, another 'charismatic Christian,' observed that:- *'kids are going to get an incredibly distorted view of what sex is unless they watch it with their parents'* she was countered by Nick of the 'Late Teenagers' group who said that:- *'the programme doesn't actually show kids what to do. Young ones would probably just strip off their clothes and stand next to each other.'*

The Indians felt that it should have been broadcast later and voiced the discomfort that people of their culture would feel at such a programme"- *'I think most Indians would be embarrassed to watch such a programme'* (Geeta - female 31-40)

The Pacific Islanders expressed similar sentiments:-

*'It was an embarrassment as a whole'* (Huiata - female 51-60)

**8.6.2. Do you think that there would be a preferred way for the programme to be watched? - (fishing for comments re watching as a 'family' or 'couples' i.e. 'educational').**

The groups were not sure whether the audience aimed at was essentially teenage or wider. However, following discussion most agreed that the age range of the people in the various segments indicated that the producers were aiming at the widest possible audience.

*Nick: Teenagers.*

*Beth: No, they've got a variety.*

*Flo: Yeah, they've got a variety.*

*Di: I think a variety.*

*Beth: There was stuff directed at teenagers.*

*Di: And for couples.*

*Flo: It covers a whole range. ('Late Teenagers' group).*

Several of the young people in flats reported watching it in a mixed sex group and commenting on the content.

However, if it was the intention of the programme makers to stimulate discussion within the family they would be disappointed to hear that several from both the young people and the parents that they would be embarrassed to watch it in each other's company.

*Dot: I couldn't get my teenagers to sit with me.*

(Parents of Teenagers)

Some, in several groups, argued that it was not suitable for young family members:-

*Di: I think it's delivered in such a way that it's not hard for either a family, or flatmates, to sit down and watch it.*

*Flo: Yeah, but you wouldn't allow your 9 year old daughter to watch it. My sister sends her children to bed before it comes on.*

*Chris: (Interviewer) How old's your sister? ( to Flo )*

*Flo: She's 33.*

*Chris: And she doesn't let who watch it! How old are they?*

*Flo: Her children. / About 8 and 12.*

*Di: Yeah, probably a little young.*

*Nick: Mmm. ('Late Teenagers')*

The 'Young(er) Teenagers had a similar conversation:-

*Flo: I don't think its for families. I mostly watched it with my mates. I wouldn't want to watch it with my parents . It would be embarrassing. For them as well as me. You watch it with people of your own age group.*

*Carl: It would be fine watching it with my parents*

*Dak: My dad would probably love it*

*Flo: It's different for girls*

*Chris: Was it aimed then, do you think, just at teenagers?*

*Flo: It had the bit for couples with babies, and married. It seemed to be aimed at everyone.*

Although there were some in most groups who felt that watching it together could be beneficial:-

*Chris: Did you watch it with your children?*  
*Phil/Ada/Dot: Yes, we did.*  
*Ada: I told my ten-year-old to go to bed. He said:- 'I've got to get my tips for the week'. We saw something about oral sex on 'Holmes' and he asked questions then, but not when it was on 'Sex'. He took out of each programme what he wanted and asked questions when he was interested.*

The rapporteur for the Pacific Island group said that it would be against custom for brothers to watch it with their sisters as it would be for them to discuss sexual matters together. This group said that they would definitely not feel comfortable watching the programme with their children. The Indians expressed similar sentiments:-

*Indra: ' will feel very embarrassed to watch this programme with my teenage children. Any time an embarrassing scene comes up while we are watching a programme as a family, I normally turn the TV off. Sometimes my 17 year old daughter takes the initiative to switch the TV off.*

People in several groups felt that the magazine style of the programme was not ideal. Some of the Young(er) Teenagers group expressed it well when they said:-

*Flo: Bits of it were odd*  
*Henry: I found it quite disjointed. Someone's having simulated sex here, then someone's talking about child abuse. It was unexpected.'*

Most members of all groups were aware that the 'watershed' for adult viewing was 8.30 p.m., and felt that 9.30 p.m., was an appropriate time to screen *Sex*. (Although the Indians and some Pacific Islanders seemed to think that it should have been later).

***FOLLOWING THIS INITIAL DISCUSSION SHORT VIDEO EXTRACTS WERE PLAYED AS REMINDERS TO STIMULATE COMMENT ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS.***

### **EXTRACT #1 SOPHIE LEE OPENS**

Give this information:- Sophie Lee came to fame as a presenter for '*The Bugs Bunny Show*' and as a 'receptionist/nurse' in '*Flying Doctors*'.

#### **8.6.3. What do you think of Sophie Lee as 'presenter' of this programme?**

Several in each of the groups remembered Sophie Lee from the *Flying Doctors* but they didn't have the knowledge that would be common amongst Australians of her links to children through the *Bugs Bunny Show*.

- 8.6.4. How is she presented? (expect:-sexy/short/red frock... long, straight unruffled hair,.. clean, young, open face).

Most people thought that she was presented as young and 'sexy'. They mentioned her red dress and plunging neckline. Few saw her as innocent although her long straight hair and restrained makeup could have been expected to appeal to older members of the audience.

Louie, of the 'Mature Thinkers' group did observe that:- *she was clean, fresh, well-rounded, wholesome and a tidy young girl* and Delia from the same group added that:- *Sophie is presented in two ways, one the parents would like to see, the other for young people.*

## EXTRACT #2 CHILD ABUSE

- 8.6.5. What do you think of this story/presentation?

Members in all groups expressed 'sadness' at the story of the abuse of Daryl (a fat, young man, now in his twenties). The story of Maria (a southern European woman of the same age) seemed to have less impact. Many said that it was 'necessary' and 'informative'.

Gina, in the 'Mature Thinkers' group, would have cut all the programme but for this segment. Flo, in the Young(er) Teenagers said that the segment made her feel sick.

- 8.6.6. What do you think of the emphasis on church connections with Daryl's abuse?

