



# Facilitator Notes

## Media and Sexuality

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This module was created by Dr Katherine Albury and adapted by the Advancing Sexuality Studies short course team at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

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## Background

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This module draws on contemporary theoretical work from the fields of media and cultural studies to consider the questions of *who* uses media, and *how* and *why* they use it. Its focus is on the variety of ways that media can be used to *make sense* of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is also designed to introduce researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines to the practice of textual analysis as a research methodology.

### **The aims of the module are:**

- To introduce theories of representation and media consumption as they apply to sexuality
- To encourage participants to reflect on, and experiment creatively with, their own practices of media consumption and analysis.

### **Participants will:**

- Develop a basic understanding of theories of media consumption
- Acquire an increased ability to read, understand and effectively communicate theoretical ideas on media and sexuality
- Gain greater ability to engage in critical and constructive interactions with peers and workmates, thereby increasing collaborative learning skills.

## Module approach

While the module does contain some lecture material, the overall aim is that participants should be involved in active learning. Group work will be undertaken in Sessions 1 and 3 (see below), and time is given for review and discussion of issues raised after each of the lecture segments. The short course team advises that any review or amendment of the module maintains a focus on active learning wherever possible.

## Overview

### **Introduction**

Participants will be given an overview of the module, module aims and schedule. They will also have the opportunity to review and extend their understanding of the module pre-readings, through group work.

### **Session 1. Cultural studies and textual analysis: some key terms**

Beginning with a lecture and moving through a video screening and group work, this session will set the theoretical framework for the whole module. Participants will be introduced to Hall's theories of media encoding and decoding. Semiotics and meaning will also be discussed and participants will develop different readings of advertising materials.

### **Session 2. Media and HIV in Australia**

The second session offers participants the opportunity to reflect on ways that media can shape popular ideas about sexual health, through the lens of a case study of the response to HIV/AIDS in Australia. Again, video will be used as a tool to encourage participants to unpack media texts before participants are asked to critically examine local examples of HIV/AIDS and sexual health materials or local media coverage of issues related to HIV/AIDS or sexual health.

### **Session 3. The Henson case**

The final session of the module examines a recent controversy around sexuality and media representation in Australia, and gives participants an opportunity to reflect on the different roles that they might play when participating in a media debate.

### **Conclusion**

The module's key points will be summarised, with reference back to the outputs of group work and other module activities.

## Required pre-reading

(to be discussed in module group work)

McKee, A. (2006) What is Textual Analysis? *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. London, Sage.

O'Shaughnessy, M. & Stadler, J. (2002) Semiology. *Media and Society*. 2nd Ed. Melbourne, Oxford University Press.

⇒ The facilitator must remember *either* to tell all participants to read both articles *or* to assign one article to half the participants and the other article to the other half.

## Facilitator pre-viewing

⇒ The facilitator should pre-view all visual material shown in the module in full:

- (1997) *Stuart Hall: Representation and the Media*. Available for purchase from: <http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=409>  
University price US\$195. Non-profit price US\$75.
- (2007) *Rampant: How a City Stopped a Plague*. Australia, ABC television documentary. Available for purchase from: <http://www.abc.net.au/programsales/s2340623.htm>  
Schools price AU\$88.
- (2008) *Insight: The Naked Eye*. Australia, SBS television documentary. Can be watched online at <http://news.sbs.com.au/insight/episode/index/id/22>
  - A full transcript of the programme is available at: <http://news.sbs.com.au/insight/episode/index/id/22#transcript>

## Materials required

The Module Outline for Course Participants asks each participant to bring:

- A fashion magazine or other magazine with full-page colour advertising
- A sexual health promotion image, advertisement or poster, or other media coverage of HIV/AIDS or STIs from their local context

The facilitator should bring back-up copies of these materials (in case participants forget theirs).

Flipchart paper or whiteboard, marker pens

## Module structure, materials and timing

| Session & approach                                                      |                                    | PowerPoint | Other materials (provided or required)                                           | Est. timing            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Introduction, objectives, schedule</b>                               |                                    |            |                                                                                  |                        |
|                                                                         |                                    | Slide 1-4  |                                                                                  | 5 mins                 |
| Pre-readings                                                            | Pairs review                       | 5          |                                                                                  | 20 mins                |
|                                                                         | Small group work                   | 6          | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                       | 20 mins                |
|                                                                         | Review + small group work feedback | 6          | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                       | 10 mins                |
| <b>Session 1. Cultural studies and textual analysis: some key terms</b> |                                    |            |                                                                                  |                        |
| Lecture                                                                 | Facilitator delivery               | 8-17       | Lecture included in Facilitator Notes                                            | 20 mins                |
| Screening<br><i>Representation and the Media</i>                        | Screening & discussion             | 18         | Need to access a copy of <i>Stuart Hall: Representation and the Media</i> (1997) | 70 mins<br>Or 53 mins* |
| Textual analysis                                                        | Group work                         | 19-20      | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                       | 30 mins                |
|                                                                         | Feedback                           | 20         | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                       | 20 mins                |
| <b>Session 2. Media and HIV in Australia</b>                            |                                    |            |                                                                                  |                        |
| Mini lecture                                                            | Facilitator delivery               | 22         | Mini lecture included in Facilitator Notes                                       | 10 mins                |
| Screening <i>Rampant: How a City Stopped</i>                            | Screening                          | 23         | <i>Rampant: How a City Stopped a Plague</i> (2007)<br>ABC television documentary | 50 mins                |