*Fay: It's a way of kneecapping Christians.*

This response, indicating an antagonism between the programme and its critics was expected but not many groups saw it this way. However, Dora of the 'Late Teenagers' was quite specific as to what she thought was going on:-

*Dora: I thought actually it was trying to have another dig at the church. They're being really exposed lately.*

*Chris: Is there any reason why the programme would want to have a dig at the church?*

*Dora: Because they're the ones, religious people, who are most critical of this programme. You see it in the letters that come in about the programme at the end. I think the church has a lot to do with suppressing sex. The church has never wanted people to be educated about it, and that's what this programme is doing. In a way there's a war going on.*

Similarly Ian and Les of the 'Lower SES' group thought that they knew what was going on:-

*Ian; It is associating this (behaviour) with the church - it's an attack on the church.*

*Les; An interview with a Church minister when the programme was first released showed that he was against it.*

**8.6.7. How do you feel about the explicit language e.g. 'he started to have oral sex with me'?**

There was no objection to this from anybody in any of the ten groups. Everyone was prepared to accept that it was necessary for such language to be used in this context.

**8.6.8. What do you think of the use of 'experts' e.g. the Social Work Lecturer/'Counsellor' etc., AND why do you think they use such people and include their status on screen?**

All groups realized that it was a television convention to include name and status beneath the image of 'experts' and some in every group were sufficiently 'media literate' to know why:-

*Flo: To back it up.*

*Ollie: So you know they're not just pulling anyone out. You wouldn't listen to them if it was just Sophie Lee.*

*Stan: You trust experts.*

*Di: Because it's like the old "god syndrome" with the doctor, isn't it?*

*Ann: I mean they're bound to know more than you.  
(Late Teenagers').*

**EXTRACT #3 STATISTICS (OF CHILD ABUSE)**

Give this information:- 'At intervals throughout the Sophie Lee's Sex programmes statistics are scrolled up the screen - this is the first example in this programme'.....

**8.6.9. What do you think of the presentation of statistics like this? (possibly something along the lines' it is intended to give an air of scientific authenticity to the programme')**

Most participants realized that, like the naming of 'authorities', the use of statistics gave credibility to the programme.

However, when asked to re-call any of the statistics that they had seen few could cite any accurately and several remarked that they had been distracted by the logo that is always placed to the left of the screen whilst the statistics are scrolled upwards from the base.

The Logo consists of a standing, naked, couple, embracing and rotating slowly. Because the statistics come from below they have to be read next to the 'bottoms' of the protagonists which can be distracting - at least for the younger people.

- Dora: I look at his bum - but only a quick look - I still try to read the words!* ('Young Ravers')
- Ann: I look at the guy's bum instead of the statistics. The words come up at the level of the bum - you naturally look at it.* ('Late Teenagers')

The older groups felt that they could avoid this distraction but they didn't like it.

- Ellen: Nude couple are a waste of space*
- Delia: Nude figures are irritating* ('Mature Thinkers')

- Ian: The Picture is irrelevant to the statistics*
- Anna: The whole thing is irrelevant!* ('Lower SES').

#### EXTRACT #4 THE DATING GAME

##### 8.6.10. What did you think of this segment?

All groups enjoyed the humour of this segment but it took a lot of probing for anyone to notice that this part of the programme was vaguely feminist. It achieved that effect by a 'role reversal' whereby the young woman donned a hard hat and called out sexist comments at men passing her building site.

Oscar, from the 'Christian Churchpeople,' got the point when he observed that it was '*showing the male what it is like - from the other side*' and Ada, from the 'Parents of Teenagers' said that:- '*it is good for the man to see the reversed role; to know what it is like*'. Guy, from the Maori, added '*It makes men feel and hear what they sound like*'.

##### 8.6.11 Why do you think that the programme uses comedy routines like the role reversal of the reporter?

Most people saw that this was part of the 'infotainment' approach that is becoming fashionable for many television non-fiction programmes:-

- Ron: It's part of the entertainment of the whole thing.*
- Dot: It keeps you awake.* ('Parents of Teenagers').

However, nobody noted that it was specifically 'satirical' in style.

#### EXTRACT #5 WILD SEX - STATISTICS

Give this information:- 'This is an on-going story. There is something about animal sex each week. Sometimes they have been shown mating. This week's example looks like a 'statistics' insert'. The story scrolls beside a peacock's tail.

##### 8.6.12. What did you think of this segment?

Most found it amusing. It consisted of a factual statement about the habits of the praying mantis where the female devours the male after (and sometimes, during) mating. Subjectively it seemed as

though the laughter of the males was a little nervous. Nobody noticed that it could be read as a feminist continuation of the previous role-reversal segment.

**8.6.13. What do you think is the purpose of the on-going story on animal sexual behaviour?**

It was expected that participants would pick up two possible interpretations of the ideology behind this series. Most did believe that the writers were saying that since sex is found throughout nature it is a 'natural' instinct.

*Eva: We are encouraged to think that sex is universal*

*Owen: They want us to think that it is natural*

(Parents of Teenagers')

It also seemed likely that some might read it as suggesting that sex was bestial. Only ten of all the participants made this connection e.g.:-

*Louie: Makes the point that humans are animals*

(Mature Thinkers')

One of the Christian Churchgoers found an unexpected message:-

*Paddy: It's hard to handle - it's peddling the evolution myth - insinuates that we came from animals.*

When the facilitator put this idea to the whole group there was a general murmur of agreement. It seems that the church discussion group had only recently been discussing their approach to evolutionary theory. From the use of the word 'myth' it can be assumed that they preferred the creationist interpretation.

## EXTRACT #6 WHAT AUSTRALIANS WEAR TO BED

**8.6.14. What did you think of this segment?**

On the whole this section was treated with light amusement. However, the more serious participants felt that it was all too slight and a waste of time.

**8.6.15. Why do you think they ask famous people?**

The significance of what the Australian celebrities wore to bed escaped the local audience. However, when they were asked if they were interested in what Anita McNaught or Colin Meads wore at night they indicated that such a question would have been more gripping. It was at this stage that the 'cultural specificity' of much television became clear to them

**8.6.16. What did you think of the poses of those in the sexier lingerie?**

In all groups someone, nearly always a woman, suggested that the women were placed in typical 'pin-up poses'. The younger women noted that:- *The view is for the men* (Cynthia:-'Young Raver').

One or two remarked on the fact that the camera didn't look at the males in the same way.

*Beth: They had corny, spastic poses*

*Ollie: Like the guy bouncing on the bed.*

One of the Indians, a cinematographer, noted that:-

*Chandan: The cameraman shot the women from above - lying supine; they shot the men from below - looking strong.*

**EXTRACT #7 WHAT ITS LIKE TO BE MALE**

**8.6.17. What did you think of this segment?**

Not many people liked this segment. It wasn't easy to hear exactly what was said and the men did all seem very similar. Much of their conversation was banal (in contrast to a women's dinner party in a previous episode where similar questions had produced much 'deeper' answers). The young(er) teenagers, in particular, were bored by this segment.

**8.6.18 What did you think of the men chosen for the dinner party/how and why were they chosen?**

Although the questioner had thought that the producers had thought that they had chosen 'SNAGS' (Sensitive New Age Guys) most of the participants did not agree. They were mostly in their forties but the young people thought that they:-

*...looked like typical, beer drinking, middle aged men*

(Ann; 'Late Teenager')

*...looked like a bunch of rugby players* (Cynthia; 'Young Raver')

*...looked like faggots....seemed well to do but faggy*

(Carl and Ed; 'Young(er) Teenagers')

The 'Young Ravers' didn't think much of the level of debate either:-

*Oxo: It was a really good topic but they blew it - they were too embarrassed*

*Paul: They couldn't say anything*

*Nick: If they had included a bloke with ability to talk it would have been more open; they were all like boys - get pissed - get laid.*

Following these comments by the men in the group a lively debate developed with the young women insisting that 'guys couldn't talk about feelings'. If this sort of discourse could be taken as typical of

what happened when flatmates viewed the programme together it could be viewed as a healthy development.

### EXTRACT #8 WHAT DO YOU FIND SEXY?

Give this information:- This is an on-going format; each week they go up to 'ordinary people in the street' and ask them forthright questions that many would find embarrassing.

- 8.6.19. What did you think of this segment? Many might spontaneously answer themselves - watch to see if any of the participants do so).

Most enjoyed this section where people give off-the-cuff answers. Several volunteered their own criteria. Although nobody called out during the actual transmission several said that in the home situation individuals would volunteer their own answers to such a segment. An attempt by producers to 'position' their audience as active participants is the equivalent of a sing-along at vaudeville i.e., an attempt to gain active identification through participation.

- 8.6.20. Why do you think that they do it (i.e. ask ordinary people intimate questions)?

(Possible answers include:- to show that ordinary people are not always embarrassed; to show that ordinary people are into sex as well as 'experts'; to position the viewer at home with those being questioned).

All groups gave answers along the expected lines. Although most thought that it was amusing they often indicated that it was a pretty superficial exercise

*Denise: I think people answered in a light-hearted way. There wasn't any depth there. Perhaps in such a situation they couldn't think. (Christian Churchpeople)*

### EXTRACT #9 HAVING A BABY AND A SEX LIFE

- 8.6.21. What did you think of this segment?

This segment was generally thought to be one of the most worthwhile. The 'Young Ravers' actually voted it 'the best section'. Typically it was described as 'educational' and 'informative' even though it was basically limited to the resumption of sexual relations after having a baby.

Anne, of the 'Mature Thinkers', a woman in her sixties with four children in their thirties, said:- *It was information that I would like to have known - it would have improved things at the time.* and Paul, of the 'Young Ravers' said that:- *Your parents and the doctor don't tell you about that side of it'.*

Carl, Henry and Gina of the Young(er) Teenagers found it interesting too. Flo added *'It wasn't stuff we knew'* and Carl said *'We learnt new things'*.

#### 8.6.22. What did you think of the explicit, anatomical language?

Once again talk of the 'stretched vagina' and 'muscles that enhance orgasm' raised no objections. Someone in every group described it as 'necessary'; 'appropriate'; 'no problem'. Although Amy of the Christian Churchpeople *'did not like it'* even the rest of that group didn't find it offensive.

#### 8.6.23. What did you think of the nudity?

In this segment the nudity included female breasts and a naked male (but no genitals were visible). The lighting was subdued and blue in the romantic tradition.

The (older) younger people and the 'Parents of Teenagers' raised no objection.

*Di: It was true to life (LT)*  
*Nat: It was good (YR)*  
*Ada: It was sophisticated (PT)*  
*Beryl: They used soft lighting (PT)*

Although it was greeted with an element of disbelief by some:-

*Cynthia: I was really surprised at that (YR)*  
*Chloe: They say its simulated but I don't know (PT)*

...and one or two weren't sure that it wasn't gratuitous e.g:-

*Anne: I don't see why they needed it (LT)*

The 'Mature Thinkers' were not all so sanguine:-

*Louie: Intimate moments could be cut*  
*May: I was embarrassed on occasions.*

...and the 'Christian Churchpeople' were sure that it was unnecessary:-

*Edna: It detracted from what was being said*  
*Paddy: It was totally unnecessary.*

The young(er) teenagers (perhaps surprisingly) felt much the same and the Indians and Pacific Islanders were also particularly opposed to the nudity

*Amit: Cartoons and still photographs would have been appropriate in this context. Otherwise glimpses of the upper parts of the body would have been sufficient.*  
 (Indians)

*Hulata: The information could have been given without the picture.*  
 (Pacific Islander)

## 8.6.24. Why did it say 'simulated intercourse' on the screen?

Although there is no specific legislation forbidding the broadcasting of images of actual sexual intercourse it is assumed by many people in Australia and New Zealand that to do so would break some law even though they know that it is not illegal to film it for distribution on video-tape. Thus the broadcasters probably believe that placing 'simulated sex' across depictions of sexual intercourse should reassure the public that they have not broken this mythical legislation. A few of the participants expressed this view:-

*Amy: There are laws protecting television from real sex (CC)*

The rest reckoned that it was to forestall criticism:-

*Chloe: They'd have the Patricia Bartletts of this world jumping up and down without this (PT)*

### EXTRACT #10 PROSTITUTES IN KINGS CROSS, SYDNEY

## 8.6.25. What did you think of this segment?

Along with the section on *Child Abuse and Sex after Childbirth* this was widely seen as one of the most useful sections. It was also described as 'sad' by many. A cautionary tale it would put anyone off street prostitution (an earlier episode on parlour sex had been less perjorative).