|                                                                                                               |                                |       |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>a Plague</i> (2007)                                                                                        | Small group discussion         | 23    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 15 mins                       |
|                                                                                                               | Small group work feedback      | 23    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 15 mins                       |
| HIV/AIDS and sexual health texts                                                                              | Small group discussion         | 24-25 | Examples of sexual health promotion advertising (HIV/AIDS or STIs) or media coverage of HIV/AIDS or STIs from the local context (to be provided by participants and facilitator) | 15 mins                       |
|                                                                                                               | Feedback                       | 24    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 15 mins                       |
| Wrap up                                                                                                       | Whole group discussion         | 25    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 15 mins                       |
|                                                                                                               |                                |       |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                               |
| <b>Session 3. The Henson case</b>                                                                             |                                | 26    |                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>110 mins</b>               |
| Defining moral panics                                                                                         | Quiz, definition & brainstorm  | 27-30 |                                                                                                                                                                                  | 20 mins                       |
| Mini lecture                                                                                                  | Facilitator delivery           | 31-33 | Mini lecture included in Facilitator Notes                                                                                                                                       | 5 mins                        |
| Screening <i>Insight: The Naked Eye</i>                                                                       | Introduction & focus questions | 34    |                                                                                                                                                                                  | 5 mins                        |
|                                                                                                               | Screening                      | 34    | Need to access <i>Insight: The Naked Eye</i> (2008). SBS television documentary. Can be viewed online.                                                                           | 50 mins<br><i>Or 20 mins*</i> |
|                                                                                                               | Feedback                       | 35    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 10 mins                       |
|                                                                                                               | Large group discussion         | 35    | Flipchart paper or whiteboard; marker pens                                                                                                                                       | 20 mins                       |
|                                                                                                               |                                |       |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                               |
| <b>Conclusion</b>                                                                                             |                                | 36    |                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>10 mins</b>                |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                  |                                |       | <b>450 mins (just under 7.5 hours)</b>                                                                                                                                           |                               |
| <i>*Timing can be reduced if Representation &amp; the Media &amp; The Naked Eye screenings are shortened.</i> |                                |       |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                               |

## Key to symbols and formatting

Throughout these notes, the following symbols and formatting ‘clues’ have been used:

⇒ This symbol marks an instruction to the facilitator.

- Use of a bullet point indicates steps to be followed in completing an instruction.

|| This symbol, plus larger and more widely spaced text, indicates text to be read aloud. The end of the text to be read aloud will be indicated with the following symbol. All text marked to be read is *suggested*, not required. The facilitator is free to amend or rewrite as she sees fit. ||

We have also indicated the points where a slide transition occurs on the PowerPoint presentation by inserting:

**SLIDE**

# Module instructions

## SLIDE 1

### Introduction

(5 mins)

⇒ Read text below and follow slide instructions (or develop your own introduction if preferred.)

|| This module draws on contemporary theoretical work from the fields of media and cultural studies to consider the questions of *who* uses media, and *how* and *why* they use it. Its focus is on the variety of ways that media can be used to *make sense* of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is also designed to introduce researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines to the practice of textual analysis as a research methodology.

Module readings and workshop exercises will explore the ways that media texts can be used in different contexts: to shape opinions or behaviours, to entertain, to distract, to form identities, or to build communities. Students are invited to reflect on the ways that they use and enjoy media, and the ways their own interactions with the media may (or may not) actively involve negotiating their values, attitudes and/or sense of identity. This process of critical reflection will be supported by collaborative small group work. The final session of the

day examines a recent controversy around sexuality and media representation in Australia. ||

## SLIDE 2

### Schedule

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⇒ You will see that currently the module schedule does not include tea/coffee or lunch breaks. Insert as required.

Read:

|| This module is designed to introduce different ways of critically thinking about sexuality and media. In the first session we will look at some key terms in media and cultural studies, and begin to think through some of the ways we can interpret and analyse media texts. In the second session we will look at media responses to HIV/AIDS, and consider the ways that both mainstream and niche or community groups used media to make sense of HIV in Australia in the 1980s.