## 8.6.26. What did you think of the language e.g. 'fuck'?

All groups (except the Pacific Islanders) even including the Christian Churchpeople, were willing to accept the use of this word *in the context in which it was said*. The young prostitute had been asked how she felt and she used 'fuck' to express her desperation.

Others felt that the word was now in common parlance and could be tolerated even more widely on television:-

*Di: It's so real now. It's used a lot. (Late Teenager)*

*Mike: You hear it all the time (Late Teenager)*

*Bea: It's part of today's language (Young Raver)*

*Cora: You hear it so much it wouldn't matter (Mature Thinker)*

*John: No problem - this is the language of the street (Lower SES)*

Although this was the majority stance there were a few who would have preferred the word excised.

*Joy: Leave it out (Maori, aged 31-40)*

And all of the Pacific Islanders would have liked it removed.

**8.6.27. Did the warning mitigate the use of such language?**

Most did appreciate the warning although only a few of the respondents said that they had ever turned off as a result of one.

*Henry: I sometimes change the channel, both for the children and for myself*  
(Christian Youth Leader - Young(er) Teenagers).

The 'Christian Churchpeople' got into a debate as to whether it was better to 'bleep' bad language and were divided equally as to whether such a technique should have been used in this case. They certainly liked it to be used in films. However, few in the other groups supported this view. There was a general dislike of the bleeping technique

**EXTRACT #11 SPICING UP YOUR MARRIAGE****8.6.28. What did you think of this segment?**

People were ambivalent about this part of the programme. Many laughed at the couple thinking about something else whilst they were having sex (the man of rugby; the woman of England) and they chuckled at the vibrator but the Christians thought that '*it was all about sex and nothing on communication*' (Oscar) and '*trying to lead the audience to adopt a philosophy where there has got to be imagination, fantasy and creativity; with fun for fun's sake rather than for commitment*'. (Mic)

Some of the young people who appeared, from their lusty responses, to enjoy it a lot nevertheless expressed some disgust at such 'old' people doing it. (The couple would have been in their forties).

*Beth: It's really gross watching old people!*

*Flo: Yeah.*

*Eve: Do you think old people don't have sex?*

*Flo: Obviously, it's going to appeal to older couples. - But shouldn't they know each other after years of marriage?*

*Di: Not necessarily. ('Late Teenagers')*

The young(er) teenagers were even more uncomfortable with the segment:-

*Henry: I think this section was badly done*

*Bill: It was a lot sleazier*

*Carl: It should have been cut*

*Ed: Yeah, there's no need for it*

*Dak: If they put in much more they'd be making a pornography tape. ('Younger Teenagers')*

## 8.6.29. What did you think of the simulated sex?

One of the 'Late Teenagers' made a sophisticated contrast with the sex sequence during the 'After Baby Sex' he observed that this time:-

*what really got me was the filming. The other segments had really soft, romantic lighting. It was quite nice watching it. Whereas this had really harsh lighting. It was tackily presented. It was like watching a porn movie.'* (Stan)

From the same group and in the same vein:-

*Eve: and they couldn't act either*

*Flo: Stupid.*

*Ollie: It looked like he was doing push-ups.*

*Mike: It was tacky music.*

The 'Young Ravers' noted that:-

*Dora: It was less loving*

*Oxo: In the other shots there was a lot of kissing and cuddling - here the guy was just doing push-ups.*

## 8.6.30 What did you think of the display of a vibrator?

*Nick: Wrong colour!*

*Ollie: Wrong place (it was being used to stroke the woman's breast).. You saw the shape of it! ('Late Teenagers')*

Despite these reservations the young people, the parents, the Maori and the 'Lower SES' groups did not demand any cuts or modifications for the sequence.

However, some of the 'Mature Thinkers'; two of the Indians; three of the 'Young(er) Teenagers'; five out of seven of the Pacific Islanders and all of the 'Christian Churchpeople', would have excised these scenes.

*Clara: The vibrator scene was unnecessary, awful, 'Let's have a vibrator instead of love, communication and cuddles'.*

*Brenda: It's lust not love. It's saying the more you fantasize the more your love increases.*

Although two of the 'Mature Thinkers' felt, by implication, that this scene should have been cut, having noted the need to remove 'intimate moments' and 'all but the scene on child abuse' in the 'Personal Profile (iii)' Ivy in that group actually specified that this scene should have gone. On the other hand the two verbal comments, by the 'Mature Thinkers' that were noted by the rapporteur in the discussion of this section were:-

*May: It was educational*

*Kate: I don't know why he didn't use his hand!*

8.6.31. Give this information:- This was the last segment of the programme that we watched.

Can you detect any special 'order' in which the various parts were put together? (Possibly something along the lines of 'the bits get 'harder' as the programme progresses').

Not as many participants as expected commented that the programme got 'harder' or 'sexier' or 'more controversial' as it went on. Or that the 'best bits' were saved for the end. Although some did believe this:-

*Ed. The gorey things were first; the juicy things last (Y(er)T)*

*Paul: It gets more exposed (YR)*

*Chloe: It gets ruder.....*

*Mark: Yes, and others I've seen were like that (PT)*

*Edna: Gets more lustful - from the Christian viewpoint fantasy and hedonism for its own sake is bad. (CC)*

## 8.7. CONCLUSION OF THE DISCUSSION - VIDEO TAPE EXTRACTS

At the end of the discussion on the programme itself three extracts from a video tape entitled *The Lovers' Guide* were played. The programme *Sex* had used *The Lovers' Guide* as a source of material at various times. The tape has been a 'best-seller' in the U.K. It carried a Video Recordings' Authority R18 sticker with the warning 'contains explicit sexual material'. Thus, it was not screened to the groups which contained people under the age of eighteen. Neither were all three extracts screened to groups which had expressed united opposition to nudity and to the first and second extracts.