In the final session we will examine a recent Australian media controversy that has come to be known as 'The Henson Case'. We will look at a televised debate about this case and consider the ways that different stakeholders and commentators 'made sense' of Bill Henson's artwork (David Marr's chapter in the further readings explains the final legal rulings on the case). We will also consider the ways that different

positions were represented by the producers and presenter of the *Insight* program. ||

### SLIDE 3

## Module aims

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⇒ Read (on slide):

|| This course aims to:

- Introduce theories of representation and media consumption as they apply to sexuality
- Encourage participants to reflect on, and experiment creatively with, their own practices of media consumption and analysis. ||

### SLIDE 4

|| Participants will:

- Develop a basic understanding of theories of media consumption
- Acquire an increased ability to read, understand and effectively communicate theoretical ideas on media and sexuality
- Gain greater ability to engage in critical and constructive interactions with peers and workmates, thereby increasing collaborative learning skills. ||

## SLIDE 5

### Pre-reading pairs review

(20 mins)

- ⇒ Query: Did all participants read both articles prior to the module, or did half the participants read O'Shaughnessy & Stadler and the other half read McKee?
- ⇒ Run the review activity as follows:
- Divide participants into pairs, based on the instructions given to participants regarding pre-readings. (If everyone has read both articles then divide participants randomly into pairs, but ask one person in each pair to report back on one article and the other person in the pair to report back on the second article. If half were asked to read one and half asked to read the other, pair up accordingly.)
  - Everyone has 10 mins to summarise their allocated pre-reading to their partner (total time: 20 mins per pair).
  - Within pairs, ask participants to try and reach agreement on what they think each article is saying. Ask them to pay particular attention to defining the concepts of denotation and connotation.

## SLIDE 6

### Pre-reading small group work

(20 mins)

- ⇒ Divide participants into small groups to discuss the focus questions (on slide):
- Do McKee's arguments on the nature of reality seem reasonable or unreasonable to you?
  - Why do you think you have responded in this way?
  - Do you think your reaction is influenced by your professional or disciplinary outlook; your personal beliefs, or other factors?

### Pre-reading pairs review & small group feedback

(10 mins total)

- ⇒ Ask for one volunteer willing to try and summarise the O'Shaughnessy and Stadler article and another willing to try and summarise McKee (**5 mins**).
- Do others agree with the summaries? Does anyone still have unanswered questions about either article?
- ⇒ Ask for one volunteer to report back on what came out of their small group work. Did other groups have similar or different responses? Summarise on flipchart paper, and wrap up (**5 mins**).

## SLIDE 7

## Session 1. Cultural studies and textual analysis: some key

terms

(140 mins total)

Lecture

(20 mins)

⇒ Read text below and follow slide instructions (or develop your own lecture if preferred.)

|| This module is based more on group work and discussion of media texts than lectures, so this will be the longest lecture of the day. It is designed to introduce the key concepts we will be drawing on for the course.

As McKee observes, researchers in the fields of media and cultural studies are interested in the ways that people use media and other cultural texts to make sense of the world. These researchers generally have a social justice agenda, and tend to view both the production and consumption of media as political processes, both in the general sense, and in the sense that media can be seen to influence or reflect personal identity formation.

While some media research has focused fairly narrowly on analysing media content in order to detect 'bias' or 'stereotypes', for the purposes of this module we are asking more open-ended questions.

## SLIDE 8

Rather than asking whether particular media texts are good or bad, we will ask *how* particular media texts can be understood, and *why* we understand them in particular ways. To answer these questions, we need to move beyond the issue of whether texts accurately represent the real world, and consider instead how we use languages and images to make sense of reality.

Within cultural studies, media is studied as one aspect of *popular* culture (i.e. everyday cultural production) rather than *high* culture such as opera or ballet. The term popular culture tends not to refer to traditional cultural practices, such as religious ceremonies, nor folk practices, such as arts and crafts. It is usually applied to things like television programs, magazine articles, advertising, film and, more broadly, popular fashion and music. If, for example, we refer to 'hip-hop culture', we may be describing dance styles, recorded or live music, clothing, telephone ringtones, slang and/or graffiti.

## SLIDE 9

In his book *Understanding Media Cultures*, Nick Stevenson offers a useful definition of culture, which, he notes, 'has been used [in the past] to

indicate the spread of civilised ideas and beliefs’, but is now applied ‘more neutrally to describe the symbols, meanings and practices that can be associated with living within a media-dominated society’ (2002: 227).

Media and cultural studies view culture as a site of political conflict, or, as Ellen Rooney explains it, ‘as a productive network of power relations’ (1996: 22). Like any academic discipline, media and cultural studies are characterised by dissent, particularly around the nature of power itself and the ways it acts on cultural consumers, in this case, media audiences. This module draws on a Foucauldian model of power, which sees power relations as dynamic. Power is not simply domination, or the means by which the strong oppress the weak. Power is not just exercised one way; it involves ‘power to’ not just ‘power over’.