The three pieces played to the groups were more controversial than anything so far screened in the first series on television. The only male penis to have been seen was in an earlier programme within a sequence on genital warts which included close-up instructions of how to wash it. These three extracts were chosen to gauge the response to further depictions of the male organ.

The first of these extracts showed a flaccid male penis being briefly fondled; the second an erect penis onto which a condom was being rolled and the third a sequence on 'sexual positions' in which a penis could just be glimpsed in action. The extracts were of a sufficient length for a judgement to be made of their suitability, in context, but it was made clear that these items had not been broadcast and the participants were asked to decide whether it would be acceptable to them if they had been or were shown in the future.

Give this information:- Sexual material has long been presented to the public as educational. Sex education films had a vogue before and after the last war. In 1992 the most popular video tape for sale and rental in the United Kingdom was '*A Lover's Guide*'. It is available at K-Mart here. Whereas nudity on television usually follows the convention that the genitals will not be shown, video tapes intended for adults, and films e.g, *Room With a View* and *Basic Instinct*, sometimes do show private parts.

*Sophie's Sex* actually borrowed footage from *A Lover's Guide* but not the following three extracts. These do show genitalia. We will show you them to see how you would feel if they were screened on television. Some of you may wish to leave the room whilst these three extracts are shown. Please feel free to do so (*nobody did so*) we'll call you back in about five minutes for refreshments.... Pause...

### EXTRACT #1 - LOVE PLAY THROUGHOUT A MARRIAGE

(Shows a couple in a bathroom. The woman adjusts man's tie - her hand drops to fondle a flaccid penis.. they fall into the bath together)

#### 8.7.1. Would you think that the sequence could/should be shown on television?

All groups were split on this although the general tendency would be not to allow a penis to be shown. However, when reminded that genitals had been shown being cleaned in an earlier episode more people felt comfortable with the idea of a sequence connected with health. It was the frivolous nature of this segment that seemed to be a barrier to acceptance.

*Ollie: No.*

*Stan: No.*

*Di: You can see the penis.*

*Stan: It's not permissible. There just might be the odd 10 year old seeing that... There's so much abuse.*

*Ann: It's not necessary to show it.*

*Eve: His shirt could have been longer. ('Late Teenagers')*

*Hannah: Leave it out - what is it saying?*

*Fred: This is not suitable for family viewing*

*Dora: It's bad taste (Maori)*

However a few people made comments along the lines that if women's sexual organs (i.e. breasts) were to be shown men should not be exempt from exposure.

*Bea: Women get just as nervous about their breasts. ('Young Raver')*

*John: If its good enough for females - it should be good enough for males (Lower SES).*

Another felt that it was a step forward because the woman was taking the initiative:-

*Di: I like it because it's great to show a woman taking control. It's good to see. I think it would be a shame to cut it. (Late Teenager)*

**EXTRACT #2 - BIRTH CONTROL/DISEASE PREVENTION**

(Shows a couple in a bedroom. The woman puts a condom onto a man's erect penis).

**8.7.2. Would you think that the sequence could/should be shown on television?**

Perhaps surprisingly, for the penis was erect, this sequence was seen as acceptable by some who would have banned the last one. The rationale was that this was an 'educational' sequence that showed the correct fitting of a condom. It seems that the AIDS prevention movement has succeeded in making all matters related to the arrest of this disease a viable subject for public discourse.

Participants in several groups told a variation of the story of the couple who placed a condom on a carrot in the expectation that it would prevent conception because this was how it had been demonstrated to them by Family Planning personnel. The tale has achieved the status of a myth but as such provides a basis for accepting the graphic depiction of the technique for correct application even if a previously taboo image must be employed.

The young found it easiest to accept:-

*Nick: Yes. It's making an educational point.*  
*Eve: Yeah, not like the last one.*  
*Di: I think it has a high educational rating. It shows the difficulty of condoms - the awkwardness, the loss of momentum. It would be good to show it..*  
 ('Late Teenagers')

*Bea: You get sick of seeing them put condoms on vegetables*  
*Nat: It's educational*  
*Cynthia: My sisters have seen and probably done this - it's better to know how to do it properly.* ('Young Ravers')

Even eight of the ten 'Parents of Teenagers' approved of the idea of showing the sequence and the two who did not 'approve' said that they weren't sure and 'abstained'.

As a group the 'Mature Thinkers' were not comfortable with this extract but could still see some merit in it:-

*Kate: Very educational - for young people to know how it works*  
 ('Mature Thinker')

Although some of the 'Christian Churchpeople' and some of the Indians could see the educational value in showing how to apply a condom properly none of them would be willing for it to be shown on television. They envisaged it being used by instructors as a video tape and added comments such as:-

*Brenda: This is sad - using a condom to protect yourself from STDs is all very well but once again it is emphasising promiscuity.*  
 (Christian Churchpeople)

*Geeta: Since sex before marriage is out of the question for Indians the need for this kind of instruction does not arise.*

The Pacific Islanders, whose attitudes were generally similar to those of the Indians were divided on this issue. Although five were against screening it the other four saw some educational merit in the clip

*Ioana: If I say 'no' how can children know about it?*

*Bekka: For the health of little persons it's O.K.; but it's bad*

*Carmela: It's O.K. - for educational reasons.*

### EXTRACT #3 LOVE-MAKING POSITIONS

(Shows a couple in a bedroom having sexual intercourse a detached, objective, voice-over describes the advantages of the particular position - the man's penis can just be glimpsed - intercourse is not being simulated).

#### 8.7.3. Would you think that the sequence could/should be shown on television?

Very few, in any of the groups, would be prepared to tolerate this on television. The most liberal on the matter were the 'Young Ravers' of whom six out of eight would not object. Several observed that it was only marginally different to the depictions labelled as 'simulated sex'.

The 'Late Teenagers' were less ambivalent on the matter:-

*Ann: No. It would be a shock. It makes it hard to take, and means I'd probably miss what was being said. I'd prefer to see simulated sex. Real sex is too personal.*

*Beth: It feels like an invasion of privacy, watching something intimate that you shouldn't be.*

*Eve: But they do it so badly [simulated sex].*

*Di: It could be done a lot better.*

*Nick: So as long as it says it's simulated sex underneath you don't mind watching it, even though it looks exactly the same?*

*Flo: Yeah.*

*Ann: There's that personal difference. And it is a big difference.)*

(However there was no consensus to show or to ban it)

Three of the 'Parents of Teenagers' (two women and a man) would have been prepared to let it screen because 'it was educational' The other eight were not of a mind to ban it but 'abstained' on the vote. Similarly six of the seven in the 'Lower SES' group would have permitted it 'because it was educational'. Barb even said that:- 'it was better than the simulated one and Les added:- 'whereas the simulated sex was comical the real thing was educational'.

The 'Mature Thinkers' were unanimously opposed and, since all the Christian Churchpeople and all the Indians had been against screening the previous segment they were not even shown this one. It can reasonably be assumed that they too would have been totally against any screening on television of 'real' sexual intercourse.

### 8.8. FINAL COMMENTS - PERSONAL PROFILE (iii) (DOCUMENT #4 see Appendix 4)

At the conclusion of the discussion phase individuals were asked to complete a third document that was designed to see if they had changed their opinions about the suitability of the programme for broadcast as a result of the discussion in which they had participated.

An extra question was asked to see if they felt that there were too many broadcasts about sexual matters scheduled in the same week. All such programmes for the week in which the episode of *Sex* that had been the subject of the group's close study were listed and they were asked to tick those that they had seen (to ascertain if individuals did see a lot of what was available) and, finally, to tick another box if they would have watched if they had been able to (in case this had been a week when they had been unable to watch much television). They were invited to add a comment on 'the number and type of such programmes'.

The following two questions were asked again in this questionnaire which was given out at the end, following both the screening and discussion, to see if anyone had changed his or her mind as a result of the debate.

#### 8.8.1. TO THE QUESTION:- "Do you still think that it should have been broadcast - as seen?":-

YES 70  
NO 24     n=94

#### 8.8.2. TO THE QUESTION:- "If you answered 'no' do you think that it could have been broadcast if cut?"

YES 21  
NO 3     n=24

One person, amongst the 'Christian Churchpeople' had changed his mind and was now willing to allow it to be screened but with 'cuts to some of the nude scenes.'

## 8.8.3. TO THE PROPOSITION THAT:-

THE PROGRAMME THAT YOU HAVE JUST WATCHED WAS BROADCAST IN THE WEEK 11 - 17 OCTOBER. DURING THAT WEEK THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMMES WERE ALSO HEAVILY 'INTO SEX'. DID YOU SEE THEM? WOULD YOU HAVE WATCHED THEM IF YOU HAD HAD THE TIME? The following response was received:-

|                 |                | TITLE                                   | SAW IT/WOULD HAVE WATCHED IT |
|-----------------|----------------|---|------------------------------|
| Sun 11 October  | TV1 10.30 p.m. | film 'Carnal Knowledge'                 | 1 20                         |
| Mon 12 October  | Ch2 10.20 p.m. | Late Night Studs                        | 19 6                         |
| Tue 13 October  | Ch2 9.30 p.m.  | Sophie's Sex ('Our' programme)          | 27 17                        |
|                 | Ch2 10.30 p.m. | Late Night Studs                        | 15 7                         |
|                 | TV3 9.30 p.m.  | 3 Special: Elle                         | 20 12                        |
| Wed 14 October  | TV3 12.05 p.m. | Oprah Winfrey (Sex-starved wives)       | 8 18                         |
|                 | TV3 1.05 p.m.  | Donahue (Sexual Oddities)               | 4 15                         |
|                 | Ch2 10.50 p.m. | Late Night Studs                        | 12 6                         |
| Thur 15 October | TV3 1.05 p.m.  | Donahue (sons raped by their mothers)   | 0 17                         |
|                 | Ch2 10.50 p.m. | Late Night Studs                        | 10 7                         |
| Fri 16 October  | Ch2 9.30 p.m.  | film - Cat People (incest)              | 11 16                        |
| Sat 17 October  | TV1 12.45 a.m. | film - Annie Hall (adoles/adult affair) | 1 16                         |

## 8.8.4. TO THE QUESTION:-

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT TO MAKE ON THE NUMBER/AND/OR TYPE OF SUCH PROGRAMMES?

Participants in five of the groups (Maori, 'Late Teenagers', 'Young Ravers', Pacific Islanders and 'Parents of Teenagers') had nothing to say. The majority of comments were received from the Indians, 'Mature Thinkers' and 'Christian Churchpeople'. In a way the question invited negative comments and that was generally the tone of those that were received:-

THE FOLLOWING REPLIES WERE WRITTEN DOWN:-

*'These programmes are entertaining but there is a danger of them becoming too obscene.'* (Indian)

*'Programmes with an in depth coverage of sex and about children and uncertain relationships (would be of more value than those listed).'* (I)

*'There are too many adult freedoms imposed upon all viewers'* (Young(er) Teenager)

*'Too many; but have seen none nor would choose to'* (Mature Thinker))

*'Too much explicit sex with not enough emphasis on responsibility and caring concern'* (MT)

*'Should be shown when they can help young people e.g. against rape and incest and programmes which show well-rounded relationships with friendship' (MT)*

*'All the above are informative. I feel that it needs to be brought out of the closet; it is part of the sexual revolution of today. I totally commend Sophie's Sex for showing the initiative and bringing people into the twentieth century' (Young Raver)*

*'Don't watch TV2 and glad we can't get TV3' (Parent of Teenager)*

*'There does seem to be an over-abundance of such programmes; sex sells' (PT)*

*'Didn't watch any of these; prefer the Concert Programme' (PT)*

*'Would never watch any stuff like this; it is an indictment on TV to screen so many programmes zeroing on sex - giving an unbalanced relationship' (Christian Churchperson)*

*'Didn't realize there were so many' (CC)*

*'Sad to see the lack of emphasis on love and the possibility of a permanent relationship' (CC)*

*'99.9% seem to be gratuitous 'entertainment' and because they present such a lack of values are dangerous to the continuation of a stable, happy, society' (CC).*

*'Generally unnecessary; there is too much in New Zealand society that is slanted and unbalanced (CC).*

*'Too many examples of unnatural, unacceptable sexual and moral behaviour' (CC)*

*'Too much of Sophie's type magazine sex style stuff - has little or no impact. We need more serious types of show' (CC).*

## 12. CONCLUSION -

The last programme in the series *Sex* aroused much interest and little wrath amongst the focus groups of (older) young people, those of 'Lower Socio-Economic-Status', Maori, and the parents of teenagers who watched it. There was nothing in it that they would have liked cut. Most perceived it as essentially 'educational' and they believed that it was authoritative and factually correct.