## SLIDE 10

In the context of media audiences, this means that audiences or ‘consumers’ are seen not just as passive receptacles who are brainwashed by ‘media bias and stereotypes’ but as active interpreters of the information that is presented to them. While they *may* accept media content unquestioningly, their interpretation is coloured by their existing beliefs and values, and can run completely counter to the ‘official’

narrative or plotline presented in a media text (such as a news story or advertising billboard).

Audiences can also use commercial or mass-produced texts in such a way that they gain a new meaning in their new context. For example, reggae music was created by Jamaicans in the context of working-class, post-colonial, black culture. Reggae music draws on pop music traditions created by African-Americans, who are also descendants of slaves with histories of forced dispossession and migration. Reggae music and its associated cultural practices and images (such as dreadlocked hairstyles, pictures of Bob Marley) have been popularised widely, and now appear way beyond their original Jamaican context. In Australia, for example, young white surfers and young indigenous musicians have adapted reggae music and fashion within their specific subcultures. Depending on which reggae fan you speak to, reggae can symbolise black resistance to white colonisers, the freedom to smoke marijuana, or just a good beat.

Some commentators would suggest that the 'correct' meaning of reggae is diluted or co-opted when consumers adapt it to their cultural context or consume it in ways that ignore the political and social context in which it was produced. Within this module, you will certainly be invited to think critically about media texts. However, it is worth considering what can be lost when there is too much insistence on finding (or enforcing) the

‘correct’ interpretation of a media text. For most people, consuming media is associated with leisure, entertainment or relaxation. Even news media such as television and newspapers are not seen purely as a site of ‘factual information’ – they entertain as well as inform. This does not mean that media audiences who want to relax or be entertained are not *also* seeking to make sense of their everyday lives and the world around them.

## SLIDE 11

It is important to remember that media operates on multiple levels. This means that whether you are producing media texts, consuming them or commentating, there is always the possibility of multiple strategies for interpreting and using media. Meanings are not ‘fixed’ into texts. Meanings are not stable either. They change according to the time, or location in which they are consumed. Factors like class, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, political affiliation, health and physical ability can all affect how a specific consumer (or group of consumers or ‘audience’) makes sense of a media text. Importantly, even ‘bad’ media texts can offer opportunities for emotional engagement, whether it is based on disgust, pleasure or surprise. This makes them prime sites for learning and thinking.

## SLIDE 12

Stuart Hall is not the only well-known theorist in media and cultural studies, but his work is highly respected, and very influential. His work draws on anthropology, sociology, linguistics and politics, and takes a political approach to the study of everyday media and culture. Hall considers issues of race, class and gender as they arise in the context of everyday interactions, particularly through debates in popular and news media.

A common model within media communications theories that favour the media effects approach is called the 'Sender-message-receiver'. This model supposes that a signal or message is formulated by a sender. Then, it is transmitted in a clear and coherent way to a waiting receiver. The receiver, in this model, could be seen as a blank piece of paper written on by the sender, or as a body 'injected' with a message by the sender. This model is sometimes referred to as the hypodermic model of communication because it assumes that the message is delivered in a pure or uncontaminated way, just as a medicine is delivered by hypodermic needle. Stuart Hall is very critical of this model arguing it is too simple. It assumes that if messages are not transmitted in an undiluted form, this is because (a) the sender has prepared them

incorrectly, or (b) the receiver is not intelligent enough to understand them correctly.

### SLIDE 13

In contrast Hall believes that the message (however skilfully crafted) cannot be fixed or controlled by the sender/producer, because she could not control all the factors involved in transmission and reception. 'Distortion' of the message is built into the process of communication itself; it is not the result of a breakdown in the process.

In contrast to this flawed model Hall seeks to develop a means of understanding the way audiences make meaning out of the images presented by producers. He argues that these meanings are produced in particular contexts, and they are consumed in specific contexts. So, while 'media-effects' researchers seek to measure the cognitive and attitudinal effects a given media message might have on an audience, Hall's work looks at the interactions between media producers, media content and media consumers.

Rather than using instrumental or quantitative tools to gauge 'positive' or 'negative' media impact, cultural studies practitioners apply methodologies such as textual analysis (the methodology introduced in

the McKee reading), ethnographic participant-observation, and qualitative interviews. Although Hall himself uses a number of methods, he is best known for his approach to textual analysis, which he explains as the process of ‘encoding/decoding’ (see Hall, in further readings).

Drawing on the work of philosopher Roland Barthes, Hall applies the linguistic field of semiotics (or semiology) to media. Hall proposes that we can only make sense of ‘real’ events when we are able to share a common understanding of them. He uses the example of the letters T R E E, which are understood by English speakers to represent both the real—material trees we might plant or burn—and the abstract idea of a ‘tree’. The same collection of letters does not have the same meaning to a French speaker, who will call that same material object by another name: ‘Arbre’.

#### SLIDE 14

Without shared language (which can be made up of writing, speech, touch, symbols, sounds or visual images) there can be no shared understanding. For this reason, Hall proposes that representations do not *distort* ‘reality’ – they allow us to make sense of it.

While each individual can make sense of real events in slightly different ways, we rely on *shared* understandings in order to communicate. Particular groups – national, cultural, religious or professional – have their own collective sense-making practices, also known as *codes* or *discourses*. These practices often seem commonsensical or ‘just the way things are’, but as Hall and many others have argued, they are often highly politicised and always culturally produced. Representation only makes sense in context—and since media representations can appear in a number of different contexts, they can be interpreted in a number of ways. To take a fairly neutral example, the colour red can mean different things according to the context in which it appears. The red in a red silk wedding dress symbolises something quite different to the red on a stop sign or a traffic light—but that does not mean that only one of them represents the ‘true’ meaning of red.

As Hall explains in his DVD lecture on Representation and the Media, media images are not simply faithful renditions (or distortions) of the real world. They are representations that re-present versions or impressions of reality, and these impressions are based on shared assumptions or understandings. In the process of encoding, media producers choose to include or exclude certain kinds of words or images in order to shape a meaning that fits a particular world view. This is not a neutral process; it is based on their assumptions about the ‘ideal’ values their audience will

share, and often reflects and even supports the interests of their employer, or other powerful forces (such as governments). ||

## SLIDE 15

Images of trees

## SLIDE 16

|| So to recap what we have covered so far, without a shared language there is no shared understanding. Representations do not 'distort' reality; they allow us to make sense of it. But not everyone 'makes sense' of things in the same way. Hall argues that particular groups have their own, collective, sense-making practices, also known as codes or discourses.

In terms of media images, we must remember that these images are not merely faithful renditions of the real world. They are literally re-presented *versions*, or *impressions*, of reality. These versions or impressions are based on shared assumptions of understanding.

Media producers make choices regarding which words or images are included or excluded in media products. These choices are based on particular world views.

## SLIDE 17

However, these messages must be decoded by audiences who bring their own sets of experiences, values and attitudes to bear. This, again, is not a neutral process. According to Hall, there are three main ways an image may be decoded or read by an audience. The first is termed the dominant reading. In this case, the audience's understanding of a media representation is shaped by the dominant assumptions in their culture. The second reading is the negotiated reading, where an audience accepts parts of the embedded codes, but accepts them selectively, according to their own understandings or experiences. The third is termed a resistant or oppositional reading. In this instance, audiences may reject the messages 'encoded' outright, because they conflict with the audience's beliefs or understanding of the world.

The encoding/decoding process is always subject to interpretation. Therefore, there is always a space to challenge 'preferred' or dominant encodings, and this offers space for critical thinking about what the media is, what it does, and how it can be adapted and changed in different contexts. Let us see how Hall explains this in his own words. ||

## SLIDE 18

## Screening & discussion (55 mins screening, 5 mins check-in + 10 mins discussion)

- ⇒ Screening of *Stuart Hall: Representation and the Media* (**55 mins**. NB: the video can also be stopped at the point of 'Ideology and Power', which is the 43 min mark.)
- Before starting the screening, draw participants' attention to the focus question: given that this video is of itself a media representation, how has Hall encoded his own work? (on slide).
- ⇒ Stop the screening at the following 'check-in' points to allow participants to clarify any questions they may have and for you to assess how well the participants are following Hall's arguments:
- 16'38 (just after the screen shot "'Reality" does not exist outside the process of representation').
  - 29'22 (just after the screen shot 'Without language, meaning could not be exchanged').
  - 43'14 (just after the screen shot 'Making meaning is always a process of interpreting what is presented'). **(5 mins total)**
- ⇒ At the end of the screening, brainstorm participant responses to the focus question. Check again for any unanswered questions arising from the video. **(10 mins)**

### SLIDE 19

## Textual analysis: group work (20 mins + 10 mins)

- ⇒ Check to see if participants have brought magazine advertising images, as requested. If not, or not enough participants brought examples, provide additional materials.
- ⇒ The following text can be read (or amended), then follow the bullet point steps.

|| Semiotics is not an exact science, just one tool that can be used to analyse media. For this reason, it is most useful when combined with other methods of analysing texts. ||