They admitted to being entertained and informed. They were also amused by the lighter aspects.

They generally failed to see any hidden agendas - such as anti-religious or pro-feminist messages in any of the sequences which they watched. They also missed many of the cultural allusions to things Australian.

Almost all, in these four groups, would have accepted material of the kind that TVNZ cut (i.e. of genitalia) on the basis that it was 'educational' or 'informational' but only a few individuals would be willing to see images of real sexual intercourse broadcast.

The mature ladies were rather more ambivalent. They too admitted to enjoying parts of the programme and most said that they had learned something new. A few even admitted to regret that they had not had the knowledge earlier in their lives. Some were also shocked at times although, generally, such shock did not lessen their interest in the didactic nature of the information. Only one would have cut the programme heavily. Three others would have made light excisions. On the other hand some would have permitted the images of a limp penis to be broadcast, more would have allowed the 'educational' depiction of an erect penis with condom to have been shown, but none would have permitted the images of real sexual intercourse to be transmitted.

The groups chosen on the basis of cultural affinity were uncomfortable with the programme. For Pacific Islanders and for Indians the cultural taboos against nudity and the open discussion of sexuality made watching the programme embarrassing. Nevertheless, they conceded that there was some educational merit in the programme and that it might be beneficial for their own young people, growing up in a different society, to see such a programme especially if they were sufficiently secure in the principles of their traditional upbringing to challenge the values on display.

It was the group chosen because they were 'Christian Churchpeople' who were most opposed to the programme - as well as the Christians within the 'Young(er) teenage' group. In the end three from these two groups would have banned it completely. However, the rest would have permitted broadcast, if the simulated sexual intercourse had been cut, for they too saw that there were 'educational' aspects to the programme and they had also accepted, to a limited extent, the anti-Aids agenda.

This group's objection was strongly ideological. They believed that sex was essentially non-recreational; that it was not important for its own sake; that its expression should be confined within marriage. Portrayals of nudity and simulated intercourse were particularly offensive to them. This was also the case for the Indians and Pacific Islanders. However in the case of the 'Christian Churchpeople' 'fantasy' was also seen as an excuse for evil. They also felt responsible for society as a whole. As a result they

believed that, since it would be for the 'good' of all, it would not be an unjustified imposition to expect broadcasting to abide by their values.

Nobody, in any group, objected to explicit (non euphemistic) language used to describe sexual matters although a few did not like the matters which were discussed. Nearly everyone accepted the use of coarse language ('fuck') in the context in which it was used.

In conclusion, New Zealand society in general, inasmuch as it could be represented by this non-randomly selected set of focus groups, would appear to accept this programme as useful and valid television. Furthermore, they would be prepared to accept more of the same and would accept some that 'goes further' than that shown so long as the educational and medical rationale was emphasized. Evangelically religious people and those from some overseas cultures are, however, uncomfortable, and critical of the programme and would not be sorry if the series just ended was the last.

### **1 3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 The next series of Sophie Lee's *Sex* should be screened.
- 13.2. Specific and detailed warnings of content (or language) likely to offend should be given as appropriate.
- 13.3. Specific mention should be made of nudity so that those cultures which do not approve of its public exhibition are alerted.
- 13.3. Explicit language, used for educational or medical reasons should not be cut.
- 13.4. Coarse language, used in context, should not be cut or 'bleeped'
- 13.5. Only images of genitalia that are depicted for 'educational' or 'medical' reasons should not be cut.
- 13.6. Images of real (as opposed to 'simulated') sex should not be broadcast.

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## DOCUMENT #1 INTRODUCTION

### HAND OUT AT BEGINNING OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION.

#### MEMO TO:-FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

FROM:- Chris Watson, Director of Focus Group Discussions  
(Ph 35-76198 - home; 35-69099 x 8568 work)

DATED:- 25 October 1992

RE:- Research Project for the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

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I have been asked to conduct some research into what people think of a programme that the Broadcasting Standards Authority are meeting to consider in December.

We need several groups of quite different people to watch the programme, and to talk about it - to say what they like and don't like about it.

It is impossible to work with a random sample in the time frame available and it is difficult to get a clear statement if a discussion group comprises very divergent people. Thus it has been decided to talk about the programme with five different groups the personnel of which have something in common. It is important that each group comprises a different segment of society. So, the five groups that will take part in this study are composed of eight to ten people in the following categories:- 'Christian Churchpeople'; 'Young Ravers'; 'Mature Thinkers'; 'Late Teenagers' and 'Parents of Teenagers'. You can guess which group you are slotted into!

Together we will watch a full episode of the programme. A 'rapporteur' will note down anything that you say. There may be some spontaneous comments during the full screening, but discussion proper will begin immediately after watching the programme. First, you can say what you think - in general terms and then we will play you short extracts to remind you of each segment and you can discuss each part in detail.

We will need to link your comments to you, as a person. **However, these personal details will be recorded anonymously.**

To help the rapporteur you have been assigned a name - printed on the attached label. We ask that you complete the personal profile under that name and the rapporteur will record your comments under the alias. That way no one will ever know who really said what!