- Divide participants into small groups and select a fashion magazine from those brought in.
  - Ask each group to look for representations of aspects of sexuality or gender through images, symbols and/or written text.
- ⇒ Tell group members they should develop denotative and connotative readings of the images.
- Revisit the meaning of these terms if necessary. Denotative is a straightforward description of the text - i.e. it is a picture of a woman wearing a blue dress and diamonds etc. Connotative is the underlying meaning - i.e. the blue dress and diamonds suggest a 'cool' demeanour and sexually unattainable etc.)
- (20 mins)**

## SLIDE 20

- ⇒ The group should then choose one image and propose a dominant, negotiated and oppositional reading of that image. The object of this exercise is to play with new methods, so groups should be encouraged not to concentrate on the 'correct' interpretation.
- Revisit these terms if necessary.
  - Dominant reading—the audience's understanding of a media representation is shaped by the dominant assumptions in their culture
  - Negotiated reading – the audience accepts parts of the embedded codes, but accepts them selectively, according to their own understandings or experiences
  - Resistant or oppositional reading—the audience may reject the messages 'encoded' outright, because they conflict with the audience's beliefs or understanding of the world.
- (10 mins)**

## Group work feedback

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(20 mins)

⇒ Reform the whole group.

- Invite a representative from each group to report back on their image and the proposed dominant, negotiated and oppositional reading of that image.

Encourage suggestions of alternate readings, to emphasise the fluidity and contextuality of meaning.

**(20 mins)**

**SLIDE 21**

## Session 2. The media and HIV in Australia

(135 mins)

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### SLIDE 22

#### Mini lecture

(10 mins)

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⇒ Read the following text:

|| When people complain about (or compliment) ‘the media’, it is often hard to know what exactly they are referring to. Do they mean newspapers? A government-funded television station? An online news site produced by amateur ‘citizen journalists’? Or are they referring to a sponsored advertising campaign that has been embedded in other media texts?

In this session, we will look at the ways various Australian media texts intersected with and reflected the attitudes of activists, politicians, religious leaders, researchers and educators to shape ‘the Australian response to AIDS’ in the 1980s. Most of the texts you see here are broadcast or print media; but since the 1990s, online and mobile media has changed the ways we access or pass on information.

The program *Rampant* is of course also a media text. It is a documentary film produced for ABC television, the Australian national public broadcaster. As you can see from the *Educator’ Notes* in the further

reading (Raynor 2007), *Rampant* has been used as an educational text in Australian high schools in a number of subjects, from history to physical education, health and personal development. It has also been screened at Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer and Transgender community film festivals around the world. As you watch the extract today, you might like to reflect on the different meanings the film might have for different audiences in these different contexts.

You are also invited to reflect on the different circumstances surrounding the development of a public awareness of HIV/AIDS in your community, and the role newspapers, advertising and other media texts played in shaping popular perceptions. In Australia, for example, there was an early distinction made between ‘innocent victims’ of HIV (such as children and people with haemophilia) and ‘guilty’ people with AIDS: gay men, sex workers and injecting drug users. The National Association of People With HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) has actively lobbied to change these popular representations in news media, and continues to work with journalists in an attempt to present a less judgemental popular perception of positive people. Of course, the needs of journalists and news editors do not always overlap with those of HIV-positive people. ||

## SLIDE 23

## Screening: *Rampant: How a City Stopped the Plague* (2007) (50 mins)

⇒ Introduce the screening with the following text:

|| When we watch *Rampant*, remember not just to follow the story but also to consider the way it is put together. We never see the central narrator or storyteller, but it is clear that a writer, producer and editor have decided to shape the narrative in a particular way. Elements of interviews have been omitted. One person's statement may be edited in such a way that it seems to give a different meaning to the images or words that follow or precede it. As the director, Penny Chapman, notes in her statement in the *Educator's Notes*, the city of Sydney itself is also a character in this film, and images of the city are used to give us a sense of 'who' this character is. ||

⇒ Ask participants to keep the following focus questions in mind as they watch (questions on slide):

- How has the narrative been shaped?
- How is the 'reality' of the Australian response to HIV/AIDS represented by different interviewees?
- Do different speakers seem to have different levels of authority or expertise?  
What is the source of this authority?

## Small group discussion

(15 mins)

- ⇒ Divide participants into groups and tell them to use the focus questions as their starting point for discussion:
- How has the narrative been shaped?
  - How is the ‘reality’ of the Australian response to HIV/AIDS represented by different interviewees?
  - Do different speakers seem to have different levels of authority or expertise?  
What is the source of this authority?
- ⇒ Ask them to summarise their discussions in response to the questions on flipchart paper.

## Small group work feedback

(15 mins)

- ⇒ Ask group volunteers to talk through their flipchart paper summaries.
- During their feedback, summarise similarities and differences between group discussions on flipchart paper/whiteboard. Check: did the film raise any other questions or issues for people?
- ⇒ Wrap up by reviewing the way in which the video is an example of construction of a media text; Hall’s divisions of dominant, negotiated and resistant or oppositional readings still apply, as do the concepts of denotative and connotative.

### **SLIDE 24**

## Group work on sexual health advertising or media coverage (30 mins)

- ⇒ Check to see if participants have brought examples of sexual health promotion advertising or media coverage of HIV/AIDS or STIs from the local context, as requested. If not, or they have not brought enough examples, provide additional materials yourself.
- Group members should consider the following focus questions (on slide):
    - What is the focus of the material?

- What strategies does the piece use?
- What do they think is the target audience?
- Do they think the piece succeeds in addressing this audience?
- How do they think the effectiveness of this piece will be measured?
- How do they rate its effectiveness? Why?
- What are the possible oppositional/negotiated campaign readings?

**(15 mins)**

⇒ Remind everyone that Sendziuk's chapter in their further readings list offers different responses to a single sexual health campaign.

⇒ Bring the whole group back together for feedback, and begin by asking a volunteer from each group to use the focus questions to briefly describe the resource they examined. Do others agree or have different readings/reactions?

- Reiterate that different readings/reactions can also be understood as oppositional, negotiated or dominant readings based on the connotations and denotations that each person sees.

**(15 mins)**

## SLIDE 25

### Large group discussion on textual analysis (15 mins)

⇒ Once all groups have provided feedback on materials, ask everyone (on slide):

- Has anyone been involved in developing or delivering SH campaigns?
- If so, did they analyse audience, strategies, effectiveness? How?
- Did they consider oppositional or negotiated readings of the campaigns?
  - If not, might such an analysis have helped improve those campaigns?  
Give examples where possible.
- If no one has been directly involved in campaign development, which campaigns have directly affected them?
  - How were they affected? Positively? Negatively?
  - What dominant reading of sexuality did the campaign deliver?

## SLIDE 26

### Session 3. The Henson case

(110 mins)

- ⇒ **REMEMBER:** the issue of young people's sexuality can be highly charged.  
Remind participants that while there may be confronting material in this section, they will necessarily be focusing on the narrow area of a specific debate.

## SLIDE 27

### Defining moral panics

(10 mins)

- ⇒ Ask participants to choose an answer to the quiz on the slide, then to get into pairs and discuss their chosen answer together. **(5 mins)**

## SLIDE 28

- ⇒ Check: how many people chose answer C, the correct answer? Read:

|| The term moral panic was coined by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in the early 1970s. It refers to an overreaction to something—an episode, person or group of persons—that is defined as a threat to societal values and interests. ||

[From Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.]

## SLIDE 29

- ⇒ Read the following text:

|| According to Ben-Yehuda & Goode, moral panics have five characteristics:

1. Concern: there must be expectation that the behaviour of the group or category in question is likely to have a negative impact on society.
2. Hostility: hostility towards the group in question increases. A clear division forms between "them" and "us".
3. Consensus: widespread acceptance that the person or group in question poses a very real threat to society. Those feeding the moral panic, the "moral entrepreneurs" are vocal and the target, the "folk devils", appears weak and disorganised.
4. Disproportionality: the action taken is disproportionate to the actual threat posed by the accused group.
5. Volatility: moral panics are highly volatile and tend to disappear as quickly as they appeared due to a wane in public interest or news reports changing to another topic. ||

[From Ben-Yehuda, N. & E. Goode (1994). *Moral panics: the social construction of deviance*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 57-65.]

## SLIDE 30

## Brainstorm

(10 mins)

- ⇒ Ask participants: can they think of any recent moral panics in their society (on slide)?
- What was the concern?
  - What disproportionate actions arose?
  - Did interest in the panic disappear quickly?
- ⇒ Summarise key points on flipchart paper or the whiteboard.

### SLIDE 31

## Mini lecture

(10 mins)

⇒ Read:

|| In May 2008 a moral panic occurred in Australia over some of the photographs of the internationally renowned artist/photographer Bill Henson. A number of photographs were seized by Sydney police from an art gallery, and held for investigation as to whether or not they were classifiable as 'child pornography'. The seizure followed a day of uproar on talk-back radio and online media, after the publication of a newspaper column by the conservative commentator Miranda Devine in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The frenzy of journalistic and other commentary continued for two weeks, and included a statement from the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, on morning television. Rudd declared that the images were 'revolting'.

### SLIDE 32

This case did not erupt in a vacuum. Over the past decade or so, Australian politicians and media commentators had expressed distress and concern over the ways that children and young people are represented within popular culture, particularly within popular entertainment media. Questions have also been raised regarding children's access to 'adult' media, such as billboards and websites.