**DOCUMENT #2 PERSONAL PROFILE (i)**

**HAND OUT AT BEGINNING OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION,  
BEFORE THE SCREENING OF THE PROGRAMME.**

**ASSIGNED NAME:-** \_\_\_\_\_

**GENDER:-** (Circle one) MALE/FEMALE

**AGE:-** (Circle one) (18-20) (21-30) (31-40) (41-50)  
(51-60) (61-70) (71-80) (81-90)

**ETHNICITY:-** (Circle one) MAORI/PAKEHA ...  
or OTHER (Say what) \_\_\_\_\_

**PLACE OF BIRTH:-** (Name town and country) \_\_\_\_\_

**MARITAL STATUS:-** (Circle one) (SINGLE) (ENGAGED)  
(MARRIED/DE FACTO) (DIVORCED) (WIDOWED)

**CHILDREN?** (Complete for each):-  
M/F

|     |       |     |       |
|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |
| SEX | _____ | AGE | _____ |

**EDUCATION:-**

|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| School Cert             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University Entrance     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Diploma                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University First Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University - Masters    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University - Doctorate  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**P.T.O.**

**OCCUPATION:-** (write here) \_\_\_\_\_

(If 'Retired' tick box and state your occupation when working)

(If 'Student' tick box and state your parents occupations)

Dad's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mum's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**RELIGION:-**

Prefer not to answer:-

athiest

agnostic

Christian (state denomination)

Other (state)..... \_\_\_\_\_

**WORSHIP:-**

never attend church/temple etc

attend for weddings/funerals etc.

attend occasionally (few times a year)

attend often (many times a year)

attend very often (weekly, or more)

**TELEVISION HABITS:-**

I watch television:-

every evening and at some time every day (8hr +)

every evening and some daytimes (6 - 8hrs/day)

most evenings and/or daytimes (av 4-6hrs/day)

some evenings and/or daytimes (av 1-4hrs/day)

never...

I/We have \_\_\_\_\_ (number) television sets in the house/flat

I have one in the bedroom/'my' room YES/NO (Circle one)

Would you choose to watch a programme that was promoted as 'sexy' or with sex? YES/NO/MAYBE (Circle one)

Did you watch any of the Australian series entitled 'Sophie's Sex'? NONE/ONE/SOME (i.e. more than one)/ALL (Circle one)

**DOCUMENT #3 PERSONAL PROFILE (ii)**

**HAND OUT AFTER SCREENING OF VIDEO, BUT BEFORE DETAILED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION:-**

**ASSIGNED NAME:-** \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU BELIEVE THAT:-** (you make tick any, all, or none)

There is no place for sex education on television

There is no place for sex education in schools

Sex education should only take place within the family

**WHAT WAS YOUR IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE PROGRAMME YOU HAVE JUST SEEN?** (you may tick as few or as many as you wish)

Amusement

Enjoyment

Anger

Horror

Surprise

Boredom

Embarassment

Interest

Disgust

**DO YOU THINK IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BROADCAST (AS SEEN)**

YES/NO (Circle one)

**IF YOU ANSWERED 'NO' DO YOU THINK IT COULD HAVE BEEN BROADCAST IF CUT?**

YES/NO (Circle one)

**IF YOUR ANSWER WAS 'CUT' WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DELETED?**

## DOCUMENT #4 PERSONAL PROFILE (iii)

HAND OUT AFTER DETAILED FOCUS GROUP  
DISCUSSION AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SESSION:-

ASSIGNED NAME:- \_\_\_\_\_

EITHER:-

DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT THE EPISODE OF SOPHIE'S SEX THAT WE HAVE DISCUSSED  
SHOULD HAVE BEEN BROADCAST (AS SEEN)? YES/NO

OR:-

DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT IT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BROADCAST?

YES/NO (Circle one)

IF YOU ANSWERED 'NO' DO YOU THINK IT COULD HAVE BEEN BROADCAST IF CUT?

YES/NO (Circle one)

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS 'CUT' WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DELETED:-

THE PROGRAMME THAT YOU HAVE JUST WATCHED WAS BROADCAST IN THE WEEK 11  
- 17 OCTOBER. DURING THAT WEEK THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMMES WERE ALSO  
HEAVILY 'INTO SEX'. DID YOU SEE THEM? WOULD YOU HAVE WATCHED THEM IF YOU  
HAD HAD THE TIME?

| DATE            | TITLE  | WOULD<br>HAVE<br>WATCHED<br>IT | SAW<br>IT                |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sun 11 October  | TV1 10.30 p.m. film 'Carnal Knowledge'                     | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mon 12 October  | Ch2 10.20 p.m. Late Night Studs                            | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tue 13 October  | Ch2 9.30 p.m. <b>Sophie's Sex ('Our' programme)</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                 | Ch2 10.30 p.m. Late Night Studs                            | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                 | TV3 9.30 p.m. 3 Special: Elle                              | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wed 14 October  | TV3 12.05 p.m. Oprah Winfrey (Sex-starved wives)           | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                 | TV3 1.05 p.m. Donahue (Sexual Oddities)                    | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                 | Ch2 10.50 p.m. Late Night Studs                            | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thur 15 October | TV3 1.05 p.m. Donahue (sons raped by their mothers)        | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                 | Ch2 10.50 p.m. Late Night Studs                            | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fri 16 October  | Ch2 9.30 p.m. film - Cat People (incest)                   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sat 17 October  | TV1 12.45 a.m. film - Annie Hall (adolescent/adult affair) | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT TO MAKE ON THE NUMBER/AND/OR TYPE OF  
SUCH PROGRAMMES?

**DOCUMENT #5 'RELEASE'**

**HAND OUT AT THE BEGINNING AND COLLECT AT THE VERY END OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION.**

**MEMO TO:-FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

**FROM:- Chris Watson, Director of Focus Group Discussions  
(Ph 35-76198 - home; 35-69099 x 8568 work)**

**DATED:- 25 October 1992**

**RE:- Research Project for the Broadcasting Standards Authority.**

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I,..... am happy to have taken part in the focus group discussion on the programme Sophie's Sex and am willing that any comments that I may have made be included in the report to the Broadcasting Standards Association *on the understanding that such comments cannot be traced back to me.* All publications based on this research will refer to participants only by the alias which I have been given.

The researcher and rapporteur promise not to reveal the actual identity of the participants to anyone.

Signature:- (Researcher)

.....

Signature:- (Participant)

.....

(date).....