The case was extremely complicated and involved complex interactions of common-sense and legalistic modes of 'making sense' of young people's sexuality. In Australia, young people may legally consent to sexual intercourse at age either 16 or 17 in all States and Territories, but they cannot legally consent to be the subject of sexually explicit photographs or videos until the age of 18. (Nor can a parent or guardian consent on their behalf). Young people of 17 have been charged with producing 'child pornography' under Australian law when they have been found to have taken sexually explicit photos of peers of the same age.

What was surprising for many onlookers however was that an artist of Bill Henson's stature (whose work is part of the high-school curriculum in some states in Australia) would face allegations of 'child pornography', in response to images from his exhibition catalogue that were posted online.

## SLIDE 33

Key question in this case, then, were (1) whether Henson's photographs of a naked 13 year-old girl should be considered 'art' or 'pornography', and (2) whether the girl and her parents could legally consent to the taking of the photographs.

The photo on the slide shows Bill Henson, standing in front of the image from the 2008 show that seemed to cause most outrage.

For many, the means by which the photos were disseminated were important indicators of their correct classification: while it was agreed that the photos might constitute 'art' when hung on a gallery wall, were they converted to 'pornography' when they were posted on the art gallery's website? This question suggests that it was not simply the context in which the images were produced, but the context in which they were *consumed* that shaped their meaning. In fact, the fact that the images were circulated in the media seemed to change the way that people viewed or understood them. This process is sometimes termed 'mediation' or 'mediatisation'. ||

## SLIDE 34

## Introduction to screening of *Insight: The Naked Eye* & focus questions

(5 mins)

⇒ Read the following introduction:

|| The *Insight* program we are about to watch looks closely at the question of classification, and the issue of consent—both highly politically and emotionally charged issues in Australia, as they are elsewhere.

While watching the video, consider both *denotative* and *connotative* factors. Remember that on the denotative level, we simply describe what we see: i.e. a group of people are sitting on tiered seating in a television studio with the host of the program standing in the middle. On the connotative level, we add nuance and consider context and cultural codes of meaning.

In textual analysis it can be very useful simply to describe all the elements in a text *before* going on to interpret more deeply. This can help add critical distance and remind us to look at the way a narrative or argument is put together. Some denotative elements may be much more important than others, but it is worth looking at the big picture first.

Of course, emotional and subjective reactions are also important and do not detract from a critical analysis *provided* they are openly

acknowledged. The importance of emotion and personal reaction is brought into sharp relief if we compare the experience of watching *Insight: The Naked Eye* with the experience of reading the programme transcript. A link to the transcript is provided in the list of further reading. This Insight programme was screened on prime-time television by Australian national broadcaster SBS. ||

⇒ Ask participants to bear the following focus questions in mind, while watching the screening (on slide):

- Who speaks? What do they look like? How do they sound? How do you know who they are?
- Do some speakers seem to have more authority in the debate than others? What makes you think so?
- Did anyone try to redefine the way the debate was being framed? Who, and how did they do it?

### Screening. *Insight: The Naked Eye* (50 mins)

⇒ Screen the video. NB: if time is short, the first 20 mins provide sufficient material for the following discussions.

#### SLIDE 35

### Feedback (10 mins)

⇒ Ask for volunteers to provide feedback on the film based on the focus questions.

- Summarise responses on flipchart paper.
- Are group interpretations similar, or widely divergent? The facilitator should use the feedback to reinforce the module's earlier discussions on Hall and representation.

**(10 mins)**

## Discussion on *Insight: The Naked Eye* (20 mins)

⇒ Ask everyone to discuss the screening, using the following questions as a guide

(on slide):

- What purpose does this kind of television program serve?
- What are your personal responses to popular media debates around sexuality?
- Do you think such debate programs are useful, or not? Why?
- Do your personal attitudes and values on sexuality (or media) conflict with your professional responsibilities? **(20 mins)**

### SLIDE 36

## Conclusion (10 mins)

⇒ Read:

|| Today we have introduced some contemporary theoretical work from the fields of media and cultural studies to better understand *who* uses media and *how* and *why* they use it.

We have tried to look at different ways that media can be used to *make sense* of sex, sexuality and sexual health. We have also aimed to introduce you, who are from a range of disciplines, to the practice of textual analysis as a research methodology. ||

⇒ The facilitator should draw on some of the outcomes of the group work activities here, to illustrate and review the critical analysis work that the participants have

undertaken (e.g. examining advertising and HIV/AIDs or STI texts, unpacking video screenings etc).

⇒ Read:

|| Mass media can be powerful tools, with both positive and negative effects. They can be used in different contexts to shape opinions or behaviours, to entertain, to distract, to shape identities, or to build communities. We all use and enjoy media and in doing so we have a choice. Do we choose to actively negotiate our values, attitudes and sense of identity in relation to the messages media offer, do we become critical users, or do we remain passive consumers? ||

## SLIDE 37

Short course acknowledgements.

## Further reading

(includes lecture bibliography)

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